The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor programs, paying particular attention to how the instructional supports and psychological supports in their induction and mentor programs shaped their current views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. Data were collected from focus group interviews, individual interviews, fieldnotes, and documents. Analysis of the data followed qualitative study procedures. This study resulted in four findings: (1) a lack of teachers, mentors, and high quality, aligned professional development at the school site created a perception that there is not a clear articulated plan for support and development of new teachers; (2) the informal mentoring structure has made a notable impact on teacher satisfaction, retention, current views, and current teaching practices; (3) teachers advocated for the prioritization of psychological support throughout the first three years of teaching through their induction and mentor programs; and (4) teachers in the study believe five mindsets (belief in students, care for students, teacher efficacy, humility about your experience, and a desire to serve as a role model for students) are necessary in order to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. These beliefs were developed through informal mentoring, personal experience, and personal backgrounds. The findings from this study have implications for state departments of education and school districts.
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Perceived Experiences of Induction and Mentor Programs by New Teachers Working in High-Poverty Schools: An Exploration of Views and Teaching Practices

by
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Sandra Nelson, and my father, Harold Nelson. At a very young age they instilled in me the power of an education. I have dedicated my life to ensuring positive educational opportunities for students regardless of their background.
BIOGRAPHY

Brandy Nelson was born and raised in Prince George’s County, Maryland. She earned a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Mathematics from Salem College, and a Masters in School Administration from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. For two years, Brandy Nelson taught 7th and 8th grade mathematics in the South Bronx. She also taught high school mathematics for four years in Winston-Salem, NC. She served as an Assistant Principal for five years in North Carolina. Brandy Nelson has worked as a managing director for an educational non-profit for two years and the managing director of a principal pipeline non-profit for almost two years in North Carolina. She currently serves as the principal of a public high school in North Carolina.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The research shows that quality teachers are necessary for school improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gold, 1996; Haberman, 2010; Lyman & Villani, 2004). For example, Haycock (1998) found that “the average reading scores of a group of Dallas fourth graders who were consecutively assigned to three highly effective teachers rose from the fifty-ninth percentile in fourth grade to the seventy-sixth percentile by the conclusion of sixth grade” (p. 61). Also, Sanders and Rivers (1996) showed that “the residual effects of both very effective and ineffective teachers were measurable two years later, regardless of the effectiveness of the teachers in later grades” (p. 6). Research conducted by Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff (2014) of school district records and tax records of more than one million children in an urban school district also found strong results regarding effective and effective teachers. These researchers found that not only do students of effective teachers perform better academically, but these students also are more likely to attend college, earn higher wages, and are less likely to have children as a teenager (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). Indeed, given these and other compelling findings about the impact of teacher quality in student achievement, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future set a goal to provide all students access to a caring, qualified and competent teacher not merely for a single year, but over a period of consecutive years. High quality teachers are especially important for students in high-poverty schools, where students often perform significantly below their peers who attend schools with considerably fewer students who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch (a standard measure of school poverty). Unfortunately,
students in high-poverty schools “have less than a 50% chance of getting a science or mathematics teacher who holds a license and a degree in the field in which he or she teaches” (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 195). The quality of the teaching corps in a high-poverty school is less than schools not impacted by poverty (Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2007; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Haberman, 2010; Haycock, 1998). As Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff (2008) explain, “Across several different states and at least one other country, low-performing, poor, and minority students systematically are taught by teachers with the weakest credentials” (p. 794).

Compounding the problem of teacher quality is the issue of teacher retention. In the United States, beginning in the early 1990s, the number of teachers exiting the profession has been larger than the number of teachers entering the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Recent data show that “as many as 14% of teachers quit after the [first] year, with numbers rising as high as 50% leaving within 5 years of taking their first teaching position” (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 112). This teacher turnover rate creates an undue burden on human resources departments to recruit new teachers and also requires schools to spend additional resources on training and mentoring programs for new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) review of relevant research found a surge in newly hired, first-year teachers in the United States, from 50,000 new teachers in 1987-1988, to 200,000 new teachers in 2007-2008. Additionally, “In the late 1980s the modal teacher had 15 years of teaching experience; by 2008, the modal teacher was a beginning teacher in his or her first year of teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 204). Also, research shows that students
underperform in years wherein the teacher turnover rate is higher (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013).

In high-poverty schools, teacher turnover is at least fifty percent higher than in schools with significantly less poverty (Ingersoll, 2001). This problem with teacher retention has resulted in a “disproportionate number of inexperienced, uncertified and/or under-qualified teachers placed in urban schools” (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009, p. 814). Darling-Hammond (2000) contends that having new, under-prepared, and less experienced teachers teach high-poverty students adds to the disparity in the achievement of the high-poverty students and their non-impacted peers. This conclusion is supported by Ronfeldt et al.’s (2013) work that shows teacher turnover in both mathematics and English/Language Arts explained the achievement gap between schools with higher proportions of low-achieving and African-American students and schools with smaller proportions of low-achieving and African-American students.

In an effort to try to address these challenges of underprepared teachers, unqualified teachers and teacher retention in high-poverty schools, many school districts are implementing a wide range of interventions to support, train, retain, and improve the effectiveness of teachers in these settings. This study focuses on one such intervention: induction and mentor programs. In high-poverty school districts, these induction and mentor programs range from traditional programs in colleges and universities to alternative certification programs including Teach For America, Grow Your Own Teachers in Illinois, Teaching Fellows, The New Teacher Project (TNTP), Career Switchers in Virginia,
Educators of Change in Florida, as well as district- and state-sponsored alternative/lateral entry programs.

This study focuses on a teacher induction and mentor program in a southern urban school system, paying particular attention to teachers entering classrooms with a large percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Specifically, this study examines novice teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor programs while working in high-poverty schools. Special consideration is given to how the instructional and psychological support these teachers received during the program shaped their views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices.

**Induction and Mentoring**

Induction can be defined as an organized plan of support and professional development for a new teacher in the first three years of their teaching practice (Bartell, 2005). Induction programs could include workshops, orientations, informal collaborations, psychological support systems and mentoring (Bartell, 2005; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008). Induction programs have existed in the United States for over 20 years, having begun as an effort to support new teachers during the most challenging years of their teaching career (Bartell, 2005): “Induction programs have been developed as a way to effectively and thoughtfully introduce new teachers to their responsibilities and bring newcomers into the profession” (p. 6). They are seen as a comprehensive package of support for a new teacher.
Mentoring is a major component of teacher induction programs (Bartell, 2005; Brock & Grady, 2007; Drummond et al., 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Stotko et al., 2007). Mentoring can be defined as “one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee’s expertise and facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession” (Hobson et al., 2009, p. 207). Most mentoring programs include coaching by the mentor to the mentee around content and pedagogy in addition to counseling and psychological support for the mentee (Harrison, Dymoke, & Pell, 2006).

The benefits of teacher induction and mentor programs, according to Bartell (2005), are numerous:

(a) higher retention of beginning teachers, (b) increased levels of professional efficacy and satisfaction, (c) improved teacher performance, (d) earlier identification of weak teachers for assistance or termination, (e) more consistent use of instructional practices that lead to higher levels of student achievement, (f) more varied and more complex instructional practices being used by teachers, [and] (g) improved ability of new teachers to engage in reflective practice and critical examination of their work, establishment of professional norms of collegiality and expectations for continued learning. (p. 16)

As demonstrated by Stotko et al.’s (2007) finding that forty percent of teachers that received no mentoring either left the profession or changed their school placement after the first year
of teaching, teacher induction and mentor programs could possibly help reduce teacher turnover.

In general, studies about inducting and mentoring new teachers have varied in both their approach and their scope, addressing questions ranging from the need for induction and mentor programs to the types of feedback from mentors (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Soares & Lock, 2007); general pedagogy training versus subject-specific pedagogy training (Morton, 2005; Wang et al., 2008); and the length of time a mentor and mentee spend together as a correlation with a new teacher’s effectiveness, efficacy, and retention within the profession (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Morton, 2005). Instructional support activities that allow the new teacher to engage in common planning time and same subject collaboration (Morton, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), test instructional activities, gather feedback on those experiences from more senior teachers in the field, and garner ongoing support, possibly through a mentor (Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997) have been found to be positive components of a successful teacher induction and mentor program. Most studies about teacher mentoring and induction focus on the needs of teachers in all schools in a particular district or state rather than seeking to understand the unique needs of teachers in the hardest-to-staff schools. Wang et al. (2008) addresses this limitation in the literature, remarking, “Most studies failed to consider how the structured components were shaped by the broader contexts of the school culture” (p. 146). That is, the research regarding teacher induction and mentor programs, in general, fails to thoughtfully attend to the peculiar
demands of teaching in schools with a large percent of high-poverty students. Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007) effectively summarize the range of challenges faced by new teachers: increased levels of anxiety and depression, a greater incidence of behavioral difficulties, and a lower level of positive engagement in school…They [students] also exhibit a greater incidence of school failure, developmental difficulties and delays, lower standardized test scores and graduation rates, and higher rates of school tardiness, absenteeism, and school dropout than their middle-class peers. (p. 81)

These challenges may explain why the attrition rates for new teachers in high-poverty schools exceed other schools. According to Amatea and West-Olatunji, they average forty to fifty percent over the first five years of teaching. If researchers ignore school contexts as factors in designing support systems for new teachers, they could miss out on critical information that could be useful in creating and implementing the most effective ways to assist those who serve the most at-risk students.

The number of such high-risk students is increasing with changes in the demographics of the United States. There has been an increase in the proportion of non-White students in public schools (Clayton, 2010; Fry & Pew Hispanic Center, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The U.S. Department of Education (2014) publicized the following statistics: “From fall of 2001 through fall of 2011, the number of White students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade in U.S. public schools decreased from…60 to 52 percent” (p. 2). The public school enrollment of Black students decreased by 1 percent and Hispanic student enrollment increased by 7 percent during the same time period (U.S.
Department of Education, 2014). With respect to income levels, the “numbers of low income students in the nation’s public schools grew by 32 percent” in ten years (Suitts, Sabree, & Dunn, 2013). Most notably, the enrollment of Hispanic students in American schools has tripled since 1968 (Clayton, 2010), and “in 2002, the Hispanic share of public school enrollment exceeded the Black share and has since remained higher than the Black share in each subsequent year through 2011” (U.S. Department of Education, 2014, p. 2).

Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau reported the official poverty rate for children under the age of 18 in the United States at 17.6% in 2003 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Ten years later, the poverty rate increased to 19.9%, indicating that 1 out of every 5 children in the United States under the age of 18 lives in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Suitts et al.’s (2013) research regarding low-income student enrollment in schools across the nation support these data. Suitts et al. (2014) state, “A majority of public school children in 17 states, one-third of the 50 states across the nation, were low income students...in the school year that ended in 2011” (p. 2). In total, in 2011, 48 percent of students enrolled across U.S. public schools were eligible for free or reduced lunch and in the south, 53 percent of students were eligible. In 2010, the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act created a provision that allowed high-poverty schools to offer all students in their schools free meals (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016a). These families would not have to complete applications for free and/or reduced priced meals (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016a). Known as the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), it has been available nationwide since 2014 (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016a). States, school districts, and/or schools may complete applications for
participation based on the percentage of identified students enrolled in their schools, school
districts, and/or state education programs (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2016a). As of
September 2014, in North Carolina, 65% of school districts across the state are participating
in the CEP program, with 25% of the state’s schools participating, serving free breakfast and
free lunch to approximately 309,181 students out of almost 1.5 million students across the
state (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016; U.S. Department of
Agriculture, 2016b). These data show the volume of students served free breakfast and/or
lunch in typically a high-needs school in the state. With student populations labeled the
minority increasingly becoming the majority in many school districts, and a growth in the
number of students entering schools with various needs, the problems of teacher retention
and lack of high quality teachers in high-poverty schools becomes an issue of pressing
concern.

It is predicted that in 2023, White enrollments will continue to decrease to 45 percent,
with White students less than 50 percent starting in 2014, Hispanic students constituting 30
percent by 2023, Black students constituting 15 percent, and Asian/Pacific Islander students
constituting 5 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Establishing effective
induction and mentor programs for teachers in settings with a large population of students of
color or from disadvantaged backgrounds might improve the effectiveness, retention and
satisfaction of those newest teachers entering this diverse context.
Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to understand new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentoring program, paying particular attention to the instructional and psychological support in their induction and mentor programs and how their induction and mentor programs have shaped their current views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices.

Figure 1. A visual model of the research questions for this study. This figure illustrates how the research questions fit together into a framework for the study.
The research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. When specifically examining instructional support, how do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school?

2. When specifically examining psychological support, how do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school?

3. How do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school that shape their current views about working in their school?

4. How do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school that shape their current teaching practices?

This study was designed to contribute to the literature regarding the development of induction and mentor programs for teachers working specifically in high-poverty schools. The next section provides an overview of the research design, which describes how the study was conducted.

**Overview of Research Design**

This qualitative study was designed to understand how induction and mentor programs provide both instructional support and psychological support to teachers, which may shape their views and teaching practices related to work in high-poverty schools. Data
were collected from focus group interviews, individual interviews with current and former first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States, field notes, and documents. As the primary researcher, I followed the steps outlined by Creswell (2013), where I reviewed the data, identified major themes from the data and grouped major themes together. From these groupings, descriptions of study participant experiences with their induction and mentor program, the context in which they experienced their induction and mentor program, and how their induction and mentor program impacted their experiences in their high-poverty school were developed (Creswell, 2013).

**Significance of the Study**

It is difficult to ignore the impact of a quality education on the life path of a student. It is a predictor of whether an adult makes minimum wage or achieves financial stability (Day & Newburger, 2002). For many children attending underperforming high-poverty schools, the type of education they receive has defined their destiny. Ultimately, the effectiveness of teachers in a high-poverty school can greatly contribute to the academic success and life outcomes of the students they teach (Haycock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Many school districts have implemented teacher induction and mentor programs in an effort to improve the quality and retention of all teachers, including teachers working in high-poverty schools. Whereas many studies regarding teacher induction and mentor programs do not include the perceptions of these teachers in the studies, this study solicited the unique
perceptions of those teachers working in these schools. This study of teacher perceptions of their induction and mentor programs includes an exploration of how these teachers understand or make meaning of their world through their senses. Examining perceptions is critical because as humans, we compose various perceptions in our brains which we then act on (Link, Monahan, Stueve, & Cullen, 1999). If a teacher in their first three years of teaching perceives the components of their induction and mentor programs in a positive way, it might improve their teaching strategies and their job satisfaction in a positive way (Marable & Raimondi, 2007; Soares & Lock, 2007; van den Berg, 2002). Thus, insights from this research can help program designers, educators, and policymakers to better understand relationships that might exist between induction and mentor programs and the attitudes and actions of teachers in high-poverty schools, possibly influencing the quality of their teaching and their retention.

Studies regarding teacher mentoring and induction attempt to address the needs of teachers in all schools in a district, state, or country. Examining teachers in aggregate presumes that induction and mentor programs are impacting all teachers in the same way. Given that some teachers in high-poverty schools face different challenges than their peers in other settings, it is important to take a closer look at this subgroup of teachers. Findings from this study could lead to recommendations for professional development designers, and district and state departments of education designers, about how they might adjust their mentor and induction programs to influence the various outcomes of those teachers working in the highest-needs schools.
Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations of the Study

When conducting this study, as the researcher, I assumed that participants would provide truthful and candid responses in interviews and focus groups to promote openness. Informed consent was secured from each participant, confidentiality was maintained throughout the study, and participants were able to opt out of participating at any time. I also assumed that the perceptions of the teachers, of their experiences, and their descriptions of their beliefs and instructional practices reflect what was actually happening in their schools. Additionally, I assumed that teacher perceptions of induction and mentor programs shaped the behavior of those teachers.

This study was conducted in an urban school system in the state of North Carolina. This study did not represent every geographic region in the country, but did provide insight for similar districts, notably large urban districts with high-poverty schools that struggle to retain teachers to serve their diverse student populations. Also, this study was neither conceived nor conducted as a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of an induction and mentor program, but rather is intended as an exploration of the perceptions of an induction and mentor program for teachers in their first three years of teaching in an urban southern school district.

Definition of Terms

*Induction program* is defined by Carol Bartell (2005) as a systematic, organized plan for support and development of a new teacher in the initial one to three years of service.
**High-poverty school** is a school that has been identified as a Title 1 school where they have at least a 40% poverty level, as measured by the number of children enrolled in a free or reduced price-lunch program. According to the U.S. Department of Education’s (n.d.) Office of Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs, schools with at least 40% of their students from low-income families are eligible to use their Title 1 funds to implement school-wide programs to support all students and especially students currently failing or at most risk of failing.

**Mentoring/Mentoring Program** is a structured program where a novice teacher is paired with an experienced teacher for the purpose of guiding and/or coaching the novice through instructional practices, classroom management strategies, time management, and school specific acculturation (Hobson et al., 2009; Orland-Barak, 2014).

**First-year teacher** is a teacher of record employed for more than five months and less than twelve months during the calendar year of the study. A first-year teacher working for at least five months will encounter multiple experiences in their induction and mentor program.

**Second-year teacher** is a teacher of record employed for more than twelve months but less than twenty-four months during the calendar year of the study.

**Third-year teacher** is a teacher of record employed for more than twenty-four months but less than 36 months during the calendar year of the study.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One describes the impact of teachers on student outcomes and the crisis around teacher retention. It also presents the
purpose of the study and explains how the study contributes to the literature on teacher induction and mentoring in high-poverty school contexts. Lastly, Chapter One specifies the significance of the study, defined assumptions, delimitations and limitations, and provides definitions of relevant terms. Chapter Two reviews studies related to teacher effectiveness and retention, characteristics of strong teachers in high-poverty schools, and induction and mentor programs, especially in high-poverty schools. Chapter Three contains a description of the methodology of this study, including a description of the qualitative approach used, data sources, and analysis procedures. Chapter Four presents the findings of this study, highlighting important themes related to each research question. Chapter Five summarizes the key findings from the study and discusses how the findings contribute to the literature on teacher induction and mentor programs for new teachers serving in high-poverty schools. Implications for state-level and district-level administrators, institutions of higher education, and recommendations for future research are also discussed in the chapter.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to impact the success of students, we must have confident and competent teachers in every classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gold, 1996; Haberman, 2010; Lyman & Villani, 2004). The work of school districts is to ensure teachers in each classroom have a positive effect on the academic success of their students. In high-poverty schools, there are added challenges while working in those schools (Ametea & West-Olatunji, 2007). In addition to school-level challenges, many school districts struggle to retain strong teachers, especially in high-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). In an effort to address these challenges of teacher quality and teacher retention, school districts have implemented teacher induction programs (Bartell, 2005; Brock & Grady, 2007; Drummond et al., 1990; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Stotko et al., 2007). One popular component of teacher induction programs that has been studied is teacher mentoring (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Morton, 2005). The research on teacher induction and mentoring generally examines the impact of specific program components on teacher effectiveness, teacher satisfaction and teacher retention (Morton, 2005; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Unfortunately, in the high-poverty school context, research has been limited regarding the contributions of induction and mentor programs on teacher effectiveness, satisfaction, and retention. As a result, the purpose of this study is to explore teacher induction and mentor programs for new teachers in high-poverty schools, with a close examination of the instructional and psychological supports these teachers received in
their induction and mentor programs as well as an exploration of how their program affected their experiences in their high-poverty school.

This chapter will review the relevant literature pertaining to induction and mentor programs in general and in high-poverty schools specifically. The chapter begins with a review of the literature pertaining to the impact of high quality teachers on student success, the challenge of teacher retention, key characteristics of successful teachers in high-poverty schools, the origins of induction and mentor programs, and the research regarding induction and mentor programs schools in general and schools impacted by poverty. Research regarding instructional and psychological supports teachers receive through induction and mentor programs is also explored. The chapter ends with a general summary.

**High Quality Teachers**

The difference in student achievement between a high performing teacher and a low performing teacher can be measured (Haycock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). In Boston, students taught by low performing teachers showed no academic growth over the course of an entire school year, in comparison to their peers taught by top performing teachers (Haycock, 1998). To elaborate, in their study of the cumulative teacher effects for 3rd to 5th grade mathematics in two Tennessee metropolitan school systems, Sanders and Rivers (1996) wanted to examine the traceable effect between grade levels for cohorts of students from year-to-year. Their analysis allowed the researchers to “determine whether teachers from previous grades affected current year scores” for students in the study (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, p. 2). They found that an effective teacher could generate strong academic gains for
students within one year, but the “residual effects of relatively ineffective teachers from prior years can be measured in subsequent student achievement scores” (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, p. 4). Sanders and Rivers (1996) argue when a student experiences two consecutive years of a low performing teacher and one year of a high performing teacher that student performs almost twenty-four percentile points below a fellow student that experiences three consecutive years of high performing teachers. Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff’s (2014) study of more than one million children in an urban school district produced positive findings as to the long-term impacts of an effective teacher on students. Using value-added data coupled with tax data, the researchers were able to track students starting in elementary school and ending in as young adults (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). They measured the wages, attendance in college and birth rates of these individuals and found that students of teachers with high levels of value-added data performed better academically, earned higher wages, attended college and constituted lower teenage birth rates (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014). The researchers state, “the financial value of having a one standard deviation higher VA teacher [value-added teacher] is 1.34 percent \times \$522,000 \approx \$7,000 per grade. The undiscounted lifetime earnings gain is approximately \$39,000 per student (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014, p. 2655). In short, for every year a student has an effective teacher, they could increase their earnings by nearly \$39,000. The Chetty, Friedman, and Rockoff study as well as the Sanders and Rivers study helps support the claim that the impact of a teacher on a student’s academic success can be evident throughout that student’s educational journey.
In high-poverty schools, the quality of the teaching cadre is less than schools not impacted by poverty (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Haberman, 2010; Haycock, 1998). For students attending high-poverty schools, the quality of the teacher is critically important and their impact is measurable (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Sanders and Rivers’ (1996) study also found that as a teacher becomes more effective, low achieving students were the first to benefit from the growth of the teacher. In schools, and especially high-poverty schools, students benefit from high quality instruction delivered by a high performing teacher that continuously improves their performance over a period of time.

