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Effects of mentoring preservice teachers on inservice teachers in professional development school environments

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2009

ABSTRACT

Effects of Mentoring Preservice Teachers on Inservice Teachers in
Professional Development School Environments

by

Marianne Pratschler
M.A., Montclair State University, 1994
B.S., Centenary College, 1979

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education
Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership

Walden University
August 2009

ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities collaborte with P-12 public schools in professional

development school (PDS) partnerships to improve teacher training, provide professional

development for inservice teachers, improve student achievement, and promote action

research. Most research has been done on advantages for preservice teachers and for

students in classrooms. The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand

inservice teachers' mentoring experiences in order for a local college to support and

enrich the professional lives of inservice teachers. Research questions addressed inservice

teachers' perceptions regarding mentoring interactions, effects on their own classroom

practices, and professional growth. The purposeful sample was comprised of 17 mentor

teachers from 3 elementary schools that had PDS partnerships with a local college.

Individual interviews and school cohort focus group transcripts were coded and analyzed

using a data analysis spiral. The researcher also collected unobtrusive data relevant to

professional development activities in the PDSs. Results indicated that mentor teachers

viewed mentoring experiences as positive and felt rejuvenated. Participants noted that

reciprocal learning took place and that they had grown professionally. The local college

has implemented changes and plans to continue to improve programs based of the study

findings. Other colleges and universities can utilize the study results and the PDS model

to improve inservice teachers' mentoring experiences. Inservice teachers may be

empowered by successful mentoring experiences to create change in their schools as they

take leadership roles, engage in action research, and promote academic success for all

learners in the 21st century.

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UMI Number: 3369791

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my granddaughter, Adrena Charli Shellhouse, who deserves caring, competent, and qualified teachers who find as much joy in their teaching as Adrena finds in learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

So many people contributed to making my dream of doctoral study come true. Walden's Ed. D. program taught me so much and introduced me to some astounding people. My personal and professional cadre has been my mainstay throughout this extraordinary process. I am grateful to:

- Dr. Cheryl Keen, chair of my doctoral committee. Serendipity brought us together and the match was perfect. She was a mentor in every sense of the word, and she helped me do my best work.

- Dr. Carole Pearce, who came to our rescue in the later part of the process and worked tirelessly to provide me with superb feedback.

- Dr. Simon Saba, colleague, friend, and technical guru, who read countless versions of my work, listened to my concerns, and provided commonsense suggestions.

- Dr. Barbara-Jayne Lewthwaite, who believed in me from the very beginning, and teaches every day of her life, no matter what her position.

- All current and former members of the Education Department at Centenary College, who shared all my joys and frustrations, always taking a genuine interest in my work, and taking care of me; Emily Williams Anderson and Geri Ann Nestman who assisted with the focus groups and gave me their "inside – out" points of view.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Education in the United States was under scrutiny from many quarters during the 20th century. Perhaps the most influential report critical of the effectiveness of public schools was *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. The National Commission studied all facets of public education, including the content taught in schools, aspects of teaching, and support for educational reform (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Educational organizations took the challenges presented by *A Nation at Risk* very seriously. These groups undertook research studies on many educational issues to support and promote reform efforts in public schools.

Research studies examined schools' impact on student achievement; results indicated that specific schools had positive impact of their students' accomplishments (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack, 2001; Reeves, 2002). While individual schools were effective, more research was needed on the factors that comprise effective schools. Having specific goals proved effective when schools established goals for the school as a whole, and goals applied to individual students (Marzano, 2000). Successful schools had good communication structures inside and outside their buildings, which fostered greater community engagement in the schools (Marzano, 2003). However, effective curriculum

was more difficult to implement due the vast content areas to be covered and limited resources (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000; Schmoker, 2001).