**Teacher Retention**

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) propose that a low level of employee turnover is normal and supports the success of a school system. Unfortunately, attrition rates in the teaching profession are not at low levels and continue to be disappointing, with 50% of teachers leaving the field by the end of the fifth year (Mable & Raimondi, 2007). As supported by other research, “about one-third of new teachers leave the profession within five years” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 7). In a study conducted by Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2011), the researchers wanted to understand the reasoning why so many teachers were transferring or resigning from low-performing New York City schools. At the time of their study, “twenty-seven percent of first-year teachers in NYC’s lowest performing schools do not return the following year compared to 15 percent in the quartile of schools having the relatively highest student achievement” (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 166). In this study, they found three reasons for teacher departures. First, highly-qualified teachers were more likely to quit
or transfer when they were teaching lower-achieving students and second, some teachers
were significantly affected by working in a school with low-performing students, while
others were not affected (Boyd et al., 2011). The researchers’ last finding indicated that
“teachers who lived farther from their school prior to beginning their job were more likely to
quit or transfer” (Boyd et al., 2011, p. 171). This study and other studies into teacher
retention indicate that more often under-prepared and less experienced teachers are teaching
students in urban high-poverty schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2007). Many of these
urban educators “enter the classroom with little training and leave soon after, creating greater
instability in their wake. Meanwhile, affluent students receive teachers who are typically
better prepared than their predecessors, further widening the achievement gap…between
affluent and high-poverty schools” (Darling-Hammond, 2007, p. 1). Olsen and Anderson
(2007) add evidence to the constant churn of teachers in high-poverty schools stating, “high-
poverty schools often fill vacancies with underqualified teachers who are not only less
prepared to teach but also migrate and leave schools at higher rates than their certified peers”
(p. 6). In short, low-income students are most likely to enroll in schools where the teaching
quality is significantly lower than their higher-income peers (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

The consequences of these teacher departures impact school systems, students,
teachers and schools regardless of income. In Ronfeldt et al.’s (2013) quantitative study of
fourth and fifth grade students across all NYC elementary schools over eight academic years,
they found that “students of teachers in the same grade-level team in the same school do
worse in years where teacher turnover rates are higher” (p. 18). Ronfeldt et al. (2013)
showed that the effects of high teacher turnover extend beyond the individual teacher that left
the classroom, but impacts other teachers and students at the school. There are fewer expert
teachers in the building, providing less support and coaching (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). It is
important to find ways to retain current high-quality veteran teachers and find ways to retain
new teachers, giving them an opportunity to become high-quality over time.

When examining high-poverty schools specifically, teacher turnover is higher
(DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013; Ingersoll, 2001). School districts with higher percentages of
low-income and low-performing schools have a more difficult time retaining teachers
(DeAngelis et al., 2013). Ingersoll (2001) argues that the turnover rate in schools with
academically disadvantaged students is at least fifty percent higher than schools with less
poverty. The impact of this high turnover rate is shown in the data for those schools
(Ronfeldt et al., 2011). For schools with a higher population of low-achieving and Black
students, the Ronfeldt et al. (2011) study produced alarming results, “Across math and ELA,
and across measures of teacher turnover, the negative effect of teacher turnover on student
achievement was larger” in those schools (p. 25). The impact of this high teacher turnover is
also evident in the financial costs to recruit, hire, train, and pay new teachers as well as a lack
of experienced staff to mentor and support new teachers (Amatea & West-Olantunji, 2007;
Goldberg, 2001). Recognizing the importance of a high quality teacher in every classroom,
the lack of high quality teachers for students in a high-poverty school according to Haberman
(1995) “is a matter of life and death. These children have no life options for achieving
decent lives other than by experiencing success in school” (p.1). To support the success of
these students, it is critical that we examine efforts to increase teacher quality in high-poverty schools as well as continuing to retain potentially high performing new teachers to the profession.

**Effective Teachers in High-Poverty Schools**

Despite the challenges of working in a high-poverty school, there are teachers that find success in working with this population of students. These teachers exhibit strong beliefs in student and school success, express a desire to help others, are relentless in their pursuits, demonstrate reflection and humility, and grow in self-efficacy and confidence (Lyman & Villani, 2004; Stotko et al., 2007). These effective teachers maintain high expectations for their students, stay flexible in their planning and execution, cooperate with their disillusioned peers, and are sensitive to a culturally diverse community (Lyman & Villani, 2004; Stotko et al., 2007).

In their book, *Best Leadership Practices for High-Poverty Schools*, Lyman and Villani (2004) argue that the rewards of working with high-needs schools far outweigh the challenges. However, teachers in these schools must be conditioned to believe in the ability of every child, take risks to be innovative in their teaching, remain relentless in their encouragement, and maintain high expectations for every student while also showing humility for their students’ families and each child’s circumstance (Lyman & Villani, 2004). Haberman (1995), in his seminal book, *Star Teachers. The Ideology and Best Practice of Effective Teachers of Diverse Children and Youth in Poverty* also articulated these characteristics of persistence, emotional and physical stamina, and humility.
In addition to the mindsets stated above, Stotko et al.,’s (2007) review of the literature on the characteristics of effective urban educators produced several dispositions and beliefs:

They are persistent: They refuse to give up on their students. They are flexible: They are willing to modify various aspects of practice (e.g., planning, classroom management, instructional strategies) to improve student learning. They set high standards for their students…They are cooperative: They are willing to work with other teachers, administrators, parents, students, and leaders in their community.

They believe in professional development and lifelong learning: They are constantly engaging in activities designed to improve their knowledge and skills. (p. 40-41)

The researchers go on to say that effective urban teachers must also be able to navigate working with disillusioned colleagues and dysfunctional school bureaucracies while remaining sensitive to a culturally diverse community of parents and caregivers (Stotko et al., 2007). Successful urban teachers maintain strong beliefs in the success of students and their schools, they express a desire to help others, remain relentless and persistent, demonstrate humility and cultural sensitivity, and grow in their self-efficacy (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Haberman, 1995; Lyman & Villani, 2004; Stotko et al., 2007).

**Teacher Induction and Mentor Programs**

This study examined how induction and mentor programs provide instructional and psychological support to new teachers and shaped their views and teaching practices in high-poverty schools. In this section, induction and mentoring programs in general and in high-poverty schools are reviewed. The end of the section includes a summary of the components
of induction and mentor programs participants found most influential to their practice, their satisfaction and/or their retention.

Induction programs are designed to provide professional development for a new teacher during their first three years of teaching (Bartell, 2005): “Although the public expects beginning teachers’ performance to resemble that of experienced teachers, novices without adequate support need 3 to 7 years of teaching to reach their maximum impact on student learning” (Stanulis & Floden, 2009, p. 112). Induction programs have varied in their complexity; however, most induction programs include opportunities for participants to attend courses, workshops and/or seminars (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Franklin & Molina, 2012), interact with a mentor from the same field, engage in subject specific activities, participate in common planning with teachers of the same content (Lewis et al., 1999; Luft et al., 2003; Morton, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wang et al., 2008), test instructional strategies and gather feedback on their practices from more experienced teachers (Oliver, 2009; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Soares & Lock, 2007), and experience ongoing support and coaching from a mentor (Lewis et al., 1999; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Mentoring is one of the most common elements of an induction program and most studies examining the impact of a mentor on a protégé indicate that the mentor makes a difference in the confidence, competence and/or retention of a new teacher (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Lewis et al., 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009; Stotko et al., 2007). Mentoring can be defined as one-on-one coaching and support of a new teacher
by a more experienced teacher in order to assist the novice in their teaching practices, and
their assimilation into the school culture and the teaching profession (Hobson et. al, 2009).
Smith and Ingersoll’s (2004) study found that having a mentor in one’s field of practice
reduced the risk of a teacher leaving the profession in the first year by thirty percent. Lewis
et al.’s (1999) study regarding the impact of mentors found that “70 percent of teachers who
were mentored at least once a week reported that it improved their teaching” (p. v). Andrews
and Quinn (2005) in their study of the effects of mentoring used a questionnaire to measure
the impact of mentoring and non-mentoring on first-year teachers in a diverse school district.
The researchers found a “significant difference between the amount of support received, as
perceived by teachers with a mentor assigned by the school district versus those without an
assigned mentor” (Andrews & Quinn, 2005, p. 113). Stanulis and Floden’s (2009) study of
twenty-four beginning teachers working in an urban school setting found that the teachers
participating in the intensive mentoring program increased their effectiveness over the
comparison group in the study in the areas of classroom environment, instruction and
content, classroom management and student engagement. At the start of the study, the
experimental group of teachers exhibited scores below their comparison group. Through
intensive mentoring, which included weekly interactions with their mentor related
specifically to classroom environment, instruction and content, classroom management and
student engagement, the experimental group improved their scores. The mentors were
thoroughly trained and had release time from their teaching duties to observe and meet with
the new teachers. These studies may help support the claim that mentors matter for teachers new to the profession.

**Studies Investigating Teacher Induction and Mentor Programs**

Most studies focused on teacher induction and mentoring include an examination of the instructional supports offered through these programs and their impact on teacher retention, teacher perceived effectiveness and teacher satisfaction (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Morton, 2005; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Wang et al., 2008). In 2011, Ingersoll and Strong conducted a critical review of fifteen empirical studies examining the impact of induction and mentor programs for beginning teachers. These studies fell into three categories: “(a) teacher job satisfaction, commitment, retention and turnover, (b) teacher classroom teaching practices and pedagogical methods, and (c) student achievement” (p. 211). They found through their review of the literature that induction for new teachers as a positive impact on satisfaction, commitment or retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Also noteworthy, the authors indicate for teachers’ classroom practices, most of the studies reviewed showed that beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction performed better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing workable lesson plans, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students’ interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management. Finally, for student achievement, almost all of the studies reviewed showed that students of beginning teachers who
participated in some kind of induction had higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests. (p. 225)

Instructional supports, as defined by Krull (2005), are the knowledge and skill supports a new teacher might need in order to successfully execute in the classroom. These instructional supports include workshops and seminars, subject specific content activities, common planning, instructional activity support and feedback, and coaching support from a mentor.

Workshops and seminars serve as one component of teacher induction programs. In Franklin and Molina’s (2012) study of agricultural education, they found through a survey of sixty-two teacher education institutions that 73.3% of the programs conduct workshops for new teachers. In Bickmore and Bickmore’s (2010) study of suburban first-year and second-year teachers in the southeast U.S., they examined the implementation and effectiveness of an induction program created and implemented in two middle schools. The induction programs included five components: orientation, individual tutoring, interdisciplinary teams, support from administration and professional development workshops and seminars (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Using a mixed-method design, the researchers conducted interviews and written surveys, as well as collected artifacts from new teachers, mentors and principals (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). Participants in the study indicated that their professional development workshops had a “positive effect on a variety of professional needs including curriculum, instruction, management, and new teachers’ competence” but the participants struggled with managing their time between their professional development
responsibilities and other teaching duties (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010, p. 1012). Despite the time management challenge, this research shows that teacher workshops and professional development occur in induction programs and are generally viewed by participants as a positive instructional support in their development as teachers.

Teacher engagement in activities that are subject specific and allow them to plan collaboratively with other teachers, including a mentor in their subject area, have made positive contributions to the satisfaction, perceived effectiveness and/or retention of those teachers (Lewis et al., 1999; Morton, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Wang et al.’s (2008) research argues “induction support might need to focus on subject-specific pedagogy instead of general pedagogy” (Wang et al., p. 141). Lewis et al.’s (1999) research affirms, “Increased time spent in professional development and collaborative activities was associated with the perception of significant improvements in teaching” (Lewis et al., 1999, p. v). In a year-long study by Morton (2005), the researcher maintained a relationship with two third-grade teachers, as their mentor, to uncover strong collaboration practices, mentoring practices, and obstacles to collaboration. Morton (2005) used collaborative action research to allow participants to study what was happening in their classrooms and actively make improvements. The researcher engaged in subject specific coaching conversations, modeling, co-teaching, classroom observations, and relationship building with each participant (Morton, 2005). The researcher confirmed these practices as a catalyst for changing beliefs and behaviors of teachers through exposure to ideas and modeling in a caring and collaborative way (Morton, 2005).
Morton’s (2005) findings support Luft, Roehrig, and Patterson’s (2003) study of subject specific induction programs for science teachers. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach to understand the impact of science induction programs on beginning science teachers’ instructional methods, their beliefs, and their experiences (Luft et al., 2003). The induction program consisted of subject specific support, collaboration, and feedback through monthly workshops, unlimited access to a strong science teacher, and monthly observations and feedback around science instruction (Luft et al., 2003). The eighteen beginning teachers in the study were split into three groups with one group experiencing an intensive science-based induction program, the second group experiencing a traditional induction program, and the final group experiencing no induction program (Luft et al., 2003). The researchers found that teachers who participated in the science-based induction program “enacted more extended inquiry lessons…used various forms of student work groups more frequently” and identified challenges in their schools but did not fixate on the problems (Luft et al., 2003, p. 87). The researchers concluded that induction programs must provide opportunities for teachers to engage in subject specific content as often as possible (Luft et al., 2003). According to the researchers, embedding induction and mentoring practices within content-specific practices improved the study participants’ beliefs, their lessons for their students, and their ability to navigate constraints at their schools (Luft et al., 2003).

When Smith and Ingersoll (2004) decided to examine teacher retention through positive effects of induction programs, they found that mentors and collaboration with peers
were statistically significant components that should be included. After using data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey, the researchers uncovered positive effects for teacher retention when certain components of induction programs were in place and of high quality. They examined: (a) whether the new teacher was working with a mentor in the same subject area as the teacher, (b) whether the teacher participated in any kind of collaborative supports, and (c) whether the teacher received any additional assistance to help them in easing into the transition of teaching. The researchers found

some types of activities appear to be more effective than others in reducing turnover. The most salient factors were having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers in the same subject or collaboration with other teachers on instruction, and being part of an external network of teachers. (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 706)

In short, the researchers indicated that “having common planning time with other teachers in their subject area or participating in regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers on issues of instruction reduced the risk of leaving…by 43%” (Smith and Ingersoll, 2004). Each of these studies found that opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other teachers around subject specific activities positively impacted their satisfaction, retention and perceived effectiveness (Luft et al., 2003; Morton, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Research examining the impact of induction and mentor program components related to testing instructional activities with their students and receiving feedback from an experienced teacher in the field exists in several studies (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Bartell,
Rudolf van den Berg’s (2002) examination of program elements that impact strong professional development found that opportunities for teachers to work with content they are currently teaching, experiment in real-time with the new learning, and reflect on their successes and failures based on their execution were the most significant. Ponticell and Zepeda’s (1997) study of sixty-two first-year teachers in three suburban high schools in Illinois, examined the teachers' struggles with learning 1) the organizational context of their individual schools, 2) the climate and culture of the school, and 3) the politics of the human relationships among teachers, administrators, parents, and students in the school. The participants completed an open-ended question survey and participated in focus groups. The teachers in the study indicated that a sense of “connectedness” and “ongoing dialogue” was necessary in assisting them in overcoming obstacles (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997, p. 13). A teacher in the study stated, “I need acknowledgement, guidance, and evaluation of my current progress – both positive and negative. As a new teacher, I cannot grow without criticism. Constructive advice on how to improve could possibly enable me to drop what wasn’t working or refine and expand upon what was working” (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997, p. 19). The researchers uncovered that the teachers “wanted more classroom pop-in visits with constructive criticism and feedback” (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997, p. 18).

In Soares and Lock’s (2007) study of lesson planning, observations, and feedback on those observations and lesson plans, the researchers examined both the quality of the mentor feedback to student teachers in the United Kingdom, and the impact of the mentor
preparation program on the type of feedback new teachers received from their mentors. Soares and Lock (2007) used an open-ended questionnaire to measure teacher perceptions of the feedback they received three times over the course of fifteen weeks. Teachers in the study found mentor comments related to content specific strategies, tips and suggestions to be the most helpful in their practice (Soares & Lock, 2007). The researchers concluded that any mentors working with new teachers need training to “address topic-specific pedagogy in a more comprehensive way” (Soares & Lock, 2007, p. 87). The new teachers valued the feedback and preferred subject specific feedback to “generic teaching issues, classroom management and control” (Soares & Lock, 2007, p. 82). Like Ponticell and Zepeda’s (1997) study, Soares and Lock (2007) found that critical, subject specific feedback was an important component of teacher induction and mentor programs.

This theme of action and feedback from a mentor was also asserted in Oliver’s (2009) study of new science and/or math teachers, their mentors, and their principals working in schools across western Australia. The study participants completed written applications and surveys, and participated in focus groups conducted at the start and the end of their mentoring program (Oliver, 2009). New teachers in the program reported, “reflecting on their experiences, gathering information and resources, working through instructional and assessment options with the mentor and setting goals” were key to their satisfaction in teaching (Oliver, 2009, p. 7). Like Ponticell and Zepeda’s (1997) study, and Soares and Lock’s (2007) study, Oliver (2009) found that planning, collaboration, and feedback were important components of teacher induction and mentor programs.
Evidence of the impact of a mentor on a beginning teacher’s success has also been studied (Lewis et al., 1999; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Smith and Ingersoll’s study (2004), found that 91.6% of participants found their mentor helpful to their teaching. Additionally, Ponticell and Zepeda’s (1997) study of sixty-two first-year teachers in three suburban high schools in Illinois provided more evidence that mentor programs greatly impacted teachers’ feelings of success in the first few years of teaching. Wang et al.’s (2008) review of the literature regarding factors that might influence new teachers’ performance when supported by a mentor purports that the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship, the mentor’s skill in articulating a clear vision of strong teaching and providing support to help the teacher achieve this vision, and the mentor’s ability to “practice, model, analyze, and reflect” at a high level with the new teacher are key to the effectiveness of any mentor (Wang et al., 2008, p. 144).

In conclusion, assuming that mentoring is considered a component of an induction program, studies examining induction and mentor programs have assessed the impact of program components on teacher retention, teacher perceived effectiveness and teacher satisfaction (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Luft et al., 2003; Morton, 2005; Oliver, 2009; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wang et al., 2008). This section summarized studies investigating induction programs, in general, and mentor programs, specifically. These program components include opportunities for participants to attend courses, workshops and/or seminars (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Franklin & Molina, 2012), interact with a mentor from the same field, engage in subject specific activities,
participate in common planning with teachers of the same content (Lewis et al., 1999; Luft et al., 2003; Morton, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wang et al., 2008), test instructional strategies and gather feedback on their practices from more experienced teachers (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Soares & Lock, 2007; Oliver, 2009), and experience ongoing support and coaching from a mentor (Lewis et al., 1999; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Missing from many of these studies is the context of the study. As supported by Stanulis and Ames’ (2009) study of mentoring training and development, the researchers acknowledge that context makes a difference in the effectiveness of a mentor’s impact on a teacher. It is alarming the limited research into the perceptions of teachers in high-poverty schools. This study contributes to this gap in literature through its examination of new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school. Given the changing demographics of our country, this study could serve as a significant contribution to the literature.

**Studies Investigating Teacher Induction and Mentoring Programs in High-Poverty Schools**

The research on teacher induction and mentoring in high-poverty schools is limited. This is concerning because “components of teacher induction do not independently influence beginning teachers’ learning and teaching practice. The quality of influence is dependent on social, cultural, and organizational contexts of schools where such components are situated” (Wang et al., 2008, p. 148). Ingersoll and Strong’s (2011) review of the impacts of induction and mentor programs for teachers new to the profession also point to a randomized controlled
trial study of new teachers working in low-income schools in a large urban school district. The researchers found that “after beginning teachers had experienced two years of induction there were significant differences between the treatment and control groups in the achievement of their students” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011, p. 226). Unfortunately, there were no effects, according to the researchers, on the teachers’ instructional strategies or retention of the treatment group of teachers versus the control group of teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). More research is necessary to understand how to best craft strong induction and mentor programs for teachers in high-poverty schools. Given the limited research that is available regarding teacher induction and mentor programs specifically designed for teachers entering high-poverty schools, it will be important to note studies that include teachers working in a variety of settings and teachers working only in schools impacted by poverty.

The literature related to teacher induction and mentor programs specifically designed for teachers entering high poverty schools include the general instructional supports established in previous sections of this literature review as well as activities that address psychological supports for these teachers. These activities include emotional support and encouragement as well as context and content embedded observation and feedback from mentors and others. (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Gaikhorst et al., 2014). These activities impact teacher self-efficacy, teacher mindsets and teacher satisfaction (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Jorissen, 2002). Additional studies examining the psychological supports for teachers also endorse these activities, however they do not pay particular attention to teachers working solely in high-poverty schools (McCann &

When examining psychological supports for all teachers, Krull (2005) defines psychological support as providing emotional support, being empathetic to the teacher and meeting their needs. This may look like “helping a beginning teacher in terms of how to cope with his or her class” (Krull, 2005, p. 147). Hoy and Spero (2005) described psychological support as social or verbal persuasion by another person. “Social or verbal persuasion may entail a ‘pep talk’ or specific performance feedback from a supervisor, colleague, or students” (Hoy & Spero, 2005, p. 346). In 1992, Odell and Ferraro attempted to understand the psychological support found in mentoring that supported teacher retention. Prior to this study, there was limited research into the impact of psychological support for new teachers (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Odell and Ferraro (1992) conducted a 12-item survey to a diverse group of beginning teachers, not in urban schools exclusively, to determine what elements of their mentor support made a difference in their decisions to remain in teaching. Odell and Ferraro (1992) argue in their study that mentor emotional support is a key component of the induction experience and needs to be examined more closely. The researchers “traced two cohorts of beginning elementary teachers who had participated for a year in a large, collaborative university/school system teacher mentoring program to determine how many were still teaching 4 years later” (Odell & Ferraro, 1992, p. 201). They also wanted to gain a better understanding from the teachers of the support they received from their mentor four years ago (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Two groups of teachers were established, constituting 160 teachers in the study (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). The mentors
used “peer coaching, shared teaching, and questioning, that guided and encouraged the beginning teachers to identify what they were thinking and what they were focusing on in their teaching” in an non-evaluative way (Odell & Ferraro, 1992, p. 201). The researchers found that “beginning teachers who were still teaching after 4 years most valued the emotional support that they received from their mentors in the first year of teaching” (Odell & Ferraro, 1992, p. 203). According to the researchers, emotional support was a key component in improving the retention of a variety of teachers over time. Unfortunately, this study did not examine teachers in high-poverty schools exclusively, but does provide foundational evidence to support the need for psychological supports for teachers new to the profession.

In McCann and Johannessen’s (2004) study of high school English teachers in the early stages of their careers working in urban and non-urban schools, the researchers wanted to know frustrations of teachers that influenced their decisions to leave as well as uncover the critical supports, resources, and preparations teachers received that influenced teacher retention (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Like Odell and Ferraro (1992), the researchers interviewed teachers in a variety of settings, not just teachers in high-poverty schools. The study was an “investigation into the concerns that drive new teachers from the profession and the attitudes and support systems that help retain them” (p. 138). Over two years, the researchers conducted interviews of eleven novice high school English teachers. They analyzed the data looking for “causes of stress, the methods for coping with stressful situations and the preparation and support novice teachers received” (McCann &
Johannessen, 2004, p. 138). They then conducted follow-up interviews with six of the original eleven teachers and an additional twenty-three more interviews with both novice and experienced teachers (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). The researchers found that “those teachers who seem unlikely to persevere in teaching talk about how the workload is unreasonable and hopeless” (McCann & Johannessen, 2004, p. 141). They summarize, “The beginning teachers identified several concerns, all of varying gravity. We advise that those who train teachers and support their professional development focus on two areas: alleviating a potentially demoralizing workload and developing positive relationships with students” (McCann & Johannessen, 2004, p. 145). The participants argued that the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship and the novice teacher work sessions impacted retention directly (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). Participants also requested therapy to battle feelings of doubt, “Beginning teachers may need some kind of counseling, and engage in conversations, which may ease depression. Having an opportunity for personal connections can make the experience more pleasant” (McCann & Johannessen, 2004, p. 144). Although this study, like Odell and Ferraro’s (1992) study, includes a variety of teachers and not teachers working in high-poverty schools specifically, it makes the case for the need to include psychological support to help novice teachers manage the workload as part of any teacher induction and mentor program.

For teachers in high-poverty schools, Jorissen’s (2002) study examined the relationship between urban teacher retention and the psychological support they received in their first few years of teaching. These psychological supports impact the emotional aspects
of teaching and could include counseling support, empathy, and positive affirmations to a new teacher (Krull, 2005). Jorissen (2002) wanted to “explore how these teachers constructed meanings from the process, events, and relationships they experienced to identify common themes among them” (p. 3). She studied thirteen teachers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota still teaching in urban schools in the 1997-98 school year that were involved in the 1991-92 alternative license cohort (Jorissen, 2002). All the participants were elementary teachers of color (Jorissen, 2002). The researcher’s case study methodology included an information questionnaire, “in-depth phenomenological interviews using an interview guide,” and “the human instrument skills of the researcher” (Jorissen, 2002, p. 4). Jorissen found that mentoring and cohorts played key roles in the persistence of the study subjects. Mentors helped the alternatively licensed teachers translate instructional theory from coursework to classroom practice, provided emotional support both personally and professionally, and generally improve their teaching practices (Jorissen, 2002). Confirming the psychological support of mentors, responses from the participants included, “It gave me a feeling of security that I knew there was someone…I could plug into, should I need some help” (Jorissen, 2002, p. 15). The cohort model in the study also provided psychological support to the alternatively licensed teachers. Comments from participants included,

We studied together…we cried together…I made them pray together…We would call each other every night and cry…Here were people who had decided to go into education and had make [sic] some sacrifices…In many cases we were helping each
other to think of ways to survive…We gave each other support, spiritually and emotionally, to not give up. (Jorissen, 2002, p. 20)

Jorissen’s (2002) study supports the claim that psychological support from a cohort and a mentor played critical role in the retention of these teachers over the course of the teaching career, many years later.

Given the previous studies examining the activities related to the psychological support novice teachers found most positive, Gaikhorst et al. (2014) wanted to take a closer look at ways to increase teacher retention through the type of support structures and culture activities urban educators in Dutch primary schools would need in their first years of teaching. After completing a qualitative, descriptive study using in-depth semi-structured interviews with eight beginning teachers and eleven principals, Gaikhorst et al. (2014) found that “in schools where teachers judged the support practice positively, support was focused on the specific urban challenges that the teachers experienced” (p. 32). The participants believed that classroom visits, support from a coach or mentor, and video conferencing with other teachers or specialists, with a special emphasis on “the specific problems that teachers experience within the context of their work–in this case, the urban educational context” made the difference in their development and retention (Gaikhorst et al., 2014, p. 32).

Opportunities for new teachers to collaborate with experienced colleagues, encouragement by experienced staff, and openness to help the novice teacher learn the complexity of teaching in an urban environment were also cited as important for these teachers (Gaikhorst et al., 2014).
In addition to limited research regarding the use of psychological support to help new teachers manage working conditions in high-poverty schools, there is limited research into the impact of induction and mentor program components on the beliefs and views of teachers working in these schools. Strong teachers working in high-poverty schools demonstrate a belief in the success of students and the schools they teach, a desire to help others, and positive self-efficacy beliefs (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Haberman, 1995; LeLand & Harste, 2005; Obidah & Howard, 2005; Stotko et al., 2007). Induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools should provide psychological supports that impact teacher mindsets.

McCann and Johannessen’s (2004) study of the teaching frustrations of high school English teachers working in high-poverty schools and schools not impacted by poverty uncovered similar results. As explained earlier, the researchers studied the anxieties of departing teachers and the resources and support of teachers that remained in teaching (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). For the teachers in this study that decided to stay in teaching, they reported that their mentor and induction produced a belief in the success of their students and their school, a desire to help others, and strong reflection (McCann & Johannessen, 2004). As cited by the researchers, “Those likely to continue in the profession express…a sense of duty to help young people benefit from instruction…an interest in developing their teaching skills…a belief that bad experiences in school are evidence of the need for good teachers…” (McCann & Johannessen, 2004, p. 142).

With respect to positive self-efficacy beliefs, in 1996, Chester and Beaudin explored the relationship between change in self-efficacy beliefs, teacher characteristics and school
practices for new teachers in urban school settings. The researchers wanted to highlight the personal characteristics and school practices that contribute to changes in self-efficacy of newly hired teachers (Chester & Beaudin, 1996). In Connecticut, 173 newly hired teachers were surveyed at the start of the school year and in February of that same school year to examine “whether specific teacher, assignment, and school practice variables, affect changes” in their self-efficacy beliefs (Chester & Beaudin, 1996, p. 241). The researchers found that multiple observations with focused, content specific feedback from supervisors resulted in an increase in self-efficacy. Additionally, when the researchers controlled for age in their model, they found “beginning teachers who were assigned to schools in which they perceived high degrees of collaboration among teachers and administrators reported substantially higher values of change in self-efficacy beliefs than those who worked in schools with little opportunity for collaboration with other adults” (Chester & Beaudin, 1996, p. 251). Ultimately, psychological support in the form of emotional support and encouragement, in addition to context and content embedded observation and feedback from mentors and others may support the positive development of teacher self-efficacy, teacher mindsets and teacher satisfaction (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Jorissen, 2002; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Odell & Ferraro, 1992).

This section summarized program components for induction and mentor programs for high-poverty schools and schools not impacted by poverty. In general, induction programs where participants articulated a positive impact on their effectiveness, their retention or satisfaction included opportunities for participants to attend courses, workshops and/or
seminars, interact with a mentor from the same field, engage in subject specific activities, participate in common planning with teachers of the same content, test instructional strategies and gather feedback on their practices from more experienced teachers and experience ongoing support and coaching from a mentor. As an additional layer of support for teachers in a variety of school settings, teacher induction and mentor programs should also include activities that provide psychological supports to new teachers. This psychological support in the form of emotional support and encouragement, in addition to context and content embedded observation and feedback from mentors and others may support the positive development of teacher self-efficacy, teacher mindsets and teacher satisfaction (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Jorissen, 2002; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Unfortunately, the research is limited regarding high-poverty school induction and mentor programs specifically and more research is necessary to understand how to best craft strong induction and mentor programs components related to instructional supports and psychological supports for teachers in high-poverty schools. This study intends to contribute to this gap in literature through examining how induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools provide instructional and psychological support to teachers and shape their views and teaching practices in their schools. This study is timely given the changing demographics of our country, the limited research regarding new teacher perceptions of their induction and mentor programs in their high-poverty schools, and the increase in the number of students attending diverse schools in urban centers.
Significance of Perceptions

There is a need for high quality induction and mentor programs for beginning teachers working in high-poverty schools given the multiple challenges these schools face daily. Additionally, the research is limited in soliciting the unique perceptions of these teachers with respect to their induction and mentor programs. This study looks to examine these unique perceptions through interviews and focus groups with these teachers in an effort to understand better their experiences in their induction and mentor programs and how their perceptions of these experiences have shaped their current views and their teaching practices.

Perception, as defined by the Random House College Dictionary (1984), is “the act or faculty of apprehending by means of the senses or of the mind; cognition; understanding” (p. 985). Consequently, a study in perceptions would include an exploration of how individuals understand or make meaning of their world through their senses. In his article, Pure Perception: God as Art, MacQueen (2011) articulates perception creation as a phenomenon unique only to humans. MacQueen argues that we already know we have the ability to create in our brains. One of the many things we create in our brains is a perception of the world. The brain’s capacity to create perceptions is initiated internally and not forced onto the brain from the outside world. Most importantly, these perceptions are influenced by our cultural contexts and experiences (MacQueen, 2011). The argument that context and experience matters is supported by Ferrari, Robinson, and Yasnitsky’s (2010) discussion that “human beings...are distinct in that they use also what Vygotsky refers to as historical experience of the previous generations (social experience of other people) and the doubled
experience of one’s own creativity and imagination as a prediction for virtually all transformative and active adaptations” (p. 104-5). In the end, we create perceptions in our brains and we leverage our culture, our environment, and our experiences in generating these positive or negative perceptions of our world.

After composing these perceptions in our brains, we then act based on those perceptions. As stated by Link, Monahan, Stueve, and Cullen (1999), “we propose a specific application of the idea that people’s definitions of situations shape their behavior” (Link, Monahan, Stueve, & Cullen, 1999). Merton (1995) adds evidence to this claim through the Thomas theorem that “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Merton, 1995, p. 380). In 1857, Schopenhauer observed that “it is not what things objectively and actually are, but what they are for us in our way of looking at them that makes us happy or unhappy (quoted in Merton, 1995, p. 382). Within the context of this study, these perceptions help teachers create a set of opinions that ultimately drive their behaviors. In full, every teacher “has a set of opinions that may clearly differ from those of his or her colleagues (van den Berg, 2002, p. 589). These opinions or perceptions are the result of “an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis” (van den Berg, 2002, p. 589).

The “meanings” or perceptions teachers make about their work will determine the amount of energy they are willing to invest (van den Berg, 2002). If a teacher perceives that they are developing in a positive way through their induction and mentor programs, they are
more likely to devote more time and energy to improving themselves. Over time, new teachers learn more, interact more, and through discussions and debates, preferably in a positive way with a mentor or teacher leader, begin to alter their perceptions and make new meanings about their views and their teaching practices. They are constantly testing their perceptions and building new meanings or confirming their currently held perceptions (van den Berg, 2002). This adds evidence to the assumption that teacher perceptions and “meaning making” contribute to how they interact with others and make choices about their teaching practices.

The power of a positive perception can be found in studies regarding teacher professional development. Drummond, Grimes and Terrell (1990) found in their study that implementers of a beginning teacher program should continuously monitor the program because they found “that attitude is an important variable in how individuals perceive and perform in the implementation of a program” (Drummond, Grimes, & Terrell, 1990, p. 189). In 1999, Lewis et al.’s study of teacher quality, they found that a teacher’s perception of preparedness impacted the quality of the teacher. These studies support the claim that perceptions of the quality of a program could contribute to the action of a teacher in their own classroom.

Chapter Summary

In high-poverty schools, the quality of the teaching cadre is less than in schools not impacted by poverty (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Haberman, 2010; Haycock, 1998). For students attending high-poverty
schools, the quality of the teacher is critically important and their impact is measurable (Sanders & Rivers). Sanders and Rivers’ (1996) study found that as a teacher becomes more effective, low achieving students were the first to benefit from the growth of the teacher. Unfortunately, school districts with higher percentages of low-income and low-performing schools have a more difficult time retaining teachers (DeAngelis et al., 2013). Ingersoll (2001) argues that the turnover rate in schools with academically disadvantaged students is at least fifty percent higher than schools with less poverty. The impact of this high teacher turnover is evidenced in student academic gains, financial costs to recruit, hire, train, and pay new teachers, as well as a lack of experienced staff to mentor and support these new teachers (Amatea & West-Olantunji, 2007; Goldberg, 2001).

With student populations increasingly becoming more diverse in many school districts and the expansion of student populations typically served in a high-poverty school, the challenges of underprepared teachers, unqualified teachers, and teacher retention become more frequent. High quality urban teachers will be invaluable to school districts across the country given these trends. These successful urban teachers maintain strong beliefs in the success of students and their schools, they express a desire to help others, remain relentless and persistent, demonstrate humility and cultural sensitivity, and grow in their self-efficacy (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Haberman, 1995; Lyman & Villani, 2004; Stotko et al., 2007). Most often, urban school districts leverage induction and mentor programs to support and coach their new teachers into these high quality urban educators. These induction and mentor programs include instructional supports and psychological supports. Instructional
supports that study participants found had a positive impact on their effectiveness, their retention or satisfaction included opportunities for participants to attend courses, workshops and/or seminars (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Franklin & Molina, 2012), interact with a mentor from the same field, engage in subject specific activities, participate in common planning with teachers of the same content (Lewis et al., 1999; Luft et al., 2003; Morton, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wang et al., 2008), test instructional strategies and gather feedback on their practices from more experienced teachers (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Soares & Lock, 2007; Oliver, 2009), and experience ongoing support and coaching from a mentor (Lewis et al., 1999; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). These supports exist in high-poverty schools and schools not impacted by poverty.

Studies examining psychological supports in induction and mentor programs identified emotional support and encouragement, in addition to context and content embedded observation and feedback from mentors and others as necessary components in any program (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Jorissen, 2002; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Odell & Ferraro, 1992). For high-poverty schools, emotional support and context and content observation and feedback were especially influential in positively impacting teacher self-efficacy, teacher mindsets and teacher satisfaction (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Gaikhorst et al., 2014; Jorissen, 2002).

In reviewing induction and mentor program research, limitations consistently exist regarding the voices of teachers working in high-poverty schools. More research may be necessary to understand how to best craft strong induction and mentor programs related to
the instructional supports and psychological supports for this growing subgroup of teachers. This study contributes to the current literature through an examination of how induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools provide instructional and psychological support to teachers and shape their views and teaching practices in their schools. This study is relevant because of the changing demographics of our country, the increases in the number of students attending diverse schools in urban centers, and the limited research currently available regarding teacher perceptions of their induction and mentor programs while working in high-poverty schools. This study did not address the need for induction and mentor programs, but explored the perceptions of new teachers working in those schools and their experiences related to their induction and mentor programs.

This chapter began with a review of the literature pertaining to the impact of excellent teachers on student success, the challenge of teacher retention, key characteristics of successful teachers in high-poverty schools, the origins of induction and mentor programs, and research regarding induction and mentor programs schools in general and schools impacted by poverty. Studies examining instructional and psychological supports for new teachers through induction and mentor programs were also explored. The chapter ended with a case for the relevancy of this study and a general summary. The following chapter outlines the methodology of this study. It includes descriptions of the research approach, data collection, and analysis.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative approach, this study examines novice teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school. Special attention is given to how the instructional supports and psychological supports these teachers received shaped their views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. This study is relevant because of the changing demographics of our country, the increases in the number of students attending diverse schools in urban centers, and the limited research regarding induction and mentor programs high-poverty schools. Most critically, for many children attending high-poverty schools, the success of their teachers greatly contributes to their own academic success and life outcomes (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2012; Haycock, 1998; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). This study also provides suggestions to key stakeholders about how they might adjust their mentor and induction programs to positively impact the effectiveness, satisfaction, and retention of those teachers in their highest-needs schools.

This chapter presents the design parameters for the study. It begins with a description of the research approach along with the research questions, the site selection and the study participants, and a description of how the data will be collected and analyzed, including a subjectivity statement. The chapter concludes with comments around validity and reliability, and a summary of the chapter.
Research Design

This study used a qualitative research approach. Data from focus group interviews, individual interviews, fieldnotes, and documents were analyzed to discover patterns, themes and categories using the research questions as a framework (Patton, 2002). The analysis also included descriptions of the study participants’ experiences and their school contexts (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative research method was an aligned research method given our research questions related to teacher perceived experiences in their induction and mentor programs.

Research Questions

The study’s research questions attempted to investigate induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools. In brief the questions include:

1. When specifically examining instructional support, how do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school?

2. When specifically examining psychological support, how do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school?

3. How do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school that shape their current views about working in their school?
4. How do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school that shape their current teaching practices?

**Setting Selection**

Teachers who participated in this study were in their first three years of teaching and worked in four high schools in a large urban school district. The school district was the second largest school district in the southeast and the eighteenth largest school district in the nation (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). The school district served more than 142,000 students in 160 schools with an operating budget of $1.2 billion (Study Site District Website, n.d.). There were over 9,000 certified teachers averaging 10.5 years of experience serving in 89 elementary schools, 39 middle schools, 28 high schools and four alternative schools (Study Site District Website, n.d.). The school district’s student population demographics included 42% African-American, 32% White, 18% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 3% American Indian and multiracial, and represent 160 different countries (Study Site District Website, n.d.).

The researcher specifically selected this district as the location for this study because it was working to provide induction and mentor programs to their teachers. The school district served schools with a wide range of economically disadvantaged students from 93.6% to 4.1% in 2013 (Helms, 2014). The school district in this study ranked 31st out of 115 districts in teacher turnover by the state with a teacher turnover rate of 15.99% (1329 out of 8309 teachers) in 2013 and a five-year average turnover rate of 13.87% (Educator Effectiveness Division, 2013). The reasons for turnover in the district in 2013 included
27.69% (n=368) of teachers leaving their position but remaining in education, 37.92% (n=504) of teacher turnover occurring beyond their control, 28.22% (n=375) of teacher turnover for personal reasons or other reasons, and 6.17% (n=82) of teacher turnover initiated by the school district (Educator Effectiveness Division, 2013).

In 2007, the district created the Teacher Professional Development Department to provide professional development through “differentiated programs” to the teachers based on their needs around teaching and learning, teacher leadership, new teacher support and 21st century technology (Teacher Professional Development Department, 2011, p. 2). The school district’s work with new teacher support includes managing new teacher induction and mentor programs as well as new teacher academies and lateral entry advancement programs (Teacher Professional Development Department, 2011). When examining teacher induction and mentor programs for CMS, there are some levels of consistency across schools as defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (hereafter NCDPI). NCDPI created a Beginning Teacher Support Program for teachers in their first three years of teaching. The Beginning Teacher Support Program for North Carolina maintains five standards: (a) systemic support for high quality induction programs, (b) mentor selection, development, and support, (c) mentoring for instructional excellence, (d) beginning teacher professional development, and (e) formative assessment of candidates and programs (Educator Recruitment & Development Division, 2010). NCDPI indicates in the mentoring for instructional excellence standard that mentors should guide teachers “to appreciate diversity and to create a respectful environment for a diverse population of students”
(Educator Recruitment & Development Division, 2010, p. 23). Teachers within their first three years of teaching are required to participate in an induction program that includes a formal orientation, mentor support, observations, and evaluations (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2010). The continuum of support for beginning teachers in North Carolina begins in the first year with assignment of a mentor, participation in an orientation, development of a professional development plan, participation in professional development, participation in four formal observations, and participation in a summative evaluation (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2010). Teachers in their second year and their third year of teaching continue to have a mentor, to update their professional development plans, to complete any professional development requirements, to participate in four formal observations, and to participate in a summative evaluation (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2010).

The study site district’s mission for their induction and mentor program includes a dedication to teacher development and retention (Teacher Professional Development Department, 2011). The district’s New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) offers three ten-hour seminars around “solidifying the basics for effective teaching, managing by motivating, standards-based instruction, professional networking opportunities, wellness curriculum courses, and on-the-job professional development learning labs” (Teacher Professional Development Department, 2011, p. 4). Additionally, teachers in their first three years of teaching receive a mentor at their school site to provide support and coaching. Induction and mentor programs are evaluated using a rubric based on the North Carolina Beginning
Teacher Support Standards. Created by the school district from the state-level rubric, the Rubric for Self-Assessment of School-Base [sic] Induction & Mentoring Program, examines five standards: (1) systemic support for high quality induction programs, (2) mentor selection, development, and support, (3) mentoring for instructional excellence, (4) beginning teacher professional development, and (5) formative assessment of candidates and programs (Appendix A). Schools are expected to complete the rubric yearly and submit the results to the Teacher Professional Development Department (Teacher Professional Development Department, 2011). This study provided insights about novice teachers’ experiences with this induction and mentor program while working in high-poverty schools. It was important to note the instructional and psychological supports these teachers received and how these supports impacted their views and teaching practices in high-poverty schools. Additionally, it was critical to examine differences between what these teachers perceived and experienced in their induction and mentor program versus the intentions of the New Teacher Induction Program designers. These differences may provide important information to program planners about how they can create stronger induction and mentor programs for novice teachers serving in high-poverty schools.

Data Collection

The role of a qualitative researcher is to “provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking” (Patton, 2002, p. 21). In an effort to answer the research questions, the researcher collected qualitative data to understand
the participant perceptions of their induction and mentor programs. Data collection in this study involved focus group interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, fieldnotes and documentation. This study also used basic demographic questionnaires to gather background information about the study participants.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups support strong data collection when a researcher needs to generate a range of diverse views on a topic, when the participants are similar and cooperative with each other, when the researcher has a limited amount of time, and when participants may be less forthcoming in an individual interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2013). Typical focus groups consist of five to ten people brought together to discuss a specific issue or phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 2013). The researcher conducted two separate focus groups consisting of 60-minute interviews with groups of varying sizes of first-year, second-year and third-year teachers spanning across four high school sites. One focus group consisted of three participants and the second focus group consisted of five participants. Given teacher schedules, focus groups were scheduled to meet the needs of the new teachers participating in the study. Four study participants engaged in individual interviews in addition to the focus groups. Three of the four individual interviews participants completed their interviews prior to the focus group. The researcher invited individual interview participants to join the focus groups. Through several repeated emails, the researcher was able to schedule a second focus group. In the second focus group, the study participants invited two additional participants unbeknownst to the researcher.
The focus group interviews followed an interview protocol and each participant was given a copy of the interview guide. Participants were introduced to the study at the beginning of the group interview, reminded that they do not have to agree with other participants, encouraged to share their experiences with their induction and mentor programs, encouraged to talk one at a time and informed of the confidentiality of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). All interviews were recorded using digital audio recording equipment. The focus group participants completed a demographics questionnaire at the start of the session and were given an informed consent form. Participants were asked to identify themselves at the start of the focus group. The researcher recorded each participant’s physical location and the first letter of their name in her fieldnotes. As each participant spoke, the researcher captured the first letter of speaker’s first name and took notes on what they stated. The researcher then referenced these notes as she transcribed the recordings.

**Individual Interviews**

According to Patton (2002), interviews provide “in-depth responses about people’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge” (p. 4). This study conducted five semi-structured interviews with study participants to gather deeper information regarding the influences of teacher induction and mentoring program components on their current views and teaching practices. Participants in the individual interviews participated in the focus group interviews. These individual interviews were intended to dig deeper, exploring the experiences and feelings of first-year and second-year teachers. Recognizing that the study’s research questions examined the potentially sensitive topics of psychological
supports and current views about working in high-poverty schools, individual interviews provided a more private setting for participants to share crucial information with the researcher. The researcher focused her questioning around the induction and mentor program experiences of first-year and second-year teachers in four high-poverty high schools in the district. The interview questions were open-ended and multiple participants were asked the same questions in the same order using an interview protocol to ensure consistency (Patton, 2002). If the interview guide did not provide key information during the interview, the researcher probed the participants to gain additional information. The interview questions were guided by the research questions of the study. All interviews were recorded using digital audio recording equipment and transcribed. In an effort to increase the diversity of the individuals that participated in the individual interviews, the researcher secured a first-year African-American female teacher to participate in an individual interview after she participated in the second focus group interview.