One reason research on effective teaching has been difficult is that students come to classrooms with a wide range of capacities for learning and varied levels of motivation. Diverse student backgrounds affect student achievement and success (Marzano, 2000). However, in every classroom teachers become mediating factors in the learning that takes place. Teachers combine instructional strategies and classroom management to engage students and implement district curricula (Marzano, Gaddy, & Dean, 2000). Research has indicated that effective teachers have more strategies at their disposal to use in meeting the needs of diverse student populations than their less effective peers (Anderson, Greeno, Reder, & Simon, 2000; Barrell, 2001). Making it possible for all 3.7 million teachers in the U. S. (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007) to be proficient in providing sound opportunities to learn to all students has been a focus of educational reform since the publication of *A Nation at Risk.*

One of the innovations, which arose from the scrutiny of schools and teachers, is Professional Development Schools (PDS). Professional development activities for inservice teachers, supplied as part of PDS programming, have been connected to increases in student achievement (Fischetti & Larson, 2002; Frey, 2002; Glaeser, Karge, Smith, & Weatherill, 2002; Marchant, 2002). Another signature feature of PDS partnerships is collaborative training of preservice teachers. Preservice teachers in PDS placements have supervised clinical experiences with strong inservice teacher mentors (Mantle-Bromley, 2002). Preservice teachers gain an understanding of teaching and

learning, and build skills that could guide them toward active participation in their schools throughout their careers (Guadarrama, Ramsey, & Nath, 2002).

Although inservice teachers affect preservice teachers by being strong mentors, and utilize professional development training for the benefit of their students, the benefits for the inservice teachers themselves has not been the focus of research studies. This current study will investigate the perspectives and perceptions of inservice teachers about their experiences mentoring preservice teachers in PDS environments. If inservice teachers continue sharing their students and their classrooms with preservice teachers, it would be fitting to acknowledge their needs and continue to support their personal professional growth.

Background of the Study

In 1983, the Carnegie Corporation published a report entitled *A Nation at Risk.* This report presented a critique of education in the United States. Many of the findings were no surprise to professional educators, but the urgent tone of the document pointed to a need for immediate action. The Carnegie Corporation followed up with creation of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession.

The Task Force issued its report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century* (1986). This report identified the teaching profession as needing redesign and revitalization in order to promote the achievement of more demanding standards for learners competing globally in the new millennium. Fifteen years later the issues of teaching and learning came to the forefront again with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002). Although NCLB addresses wide-ranging topics such as the use of

new technologies, school safety, high-stakes testing for accountability, and parental options, Title II of the law focuses on improving teacher quality. The NCLB law gave states and local districts more latitude in the provision of professional development activities. While the states and districts tried to meet their specific local needs for strengthening teaching knowledge and skills, the federal government wanted assurances that effective, research-based classroom practices would be promoted. Accountability would tie improvements in student academic achievement to assessment of teacher effectiveness (US Department of Education, 2002). The commitment to highly qualified teachers in every classroom is not arbitrary; educational research has suggested that classroom teachers can have a meaningful impact on student achievement and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003).

Traditionally, professional development for teachers has been provided through school-based workshops, district-wide training days, and outside conference attendance. However, the effectiveness and consistency of professional development being delivered in this fashion has not been verified (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; US Department of Education, 2000). There have been efforts to explore alternative professional development constructs and activities. Professional development efforts were embedded in the schools and classrooms and included study groups, professional learning communities, mentoring, action research, collaboration, leadership efforts, and reflection on day-to-day teaching and learning. When professional development addressed teachers' needs through authentic pathways, teachers were more likely to alter

their teaching behaviors (Angelides & Gibbs, 2006; Boudah, Blair, & Mitchell 2003; Kent, 2002).

College and university schools of education were urged to develop professional curricula for teacher preparation, provide more preservice teacher contact with the P-12 schools during their training, and develop a capstone fieldwork experience embedded in the schools (Carnegie Corporation, 2003). Throughout the 1980s, while the work of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession proceeded, many other organizations were campaigning for educational reform. Two organizations, the Holmes Group and the National Network on Educational Renewal (NNER), sponsored research that ultimately led to the creation of the PDS model (Abdal-Haqq 1998; Clark 1999; Darling-Hammond 2005).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was established in 1954. NCATE focuses on performance-based accreditation of college/university teacher preparation programs. The emphasis is on verifying the provision of content knowledge and pedagogy to deliver content effectively. The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) was established in 1997 to meet the needs of small college/university teacher preparation programs. TEAC looks for evidence of the preparation of competent, caring, and qualified professional educators. In New Jersey, the Department of Education is requiring the all colleges/universities that prepare teachers have their programs accredited by either NCATE or TEAC by 2009. NCATE developed a handbook (2001a) and a set of standards for PDSs (2001b) for evaluation of PDS cooperative relationships. PDS arrangements have the following goals in common:

1. To create a partnership between the school and the college

2. To reframe the teacher preparation programs

3. To provide professional development for inservice teachers

4. To model best practices that lead to higher student achievement

5. To encourage opportunities for inquiry learning for students and faculty at both institutions (NCATE, 2001a).

Ideally, there are advantages for the participants at all levels. Evaluation of the outcomes for PDS participants is encouraging. Levine (2002) and Teitel (2004) have reviewed the research on PDSs for NCATE and found the results to be promising. Independent research on the effects of the PDS model on students showed rises in standardized test scores when data were compared to non-PDS students (Castle, Arends, & Rockwood, 2008; Klinger, Leftwich, van Garderen, & Hernandez, 2004). Teachers interviewed in these studies attributed the increases in student scores to the PDS partnership activities.

Improved teacher preparation and quality inservice professional development exist under a variety of labels besides PDS (Abdal-Haqq, 2001). The names include professional practice schools (Levine, 1996), professional development centers (Clark, 1999), and laboratory schools, portal schools, or clinical schools (Aldritch, 2001). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) described a PDS as a learning community where colleges and schools work collaboratively to maximize the learning of students, train quality preservice teachers, enhance the professional development of all teachers, and investigate best practices (AACTE, 2004).

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) has been working to improve teaching quality since its inception in 1994. Several reports, including *What Matters Most* (Hunt, 1996), *Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching* (Darling-Hammond, 1997), *Studies of Excellence in Teacher Education* (Darling-Hammond, 2000), and *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children* (Hunt, 2003), identified professional practice schools as the structure to prepare teachers capable of guiding learning. Regardless of the nomenclature, each format focuses on strengthening the P-12/college relationship to close the gap between course theory and classroom practice and improving preservice teacher education. In all of the possible iterations, the professional development schools were presented as the means to strengthen inservice teacher professional development as well.

In a research study on contextual teaching and learning, Taymans and associates (Taymans, Tindle, Freund, Ortiz, & Harris, 2006) used surveys, interviews, observations, and focus groups to investigate PDS influence on preparation of preservice teachers. The preservice teachers have flourished under the full-year PDS experience. Preservice teachers learned to design and deliver student-centered instruction and managed diverse student populations. This research study also looked at novice teachers trained under the PDS model and found that those novice teachers exhibited the same skills as more veteran teachers and had additional experience in leadership roles.

University/college faculty also benefit from the PDS experience. Though a series of journal entries, meeting notes, observations, and conference notes, Gimbert and Nolan (2003) were able to discern the perceptions of university faculty regarding their

supervisory roles. The university faculty felt that there were significant differences in their roles as preservice supervisors in the PDS environment compared to a non-PDS environment. The faculty identified improved relationship building, more focus on individual children, additional emphasis on goal setting and, overall, and a more intense role as the university supervisor.

A PDS partnership in Kentucky developed an evaluation model to assess the effect that a PDS environment had on its teachers and students. The university, the school district, and the local teachers' union collaborated to do classroom observations and interviews to compare teachers in PDS schools with teachers in non-PDS schools. The researchers collected data on classroom instruction. The data on both groups of teachers were similar, but the classroom environment and quality of instruction of the PDS teachers were rated higher (Petrosko & Munoz, 2002).

In the PDS partnerships developed by Centenary College, there is a seamless, full-year teaching and learning experience for the emerging novice education students. During the first semester of their final year, the preservice students ease into teaching assignments under the guidance of veteran inservice teachers. Preservice teachers then continue in the same placement in their second semester with the same inservice teacher and the same students, gradually taking total responsibility for the teaching and learning in the classroom (Centenary College Education Department Policy Handbook, 2009). Having been thoroughly prepared through coursework and meeting departmental, state, and national standards, the preservice teachers are ready for the classroom. They perform very well in their teaching roles, as evidenced by the evaluations done formatively by

cooperating teachers, college supervisors, and seminar professors during the field

placement (Centenary College Department Summit, 2009). However, if any supervisor,

mentor teacher, or seminar professor detects an issue, the issue is addressed immediately

and collaboratively to ensure preservice teacher success. At the completion of every

semester, the department collects summative evaluation forms. By the end of the

capstone fieldwork experience, all evaluators attest to the readiness of the teacher

candidates for certification and employment in education.

The teacher-training program at Centenary College provides coursework in

content knowledge, research-based pedagogy, and best practices. Potentially, the

preservice teachers have much to share with their inservice mentors, and conversely there

is much for inservice teacher mentors to gain from the experience. There are modest

extrinsic rewards for inservice teachers who have accepted the responsibilities of

mentoring preservice teachers. However, the intrinsic rewards may be more valuable

from the viewpoint of those inservice teachers. Currently Centenary College has no way

of knowing if the inservice teacher mentors are indeed benefiting from the fundamental

nature of the mentoring relationship, either personally or professionally. With knowledge

of inservice teacher perceptions of professional gains that may accrue from the mutual

learning relationships in the PDS partnerships, the college could support inservice teacher

mentors more effectively. This researcher designed the study to ascertain the effects on

and benefits for the inservice teachers who share their classrooms, their students, and

their expertise with preservice teachers. Documentation of this data can lead to the

building of professional development activities to meet the needs of all inservice

teachers. If, because of these activities inservice teachers implement research-based techniques and strategies in their classrooms, diverse learners at all levels could benefit.

Problem Statement

Schools in the 21st century are very challenging places to teach and learn. The demands made on administrators, teachers, and students multiply every year. No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) requires increasing levels of accountability. P-12 schools are expected to produce citizens with the specialized skills to participate in the current and ever-changing knowledge-based global economy. The teachers must cover the standards-based curriculum and prepare students for high stakes testing, all while taking into consideration cultural diversity, different learning styles, and special needs. The instructional methods and strategies must be effective and efficient. If teachers do not have the prerequisite knowledge and skills, then it is up to the school districts to provide the leadership – and means – for teachers to acquire those skills.

All of this has created a dilemma for institutions of higher learning charged with training the next generation of classroom teachers. If new teachers are to be fully prepared to meet these and other challenges of careers in the teaching profession, then colleges and universities must be proactive in addressing teacher education issues. Since the education reform movement of the 1980s, teacher training has been under critical review.

The National Council on Teaching and America's Future worked through partnerships with national organizations, policymakers, state agencies, school districts, business leaders, and the higher education community to synthesize findings regarding

teacher quality. The council concluded that, in general, teacher education programs at more than 1,200 colleges and universities were not meeting the needs of future and current teachers for 21st century classroom realities (Hunt, 1996).

Levine (2006) oversaw a 4-year project for the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. Levine used a comprehensive survey to examine schools of education at colleges and universities. Areas addressed included curricular issues, the composition of faculty, admissions requirements for potential preservice teachers, standards for graduation and certification, and program assessment procedures. The analysis pointed to a need for renewed emphasis on classroom teachers. Constructive action plans were needed to improve teacher quality (Levine, 2006).

Veteran and novice teachers alike are expected to implement state-of-the-art strategies, methodologies, and technologies that they themselves may never have experienced as learners. School districts often enlist the teacher training colleges/universities to provide on-going professional development activities for the inservice teachers. Teacher education programs at colleges and universities need to be responsive to the demands of educating diverse learners at all levels (University of Washington, 2009).

Partnerships between colleges/universities and public school districts can provide the ideal conduit for meeting the needs of all parties while utilizing the strengths and expertise that exist on both campuses. The teacher education institutions need outlets in which preservice teachers can have structured teaching experiences, and the P-12 schools need access to continuing sources of professional development. Professional

Development Schools (PDS) can provide the environment to meet the needs of all

learners.