**Field Notes**

Field notes were captured throughout the study, during the focus groups and the individual interviews. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describe two types of fieldnotes, descriptive fieldnotes and reflective fieldnotes. Descriptive fieldnotes “represent the researcher’s best effort to objectively record the details of what has occurred” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 112). Reflective fieldnotes represent the researcher’s reflections throughout the study with importance levied on “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices….The expectation is that you let it all hang out: Confess your
mistakes, your inadequacies, your prejudices, your likes and dislikes” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 114). Both descriptive and reflective fieldnotes were used along with focus groups, interviews and documents to develop a more complete picture of the experiences of the study’s participants.

**Documents**

Documents in this study included external documents. These documents and artifacts included program rubrics for program evaluation. The researcher solicited internal documents, reflections, journals, activities, and other artifacts from the study participants, and was informed that this type of documentation did not exist. Patton (2002) argues that “documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing” (p. 294). The researcher actively sought these documents throughout the course of the study.

There were no risks to participants for participating in this study and all the information gathered was maintained under the strictest rules of confidentiality. Focus groups and interviews were transcribed and stored in a password-protected system, with no names of participants revealed through oral or written reports. The school district, individual schools and participants were referenced using pseudonyms and no compensation was given to participants for participation in the study.
Participant Descriptions

Participants in this study included first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers working in high-poverty schools in the study’s school district. This sample criterion was critical because these individuals were the primary receivers of induction and mentor programs in this district. More specifically, to be eligible for the study they must have (a) taught in the school district for a minimum of five months but no longer than 36 months, (b) completed more than 75% of their teaching experience in a high needs school in the school district and, (c) participated in an induction and mentor program at their school site for a minimum of five months, and (d) held a state-certified teaching license in the grade-level and/or subject area they are currently teaching.

Using this criterion, the researcher used purposeful sampling (Sproull, 1995). With this method “the sample is arbitrarily selected because characteristics which they possess are deemed important for the research” (Sproull, 1995, p. 119). The researcher secured permission from the school district through their internal process. The researcher then chose five high schools identified as Title 1 or high-poverty by the school district. After securing permission from the district, the researcher contacted the teachers via repeated email, inviting them to participate in the study. This invitation included an explanation of the study and the role of a new teacher in the research study. The researcher actively sought participants in the study until she secured acceptances from at least nine teachers from at least four high school sites. All participants completed an informed consent form.
Participants completed a quick questionnaire to gather demographic data related to the study, including consent to participate in a semi-structured interview and the focus groups. Participants were informed that participation in the focus groups will be 60 minutes and the individual interviews will be 60 minutes. During the focus group meeting and the individual interview, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher reported basic demographic information of participants only, keeping all other information confidential.

Five semi-structured interviews with high school teachers working in three high-poverty schools within the district were conducted. An overview of the teachers that participated in the semi-structured interviews can be found in Table 1. Two teachers are in their third year of teaching, two teachers are in their first year of teaching, and one teacher is in their second year of teaching. Three participants were female and two participants were male. When examining the race/ethnicity of the participants in the individual interviews, three participants self-identified as White on their demographic survey questionnaire and two participants self-identified as African-American. Three participants entered teaching through Teach for America, one participant entered through lateral entry, and one participant entered through a traditional university preparation program in Virginia. Teach for America or TFA recruits “remarkable and diverse individuals to become teachers in low-income communities” and provide training and support to these teachers with the expectation that they will make a significant academic impact in the classrooms they serve (Teach for America, n.d.). The lateral entry participant “spent 20 plus years as a trial attorney.” Two
interview participants are math teachers, one participant is a science teacher, one is a social studies teacher, and one is a special education teacher. All five participants indicated that they have a mentor.

Table 1

Profiles of Individual Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race / Ethnicity</th>
<th>Teacher Prep Program</th>
<th>Mentor (yes or no)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Teacher1</td>
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<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Lateral Entry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher5</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>University Trained</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When asked how long they planned to remain in teaching and remain in their current school placement, the study participants varied in their responses. Each first-year teacher indicated they would remain in teaching the following year. One first-year teacher indicated that after her second year, she would enter into a graduate school program and work towards her Ph.D. The other first-year teacher chose teaching as a “later in life second career” and “it is a given” that he will remain in teaching. He is considering moving to another school at the conclusion of this school year. The second-year teacher interviewed for the study indicated that she is unsure about whether she will stay in teaching. She states, “I have looked into some jobs with TFA…and other schools…but then I go back to wanting to be with the kids at [her current school].” The two third-year teachers interviewed for the study both indicated
a longer commitment to working in their schools. One third-year teacher indicated she had two more years with her fellowship and she must stay in a high-poverty school. She states, “My idea was to spend five years and truly understand the position, understand what goes on, and then decide if I want to move into administration, move into district, move into some type of policy position.” The other third-year teacher interviewed also expressed a desire to remain in his current teaching placement for “at least four or five years…right now I am comfortable. I’m actually planning on going to get my doctorate in superintendency…so I am sure, principalship and some other things are in my future.”

Two semi-structured focus group interviews with teachers working in four high-poverty schools in the school district were also conducted. An overview of the teachers that participated in the two focus groups can be found in Table 2. One focus group consisted of three participants and the second focus group consisted of five participants. Five teachers were in their third year of teaching, one teacher was in her second year of teaching, and two teachers were in their first year of teaching. Five participants were female and three participants were male. When examining the race/ethnicity of the participants, five participants in the study self-identified as African-American on their demographic survey questionnaire and three participants self-identified as White. Five participants entered teaching through TFA and three participants entered through lateral entry. One lateral entry participant retired from the city’s Fire Department, and the other participant left her job to serve at the school in which her children attended. Two focus group participants are math teachers, one participant is a science teacher, three are social studies teachers, one is an
English teacher and one is a Business/Marketing teacher. All eight participants indicated that they have a mentor. Across the interviews and focus groups, four participants, two first-year teachers, one second-year teacher and one third-year teacher participated in both individual interviews and the focus groups.

Table 2

Profiles of Focus Group Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race / Ethnicity</th>
<th>Teacher Prep Program</th>
<th>Mentor (yes or no)</th>
<th>Interview &amp; Focus Group?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Lateral Entry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Business / Marketing</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Lateral Entry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Lateral Entry</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the interviews and focus groups, three of the high-poverty schools represented were described as comprehensive public high schools serving students in grades 9-12. One school represented was described as a blended technology high school magnet, serving students in grades 6-12. All schools represented were identified by the school district as Title 1 or as serving high-poverty students.
Data Analysis

The researcher conducted a series of phases to analyze the data from the study using steps outlined by Creswell (2013). The researcher prepared and reviewed interview data, focus group data, field notes and documents, mining for “themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes” before summarizing the data through a rich description and discussion (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). More specifically, the researcher reduced the data into meaningful portions and attached codes to the portions using the research questions as a guide (Creswell, 2013). These codes were combined into broader categories (Creswell, 2013). The descriptions and discussion included the experiences of the participants, using direct quotes and examples (Creswell, 2013).

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher used the process described above, along with the process of bracketing, as defined by Creswell (2013), to analyze the data for this research study. Creswell (2013) indicated that bracketing is the process by which the researcher in this study would share her personal experiences with the research in order to bracket her out of the study. This researcher was required to set aside her personal experiences with teacher induction and mentor programs for first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers in high-poverty schools so that the researcher focused on the experiences of the participants in the study. Below, the researcher presents her background, in first person, as it relates to the subject of the current study.
This study occurred during my nineteenth year working in education. I taught at the middle school level for two years and at the high school level for four years. I completed my administrative internship at the high school level and I have worked as an assistant principal for five years at a high school. I have also worked for two educational non-profits, Teach For America and New Leaders, serving as a mentor and coach to teachers, instructional coaches, principals and assistant principals. This is my fifth year as a high school principal in a city in North Carolina. As a current sitting principal, I have welcomed new teachers to my school each year. In previous roles, I have led trainings for new teachers through various education non-profits and several school districts in the public and private sector.

My passion for working with urban students began in my first year of teaching, working in New York City. I am committed to changing the life path of urban students and believe that strong teachers make a difference in helping all students succeed. Through my various roles as supervisor, evaluator, mentor, coach, teacher, advocate and critical friend, I have been able to work with hundreds of new teachers entering teaching assignments in an urban setting. I have always wondered how we can better prepare these new teachers for the unique challenges of an urban school. I also wondered why some of these new teachers seemed satisfied with their experiences and others seemed dissatisfied. What about their induction and mentor program supported them in their unique context?

By conducting this research, I hope to uncover the key components of induction and mentor programs that support new teacher growth and retention. As a principal working in a
high-needs school, I have a vested interest in the success, satisfaction and retention of a quality teachers over time to support the students I serve each day.

**Trustworthiness**

According to Patton (2002), “in qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument. The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork” (p. 14). Additionally, Patton (2002) indicated that qualitative research “should be judged by dependability (a systematic process systematically followed) and authenticity (reflexive consciousness about one’s own perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions in the values that undergird them)” (p. 546). To support trustworthiness, dependability and authenticity of the study, the researcher was systematic in collecting the data, and used an interview guide to ensure focus groups and individual interviews were consistent. The researcher used field notes to sketch out thoughts and wonderings to support reflexivity. “Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective and voice” (Patton, 2002, p. 65). Multiple data points through individual interviews, focus group interviews, field notes, and documents supported the validity of the study. Lastly, the researcher also used descriptions and direct quotes to describe the experiences of the participants and the themes that emerge from the study as well as reported any negative evidence or evidence that does not confirm the study’s results (Creswell, 2013).
Chapter Summary

Using a qualitative approach, this study explored the induction and mentoring experiences of teachers in their first three years of teaching in an urban district in North Carolina. The researcher used purposeful sampling of first-year, second-year and third-year teachers in four high-poverty high schools in the school district (Sproull, 1995). This study involved 60-minute focus group interviews, 60-minute semi-structured individual interviews, fieldnotes and documentation. Data from focus group interviews, individual interviews, fieldnotes, and documents were coded using the research questions as a guide. These codes were combined into broader categories and the researcher developed descriptions of the study participants’ experiences with induction and mentor programs in their high-poverty school. Special attention was given to instructional supports and psychological supports the teachers received through their induction and mentor program and its impact on their views and teaching practices. The researcher set aside her personal experiences with teacher induction and mentor programs for first-year, second-year and third-year teachers in high-poverty schools and focused on the experiences of the participants in the study.

This chapter described the qualitative approach for this study. This chapter explained the research design, reviewed the research questions, and described the setting selection, the participants, and how the data would be collected. This chapter also described the process for data analysis, ensuring trustworthiness and the researcher’s subjectivity statement. Chapter Four of this study describes the findings from this study. Chapter Five provides a comprehensive summary of the study including implications for future research.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor program, paying particular attention to how the instructional and psychological support in their induction and mentor programs shaped their views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. The research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. When specifically examining instructional support, how do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school?

2. When specifically examining psychological support, how do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school?

3. How do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school that shape their current views about working in their school?

4. How do teachers in their first three years of teaching perceive their experiences in their induction and mentor program while working in a high-poverty school that shape their current teaching practices?

I conducted a series of five semi-structured individual interviews and two focus group interviews with current first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers in an urban school district in North Carolina. All the teachers served as high school teachers in district
identified high-poverty schools. I kept field notes, documents and a reflective journal during the data collection process. After these data were reviewed, themes emerged in relation to the study’s research questions.

School Descriptions

When asked in individual interviews and during the focus groups to talk about their schools, several themes emerged. Participants described their schools as serving mostly students coming from poverty; serving students with a variety of challenges and/or needs; experiencing high teacher turnover, teacher vacancies and/or a large volume of new teachers; and teaching in a school culture that lacks cohesion and school-wide expectations.

Each participant in the study’s focus groups and individual interviews articulated that their schools served students of color. “Our population is predominately Hispanic,” and “mostly Black and Hispanic working class,” were common statements made by participants. One participant indicated that they also have a percentage of White students: “They are like poor…rural White students.” In general, most participants describe their student populations as predominantly serving African-American and Hispanic communities. Many of the participants in the study described the students they serve as exhibiting a series of challenges and needs. In interviews and focus groups, participant statements reflect the context in which they teach: “We have students who come with super violent issues,” ”Our population needs so much social…psychological help,” and “A lot of our kids, their home life is just so chaotic, they like to be in school…it’s calmer…or they have adults who they can talk to...” One first-year teacher described student behaviors as “just off the wall crazy
and I cannot understand why they are doing what they are doing…and they are just sabotaging themselves and that is just hard to observe.” He continues, “Especially if you are older, because some of the behaviors…I am sorry, you would have been gone from a public high school, literally there would be like 10 kids left in the whole school in my day.”

Another first-year teacher describes being hit on by her students, “I get hit on by my students…and it’s one of those things where it’s like I hear students and they’ll talk about my body or they’ll say things I know they wouldn’t say to [another teacher].” A third-year teacher echoed this comment as well during the focus groups, sharing, “I had one experience like that; I don’t dress a certain way anymore.” A first-year teacher and a third-year teacher in a focus group described working in their school in the following way: “Three years of [a] Title 1 school…it’s almost like dog years. If you can handle that, then you can handle anything.”

When asked to describe other elements of these schools, interview and focus group participants indicated a high teacher turnover rate, teacher vacancies and/or a large volume of new teachers at their schools. Common comments made by participants were, “We don’t have enough teachers to staff everybody.” “Our turnover is too high,” and “Last year, 61% of our teachers were new teachers…and the district average is 20%.” In one school, one participant described a complete turnover of the administration and the counseling staff: “We had a whole new facelift with administration…[and] 50% turnover in our staff.” A first-year teacher also stated, “Over half our staff was new this year…the turnover rate is ridiculous.” At least two participants commented that they have heard of teachers walking out of a
teaching job in the middle of the year. Another participant discussed four math vacancies in one math team, all in the same math grade level, the previous year. Other comments made by participants supported this phenomenon of teacher vacancies, teacher turnover and large volumes of new teachers: “We just don’t have enough veteran teachers to go around,” and, “You know most of the staff is lateral entry and TFA.”

Several study participants in their individual interviews and in the focus groups referenced a lack of school-wide expectations and joy. One participant described a “lack of vision for success and growth and proficiency.” Another explained, “to have very rigorous expectations in the classroom when that is not expected school-wide is frustrating.” One second-year teacher elaborated, “We as a school have lowered the expectations, and the adults are the ones creating this problem because across school-wide we don’t have expectations. Teachers let kids do what they want and then it makes your job harder because you’re trying to hold your kids to high expectations.” One third-year teacher described how the constant turnover and the high needs of the students in his school “feels like it is a culture of being behind” where the principal is announcing over the intercom to teachers to “make sure you keep your kids in your class and sitting down.” Other participants indicated that the bells were consistently off by two minutes at their school, so students were being unfairly punished for being late to school. One third-year teacher described “too much complacency in teaching…people get stuck…in what they do and…they fight any type of change that comes through the pipe.” This was supported by a second-year teacher’s comments: “One of the disconnects with admin and the staff…[is] holding our staff to high expectations…it’s
just we need to hold these teachers to high expectations or they need to go because we're only doing a disservice to our kids.” This issue was also expressed by a first-year teacher in her individual interview, when she said, “I feel like other’s expectations for me are too low….They are not giving all the tools I need to reach the potential I could have just because of the expectations that I am not supposed to be there [as a first-year teacher].” This same first-year teacher described working in this type of context as lacking joy. She states, “because teaching, the way it is structured especially in Title 1 schools, is not a practice that makes you feel whole or makes you feel joy…If you're just purely living off what you do from day-to-day, like, there's not much joy in that, so you have to find it.” During the focus group, a third-year teacher responded stating, “It’s your first year, I had to find joy elsewhere. Find your sport, or whatever you do.”

The descriptions of the various schools represented in the focus groups and individual interviews produced key information. Most of the schools represented serve African-American and Hispanic students, with one school serving a percentage of low-income White students. Many of the students these teachers serve exhibit a variety of behavioral challenges. These schools struggle with hiring and retaining teachers, resulting in high teacher turnover, a lack of veteran teachers, and a large volume of new teachers working in the school. Additionally, study participants describe a general culture of lowered expectations across the school as well as a resistance to change by veteran staff and lack of joy in teaching in a high-poverty school.
Instructional Support in Induction and Mentor Programs

When examining the first research question in the study, participant responses regarding the instructional support teachers in their first three years of teaching received through their induction and mentor programs while working in high poverty schools were analyzed. Participants in the study elicited a variety of specific programs throughout the various interviews. The four programs most commonly mentioned by study participants were technology professional development, Performance Excellence for all Kids (PEAK) training, professional development from TFA, and school-based mentoring. A description of these programs as described by study participants are discussed first in this section.

In addition to these four programs, study participants’ responses also generated three themes with respect to the instructional support they have received in their induction and mentor programs. These themes include (a) a lack of an articulated plan for school-based professional development for staff; (b) a lower level of quality in the school-based professional development they have received in their induction and mentor programs; (c) and a teacher absence issue due to district-level or external professional development attendance as part of their induction and mentor programs. These themes emerged throughout the individual interviews and focus groups in response to a variety of interview questions regarding instructional supports. These three themes are discussed after a review of the four instructional programs study participants mentioned in their focus group and individual interviews.
The interviews with study participants generated four examples of instructional supports from their induction and mentor program. As shown, four common instructional supports study participants referenced were technology, PEAK, TFA, and school-based mentoring. Teachers’ perceptions of some of these programs were mixed, with some participants indicating clear support of the program component.

**Technology**

A common instructional professional development participants referenced was their learning around technology. One first year teacher stated since learning more about several online instructional programs, he is able to assign specific tasks to students, explaining, “I am starting to do this blended thing.” This teacher shared he has received Chromebook computers for his entire class and now instructs his students to go online and “do make up lessons, recovery…and hopefully we can help you pass the NCFE [North Carolina Final Exam].” Technology professional development has changed the way he has structured his class. He says that “some of the kids really like it. Some don’t and…they get to use bookwork, so I am giving them free choice. It is becoming a huge thing in my classroom.” One third-year teacher indicated in a focus group interview “a lot of PD [is] around technology because we are a blended learning program.” This teacher was one of four teachers in the same focus group, all of whom worked at a school they described as a blended learning school where students use technology to access their curriculum. This third-year teacher continued to detail the benefits of such activities: “I am able to go to technology conferences to see how to implement different types of instructional strategies.”
In both schools, these participants have open access to technology, which has helped them in the classroom.

**Performance Excellence for All Kids (PEAK)**

Performance Excellence for All Kids (PEAK) includes a Teaching for Excellence™ professional development track for teachers and teacher leaders referenced by several participants in their individual interviews and focus groups. According to PEAK Learning Systems, “Teaching for Excellence™ academies model a comprehensive look at research and evidence-backed principles, concepts, strategies, tools and techniques that significantly impact student learning” (Performance Excellence for All Kids, n.d.). Teachers participating in PEAK training dig into the reasons students are motivated and how students learn best. They then craft their lesson plans and their learning environment to meet six basic needs: safety, love and belonging, freedom and independence, success, fun and enjoyment, and valued purpose (Performance Excellence for All Kids, n.d.). During a focus group, a third-year teacher stated, “My go to is PEAK. I’m a die-hard PEAK.” Another third-year teacher working at the grade 6-12 school referenced PEAK during a focus group, explaining you will be successful “If you take advantage of PEAK. They [administration] brought in PEAK for the middle school, then turned around and brought it in for the high school.” A first-year teacher in her interview also identified PEAK as an instructional support, saying, “I really liked PEAK.” A second-year teacher also acknowledge PEAK training, saying that “it’s been really beneficial…we’ve been able to incorporate it…and we truly saw the results in our data last semester. Our data really skyrocketed because of it.” During an individual
interview, this second-year teacher discussed the impact of her PEAK training on her approach to teaching;

My first year in February…I did PEAK training. I did two days of PEAK training and I really liked it because I felt it aligned with my personality with wanting to be an advocate for my students and making them feel safe and successful in the classroom. And I didn't have to be a mean teacher or yell at them or anything. It was little things you could do to make kids realize they could do the work in your class. So that I would say really changed my attitude with teaching.

PEAK training was referenced without prompting from several teachers in both focus groups and individual interviews as providing instructional support to new teachers in their induction and mentor programs.

**Teach For America (TFA)**

In total, five out of the nine study participants across the individual interviews and focus groups self-identified as TFA corps members. All five participants verified receiving some level of instructional support from TFA. This support included content-specific support, observations and feedback, and vision-setting as well as classroom management/classroom climate professional development. Two third-year teachers reported content-specific support from their TFA instructional coach. One explained, “I had a teacher coach last year…and he was social studies and he used to teach the same thing, so it made sense we were paired together, very aligned.” Another third-year teacher echoes this sentiment in her individual interview, revealing, “I get way more professional development
from the TFA perspective, especially my first two years, with content-training and that was super helpful.” One first-year teacher had a different response with respect to instructional help from TFA:

I have a pretty strong content knowledge background but I didn’t have the instructional knowledge background…so how do I teach someone who doesn’t think like me? I don’t think that was addressed enough. It is glossed over in my opinion and it was more like ‘oh, you will find your way…you’re smart, you’re going to be fine’.

She continues that there is “not enough of ‘this is how you break down content for students and this is how you teach yourself the material and think through lesson planning.’” This first-year teacher wanted more pedagogy support from her TFA training program.

During individual interviews, a second-year teacher and the above-mentioned first-year teacher commented on additional support they received from TFA. One explained that “my TFA coach…that’s been an awesome source of development for me…because she’ll come in and observe my classroom and then give me feedback and things I could change that day. She calls them ‘quick fixes.’” The first-year TFA teacher in the study spoke positively of the vision-setting, classroom management/classroom culture training she received in her TFA beginning-of-the-year induction program, explaining that “we did vision-setting…[where] you form a vision, you set goals for your classroom and you think about what you want your students to believe about themselves, [and] believe about their capabilities.” She continued, “A lot of TFA PD towards the beginning of the year
was…make sure you have clear procedures and clear expectations which is important.”

These self-identified TFA teachers in the study reported varying degrees of content-specific support, “quick fixes” feedback from classroom observations and specific support around vision-setting, classroom management/classroom culture as the primary instructional supports they have received by TFA.

**School-Based Mentoring**

School-based mentoring was also referenced by a variety of participants in individual interviews and during focus group interviews. A first-year teacher defined a mentor as “a colleague you can trust.” A third-year teacher stated a mentor could be “real and frank…specifically someone within their content [area] or without their content [knowledge/expertise], that can observe and give feedback on teaching.” Another third-year teacher elaborated that an ideal mentor is “an older, veteran teacher that can give you some guidance or mentorship on certain things.” A second-year teacher summed it up saying that a mentor is “someone you’re not afraid to go to and feel like you’re admitting that you’re out of options…someone that could give you instructional strategies, support for behavior, whatever it may be. Someone that is a master in that topic or that field that you can learn from.” Nine out of the nine participants indicated they had a mentor. One first-year teacher presented a situation where he was given an informal assignment of a school-based mentor when he first arrived at his school: “My mentor was never officially assigned. Unofficially it was the facilitator and I felt that never worked.” According to this teacher, the facilitator also served on the administrative team and he viewed this as ineffective, reasoning that “the
facilitator, regardless of what you say, is part of the admin team. You can’t have a frank discussion about some things with a member of the admin team…that is always part of your evaluation.”