<div align="center">Purpose of the Study</div>

There is a lack of substantive research on the effects of the mentoring relationship

on inservice mentor teachers in PDS. This researcher's research study focused on the

experience of the inservice cooperating teacher in the mentoring relationship. The goal of

this study is to ascertain, in particular, what facets of the mentoring relationship inservice

teachers perceive engender change in their own pedagogy and professional growth. This

researcher hypothesized that the interaction between the preservice teachers and the

inservice teachers results in increased content knowledge, improved pedagogy, and

greater development of new teaching skills for the inservice teachers. This may be due to

the collaborative character of the relationship and flexible, yet focused support of learners

at all levels in PDS communities. The figure below illustrates the way interaction in the

classrooms can conceivably operate.
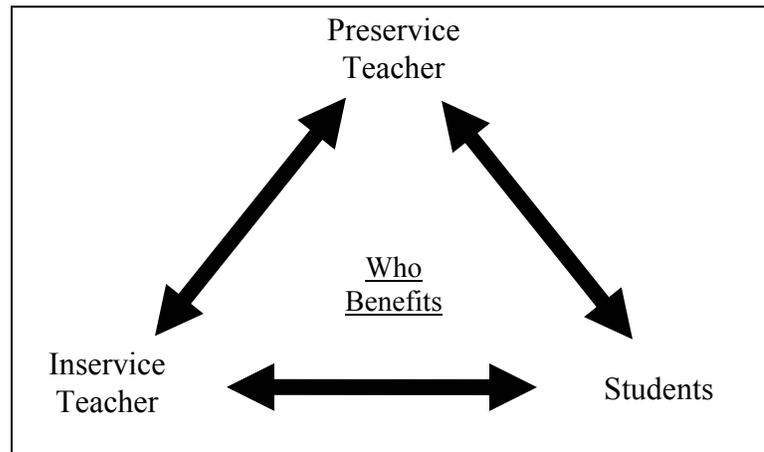
Figure 1. Reciprocal nature of the benefits of interaction in a PDS classroom

What follows is a discussion of the research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions, that affect this research study. Common terms used throughout the study are also defined.

Nature of the Study

This phenomenological research included one-on-one interviews with 17 mentor teachers from three schools in northwest New Jersey. Each school has a PDS partnership with Centenary College. This researcher conducted interviews at the school sites. Focus group sessions with each school cohort took place to clarify and expand the data from the individual interviews. This researcher also gathered unobtrusive data regarding study participants' engagement in professional development activities sponsored by the college. Data were coded and analyzed through a data analysis spiral process. A detailed discussion of the data gathering and analysis is contained in section 3 of this study.

Research Questions

Reading in the field about the issues surrounding the benefits for inservice teachers in PDS environments, professional work experience, and interactions with school districts led to the development of the following question and subquestions for this doctoral study:

Research question: How do inservice teachers perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional practices?

Subquestions:

1.   In what ways do inservice teachers perceive the interaction among the preservice teachers, inservice teachers and college faculty in relationship to any application of new instructional strategies in their classroom?

2.   How do inservice teachers perceive the mentoring experience in relationship to any application to their own professional growth?

Many aspects of PDS partnerships have not been investigated fully and therefore may be underutilized; the effect of the mentoring relationship on inservice cooperating teachers is one of those aspects. The research questions focused on the experience of the inservice cooperating teacher in the mentoring relationships. This researcher would like to understand the interaction between preservice teachers and inservice teachers and the inservice teachers' perceptions of the effects on their own professional growth.

Conceptual Framework

The Education Department at Centenary College espouses constructivism (Bruner, 1966; 1986; 1990; 1996) as a theoretical framework for its teacher training program. The program utilized the construct that learning is an active process where preservice teachers build new knowledge based on their current understanding. The department faculty focused on making connections between theory and practice to foster new understanding in the preservice teachers. Faculty tailor their on-campus teaching strategies to student responses, encourage preservice teachers to analyze and interpret information, and reflect their experiences.