Three participants shared that their mentors have changed since starting their teaching assignment. In two of the situations, the teachers searched for a different mentor than the one they were assigned and formally requested a change. The first-year lateral entry teacher requested a new mentor after his experience with the facilitator on the administrative team: “I went, when I was assigned the same facilitator, ‘I am going to go ask’…I’d been in the science building and… there’s a veteran chemistry teacher in there, and so I asked [her] to be my mentor…[she] gives me some suggestions.” A third-year teacher also “put in a request to have a different mentor” citing “there are so many other teachers with more experience who I have connected with, who I am like…‘by the time I grow up in teaching, that’s what I want to be like’.” For this teacher, her mentor doesn’t “have to be in her content” area, but she observes her mentor’s teaching style, and in the words of one third-year teacher, “I can see myself within their style.” When a first-year teacher was not receiving support from her mentor, the Professional Development Facilitator at her school became her mentor. Another third-year university trained teacher stated his mentor was assigned within his department, explaining, “She was right beside me. She was close so if I had an issue I could go right next door.” A teacher in her third-year described her mentor/mentee pairing as lucky: “I was lucky to get a mentor who is also social studies…we just bounce ideas off each other like a PLC [Professional Learning Community] even though we don’t share preps.” These teachers
articulated positive responses to appropriate mentor/mentee matches where their mentors provide instructional support to them during their first three years of teaching.

Four teachers in the study openly expressed a lack of specific structures in their school-based mentor program, low quality in mentoring practices, and a feeling that their mentors seemed overwhelmed by the volume of mentees they had to manage. A third-year teacher stated the interplay between these three themes during a focus group:

On paper I have a mentor but I am also a mentor because our turnover is so high and we don’t have the support because so many of our teachers are three years or younger in teaching. No. There is no established mentor induction, program, ceremony…nothing.

A second-year teacher in her individual interview shared, “As far as mentor/mentee, we do it at [her school] but there’s no parameters…I don’t really meet with my mentor or anything.” A third-year teacher during her individual interview stated with respect to her mentor, “I did not learn anything from her. She was not a mentor to me. She barely had time for me. She never gave me feedback on lesson plans…if I only went by her [mentorship] I would not be in the classroom still.” Participants believe such lack of structure and low quality of mentorship are due to a low number of veteran teachers at the school to serve as mentors. “When I have been paired with other colleagues, they have not been very helpful partially because they are too overwhelmed or they have three or four mentees to try to help,” argued one third-year teacher. In a focus group, another third-year teacher described a similar situation: “I learned through the mentorship program, ‘you’re a good teacher, we’re going to
give you this mentor on paper, however you need to find your own way because we have all these new teachers and...all of the mentors are stretched very thin.” She states there are “only a certain number of veteran teachers who have been teaching for four years or more...and so they have multiple mentees that they have to support in different subjects that they probably never taught before.”

The variety of perceptions regarding school-based mentoring for the study participants included both positive and less-than-desirable experiences. After defining in their own terms school-based mentoring and a mentor, participants outlined the process for receiving a mentor, the structures and quality of the mentor program, and at least one cause for the lack of quality mentorship in their experiences. Professional development related to technology, PEAK, TFA and school-based mentoring were the most common instructional supports named by teachers in their first three years of teaching with respect to their induction and mentor programs.

**Themes**

In addition to a discussion of the types of instructional professional development opportunities mentioned in individual interviews and the focus group interviews, study participant responses illuminated three major themes related to instructional supports found in their induction and mentor programs. These themes include (a) a lack of an articulated plan for school-based professional development for staff, (b) a lower level of quality in the school-based professional development they have received in their induction and mentor...
programs, (c) and a teacher absence issue due to district-level or external professional development attendance as part of their induction and mentor programs.

**Structure and Strategy**

Four teachers indicated a lack of structure and/or strategy in their overall induction and mentor programs. There were common comments such as, “There is no established mentor induction, program ceremony,” and “There’s no parameters,” stated by a third-year and second-year teacher, respectively, during the individual interviews and focus group interviews. A second-year teacher during a focus group elaborated on this theme: “Other workshops that the school has put on have just been…a flavor of the month kind of thing…and there is never any follow through.” A third-year teacher built on this comment during the focus group: “They don’t have time to really think of a full fluid plan and something that would flow throughout the year…that [is] really scaffolded and built upon [previous sessions] just like our kids learn.” In response to the first research question regarding instructional supports in her induction and mentor program, a third year teacher stated, “there’s no understanding…of how to actually fix some of the problems. It’s like they use PD as like…a quick fix solution.”

This teacher describes this lack of structure and strategy, explaining, for example, “They recycle the same things over and over again…so if you spend more than one year at the school then you’re going through literally the exact PD and so you’re not really growing all that much.” This teacher advocates for a different approach to instructional supports for teachers in induction and mentor programs, “let’s get to the root of the problem of how do we
get kids to read more effectively or how do we get kids to come to school or how do we make our school safe.” Each of these teachers advocated for a stronger scope and sequence for their learning based on the needs and challenges at their schools as beginning teachers in their school contexts.

**School-Based Professional Development**

When asked about the induction and mentor program at her school, a third-year teacher stated, “I just feel like they have not been strong.” Several other teachers supported this perception of a lower level of quality in school-based professional development. “The facilitators do an okay job…they’re trying to balance a whole bunch of other things,” explained a first-year teacher in a focus group. A third-year teacher built on his thoughts, corroborating that “school personnel are stretched so thin that they just don’t have the time. I feel like they have the passion and really want to give us good PD but they’re just overworked.” During an individual interview, a first-year teacher summarized this theme: “In-house PD…facilitators are nice teachers; can be helpful but are not professional PD people and they are busy so they are trying to do PD on top of [everything else].” He concludes, “[It] is probably more than they can effectively handle.”

Additionally, several participants commented that the district-level and external professional development was much stronger than their school-based professional development. “I’d rather have the time…to go to more of the professionally developed PD that is provided district-wide” as stated by a first-year teacher in a focus group. A third-year teacher agrees, “District PD is better.” Three of the four most-referenced instructional
supports by participants in the study—PEAK, TFA, and technology—were based outside of the school context. In the words of one third-year teacher, “I have gotten a lot more coaching from the outside resources.” Participants, in general, consistently reported a less-than-positive perception of the professional development they received in their schools. Also, they identified district-based and/or external professional development as stronger instructional supports than their school-based professional development. These perceptions were grounded in their observations of “overworked” and “overwhelmed” facilitators and school-based professional development presenters.

**Attending Professional Development**

Given this perception that district-based and/or external instructional professional development were stronger than school-based professional development, two study participants, a third-year teacher and a first-year teacher, raised concerns about leaving their classrooms to attend these more highly sought-after professional development opportunities. During a focus group, a third-year teacher raised her challenge: “I really hate taking days off, we are already short on subs [substitute teachers]. It’s already a management nightmare to have a sub…It’s just not a timely commitment to do PD during the school week.” A first-year teacher described her challenge differently: “I am not really able to do PD outside of school because I teach a course with an EOC [end of course test]. So they’re not gonna let me take time off to go anywhere because of the pressure of helping our students meet growth at the end of the year.” When asked whether someone told her that, she responded, “That has been told to me.” These two teachers provide additional insight into the perceptions of
instructional supports for teachers in their first three years of teaching in a high-poverty school.

The investigation of the instructional supports teachers received in their induction and mentor programs, produced four instructional supports: technology, PEAK, Teach for America, and school-based mentoring. Through individual interviews and focus group interviews, study participants outlined a process for receiving a mentor through formal assignment of a veteran teacher, the structure and quality of the mentor program or lack of structure and quality, and, finally, a root cause for why they perceive the lack of quality mentorship in their induction and mentor program. Overall, teachers’ perceptions of some of these programs were mixed. Through the individual interviews and focus group interviews, study participants’ responses also generated three themes regarding instructional supports in their induction and mentor programs. These include (a) a lack of an articulated plan for school-based professional development for staff, (b) a lower level of quality in the school-based professional development they have received in their induction and mentor programs, (c) and a teacher absence issue due to district-level or external professional development attendance, as part of their induction and mentor programs.

**Psychological Support in Induction and Mentor Programs**

The second research question in this study examined the psychological supports teachers in their first three years of teaching have received in their induction and mentor programs while working in high-poverty schools. After defining what they believed psychological support meant to them, participants voiced a variety of responses with respect
to experiences that supported them psychologically both at their school site and outside of their school. Additionally, study participant responses illuminated two themes with respect to psychological support. These themes were the importance of psychological support in teachers’ first three years of teaching at a high-poverty school, and the need to seek out informal mentors and provide informal mentorship to others.

When discussing psychological support within an induction and mentor program with study participants, several respondents described positive experiences with this type of support. As they defined psychological support, they referenced experiences where they felt they could speak freely to a trusted individual and their conversations were confidential. One third-year teacher defined psychological support as a strong relationship with a person and “you can go…and cry to them about your school day but know that they are not going to turn around and go tell an administrator on you.” A second-year teacher called this person “a life preserver.” During a focus group, several teachers echoed this sentiment. “Lunch time is the cry on my shoulder time,” stated a third-year teacher. Another third-year teacher built upon this point in the focus group: “I could just talk, I could vent, because I need to vent…now we have this long block to work, and plan, and eat, and…socialize.” Another third-year teacher in this focus group describes the person providing this type of psychological support to her specifically: “[They] will listen, and listen, and listen, give you suggestions, and listen some more, and then it’s over and you’re done and you’re feeling better again.” A first-year teacher in the same focus group adds, “I like having conversations with [names two teachers] because…they help me feel normal. Like it’s okay to feel angry…to be angry at my kids for
not doing what they are supposed to do.” In an individual interview, a first-year teacher described a relationship with his mentor in the following way: “She is someone I can talk to and it is ‘in [the mentor’s] room…that’s the way it has to be…sometimes you have blow off steam.” Each of these reflections helped define psychological support for these teachers as a relationship where these teachers felt trust, safety, value, and confidentiality.

Study participants produced several examples of psychological supports from their first three years of teaching. Some of these supports occurred at their school sites, and other experiences transpired in other settings. Four common supports referenced were teacher-led social gatherings, school-sponsored teacher meetings and activities, student relationships, and school-based mentorship or TFA instructional coach support.

**Teacher-led Social Gatherings**

The most popularly referenced psychological support by study participants was teacher-led gatherings. These experiences were not viewed as part of the official structure of a teacher induction and mentor program. They varied in scope, from staff-organized homecoming football game tailgates to a few teachers meeting after the workday on Fridays for a few drinks. A first-year teacher shared in a focus group an example of a teacher-led social gathering: “One that was successful for us…it wasn’t really administration led but we did have a cookout for homecoming.” One third-year teacher described a teacher at his school that hosted karaoke at his house: “[The teacher] would have a party at his house and would be like, ‘Come on by.’” This third-year teacher shared additional opportunities where he participated in teacher-led social gatherings: “Every Friday...me and some other
teachers…go out to a bar of some sort and we have a drink and we talk about some things and we go home and we’re like, ‘Have a nice weekend and we will see you back on Monday.’” He continues, “It’s something that they don’t stress enough…how important it is to build relationships with your co-workers and…[it] is important to have fun.” A third-year teacher built on those reflections in the focus group: “We do that to some degree…I’m extremely selective. Two to three good people. That’s about all you’ll get out of me.” The importance of building strong relationships with other teachers and being social was also supported in an individual interview with a third-year teacher. This teacher explained the power of a strong social network for psychological support: “I [have] a really, really, really strong group of TFA friends, even at other schools, who were my bedrock in the sense that we would come together and we would have grading parties.” She continues, “Friday nights when everyone was like ‘Yeah, I don’t want to go out,’ we could all sleep…we would literally crash at someone’s house…it was a really good family environment that I found within teaching.” This third-year teacher captures the impact of this level of psychological support through teacher-led social gatherings: “Out of our friend group, there are six of us…only one of us left [teaching]. All of us have stayed in the classroom for a third year.” Many of the study participants supported the need to socialize with other teachers in an effort to gain psychological support and encouragement. These experiences were with trusted individuals, teacher-led and were consistently informal.
School-Sponsored Experiences

Psychological supports that were school-sponsored were typically more formal and included a general new teacher meeting at the school site. Participants described a variety of teacher meetings where facilitators attempted to provide psychological support to beginning teachers. A third-year teacher in an individual interview described a new teacher program at his school where “we meet every other week…sometimes…at the school, sometimes outside the school and they talk about different things that is going on, [and] ask you how they can better support you.” One third-year teacher in a focus group stated, “They do have the new teachers stuff that they do.” She goes on to describe a new teacher meeting that she did not attend, but another teacher did attend and told her about it: “They had a stress-relief workshop where they played games and relaxed and she said [that] was the best professional development she has ever had.” A second-year teacher in her individual interview described “new teacher PD once a month. They bring in two ladies from the district…they last less than an hour…It gives us a good forum to share ideas or to share things that are stressing us out.” She explains the benefit of these meetings: “I think sometimes it is good to be together and this is what I am going through and you are not alone. We are all facing these challenges and this is how we can make it better.” She then describes a situation that happened at her school during a professional development about discipline challenges: “I remember a first-year teacher getting emotional because she felt like she’d [been] putting in all this time and effort and she wasn’t getting the results.” This second-year teacher empathized with this first-year teacher stating, “I remember feeling that same way my first semester as well, so it
was nice to hear that from her.” One participant articulated the challenge with the timing of formal psychological support meetings: “They tried to do some type of field day, but all the teachers were like, ‘This is pointless. We have so much other work to do…we want to go set up our classrooms and you want to go spend a couple hours outside playing kickball.’…The timing sometimes isn’t really there.” These participants expressed an appreciation for including opportunities for psychological support in their induction and mentor programs. One first-year teacher added her thoughts in a focus group: “I think it would be very beneficial if we were to have structured time” to receive psychological support from more experienced teachers. The school-sponsored psychological supports participants experienced typically included opportunities for teachers to come together and share frustrations, and/or engage in some type of stress relief activity.

**Student Relationships**

Five teachers in the study named student relationships as a source of psychological support for them in their schools. These relationships provide positive interactions with students and create a sense of purpose and a feeling of contributing to a greater good in the participants. During a focus group, one first-year teacher reflected, “Some days you really connect with the kids in the classroom…and connecting with the kids in the hallway and making a difference there…I haven’t realized how much maybe I mean to them.” Later in the discussion he states, “One of the kids that gave me the biggest grief last semester will show up at my room at lunch [and] I am like, ‘What are you doing here?’” A second-year teacher responds in the focus group, “I know, they’re like, ‘Can I come back in your room,’
and I am like, ‘You hated me.’” In an individual interview, this second-year teacher explains, “The words of encouragement that they [students] give me when they say I am the best math teacher they ever had or that they learned a lot or they learned every day or even when they say this is the only class that we do work in every day. I take that as a compliment.” She concludes, “When students text me on Christmas to wish me a Merry Christmas…that goes a long way.” A third-year teacher in her individual interview also spoke to student relationships as a psychological support for her: “[Students] come to me as a teacher, a sister, as a mother…and I appreciate it because I always lived a life where I felt like I needed to be useful.” She states, “I really like relationships [with students] and the fact that I feel like I make a difference every single day.” A third-year teacher described satisfaction with student success as a psychological support in her focus group: “There are some relationships with my students that I know will go well beyond…I may not ever see them again after they walk across the stage but they will never forget that they encountered me.” A third-year teacher in his individual interview provided another example of this reward for working with students in high-poverty: “Seeing a kid that maybe came in with skills that wasn’t [sic] as good and you prepare them to basically be a champion.” Positive interactions and strong relationships with students serve as another informal structure that has been identified by study participants as psychological supports for them because they create a sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute to the success of students for these teachers.
School-Based Mentor or TFA Instructional Coach

An assigned school-based mentor or an assigned TFA instructional coach was also identified by at least three study participants as a psychological support for teachers. Both first-year teachers in the study identified this support. One first-year teacher described how his school-based mentor helps him process through discipline issues: “She has been doing it for a long time. She also sympathizes with the kids’ reactions. They are challenging for her.” The other first-year teacher explained how her TFA instructional coach assures her, “‘You’re doing fine. Your classroom management is fine.’” This teacher reflects on this feedback stating, “She’s a great person and…as far as my emotional support, [she] is good.” A second-year teacher also spoke about support from her TFA instructional coach, saying, “My TFA coach always asks me ‘How are you doing?’ and things like that.” These three study participants acknowledge that someone assigned to them in a coaching capacity provided some sort of psychological support to them as part of their induction and mentor program.

After defining psychological supports in their contexts, participants voiced a variety of responses with respect to experiences that supported them psychologically both at their school site and outside of their school. Many of these supports occurred at their school sites while others occurred off school grounds. The four most referenced psychological supports by study participants included (a) a need to socialize informally with trusted individuals, (b) experiences where new teachers came together to share frustrations, and/or engage in some type of stress relief activity with other teachers through formal school-sponsored meetings.
and activities, (c) positive interactions with students and strong relationships with students because they created a sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute to the success of these students for these teachers, and (d) a school-based mentor or TFA instructional coach assigned to them in a coaching capacity to provide some sort of psychological support to them.

During the individual interviews and the focus group interviews, study participants’ responses also revealed two themes with respect to psychological support in their first three years of teaching: the importance of psychological support in the first three years of teaching at a high-poverty school, and the need to seek out informal mentors and provide informal mentorship to others.

Teachers in the focus groups and individual interviews described the importance of psychological support in the first few years of teaching. Given the psychological demands of teaching in a high-poverty school, these teachers expressed a preference for including psychological support in any induction and mentor program for new teachers. Several teachers described these psychological demands in their individual interviews and in focus groups. A second-year teacher reported, “In the first year it was really difficult. I just felt like I wasn’t prepared for what I was about to face.” In a focus group, a third-year teacher expressed an internal conflict she faces regularly while working in her high-poverty school: “I feel like I am spending my best years of my life [as] an adult being constantly stressed, overworked but at the same time loving it.” A first-year teacher in the same focus group explains this conflict as well: “It is the best job I’ve ever had and some days it’s the worst job
I’ve ever had in the same day and some days [it is] block-by-block.” This first-year teacher later reflects, “I was a high-powered trial attorney and sometimes I feel like I work harder as a teacher.” After further reflection, the third-year teacher adds to this comment, saying, “I think [of] all the hoops that we jump through. There’s just too many hoops and not enough air time.” These teachers indicate psychological demands at their schools that they did not expect and are trying to manage.

Adding to the psychological demands of teaching in a high-poverty school, many teachers working in these schools serve various roles outside of classroom teaching and find that staff members in their schools are sometimes too busy to provide psychological support. A third-year teacher in a focus group shares this trend: “I don’t go [to psychological support activities] because I do too much after school already…and that’s just one more thing I would have to do after school so I don’t go.” A third-year teacher echoes this sentiment, explaining, “I have not had a chance to go to much of it because [of] coaching…a lot of things happened at the beginning of the school year. I was not able to participate in [it].”

Multiple teachers expressed that they were very busy and were in charge of multiple responsibilities at their school beyond teaching. A third-year teacher currently serves as the head volleyball coach, a lead content-area teacher, sponsor for the school prom, and the junior class council advisor. Another third-year teacher is a lead content-area teacher in his department and the head wrestling coach. A second-year teacher is a lead content-area teacher in her department and the National Honor Society advisor. In a focus group, three teachers articulated because their school staff is so small, “all of the teachers are running
some type of club or participating in something that has nothing to do with school hours.”

These teachers describe managing clubs, duties, school-wide projects and/or athletic teams for their school while also teaching a full schedule.

**Prioritize Psychological Supports**

Given the psychological demands and competing priorities described by these teachers, many of them advocate for psychological support to be prioritized for new teachers. A second-year teacher states, “If you don’t have that psychological support, you’re not going to be around long enough to be an effective teacher. I have seen so many teachers quit in the middle of the year or quit after the first year because it is a tough place to work.” A third-year teacher remarked, “Some people might need the psychological portion of it because it is hard on somebody that wants every kid to pass. It is very hard.” A third-year teacher prioritized psychological support over instructional support, stating, “Your mindset yourself as a teacher…you can’t teach without that.” She adds to this reflection, that “there’s teachers who come in who have wonderful, beautiful math background degrees or Masters degrees and all that stuff, but if they don’t socially connect and psychologically connect with our students…they don’t last. It doesn’t matter how much you know.” A first-year teacher in her interview described the need for psychological support in her induction and mentor program and the impact when this type of support is not present: “Well, if I didn’t have psychological support, I probably still would not be teaching…I know some of my friends who are at their schools and they are isolated and they are miserable…and they are not returning.” She adds to this reflection:
There are days when I don’t want to be present just because of how weighing and how heavy my job can be and if I did not have fellow teachers who have been in that place to talk me through or walk me through what I am going through and let me know there’s some sunshine at the end of this road, I know I for sure wouldn’t be back.

Study participants consistently prioritized the need for psychological support in induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools due in large part to the psychological demands and additional duties these teachers experience while working in a high-poverty school.

Several teachers alluded to connection between the lack of psychological support for teachers in high-poverty schools and the likelihood that those teachers would leave the school.

**Informal Mentoring**

Many of the teachers in the study described the merits of informal mentoring in providing psychological support to teachers in their high-poverty schools. Many of these teachers also provided informal mentoring to new teachers at their schools, despite the fact that they are in their second-year or third-year of teaching. A third-year business/marketing teacher describes this situation: “I find myself this year trying to be a mentor to some of the ones in the [business] departments…and even though I am not an assigned mentor to them.” He provides classroom management strategies to these first-year teachers stating, “I find myself sometimes being that unassigned mentor to them, but I haven’t found that person to be that mentor for me.” Another third-year teacher discussing the importance of informal mentoring elaborates, “I have a mentor on paper…but I also try to help support newer
teachers because I’m still a new teacher [and]...I know what it was like to not receive support.” A second-year teacher also has begun informally mentoring a first-year teacher at her school. She states, “I am next to a first-year teacher right now and we’ve become close because I’ll go in there and say, ‘You need anything?’ because I remember we are so much alike.” In another situation, a second-year teacher reached out to a first-year teacher because she was struggling with classroom management. She explains, “I’ve been there before,” so she looked at the class rosters of the first-year teacher to work with the first year teacher to determine “what students are giving you trouble. Maybe I know them. Maybe I have a relationship with them.” One third-year teacher recounted an informal mentor she had during her first year of teaching. This third-year teacher picked her because they “naturally connected” and the informal mentor would help this new teacher keep her experience in perspective, saying, “‘Girl calm down, they are just kids.’” This informal mentor was in her second-year of teaching at the time and provided support that wasn’t overwhelming but prioritized and helpful. One first-year teacher illuminated the psychological support found in the informal mentorships for teachers in their first three years of teaching brightly: “At least I have a community I can run to that is willing to help and give me suggestions. Because if I had to do this by myself, it wouldn’t get done.” For many new teachers in this study, this informal psychological support network has helped them survive in their first year and allowed them to support other teachers at their schools as they moved into their second-year and third-year of teaching.
Two themes emerged during interviews and focus groups regarding psychological support for teachers in their first three years of teaching in a high-poverty school. First, study participants described the psychological demands at their schools that they did not expect as well as managing clubs, duties, school-wide projects and/or athletic teams for their school while also teaching a full teaching schedule. These factors contributed to study participants consistently prioritizing the need for psychological support in induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools. These teachers argued that the lack of psychological supports for teachers in high-poverty schools resulted in teachers leaving these schools. Second, study participants expressed the need to seek out informal mentors and provide informal mentorship to others.

The second research question in this study examined the psychological supports teachers in their first three years of teaching received in their induction and mentor programs while working in high-poverty schools. Study participants provided several examples to help define psychological support as a relationship with others where these teachers felt trust, safety, value, and confidentiality. After defining what psychological support meant to them, participants voiced a variety of responses with respect to experiences that supported them psychologically both at their school site and outside of their school. The four most referenced psychological supports by study participants included (a) a need to socialize informally with trusted individuals, (b) experiences where new teachers came together to share frustrations, and/or engage in some type of stress relief activity with other teachers through a formal school-sponsored meetings and activities, (c) positive interactions with
students and strong relationships with students because they created a sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute to the success of these students for these teachers, and (d) a school-based mentor or TFA instructional coach assigned to them in a coaching capacity to provide some sort of psychological support to them.

Additionally, study participant responses provided two themes with respect to psychological support. The first theme included a description of the psychological demands at their schools that they did not expect as well as managing clubs, duties, school-wide projects and/or athletic teams for their school while also teaching a full teaching schedule. These factors contributed to study participants consistently prioritizing the need for psychological support in induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools. Without psychological support, according to study participants, high-poverty schools will continue to struggle to retain teachers. The second theme that emerged from focus groups and individual interviews was the need by study participants to seek out informal mentors in addition to providing informal mentorship to others. These first-year, second-year and third-year teachers indicated that this psychological support through informal mentoring, helped them survive their first year of teaching and allowed them to support other teachers at their schools as they transitioned into their second-year and third-year of teaching.

**Induction and Mentor Programs Shaped Current Views**

The third research question in this study asked teachers in their first three years of teaching to share their experiences in their induction and mentor programs that shaped their current views about working in their high-poverty high school. Through focus group
interviews and individual interviews, participants articulated two programmatic areas that shaped their current views of their schools. The first programmatic area was that a lack of a defined scope and sequence in their induction and mentor program contributed to a view of dysfunction at their school. The second programmatic area was that a structure of informal mentoring and a wealth of personal experiences working at their high-poverty school, and their personal backgrounds contributed to specific views regarding resources, student needs and behaviors at their school, and strong beliefs about what is required from them in order to work in their school.

**Lack of a Formal Program**

Several study participants communicated a lack of an articulated induction and mentor program during their focus groups and interviews. They also stated that a lack of follow-through on discipline and decisions made by leadership at their high-poverty schools created participant views that the school is disorganized, poorly managed, and lacking strong decision-making. In response to a direct question regarding induction and mentor programs that shaped her current views, one second-year teacher in her individual interview, stated, “It’s hard because I feel like we don’t have a set program, other than the meetings once a month, to say that has shaped my opinion. I would say the lack of anything has shaped that [my opinion].” In response to the same question, a third-year teacher commented in his individual interview, “I don’t [think] anything shaped my views about working at [his school].” Another third-year teacher stated plainly, “I feel like my views of my school did not come from my induction and mentor program.” The second-year teacher in her
individual interview then compared the turnover of her school’s teaching staff and administration to a business, “What are we doing that we are not able to keep these people? Or are we being inefficient because if you ran a business like you run some of our Title 1 schools, they would go into the ground.” This teacher views this massive turnover as indicative of a poorly managed business. She continues, “Nothing happens when you do the [discipline] referral process…so I’m like, ‘Why am I wasting my time doing this? Why am I stopping my class to write the referral, call for a send out, do all this and then they’re back in class the next day, no consequence?’…this is not worth my time.” A third-year teacher in a focus group describes this confusion as it related to discipline as well: “I think the problem is when you put a rule in place and you flip flop. Or the administrators say we are going to do this, this, and this, and then the next week it’s like, ‘Well we are going to slack on that. You can let them do this.’ No. You have to stay one way from the beginning.” Teachers in this study perceived their school communities as dysfunctional because of their daily experiences. These experiences included inconsistent discipline practices and no clear articulated induction and mentor program.

Several teachers described decisions made by their school leadership that created a view of poor decision-making in their schools. In one situation, a second-year teacher described a decision by her school leaders to place all veteran math teachers in the same state-tested subject area. She stated, “All our veteran teachers teach Math 1…well that’s great because [of] our test scores, but then…you have a second-year teacher as the PLC lead for Math 2 [and] you have a third-year teacher as the PLC lead.” She summarizes, “I find it
hard to justify that every decision that’s made is in the best interest for kids as opposed to what is going to look good on our report card or our suspension rate.” A third-year teacher in a focus group provides an additional example of decisions made about teaching assignments in his school context:

There are very, very, very established teachers…hurting their kids…and have been there for ten years. They get the seniority and…I can try to get an honors class after teaching there for three years and…it is impossible because somebody there who is making decisions…is more experienced than you and will not give their honors classes even though EVAAS [student data] says they don’t do well in honors classes.

These views regarding the management of discipline and decisions made by leaders in their school, according to study participants, were not grounded in their induction and mentor programs. The study participants indicated in their individual interviews and/or during the focus groups that there is a lack of a strong induction and mentor program at their schools. This perception contributed to their views of their schools as dysfunctional and poorly managed.

**Informal Mentoring and Personal Experiences**

Through informal mentoring by their colleagues and personal experiences teaching in their school contexts, study participants articulated specific views about working in their schools. Study participants’ views that specifically resulted from informal mentoring and personal experiences included the following: a perception of a lack of resources, a clear opinion about the needs of their students, and strong beliefs about the skills, mindsets and
dispositions a teacher must have if they are working in a high-poverty high school. With respect to resources, study participants cited a lack of high quality teachers, veteran teachers within specific content areas, low pay, and lack of access to quality curriculum resources. One second-year teacher describes this view of a lack of high quality teachers simply: “One of the problems is the quality of teachers we have in our school.” A third-year teacher responds to this second-year teacher’s comment, adding a lack of veteran teachers of a specific content area: “They have been moved around so much within a content that [they] are not veterans within a content…They might have been teaching for five years but if they’ve taught new content every single year…they are a veteran of the practice of teaching [and] not a veteran of the content.” When discussing the turnover rates and vacancies in their school settings, other teachers shared this same sentiment. Additionally, with respect to teacher pay, in individual interviews, two third-year teachers both reported low pay as a resource lacking in their schools. One of those third-year teachers stated, “From a pay perspective…I know I am worth more than what I am paid.”

Several teachers also shared their views regarding a lack of access to strong curricular resources. According to one third-year teacher, “Schools are integrated but the curriculum is segregated. So you come to school every day and learn nothing about yourself, nothing to empower yourself…there’s nothing to keep your mind stimulated.” This teacher argued that the type of curriculum students learned did not include their cultural backgrounds or interests. During a focus group, three teachers also shared their views regarding the lack of quality resources. One teacher explained, “Some of the brightest kids you will meet can do
anything I teach them but I need to know exactly what I need to teach them…give me 100 release questions and I’ll get you an A without the curve.”

A third-year teacher in this focus group supported this view of needing better curricular resources: “I don’t have time to physically make the curriculum…or admin staff could really support us [by]…having a consistent database of curriculum and materials to pull from that are quality.” A first-year teacher in this same group added, “I do a lot of research over the summer on the best social studies and history curriculum out there…there is a bunch of that stuff around…you spend money on it.” These teachers’ views of a lack of resources came from their experiences teaching in their school settings. According to study participants, their induction and mentor program did not teach them how they might deal with the lack of resources or the cultural differences between the students in their classroom and the state curriculum.

Study participants also shared their views on the variety of needs of the students they serve at their schools. These include views on student behavior and life at home and views on student motivation and engagement. Informal mentoring conversations and personal experiences while working in high-poverty high schools across the district shaped these views, according to the participants. When approaching beliefs or views about working in a high-poverty school, a third-year teacher began by stating, “There’s just too much social need focused in one school.” This statement serves as a backdrop to other statements by participants when sharing their views of student behaviors at their schools. A first-year teacher and a third-year teacher both shared a situation where their students made a romantic
advance towards them. A first-year teacher in his individual interview shared, “Some days
the kids are just off the wall crazy…and they are just sabotaging themselves.” Two third-
year teachers in separate individual interviews shared a discrepancy they have observed
between school-based priorities and priorities at home. One explains, “And trying to get kids
involved…they don’t take school as serious as other communities might because they’re not
normally raised in school-oriented cultures.” As stated by another third-year teacher,
“Parents…might have had a bad experience when they was at [sic] school, and they pass that
experience on to their kids…so you have parents that take up for kid’s negative behavior.” A
third-year teacher adds to this view: “Just because your classroom fosters a certain sort of
mindset and environment doesn’t mean that students get to enjoy that throughout the school
day or when they go home.” A second-year teacher provides her perspective on this view of
student behavior and life at home, saying, “You don’t know what the students are coming to
school with that day….we don’t know everything that is going on with those kids….I would
definitely say behavior can wear you down a little bit.”

Student behaviors, according to study participants, also include specifically a lack of
motivation and engagement in school. A second-year teacher shares her view: “In the
beginning I have to do so much work to get students to believe that they can do the math and
not fight me on that…then you have those one or two kids in each class you feel like you are
arguing with…day in and day out just to get them to get motivated.” She continued,
“Building kids back up because they don’t even want to try because they’ll say, ‘I didn’t
have a teacher last year’ and they’re right.” This view that there is a connection between
student motivation and a lack of strong teaching staff was shared by a third-year teacher in his focus group: “We have subs that go in and out so that’s inconsistent…so kids will skip those classes and leave and then you have 30 kids who are just out [of class].” These student behaviors and lack of motivation, according to one first-year teacher, resulted in 200 of his school’s 500 ninth graders failing the ninth grade. There were two teachers, a third-year teacher and a second-year teacher that offered an alternative view of their students and their students’ behavior and motivation. One teacher noted, “People have a lot of negative stereotypes about [her school] and yes there are days where I am like, ‘Dang, we are living up to our stereotypes.’ But for the most part our kids are just normal everyday kids.” The second-year teacher shares her alternative view as well, “What about your high kids…? When are we really pushing them and really making them think…? I really worry about those kids because [they] have all the potential in the world but they’re at a disserve because of the zip code they live in.” These study participants expressed their views on student behaviors and views on student motivation and engagement through individual interviews and focus groups. Many of these views were shaped by their experiences in their classrooms and informal mentoring conversations with other teachers.

Participants were asked during focus group and individual interviews what knowledge, skills or dispositions/beliefs they felt were necessary to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. Subsequent questions asked participants to describe the experiences in their induction and mentor programs that contributed to these beliefs. Several beliefs were generated from these interviews and four beliefs appeared regularly in focus groups and
individual interviews. These beliefs were (a) you have to believe in the success of all students, (b) you have to care, (c) you must have efficacy about your impact, and (d) you have to be a role model for students. These beliefs served as additional information connected to teacher views about working in their schools. Most of the teachers attributed these views or beliefs to their experiences teaching in their schools and/or their personal background experiences. Statements by a third-year teacher such as, “All students can learn…some just need more time than others, some have different barriers than others. But at the end of the day, all can learn…” were supported by several study participants when discussing necessary beliefs of a teacher working in a high-poverty school. A second-year teacher explained the “all students can learn” belief through her own experience: “I just had this mindset about the students that I needed more belief in them.” A third-year teacher in a focus group shared his excitement when his students mastered a difficult task in his class: “Whenever I’m really excited that they did something well, then I’m going to…get turned up…and I am just going crazy like, ‘Oh man! You got Hammurabi’s Code.’” Each of these teachers view their students in this way and attest that this view was not shaped by their induction and mentor programs.

Several participants discussed a commitment to caring for the students they worked with at their schools. This caring looks like being patient with their students, according to one first-year teacher, who said simply, “Patience helps.” A second-year teacher described caring by saying, “You have to understand that you’re teaching students, you are not just teaching content.” In a focus group, this same teacher said, “To be truly successful in a Title
A third-year teacher stated it bluntly, “Caring. Not just being there for the paycheck.” Another third-year teacher in a focus group shares her opinion with respect to caring for students: “You have to care about the trajectory of your school, the trajectory of your students, and the trajectory of yourself.” Finally, a third-year teacher summed up the importance of a belief about caring for students in this way:

The idea that your students who need the most love and attention, ask in the most unloving ways. And so the kids you are super annoyed with, the kids that you just want to throw out, the kids that get kicked out every single day, those are the kids that you have to really take extra time and consideration…those are the kids you have to go above and beyond for…yes, it is above and beyond, but at the same time, when you teach at a Title 1 school, that is expected.

These teachers shared their views that effective teachers at their school believe that students should be treated as individuals and shown genuine care from their teachers.

A third-year teacher in a focus group describes a strong belief that she has the ability to impact her students positively: “My job is really rewarding because I see the relationships with kids and what they’re gaining from the hard work I put into it.” This belief is supported by a third-year teacher in a focus group discussion through his description of a belief around humility coupled with self-efficacy: “Have humility…of being able to learn and make it a learning experience, but also the hubris of being able to believe that you can change them [your students].” He explains this further:
It’s statistically silly for us to think…that one teacher, one block, out of one school, could change that person’s life…but at the same time…it [is] something that all of us believe that we can do it, and you can tell me the stats all you want to, but I am looking at the stats saying, ‘Well, I guess I am beating the odds today.’

Supporting this sentiment, a second-year teacher describes working with students in the National Honor Society: “Getting to work with the top kids at the school is really awesome because those kids are going to go on and do great things and I am going to be able to say I had a little piece in that.” Several teachers in a focus group referenced this belief that these teachers can change the outcomes of their students. Two third-year teachers stated that “we are going to break the achievement gap” and “being able to defy the odds despite all the things that surround you” in support of this belief that teachers can make a difference in the lives of the students attending high-poverty schools.

In one focus group, three different teachers stated a strong belief in serving as a role model for students. Their teaching experiences and their personal experiences helped shape this belief for them. One third-year teacher stated that she serves as a mom to some of her students. Another third-year teacher elaborated on this belief of serving as a role model, stating, “I came from the same background as most of my students….and so I’m able to be a mirror for my students…because I want them to know that despite whatever situation you are going through, I had some of the same situations and I still made it out and you can make it out of your situation, no matter what.” A third-year teacher in this focus group adds his perspective: “You might have a brother that [is]…my age and is doing absolutely nothing
with his life but this [referencing himself] is somebody who seems to have…some of his stuff together…I think I serve as a mirror.” During these discussions, serving as a role model to students became a necessary belief for teachers working in high-poverty schools. These teachers referenced their own backgrounds and experiences as shaping this particular belief and did not reference their induction and mentor program as a providing any influence in this current view of strong teachers working in their schools.

The third research question in this study asked teachers in their first three years of teaching to share their experiences in their induction and mentor programs while working in a high-poverty high school that shaped their current views about working in their school. Through focus group interviews and individual interviews, participants articulated two programmatic areas that shaped their current views of their schools. The first programmatic area was that a lack of a defined scope and sequence in their induction and mentor program contributed to a view of dysfunction at their school. Several study participants communicated a lack of an articulated induction and mentor program, a general lack of follow-through on discipline, and unaligned decisions made by leadership at their high-poverty schools as factors contributing to their views that their school was disorganized, poorly managed, and lacking strong decision-making. The second programmatic area was a network of informal mentoring and a wealth of personal experiences working at their high-poverty school in additional to the personal backgrounds of study participants that contributed to specific views regarding resources available at their school, views regarding student behaviors and motivation at their school, and strong beliefs about what it takes to
work in their unique school contexts. With respect to resources, study participants cited a lack of high quality teachers, veteran teachers within specific content areas, low pay, and lack of access to quality curriculum resources. Study participants’ views on student behavior and life at home in addition to views on student motivation and engagement were also shaped by their informal mentoring conversations and personal experiences while working in high-poverty high schools. When asked about the necessary beliefs of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school, participants responded indicating (a) you have to believe in the success of all students, (b) you have to care, (c) you must have “hubris and humility,” and (d) you have to be a role model for students. The current views of beginning teachers are quite broad in scope and in general are not impacted by their induction and mentoring program.

**Induction and Mentor Programs Shaped Current Teaching Practices**

The fourth research question in this study asked teachers in their first three years of teaching to share their experiences in their induction and mentor programs that shaped their current teaching practices while working in a high-poverty high school. Through focus groups and individual interviews, participants articulated two supports that shaped their current teaching practices. The first support referenced was training and coaching from TFA. The second support was using student data to analyze their effectiveness as a teacher in their school. These two supports allowed these teachers to shape the way they approach working with students in their high-poverty schools.
TFA Training and Coaching

TFA training and a TFA instructional coach were described by two participants as providing support that shaped their instructional practices. Two third-year teachers in a focus group indicated that they had “phenomenal” TFA instructional coaches for the first two years of teaching. They did not share how those individuals shaped their current practices. A second-year teacher in her individual interview described how her TFA training helped impact her approach to teaching through the assumptions she made about her students: “I thought with some of my troubled kids, the ones a little harder to reach, I felt like they didn’t care. They didn’t want to learn.” She continues, “We have culturally responsive teaching and they [TFA] brought in a speaker…and he talked about some of the misconceptions we have about our students. The way he framed it, I was like, ‘I never thought about it that way’.” This second-year teacher now says she thinks differently about her students: “I always thought hard work got you wherever you wanted to go and then I realized there were a lot of barriers in place for students in Title 1 schools that were preventing them and it was things out of the students’ control.” This teacher now takes this into account when teaching: “You have to have high expectations and you have to follow through with them…and honestly care…It doesn’t matter where you came from…if they truly know that you’re there to support them then they will hear you out.” A third-year teacher added to this teacher’s reflection regarding her misconceptions and the support she received from her TFA training and coaching with her own reflections in an individual interview: “[TFA] could tell me that it’s not just [her school]…Actually it is a high school issue, actually it is a Title 1 issue…It
helped ground myself [in] what to get hung up over and what not to get hung up over.” She continues she made efforts to not “push any sort of stereotypes or statements I had at my own school.” This third-year teacher shared that these conversations shaped the way she approached her teaching through her coach, saying, “I have seen it being addressed at this school this different way. What if you tried this?” This third-year teacher appreciated that her coach did not have her own agenda and approached coaching her from “a third-party perspective.”

**Data Usage**

In addition to participants naming training and coaching from TFA as shaping their current practices, these two participants also indicated analyzing student data allowed them to shift their teaching practices. When responding to an interviewer question regarding their effectiveness as a Title 1 teacher, both respondents identified student academic data as a source of effectiveness and opportunities for reflection. The third-year teacher stated, “You can look at my data from my NCFE…[students] averages [are] very well.” A second-year teacher also referenced her testing data: “With seeing my data from last year to this year improve, that shows me that my practices are becoming more and more effective.” The same third-year teacher also uses student culture surveys to “see what they’re saying,” so her students “can tell [her] how it is.” In each situation, these teachers state that student data provides information that they use to support their teacher effectiveness. Neither teacher indicated that this data analysis practice was part of their induction and mentor programs at their schools or within the district.
The final research question in this study examined teacher perceptions of experiences in their induction and mentor programs that shaped their current teaching practices while working in a high-poverty high school. Several participants identified two supports during focus groups and individual interviews. First, participants described how their TFA training and their TFA instructional coach helped shape their approach to teaching by addressing assumptions these teachers had about their students and their schools. The second support referenced was the use of student data to analyze teacher effectiveness. These teachers used student academic data and one teacher used student culture data to support their efforts to become more effective. These study participants did not attribute these supports to their induction and mentor programs at their schools or within the district.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand new teachers’ perceptions regarding their induction and mentor program, paying particular attention to how the instructional and psychological support in their induction and mentor programs have shaped their views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. A series of five semi-structured individual interviews and two focus group interviews with current first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers in an urban school district in North Carolina were conducted. All the teachers served as high school teachers in district identified high-poverty schools. Most of the schools represented serve African-American and Hispanic students, with many of these students exhibit a variety of behavioral challenges. These schools struggle with hiring and retaining teachers, resulting in high teacher turnover, a lack
of veteran teachers, and a large volume of new teachers working in the school. Additionally, study participants describe a general culture of lowered expectations across the school as well as a resistance to change by veteran staff and lack of joy in teaching in a high-poverty school.

With respect to perceived instructional supports and psychological supports in induction and mentor programs, participants named technology, PEAK, Teach for America (TFA), and school-based mentoring as instructional supports in their induction and mentor programs. Overall, teacher perceptions of some of these programs were mixed. Study participants’ responses also generated three themes regarding instructional supports in their induction and mentor programs: (a) a lack of an articulated plan for school-based professional development for staff, (b) a lower level of quality in the school-based professional development they receive in their induction and mentor programs, (c) and a teacher absence issue due to district-level or external professional development attendance, as part of their induction and mentor programs. Additionally, after defining psychological support, participants voiced four psychological supports: (a) a need to socialize informally with trusted individuals, (b) experiences where new teachers came together to share frustrations, and/or engage in some type of stress relief activity with other teachers through a formal school-sponsored meetings and activities, (c) positive interactions with students and strong relationships with students because they created a sense of purpose and an opportunity to contribute to the success of these students for these teachers, and (d) a school-based mentor or TFA instructional coach assigned to them in a coaching capacity to provide some
sort of psychological support to them. Two themes also emerged with respect to psychological support for study participants. The first theme included a description of the psychological demands at their schools that they did not expect as well as managing clubs, duties, school-wide projects and/or athletic teams for their school while also teaching a full teaching schedule. The second theme was the need by study participants to seek out informal mentors in addition to providing informal mentorship to others.

With respect to how induction and mentor programs shaped current views of their schools and shaped their teaching practice, participants articulated two programmatic areas that shaped their current views of their schools. The first programmatic area was a lack of a defined scope and sequence in their induction and mentor program that contributed to a view of dysfunction at their school. The second programmatic area was a network of informal mentoring and a wealth of personal experiences working at their high-poverty school in addition to the personal backgrounds of study participants that contributed to specific views regarding resources available at their school, views regarding student behaviors and motivation at their school, and strong beliefs about what it takes to work in their unique school contexts. Study participants’ views on student behavior and life at home in addition to views on student motivation and engagement were shaped by their informal mentoring conversations and personal experiences while working in high-poverty high schools. Moreover, study participants described how their TFA training and their TFA instructional coach helped shape their approach to teaching by addressing assumptions these teachers had about their students and their schools. Participants also stated the use of student data to
analyze teacher effectiveness provided support for them in shaping their current teaching practices.