The inservice mentor teachers are encouraged to follow the Education Department model, involving preservice teachers in the day-to-day learning community of their classrooms rather than expecting imitation or repetition of their teaching styles. The PDS construct fosters settings in which preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and students are actively engaged in learning, problem solving, and collaboration with others. Just as the inservice teachers act as a guides or facilitators for their students, they can, in their mentor roles, encourage preservice teachers to challenge, question, and formulate their own ideas, opinions, and conclusions about teaching.

To provide a solid foundation for this study, this researcher needed to be familiar with the literature regarding reform efforts in the field of teacher training and the evolution of the PDS construct as reform model. Immersion into the current research on the effects of PDS partnerships provided understanding of outcomes for students, preservice teachers, and inservice teachers. With this knowledge, this researcher examined the experience of inservice teacher mentors. Gathering data on mentor teachers perceptions could identify whether a PDS experience was natural, relevant, productive, or empowering.

Department faculty could address challenges and issues that arose from the analysis of the data. Faculty would assess their own practice, improve their work with preservice and inservice teachers, and revise the teacher training and professional development programs offered by the college. The result would be PDS partnerships developing the kinds of schools and teaching practices which lead to successful learning experiences for all students, preparing them to effect social change in the future.

Definition of Terms

Capstone course: In academic terms, the final course in a major program. For preservice teachers that course is the student teaching field experience.

Inservice teachers: Those teaching professionals who are employed by school districts.

Learning community: An environment where all parties are working and learning together for the ultimate academic success of students in P-12 classrooms.

Mentor: In the teacher training program, an inservice teacher who takes on the responsibility of modeling good teaching and guiding preservice teachers through their field experiences. Also known as cooperating teacher.

Peer teaching: The work of inservice teachers when colleges/universities partner with P-12 public schools to train new teachers by integrating preservice teachers into classrooms for extended fieldwork experience.

Preservice teachers: Undergraduate or post-baccalaureate students involved a teacher training and certification program which culminates in student teaching field experience and leads to state licensure.

Practicum: A limited fieldwork experience, prior to student teaching that introduces preservice teachers to classroom practices and procedures.

Professional development: Workshops, seminars, and training provided by school district for inservice teachers to maintain and improve quality classroom practices.

Student teaching: The capstone course in the teacher-training program that blends theory and pedagogy with classroom experiences. The preservice teachers assume all duties and responsibilities under the supervision of the classroom inservice mentor.

Assumptions

All inservice teachers who participated in the mentoring of preservice teachers had standards-based training provided by the college. This included on-campus seminars at the beginning of each semester in which they were mentor teachers. The inservice mentors were familiar with the *Centenary College Handbook for Practicum and Student Teaching* (2008), which the preservice teachers delivered when the contracts were signed and the college supervisors reviewed at courtesy visits. This was to ensure consistent experiences for all participants.

Because the sample included only tenured teachers, the researcher assumed that inservice teachers were secure in their teaching positions and were considered permanent members of the schools' teaching staff. It was also assumed that all of the inservice teachers assigned a preservice teacher were doing so willingly or volunteered to take on this responsibility for a full year. This researcher assumed that the mentor teachers were flexible and amenable to the potential disruption of regular classroom routines due to the addition of preservice teachers and college supervisors to the classroom environment.

Delimitations

Inservice teachers who have mentored preservice teachers from Centenary College were chosen for this research study because they have had extended relationships with those preservice teachers. Thirty-eight schools in 12 public school districts in the four counties of northwest New Jersey have collaborative PDS relationships with Centenary College. This researcher solicited support from district and building

administrators. Tenured inservice mentors were targeted for inclusion in the study. There was the potential of 250 inservice teachers in the population.

All other constituencies of the PDS relationship were excluded from this research project. While the effects of the PDS learning community on the preservice teachers, students in the classroom, teacher training program faculty, and other interested parties would be valuable, this researcher is limiting the target population to the inservice mentor teachers.

Limitations

The geographical area for this study was narrow. The teachers considered for the study were confined to schools in PDS partnerships with only one college. Therefore, the claims, which resulted from this study, were limited.