The next chapter provides information regarding the findings of this study in relation to a review of the literature and provides implications for future research and implications for practice both at the state and the district level.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor programs, paying particular attention to how the instructional and psychological support in these programs shaped their views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. It is alarming how little research has been devoted to the perceptions of teachers in high-poverty high schools with respect to their teacher induction and mentor programs. This study is relevant because of the changing demographics in our country, the increases in the number of students attending diverse schools in urban centers, and the limited research currently available regarding new teacher perceptions of their induction and mentor programs while working in high-poverty schools. A series of five semi-structured individual interviews and two focus group interviews with current first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers in an urban school district in North Carolina were conducted. All the teachers served as high school teachers in a district identified as containing high-poverty schools.

In describing the school contexts in which study participants worked, there were several similarities found between the literature and the perceptions of study participants related to the teaching staff and the student behaviors at their respective schools. The literature examining high-poverty schools describes a school context where teachers are typically less experienced and turnover rates are generally higher than more affluent schools (Darling-Hammond, 2003, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Olsen & Anderson, 2007). These schools also serve students from diverse backgrounds and increasing levels of poverty as supported
by evidence of the changing demographics in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). These students exhibit particular social and emotional behaviors that result in developmental challenges, lower rates of graduation and a general lack of engagement in school (Amatea & West-Olantuji, 2007). In this study, participants also described schools that struggled to hire and retain quality teachers resulting in high teacher turnover, a lack of veteran teachers in content areas and as mentors, and a large number of new teachers working in their schools. Common comments made by participants include: “We don’t have enough teachers to staff everybody,” “Our turnover is too high,” and “Last year, 61% of our teachers were new teachers…and the district average is 20%.” In interviews and focus groups, study participants also described specific student behavioral challenges. Examples of teachers’ comments are: “We have students who come with super violent issues,” “Our population needs so much social…psychological help”, and “A lot of our kids, their home life is just so chaotic.” Student behaviors, according to study participants, also included a lack of motivation and engagement in school, commensurate with information found in the literature regarding student populations in high-poverty schools.

Through interviews and focus groups, participants provided key insights into their perceptions of their induction and mentor programs. This chapter provides a discussion of those findings beginning with an interpretation of the findings of this study, situating the research findings in the context of a review of the literature. Implications for future research
and implications for future practice are discussed in this chapter as well before concluding with a summary of the chapter.

**Finding 1: Lack of an Articulated Strategy of Support**

Throughout interviews and focus groups, there was an underlying theme of “not enough.” Participants described schools where there were not enough resources, teachers, mentors, instructional support, psychological support, teacher pay, and/or school-wide high expectations for all. This theme of “not enough” was most clear when discussing teacher induction and mentor programs. Respondents consistently noted a lack of a clearly-articulated strategy of support and development or a formal induction and mentor program in their schools.

The literature argues that teacher induction and mentor programs provide a comprehensive package of support for teachers to increase satisfaction, retention, effectiveness and early identification of poor performers (Bartell, 2005). Induction and mentor programs are popular interventions used by schools and school districts to support new teachers. The state of North Carolina has created a rubric to help schools across the state assess the quality of their induction and mentor programs based on five standards: (a) systemic support for high quality induction programs, (b) mentor selection, development and support, (c) mentoring for instructional excellence, (d) beginning teacher professional development, and (e) formative assessment of candidates and programs (Appendix A). In the high-poverty schools in this study, these components occurred to varying degrees of perceived effectiveness by study participants. These new teachers described new teacher
meetings that occurred monthly or twice a month. These meetings were “a flavor of the month kind of thing…and there’s no follow through.” The quality of these meetings were described as weak because the facilitators of the sessions were “stretched so thin that they don’t have the time” to adequately provide strong professional development. Several teachers did speak favorably about district-sponsored and external professional development. Training offered by Teach for America (TFA) and by Performance Excellence for All Kids (PEAK) were cited as being helpful in providing teachers opportunities to plan collaboratively with other teachers, test instructional activities, gather feedback and share their learning with a more experienced adult in an ongoing continuum of support. These district-based and external professional development opportunities are supported in the literature as positive elements of a strong induction and mentor program (Lewis et al., 1999; Oliver, 2009; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Soares & Lock, 2007).

Studies examining teacher induction and mentor programs argue that new teachers should have opportunities to engage in common planning and same-subject collaboration, preferably with a mentor from the same field (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Many study participants expressed a desire to work with a subject-specific expert to help them break down the content. One first-year teacher asked in her interview, “So how do I teach someone who doesn’t think like me?” A third-year teacher explained this challenge as not enough veterans of the content available at the school: “They might have been teaching for five years but if they’ve taught new content every single year…they are [not] veterans of the content.” Given their need to spend time with a subject-specific mentor/veteran to learn more about the
content and how to teach this content to students successfully, teachers in their first three years expressed a desire to engage in this type of collaboration but a frustration in the lack of staff to support them in the content.

A lack of teachers, mentors, and high-quality, aligned professional development at the school site along with positive experiences with external and district-sponsored professional development created a perception by teachers that there is not a clearly-articulated plan for their support, development, effectiveness, satisfaction and/or retention.

**Finding 2: Informal Mentoring Impacts Views and Teaching Practices**

Nine out of the nine study participants indicated they had a mentor assigned to them. The literature is clear that mentoring is the most common element in induction and mentoring programs, and mentors can make a difference in the confidence, competence and/or retention of a new teacher (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Lewis et al., 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stanulis & Floden, 2009; Stotko et al., 2007). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) argue in their study that having a mentor can reduce the risk of a teacher leaving the profession in the first year by 30%. North Carolina State Board of Education policy TCP-A-004 requires a mentor for all teachers in their first two years of teaching (Appendix B). Odell and Ferraro’s (1992) study argued the emotional support of a mentor is a key component of the induction experience for teachers. Jorissen’s (2002) study found mentors provided emotional support both personally and professionally to new teachers working in urban schools. Teachers in the Jorissen (2002) study also leveraged a cohort of teachers in the same type of school during their induction programs to garner emotional support and encouragement.
Study participants acknowledged in focus groups and interviews they had a mentor assigned to them “on paper,” but many participants openly expressed poor structures in their mentor programs, low quality in their mentor’s practices, and a feeling that their assigned mentor seemed overwhelmed by the volume of mentees on their caseloads needing support. Participants did not blame mentors and attributed this poor-quality mentorship program to the low volume of veteran teachers at their schools: “There just isn’t enough to go around.” These participants searched for informal mentorships and cohort opportunities from other teachers in their schools as a way to get the psychological support and instructional support they needed. These informal conversations also helped new teachers manage student discipline and motivation, navigate a lack of resources at the school, and encourage strong beliefs about the school and students. Often, these informal mentorships were with teachers in their second-year or third-year of teaching, and according to study participants, this psychological support helped them survive their first year of teaching. One first-year teacher shared her perception of the impact psychological support found in the informal mentorships had on her retention as well as her effectiveness: “At least I have a community I can run to that is willing to help and give me suggestions. Because if I had to do this by myself, it wouldn’t get done.”

These perceptions regarding the impact of emotional support from a mentor are supported by the literature (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). When study participants were not gaining the psychological support from formal mentorship structures, they created this informal mentoring structure to gain access to this support. Many of the teachers in this
study stressed that this informal mentoring structure has made a tremendous impact on their satisfaction, their retention, their current views, and their current teaching practices.

**Finding 3: Prioritize Psychological Support**

The research literature defined psychological support in a teacher induction and mentor program as providing emotional support, empathy, and supportive feedback from a more seasoned teacher to new teachers (Hoy & Spero, 2005; Krull, 2005). Study participants’ definition of psychological support mirrored the literature with many participants stating psychological support means having honest conversations and/or crying with a trusted colleague who will keep the exchange confidential. These new teachers and the research literature also agree that psychological support should be prioritized in induction and mentor programs serving teachers working in high-poverty schools.

In McCann and Johannessen’s (2004) study, researchers argued in their results for stronger induction and mentor programs that include counseling or therapeutic conversations in order to help new teachers make stronger connections with others and reduce their feelings of doubt. Study participants consistently prioritized psychological support in their induction and mentor programs over instructional supports because of the psychological demands and additional duties required by these teachers in their schools. A second-year teacher captured the impact of not prioritizing psychological support in induction and mentor programs in her individual interview succinctly: “If you don’t have that psychological support you’re not going to be around long enough to be an effective teacher. I have seen so many teachers quit in the middle of the year or quit after the first year because it is a tough place to work.”
The need for psychological support was consistently found in the research on psychological support for new teachers in their induction and mentor programs in high-poverty high schools. This study provided additional support for this need. These new teachers in high-poverty high schools advocated for the prioritization of psychological support throughout the first three years of teaching through their induction and mentor programs. According to these teachers, failure to prioritize this type of support will increase the likelihood that new teachers will leave the profession within their first three years.

Finding 4: Belief, Care, Efficacy, Humility, and Role Models Required

Given the unique challenges available to teachers working high-poverty schools, the literature offered a series of beliefs effective teachers exhibit while working in these unique school settings. Additionally, first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers shared their perceptions of beliefs they deemed necessary to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. Many of these beliefs were shared between the research literature and this study. It is also important to note that these beliefs, according to the research participants, were not developed through an induction and mentor program but instead through informal mentoring, personal experiences, and the personal backgrounds of these teachers.

According to literature on the subject, effective teachers working in high-poverty schools demonstrate strong beliefs in student success, express a desire to help others, are relentless in their pursuits, demonstrate reflection and humility, and grow in self-efficacy and confidence (Lyman & Villani, 2004; Stotko et al., 2007). These effective teachers maintain high expectations for their students, stay flexible in their planning and execution, cooperate
with their disillusioned peers, and are sensitive to a culturally diverse community (Lyman & Villani; Stotko et al.). Teachers participating in this study also shared beliefs they felt were necessary to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. These mindsets were a strong belief in the success of all students, a desire to care, a commitment to both efficacy and humility, and an aspiration to serve as a role model for students.

In several circumstances, this study supported the existing literature regarding the beliefs and dispositions of effective teachers in high-poverty schools. Belief in student success, care or a desire to help others, humility, and “hubris” or confidence in their impact appeared both in the literature and in repeated responses from study participants. Additionally, several different study participants named their ability to serve as a role model for students and their commitment to do so as necessary beliefs effective teachers must demonstrate regularly for students.

Through focus groups and individual interviews, these new teachers codified five mindsets: belief in students, care for students, belief about your impact, humility about your experience, and a desire to serve as a role model for students. These beliefs were not taught in their induction and mentor programs but developed through informal mentoring opportunities, personal experience working at their schools, and their own personal backgrounds.
Implications for Research

This qualitative study examined new teacher perceptions of their induction and mentor programs, with special considerations around their perceptions of how the instructional supports and psychological supports participants received shaped their current views and teaching practices. Participants in this study requested a stronger induction and mentor program that includes a well-articulated plan for instructional support and psychological support, delivered by well-trained and accessible mentors and professional development facilitators. Opportunities for future research include further investigation into the reasons for the absence of a strong induction and mentor program in high poverty schools, possibly using the Rubric for Self-Assessment of School-Base [sic] Induction and Mentoring Program (Appendix A) created by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). There is also an opportunity to study further the new teacher-created informal mentoring structure that was consistently cited by new teachers in the study as effective. Lastly, further research into the desire for teachers working in high-poverty schools to serve as role models for students in these schools is recommended. This desire to serve as a role model for their students was repeatedly referenced by study participants as a critical mindset of an effective teacher in a high-poverty school.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to understand new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor program, paying particular attention to how the instructional and psychological support in their induction and mentor programs shaped their views about
teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. The research from this study uncovered teacher perceptions of a lack of resources, teachers, mentors and strong professional development at their high poverty schools. These perceptions of a lack of resources resulted in a negative perception of their induction and mentor program. These teachers articulated that their formal induction and mentor program did not provide strong instructional support and psychological support. Additionally, their formal induction and mentor program did not help them develop appropriate views and beliefs about their schools to ultimately help them make the necessary instructional shifts in their daily teaching practice. Teachers also specified that psychological support should be a priority in induction and mentor programs for new teachers working in high-poverty schools, having indicated that their induction and mentor program did not provide adequate psychological support nor shaped their views about their schools and their teaching practices. Most notably, participants described necessary mindsets of teachers who are effective in a high-poverty school: belief in students, care for students, self-efficacy, humility about your experience, and a desire to serve as a role model for students.

The findings from this study have specific implications for state departments of education, school districts, and institutions of higher learning. States and school districts have policies and resources allocated to support induction and mentor programs in an effort to support their newest teachers. Given their commitment to providing induction and mentor programs, states, school districts, and institutions of higher learning could use the findings from this dissertation to inform next steps in improving a structure currently in place.
Implications for State Departments of Education

The findings from this study have implications for state departments of education. This study illuminates the need for unique support structures for teachers working in high-poverty schools. The state could provide school districts with specific programs and funding to support stronger alignment of professional development and mentor training to ensure strong program execution at the district and school level. The state could also adjust the mentor requirements for teachers at high-poverty schools, allowing teachers that have been identified as effective, through a rigorous process, to serve as mentors starting in their third-year of teaching. This would allow more teachers to serve as formal mentors to new teachers in high-poverty schools, and it would build leadership and ownership in third-year teachers, possibly generating opportunities for these teachers to remain at their schools for an extended period of time beyond their third year of teaching. The state department serves all schools across the state, so they should have a vested interest in ensuring teachers serving in some of the toughest schools are getting the best support possible in order to be successful.

Implications for School Districts

Implications for school districts serving students in schools with high concentrations of poverty also have an opportunity to re-examine the current fidelity of their induction and mentor programs. Study participants openly declared a strong difference between what is required by the state department of education and the execution of these induction and mentor programs in high-needs schools. This dissertation uncovered this discrepancy as well as identified an informal mentoring structure and two external professional development
programs (PEAK and TFA) that were well-received by study participants, found to shape new teacher views and teaching practice, and, ultimately, provided psychological support to new teachers.

School districts could examine their current induction and mentor programs at their high-poverty schools and leverage the successes of TFA, PEAK and the practices found in informal mentoring. After taking a closer look at the successful elements of these programs, school districts should adjust current induction and mentor programs in high-poverty schools to include these successful elements. School districts should also train or retrain any individuals responsible for the creation, implementation and/or monitoring of induction and mentor programs in the new model.

The beliefs fostered through the informal mentoring relationships amongst new teachers could be targeted in a formal mentoring program. Study participants articulated how informal mentoring relationships helped foster these beliefs of care, efficacy, humility, belief in student success, and serving as a role model for students. Formal mentoring programs could include opportunities to encourage these beliefs in new teachers. Through coaching conversations, professional readings, targeted observations, and frequent check-ins with a well-trained mentor, new teachers could possibly develop these beliefs early in their teaching careers.

Implications for Institutions of Higher Education

In addition to state departments of education and school districts, findings from this study have implications for institutions of higher education. This study may bring additional
information in support of more targeted training and education in teacher preparation programs to prepare new teachers for these challenging contexts. Additionally, institutions of higher education could provide instruction, coaching, feedback, support and encouragement to new teachers to foster these beliefs and attitudes given the challenges these new teachers face in their schools. Many participants in the study indicated that these beliefs were grounded in their personal experiences and informal mentoring relationships. There may be some opportunities to teach, coach, and train teachers during their pre-service experiences in their teacher education programs around these perceived necessary beliefs.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine new teacher perceptions regarding their induction and mentor program, paying particular attention to how the instructional and psychological support in their induction and mentor programs shaped their views about teaching in a high-poverty school and their instructional practices. The research is limited around perceptions of the experiences of teachers in high-poverty high schools with respect to their teacher induction and mentor programs. This study is relevant because of the changing demographics in our country. Semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews with current first-year, second-year, and third-year teachers in an urban school district in North Carolina were conducted. All the teachers served as high school teachers in district identified high-poverty schools. In this study, participants described schools that struggled to hire and retain quality teachers, resulting in high teacher turnover, a lack of veteran teachers in content areas and as mentors, and a large volume of
new teachers working in their schools. Student behaviors, according to study participants, also included a lack of motivation and engagement in school, commensurate with information found in the literature regarding student populations in high-poverty schools.

The study produced the following findings:

1. A lack of teachers, mentors, and high quality, aligned professional development at the school site created a perception that there is not a clear articulated plan for support and development of new teachers.

2. The informal mentoring structure has made a tremendous impact on teacher satisfaction, retention, current views, and current teaching practices. When study participants were not receiving psychological support from their formal mentor, they created informal mentoring.

3. New teachers in high-poverty high schools advocated for the prioritization of psychological support throughout the first three years of teaching through their induction and mentor programs. Failure to prioritize this type of support will increase the likelihood that new teachers will leave the profession within their first three years.

4. Five mindsets were identified by study participants as important in order to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school. These include a belief in students, care for students, hubris about your impact, humility about your experience, and a desire to serve as a role model for students. These beliefs
were developed through informal mentoring, personal experience, and personal backgrounds.

Opportunities for future research include further investigation into the reasons for the absence of a strong induction and mentor program in high-poverty schools, the reasons for the success of the informal mentoring structure that was consistently cited by new teachers in the study as effective, and, lastly, the reasons teachers working in high-poverty schools commit to serving as role models for students in these schools.

The findings from this study have implications for state departments of education and school districts. The state could provide school districts with specific programs and funding to support stronger alignment of professional development and mentor training and adjust the mentor requirements for teachers at high-poverty schools. School districts should examine their current induction and mentor programs at their high-poverty schools and leverage the successes of TFA, PEAK and the practices found in informal mentoring to make changes to their current induction and mentor programs.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Rubric for Self Assessment of School-Base Induction and Mentoring Program

School:  
Date:  
Principal:  
Courier Number:  
Mentor Contact:  

Standard 1: Systemic Support for High Quality Induction Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing</th>
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<th>Accomplished</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals are involved in the selection and/or assignment and/or supervision of the mentor, as appropriate</td>
<td>... and Principals provide positive working conditions for beginning teachers Principals clearly communicate mentor’s role to staff and provide positive context for beginning teacher work with mentor Principals endorse and/or support the development of a mentor role that encompasses a range of dimensions and respects the confidential role of the mentor and beginning teacher</td>
<td>... and Principals provide time for and promote mentor’s work with beginning teachers Principals endorse and/or support development of a complex, multi-faceted and confidential mentor role Principals are available to meet/communicate with mentors.</td>
<td>... and Principals are knowledgeable of and demonstrate support to the full scope of mentor’s work, including formative assessment and use of professional standards Principals endorse and/or support development of a mentor role that is informed by a variety of stakeholders Principals communicate regularly with mentors while respecting confidentiality of mentor role Principals encourage beginning teachers to share evidence of professional growth as part of evaluation process</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
**Comments:**

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**Standard 2: Mentor Selection, Development, and Support**

**Mentor Selection.** The selection of well-qualified mentors is essential to creating mentoring and induction programs that support beginning teacher development, teacher retention and improved student learning. Selection criteria are developed through interaction and collaboration with a variety of stakeholder groups. Selection criteria are well-defined, explicit and clearly communicated to all stakeholders by program leadership. The application, interview and selection processes are transparent and uniformly implemented.

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<tr>
<td>Mentors are selected by the principal and/or designee based upon availability, interest or seniority</td>
<td>. . . and Mentor selection criteria are clearly articulated by school leadership and include input from school staff</td>
<td>. . . and Mentor selection may involve input from a variety of stakeholders Selection criteria include a range of characteristics, experiences and dispositions that may indicate mentoring potential Selection process is communicated</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors are selected using a rigorous process that involves a variety of evidences and multiple stakeholders Criteria are aligned with widely-accepted and research-based understandings of effective mentoring practices and characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process for selection is communicated as needed and is based upon criteria that are communicated to interested candidates</td>
<td>Process for mentor selection is clear</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Scope of Mentor Role.** The wide range of roles and responsibilities of mentors are clearly defined and broadly communicated to all staff. The initial role of mentors is to assist in the orientation of beginning teachers to the induction program their school. At this time mentors often provide logistical and emotional support. Throughout the year mentors work with beginning teachers during and after school to promote growth along the indicators defined in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process and to ensure quality student learning.

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<tr>
<td>Mentors serve largely as a resource and friend-type support provider</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors provide ongoing support and encouragement for the beginning teacher, including beginning/new teacher orientation, logistical and emotional support Mentor’s role primarily focuses on instruction and student learning</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors’ role is multi-dimensional and includes opportunities to observe and give feedback on classroom practice Mentors and beginning teachers collaborate on lesson planning and problem-solving</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors differentiate support to the needs of the beginning teacher based on the use of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process and other formative assessments Mentors’ role</td>
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**Mentored Professional Development.** Mentors are provided a formal orientation to the induction program and foundational training in mentoring before they work with beginning teachers. Following formal training, mentors will participate in ongoing professional development and in facilitated professional learning communities of mentoring practice to refine mentoring skills, advance induction practices, and improve student learning.

Mentors are oriented to their role and the induction program. Mentors receive preliminary professional development to prepare them for their role. . . . and Mentors receive ongoing professional development to advance their knowledge and skills.

Mentors receive ongoing professional development to advance their knowledge and skills. . . . and Mentors are involved in a facilitated community of mentoring practice that meets regularly to support mentor learning and problem-solving.

Mentors have opportunities to observe and coach colleagues. . . . and Mentors engage in inquiry into their practice.

Mentors are involved in a facilitated community of mentoring practice that meets regularly to support mentor learning and problem-solving. . . . and Mentors have opportunities to observe and coach colleagues.

Mentors design and facilitate mentor professional development. Mentors engage in inquiry into their practice. . . . and Mentors have opportunities to observe and coach colleagues.

Comments:

**Standard 3: Mentoring for Instructional Excellence**

**Quality Time.** Effective mentor-beginning teacher interactions and relationships are at the core of a successful mentoring and induction program. Program, district and site leadership collaborate to ensure that sufficient time is provided for mentors to meet with their beginning teachers to engage in the improvement of teaching and learning and induction-related activities both during and outside of school time.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentors work with beginning teachers occasionally</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors work with beginning teachers during and outside of the school day, based upon schedule and mentor flexibility</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors and beginning teachers have sufficient time to engage in induction-related activities</td>
<td>. . . and Mentors are provided protected time to engage with beginning teachers and support their professional growth. Beginning teachers are released to work with mentors, and other support providers as appropriate</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
### Instructional Focus

The North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards are the comprehensive guide used by all teachers, mentors, and beginning teachers to advance practice and student learning. Mentors are regularly present in the classrooms of beginning teachers to observe and to strategically collect data on management, instruction, and student learning. Mentors and beginning teachers collaboratively analyze observation data, develop next steps and together monitor results in an ongoing process designed to continuously improve teaching and learning.