This researcher is an assistant professor in the education department of the college that sponsors the PDS program. The author also supervised practicum and student teachers in some of the PDS schools. To minimize bias, several safeguards were put in place. A college colleague agreed to take the role of peer debriefer to ask questions and ensure accuracy. The participants did member checking, read the resulting interpretations, had the opportunity to agree or disagree, and validated the researcher's personal interpretations. In addition, the researcher put aside any preconceived ideas about the study through the process of bracketing and the triangulation of the results.

Significance of the Study

The PDS concept was developed in an effort to promote substantive educational reform. In the 21st century, every student needs and deserves an education to prepare him/her to be a successful member of the global community. That requires 21st century schools where students are taught by 21st century teachers. Each potential teacher is entitled to be prepared for the challenges and rewards he/she will encounter in the classroom. Additional best practices, effective strategies, and new techniques may emerge from this study; sharing this information with educators throughout the area, region, state, and nation could lead to meaningful educational reform and lifetime success for many students. In tandem with benefits for the novice professionals, institutions of higher learning, district and building administrators, and teachers themselves can utilize the information for on-going professional development activities. The results garnered from this research can be used to provide on-going support for and enrichment of the careers of inservice teachers. Continuing satisfaction with their work and taking leadership responsibilities in their schools, the inservice teachers would promote effective PDS learning communities.

The inservice to preservice mentoring relationship is a reciprocal exchange of knowledge, strategies, and skills. If the inservice teachers perceive their experiences as beneficial, they may feel empowered to create change in their schools as they take leadership roles in curriculum reform, perhaps build assessment models, or engage in action research. The preservice teachers could, at some later time, become involved in this continuous process of professional development, and choose to be mentors for new

preservice teachers. Hopefully the Walden University goals of teacher leadership and social change will flourish in this environment.

Summary and Transition

Teacher education came under scrutiny during second half of the 20th century and the PDS construct was one solution for improving the delivery of quality teachers to classrooms. Students in PDS classrooms where preservice teachers are practicing their teaching skills benefit from the collaboration that takes place between the preservice and inservice teachers. Preservice teachers flourish in the learning community in PDSs. Research on the connection between the PDS model and successful teacher training has been plentiful. Although inservice mentor teachers are recognized as crucial components of effective teacher training, the effects and benefits of those experiences for inservice teachers has not been fully researched. The purpose of this study was to solicit perceptions of inservice teachers regarding the effects of mentoring relationships on their own professional growth in the PDS environment. Section 2 will review the literature on the concepts and areas of research considered foundational in this study. The review includes reform of teacher training and the evolution of PDS as a solution to address teacher-training issues. In addition, literature on effects of PDS on preservice teachers, students, and inservice teachers was reviewed.

Section 3 will present the methodology of the study. The paradigm utilized is phenomenology. The suitability of a phenomenological research design to explore the research questions will be delineated. The researcher gave particular attention to the context of the study, criteria for selecting appropriate participants, and the ethical

protection of all parties. The role of the researcher will be addressed as well as the triangulation of information for a valid study.

Section 4 will offer the results of this phenomenological research study. The methods used to gather and record the data will be delineated. The quality of the evidence that generated the coding and analysis of the data will be discussed. Finally, outcomes of the data analysis will be offered to answer the question: How do inservice teachers perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional practices?

Section 5 will present conclusions made based on the data amassed during this research study. The researcher interpreted the findings and related them to the body of literature in the field. The implications for social change will be discussed, along with recommendations for action that may move educational reform forward. The researcher will reflect on personal learning in relationship to the study and make suggestions for further study in this topic area.

SECTION 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The focus of this research project is to ascertain inservice teachers' perceptions of the mentoring experience when they share their classrooms and elementary/middle school students with preservice teachers during student teaching field experiences. In order to move forward with this research study, three areas of educational research needed to be explored: educational reform as it pertains to teacher training, PDS as a model for improving teacher training, and the effects on inservice teacher/mentors as a consequence of taking part in PDS preservice teacher training.