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<tr>
<td>Mentors focus on logistical and operational issues, such as school practices and culture, administrative and classroom procedures and norms</td>
<td>... and Based on classroom observations, mentors work with beginning teachers on issues of classroom management, lesson planning, delivery of instruction and student learning aligned with curriculum standards</td>
<td>... and Mentors work with beginning teachers across the full-range of teaching practices as defined by North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and identified by the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process</td>
<td>... and Mentors work with beginning teachers on a strategic focus as determined by the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process and other assessments of classroom practice and student learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors are aware of equity issues as they arise in beginning teachers’ practice</td>
<td>... and Mentors support beginning teachers’ development to meet the needs of all students and create a respectful environment for a diverse population of students</td>
<td>... and Mentors guide the beginning teachers’ appreciation for diversity and responsive approaches to instruction during analysis of student work, planning of differentiated instruction and other opportunities as they arise</td>
<td>... and Mentors proactively engage beginning teachers around issues of diversity. Mentors guide beginning teachers in the ongoing development of responsive curriculum and practices.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*c. Issues of Diversity* asterisk. Mentors support their beginning teachers to appreciate the wide-range of assets that all students bring to the classroom through their diversity. Mentors guide beginning teachers in the development of positive, inclusive and respectful environments that support learning for a diverse student population. Mentors and beginning teachers design and implement a broad range of specific strategies designed to meet the diverse needs of their students and promote high levels of learning.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentors are aware of equity issues as they arise in beginning teachers’ practice</td>
<td>... and Mentors support beginning teachers’ development to meet the needs of all students and create a respectful environment for a diverse population of students</td>
<td>... and Mentors guide the beginning teachers’ appreciation for diversity and responsive approaches to instruction during analysis of student work, planning of differentiated instruction and other opportunities as they arise</td>
<td>... and Mentors proactively engage beginning teachers around issues of diversity. Mentors guide beginning teachers in the ongoing development of responsive curriculum and practices.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

*Issues of diversity include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture.

**Comments:**
Standard 4: Beginning Teacher Professional Development

Beginning Teacher Professional Development. Beginning teachers benefit most by participating in professional development that is targeted to meet their needs as novice instructors. To meet the needs of beginning teachers and promote their successful entry and engagement in the school community, principals ensure that beginning teachers receive a structured orientation and often provide a school handbook with detailed explanations of school policy and procedures.

Ongoing professional development is tailored to meet the needs of beginning teachers and scheduled before the start of school or soon thereafter. Provision is made to support late hire beginning teachers to receive information provided at site and district professional development.

Professional development for beginning teachers is aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning teachers receive a structured orientation to school policy, practices and procedures</td>
<td>... and District-wide professional development is provided for beginning teachers, often prior to the start of the teachers’ school year. Professional development is aligned with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, The North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process, and beginning teachers’ Professional Growth Plan. Professional development is based on the needs of the beginning teacher.</td>
<td>... and Beginning teachers participate in a variety of professional development opportunities designed more specifically for beginning teachers. Professional development activities may include some opportunities for inter-visitation. Participation in professional development may be open choice, suggested by the mentor, mandated by the principal, recommended by coaches, zones or central office support staff.</td>
<td>... and Beginning teachers participate in a wide range of professional development offerings based upon their assessed developmental needs. Participation is collaboratively determined in consultation with mentor, principal, and central office support staff.</td>
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</table>

Comments:
Standard 5: Formative Assessment of Candidates and Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Formative Assessment.</th>
<th>Mentors utilize the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards with beginning teachers</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Not Demonstrated (Comment Required)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors apply the language and expectations in the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards and the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process in supporting their beginning teachers’ practice. Mentors support their beginning teachers in developing a Professional Development Plan to support professional growth.</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>... and</td>
<td>Mentors integrate formative assessment into their interactions with beginning teachers and innovate upon the tools and their use. Mentors help beginning teachers draw connections between the use of formative assessment to inform and improve classroom practice and student learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:
Appendix B

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Policy Manual
(http://sbepolicy.dpi.state.nc.us/policies/TCP-A-004.asp?pri=02&cat=A&pol=004&acr=TCP)

Policy Identification
Priority: Twenty-first Century Professionals
Category: Licensure
Policy ID Number: TCP-A-004

Policy Title: Policies on the Beginning Teacher Support Program

Current Policy Date: 11/04/2010

Other Historical Information: Previous Board dates: 03/05/1998, 11/05/1998, 06/11/2003, 2/5/2004, 01/05/2006/08/03/2006

Statutory Reference:

Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category:

POLICIES ON THE BEGINNING TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAM

4.00 Induction Requirements

Initial (Standard Professional 1) licenses are issued to teachers with fewer than three years of appropriate teaching experience (normally considered to be public school experience) in their initial licensure area. All teachers who hold initial (Standard Professional 1) licenses after January 1, 1998, are required to participate in a three year induction period with a formal orientation, mentor support, observations and evaluation prior to the recommendation for continuing (Standard Professional 2) licensure.

Teachers with three or more years of appropriate experience (as determined by the Licensure Section) are not required to participate in the Beginning Teacher Support Program, nor are student service personnel (e.g., media coordinators, counselors), administrators, and curriculum-instructional specialists. Employers may request an exemption from the Beginning Teacher Support Program for teachers with equivalent non-public experience. It is the responsibility of the employer requesting the exemption to verify experience.
Completion of the Beginning Teacher Support Program requirements in one teaching area satisfies the Beginning Teacher Support Program requirement for all other teaching areas. Once a continuing license has been earned in one teaching area, additional teaching areas do not require a Beginning Teacher Support Program experience.

4.10 Assignment/Experience Requirements

It is expected that beginning teachers be assigned in their area of licensure. Three years of teaching experience, of at least six months each, are required in the Beginning Teacher Support Program.

4.20 Beginning Teacher Professional Development Plan

Each beginning teacher is required to develop a Professional Development Plan in collaboration with his/her principal (or the principal's designee) and mentor teacher. The plan is to be based on the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, and must include goals, strategies, and assessment of the beginning teacher's progress in improving professional skills. In developing the plan, the beginning teacher, principal (or designee), and mentor teacher should begin with an assessment of the beginning teacher's knowledge, dispositions, and performances. Throughout the year, formative assessment conferences should be held to reflect on the progress of the beginning teacher in meeting the goals established for professional growth. The plan should be updated on an annual basis, each year of the Beginning Teacher Support Program. Professional Development Plans will be audited as part of the Title II monitoring process.

4.30 Optimum Working Conditions for Beginning Teachers

To ensure that beginning teachers have the opportunity to develop into capable teachers, the following working conditions are strongly recommended:

- assignment in the area of licensure;
- mentor assigned early, in the licensure area, and in close proximity;
- orientation that includes state, district, and school expectations;
- limited preparations;
- limited non-instructional duties;
- limited number of exceptional or difficult students; and
- no extracurricular assignments unless requested in writing by the beginning teacher.

The term “non-instructional duties” refers to those that are not directly involved with the instructional program or the implementation of the standard course of study, but that all teachers are expected to do. Examples would be bus duty, lunch duty, and hall duty. The
term “extracurricular activities” refers to those activities performed by a teacher involving students that are outside the regular school day and not directly related to the instructional program.

4.40 Orientation

Orientation must be aligned according to the Mentor Program Standards

Each beginning teacher must be provided an orientation. This orientation should be conducted prior to the arrival of students. If the teacher is employed during the school year, the orientation should be conducted within the first ten days of employment. At a minimum, the orientation should provide the beginning teacher with an overview of the school’s/system’s goals, policies, and procedures; a description of available services and training opportunities; the Beginning Teacher Support Program and the process for achieving a Standard Professional 2 (continuing) license; the North Carolina Teacher Evaluation Process; the NC Standard Course of Study; local curriculum guides; the safe and appropriate use of seclusion and restraint of students; the State's ABC's Program; and the State Board of Education's Mission and Goals.

4.50 Mentor Assignment/Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Selection


- 4.55 Mentor Training

Local school systems are responsible for providing training and support for mentor teachers. Systems may choose to use programs developed by the Department of Public Instruction, use other programs (e.g., Teacher Academy), or develop programs of their own. Mentors need the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be effective instructional coaches, emotional supports, and organizational guides to those entering the profession. Standards for Mentor Training are attached to this policy.

4.60 Observations/Evaluation

In compliance with the Excellent Schools Act and subsequently GS 115C-333, each beginning teacher shall be observed at least three times annually by a qualified school administrator or a designee and at least once annually by a teacher, and shall be evaluated at least once annually by a qualified school administrator. Each observation must last for at least one continuous period of instructional time and must be followed by a post-conference. All persons who observe teachers must be appropriately trained. The required observations must be appropriately spaced throughout the school year. The Beginning
Teacher Support Program Plan must specify the role of the beginning teacher's assigned mentor in the observations.

### 4.80 Beginning Teacher Support Program Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>The beginning teacher:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is assigned a mentor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is provided an orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>develops a Professional Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completes any professional development required/prescribed by the LEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is observed at least four times culminating with a summative evaluation</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>The beginning teacher:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>continues to have a mentor teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>updates the Professional Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completes any professional development required/prescribed by the LEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is observed at least four times culminating with a summative evaluation</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>The beginning teacher:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>continues to have a mentor teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>updates Professional Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>completes any professional development required/prescribed by the LEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is observed at least four times culminating with a summative evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.90 Conversion Process

Each May, through an automated process, the Licensure Section converts from initial (Standard Professional 1) to continuing (Standard Professional 2) the licenses of those teachers who are employed in LEAs and who may be eligible for conversion. The official designated by the LEA in its approved Beginning Teacher Support Program plan is responsible for approving the acceptance of the continuing license issued through this process. If a teacher has not taught three years, or if the designated official has knowledge of any reason related to conduct or character to deny the individual teacher a continuing license, then the automatic conversion license cannot be accepted. Forms indicating the denial of a continuing license must be returned to the Licensure Section immediately.

When teachers employed in charter schools or non-public institutions with approved Beginning Teacher Support Programs, or teachers employed in LEAs and completing
alternative routes to licensure (e.g., lateral entry, provisional licensure, etc.) successfully fulfill the Beginning Teacher Support Program requirements, the employer must submit a recommendation for a Standard Professional 2 license for it to be granted. A principal must rate a probationary teacher “as proficient” on all five NC Professional Teaching Standards on the most recent Teacher Summary Rating Form before recommending a teacher for a Standard Professional 2 license.

4.100 Due Process

Licensing is a state decision and cannot be appealed at the local level. Any teacher not recommended for conversion from an initial (Standard Professional 1) license to a continuing (Standard Professional 2) license may have that action reviewed by filing a contested case petition in accordance with Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. Except when the denial is based on reasons of conduct or character, as an alternative, the teacher may affiliate with an IHE with an approved teacher education program and complete a program of study as prescribed by the IHE to address identified deficiencies. After the prescribed program is successfully completed, the IHE must recommend the person for another initial (Standard Professional 1) license. The teacher is then required to complete another Beginning Teacher Support Program when employed. Local boards of education are responsible for explaining appeal rights to teachers not qualifying for continuing licensure when employed.

4.120 Beginning Teacher Support Program Plans

Each LEA must develop an annual plan and to provide a comprehensive program for beginning teachers. This plan must meet the Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards. Plans must demonstrate that the Beginning Teacher Support Program is proficient on each standard and element. The Beginning Teacher Support Program is aligned to the continuum.

This plan must be approved by the local board of education. Charter schools and non-public institutions that have a state-approved plan to administer the licensure renewal program shall submit a Beginning Teacher Support Program Plan to the SBE for approval. The plans must:

1. describe adequate provisions for efficient management of the program.
2. designate, at the local level, an official to verify eligibility of beginning teachers for a continuing license.
3. provide for a formal orientation for beginning teachers which includes a description of available services, training opportunities, the teacher evaluation process, and the process for achieving a continuing license.
4. address compliance with the optimum working conditions for beginning teachers identified by the SBE.
(5) address compliance with the mentor selection, assignment, and training guidelines identified by the SBE.

(6) provide for the involvement of the principal or the principal's designee in supporting the beginning teacher.

(7) provide for a minimum of 4 observations per year in accordance GS 115C-333, using the instruments adopted by the SBE for such purposes. The plan must address the appropriate spacing of observations throughout the year, and specify a date by which the annual summative evaluation is to be completed.

(8) provide for the preparation of a Professional Development Plan (PDP) by each beginning teacher in collaboration with the principal or the principal's designee, and the mentor teacher.

(9) provide for a formal means of identifying and delivering services and technical assistance needed by beginning teachers.

(10) provide for the maintenance of a cumulative beginning teacher file that contains the PDP and evaluation report(s).

(11) provide for the timely transfer of the cumulative beginning teacher file to successive employing LEAs, charter schools, or non-public institutions within the state upon the authorization of the beginning teacher.

(12) describe a plan for the systematic evaluation of the Beginning Teacher Support Program to assure program quality, effectiveness, and efficient management.

(13) document that the local board of education has adopted the LEA plan, or that the charter school or non-public institution plan has been approved by the SBE.

The plan must be on file for review at the LEA, charter school, or non-public institution.

4.130 Beginning Teacher Support Program Annual Reports Annual Peer Review and Process and Five Year Formal Review Reports

Each LEA, charter school, or non-public institution with an approved Beginning Teacher Support Program plan must submit an annual report on its Beginning Teacher Support Program to the Department of Public Instruction by October 1 that includes evidence of demonstrated proficiency on the Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards and of mentor success in meeting Mentor Standards. The format of the report follows.

Every fifth year the Department of Public Instruction will formally review Beginning Teacher Support Programs to review evidence and verify that program proficiency is demonstrated on all Beginning Teacher Support Program Standards. The monitoring team should report any standards and key elements where programs are not deemed at least proficient to the Department of Public Instruction. Programs that are rated developing on the standards continuum should be put on an improvement plan and re-reviewed more frequently to ensure that all beginning teacher are supported.
In order to assist LEAs in progressing along the Beginning Teacher Support Program continuum to provide the highest quality support to beginning teachers. LEAs will participate in implementing a regionally-based annual peer review and support system.
Appendix C
Focus Group Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of teacher induction and mentor programs. First, there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding your perspectives, your perceptions, your feelings and your stories. Secondly, please don’t feel like you have to agree with everyone else in the group if that is not how you truly feel. There are _____ people in this room, so there might be completely different views for all of us present here today. I would like to hear from everyone in the room, but if you find yourself upset during the talk, you can leave at any time. Please feel free to share good things as well as critical things about your experiences with teacher induction and mentor programs. Please talk one at a time so that we can all hear each other and everyone’s views are heard on tape. Please respect the confidentiality of the interviews and not share other group members’ responses. I have a series of preliminary questions that I will use to get us started, and we will also let the tone of the group determine where some future questions will go. Each of you received the Informed Consent Form for Research and signed the form.

1. Please introduce yourselves and share a little bit about your teaching assignment.
2. Talk a bit about your school.
3. What brought you to this school?
4. What are the rewards of working in a high-poverty school?
5. What are the challenges of working in a high-poverty school?
6. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that provided instructional support for you? This could include workshops, interactions with mentors or others, feedback opportunities, etc.

7. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that provided psychological support for you? This could include conversations with others, counseling/therapeutic supports, relationship building activities, etc.

8. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that most shaped your current views about working in your school?

9. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that most shaped your current practices in your school? Could you give some examples about what you learned and how it impacted your practice?

10. What knowledge, skills, or dispositions/beliefs do you feel are necessary to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school?

11. You stated that you must have/be __________ if you teach in a high-poverty school. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program to support or hinder this knowledge/skill/disposition/belief that you must have/be ________________? (Question repeated given the answers from question #10)

12. What do you believe matters more in becoming an effective teacher in a high-poverty school: psychological support or instructional support? Please explain.
13. If you were to design an induction and mentor program, what knowledge and/or experiences would you add to the current design to help teachers become more effective in working in high-poverty schools?

14. What knowledge or experiences do you believe are missing from your current induction and mentor program?

15. Is there anything else you would like to share?
Appendix D

Individual Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of teacher induction and mentor programs. First, there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding your perspective, your perceptions, your feelings and your stories. I would like to hear from you, but if you find yourself upset during the talk, you can leave at any time. Please feel free to share good things as well as critical things about your experiences with teacher induction and mentor programs. I have a series of preliminary questions that I will use to get us started, and we will also let the interview determine where some future questions will go. You have received the Informed Consent Form for Research and signed the form.

1. Please tell me a bit about yourself and your teaching assignment.
2. Tell me about your school.
3. What brought you to this school?
4. Do you plan on staying at this school? Will you be there in 1 year; 5 years; 10 years?
5. Do you plan on continuing as a teacher? Will you be a teacher in 1 year; 5 years; 10 years? Why or why not?
6. What are the rewards of working in a high-poverty school?
7. What are the challenges of working in a high-poverty school?
8. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that provided instructional support for you? This could include workshops, interactions with mentors or others, feedback opportunities, etc.
9. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that provided psychological support for you? This could include conversations with others, counseling/therapeutic supports, relationship building activities, etc.

10. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that most shaped your current views about working in your school?

11. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program that most shaped your current practices in your school? Could you give some examples about what you learned and how it impacted your practice?

12. What knowledge, skills, or dispositions/beliefs do you feel are necessary to be an effective teacher in a high-poverty school?

13. You stated that you must have/be ___________ if you teach in a high-poverty school. What experiences did you have in your induction and mentoring program to support or hinder this knowledge/skill/disposition/belief that you must have/be ________________? (Question repeated given the answers from question #12)

14. Do you see yourself as an effective teacher in a high-poverty school? If yes, how do you know you are effective? If no, why do you believe you are ineffective?

15. What would make you more effective? Any additional instructional support from your induction and mentor program? Any additional psychological support from your induction and mentor program?

16. What do you believe matters more in becoming an effective teacher in a high-poverty school: psychological support or instructional support? Please explain.
17. If you were to design an induction and mentor program, what knowledge and/or experiences would you add to the current design to help teachers become more effective in working in high-poverty schools?

18. What knowledge or experiences do you believe are missing from your current induction and mentor program?

19. Is there anything else you would like to share?
Appendix E

Demographic Questionnaire for Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of teacher induction and mentor programs. First, there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding your perspective, your perceptions, your feelings and your stories. This short questionnaire is to gather demographic information of the study participants. You have received the Informed Consent Form for Research and signed the form.

1. How many months have you been teaching in a high-poverty school? (Open Response)

2. Please indicate your gender/sex. (Male/Female)

3. Please indicate your race/ethnicity. (Open Response)

4. Please indicate your route to teaching. (Multiple Choice)
   a. Traditional – university preparation program.
   b. Alternative licensure program – TNTP
   c. Alternative licensure program – Teach For America
   d. Alternative licensure program – Lateral Entry
   e. Alternative licensure program – Other. Please indicate: (Open Response)

5. Do you have a mentor? (Yes/No)
Appendix F

North Carolina State University Consent Form

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Perceived Experiences of Induction and Mentor Programs by New Teachers Working in Title 1 Schools: An Exploration of Views and Teaching Practices.

Principal Investigator: Brandy Nelson
Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Dr. Lance Fusarelli

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of the study is to listen to new teacher perspectives about their induction and mentor programs while working in a school serving a large population of students living in poverty. The researcher wants to know how these new teachers are supported in their instruction practices and emotional well-being. Additionally, the researcher wants to hear from new teachers how these supports shaped their current views about teaching in their schools and the teaching strategies they use with their students. This study is important because several school districts across the country are starting to serve more students living in poverty. These schools have their own challenges. Creating stronger induction and mentor programs for teachers working in these schools could improve the effectiveness, retention and quality of these new teachers.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in either a focus group, an interview or both. All participants in this study are high school teachers in their first three years of teaching in Title 1 schools in the school district. Focus groups and individual interviews will be conducted after school hours and off school grounds. During the focus group portion of the study, you will complete a quick questionnaire to gather demographic data related to the study. The researcher will ask a series of questions to you. The focus group will last 60 minutes. You will be introduced to the study at the start of the group interview, reminded that you do not have to agree with the other participants, encouraged to share your experiences with your induction and mentor programs, and encouraged to talk one at a time. You will be given a copy of the interview guide with questions for the interview. During the individual interviews, you will participate in a series of
questions from the researcher. The individual interviews will be 60 minutes. You will be introduced
to the study at the start of the individual interview, encouraged to share your experiences with your
induction and mentor programs, and encouraged to talk freely. You will be given a copy of the
interview guide with questions for the interview. All interview questions are open-ended. All
participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of their fellow participants during the focus group.
Any information shared in the focus group should be treated as private and should not be shared with
anyone outside of the focus group. All focus groups and individual interviews will be audio-
recorded.

Risks
During the focus groups, you may not agree with other members of the focus group. You are
encouraged to share your thoughts about your induction and mentor programs with the group and the
researcher. The individual interviews are intended to be private and to dig deeper, exploring your
experiences as a new teacher. The research questions include sensitive topics around psychological
supports and current views about working in a Title 1 school.

Benefits
Many school districts have implemented teacher induction and mentor programs in an effort to
improve the quality and retention of all teachers, including teachers working in Title 1 schools. This
study will solicit the unique perceptions of those teachers working in these schools. Many studies
regarding teacher induction and mentor programs do not include the perceptions of these teachers in
the studies. Examining teachers in aggregate presumes that induction and mentor programs are
impacting all teachers in the same way. Given that some teachers in Title 1 schools face different
challenges than their peers in other settings, it is important to take a closer look at this subgroup of
teachers. Findings from this study could lead to recommendations for professional development
designers about how they might adjust their mentor and induction programs to influence the various
outcomes of those teachers working in the highest-needs schools. In short, there is no direct benefit
expected to the participants, but the knowledge gained by the study could help teachers through the
development of stronger induction and mentor programs for teachers.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data
will be stored securely on a password-protected computer. No reference will be made in oral or
written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any
study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide. All
participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of their fellow participants during the focus group.
Any information shared in the focus group should be treated as private and should not be shared with
anyone outside of the focus group. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, however the researcher will
make efforts to keep information confidential.

Compensation
For participating in this study you will receive no compensation. If you withdraw from the study
prior to its completion, you will not receive compensation.
What if you have questions about this study?
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Brandy Nelson, at bnelson.temp@gmail.com, or 917-532-9975.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator at dapaxton@ncsu.edu or by phone at 1-919-515-4514.

I Do Not Wish To Participate
“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I do NOT agree to participate in this study.”

Subject's signature_______________________________________  Date _________________
Investigator's signature____________________________________  Date _________________

Consent To Participate in the Focus Group
“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature_______________________________________  Date _________________
Investigator's signature____________________________________  Date _________________

Consent To Participate in the Individual Interview
“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature_______________________________________  Date _________________
Investigator's signature____________________________________  Date _________________