This researcher utilized a variety of databases to investigate all aspects of research questions. This included Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Education Research Complete, and Professional Development Collection under the EBSCO data base system. Search terms pursued included: educational reform, professional development schools, teacher training, inservice teachers, cooperating teachers, preservice teachers, student teachers, mentoring, adult learning, constructivism, collaborative practices, practicum, professional development, and learning community. The researcher used search terms singly and in combinations to broaden the research background for this study. Educational organization websites were also valuable in providing foundational information for follow-up. Primary organizations were the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the American Educational Research Association, the

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Carnegie Foundation, the

Holmes Partnership, the National Association of Professional Development Schools, the

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, the National Council on

Teaching and America's Future, the RAND Corporation, and the US Department of

Education.

<div align="center">Reform of Teacher Training</div>

In 1981, the U.S. Secretary of Education created the National Commission on

Excellence in Education. The commission had the responsibility to examine the quality of

education in the United States at all levels, compile their findings, and make

recommendations for both short and long-term improvements. The commission utilized

many sources of data, including testimony at eight meetings of the commission, six

public hearings, and a series of meetings at Department of Education Regional Offices.

There were also two panel discussions and a symposium, along with a search for laudable

educational programs that were using good teaching and learning practices. In addition to

examining existing analyses of issues in education, the commission requested that 44

educators research topics of interest to the commission's mandate. Forty-one papers on a

variety of topics were presented to the commission (National Commission on Excellence

in Education, 1983).

One of those papers addressed certification and accreditation (Gardner & Palmer,

1982). This position paper provided background information, delineated challenges in the

area of teacher training and certification, and made recommendation for the commission

to consider. Gardner and Palmer gathered information from across the United States

about (a) college teacher training programs and the rules governing them, (b) teacher shortages and attracting higher quality candidates from diverse groups, (c) program approval and licensing requirements/renewal, and (d) the facets of extended teacher training programs. Gardner and Palmer took views and opinions of college faculty and experienced teachers at all levels into consideration as they formulated their report to the commission. Resulting recommendations highlighted a need for an extended, clinical field placement for all preservice teachers. This experience would entail as much as a year of teaching in a regular classroom under the careful guidance of master teachers. College supervisors and master teachers would collaborate to ensure that the preservice teachers could perform effectively before licensure would be awarded.

Another position paper requisitioned by the National Commission focused on future teacher training. Howey (1982) described the development of teacher education from an historical perspective and reviewed the literature on the state of the teaching profession as it was in the 1970s and very early 1980s. Howey discussed the need for institutions of teacher education to be connected to local school districts, and for teachers to assume leadership roles in creating and presenting inservice professional development in their schools. Additionally, Howey suggested that inservice teachers should have a role in guiding future teachers in concert with their college professors in the teacher training programs. Howey urged that there be an extension of the inservice teacher's role to include assisting college faculty in developing the curriculum for the teacher training programs. The idea of the inservice teachers sharing course instruction with college faculty was another concept that Howey promoted. Howey also encouraged thoughtful

assistance for cooperating teachers, providing them with on-going support, and rewarding them generously for these important, additional responsibilities.

The third position paper relevant to this study was an analysis of the issues surrounding professional development for inservice teachers (Yarger, 1982). Yarger was impacted by testimony heard at some of the National Commission hearings. As a result, he endeavored to provide a context for a review of the literature on inservice education for teachers. When Yarger searched the literature, there were many descriptions of inservice programming. However, the focus of district-sponsored professional programs was on district-wide goals as opposed to assistance for the teachers in daily instructional tasks. Case studies were limited to evidence such as documents, interviews, and personal observations, but there were no analyses of efficacy of the programs. Yarger came to the conclusion that inservice education was not a high research priority. Additionally, when Yarger looked for studies of colleges that offered professional development for inservice teachers, there were none. When Yarger searched college catalogues, there were programs connected to advanced degrees or certifications, but those programs did not focus on teachers' interests, and there was no way to assess the effectiveness of the programs.

Yarger also looked at five inservice programs which were described as exemplary, analyzing them according to characteristics of good quality inservice education: (a) teacher involvement in decision making regarding programs; (b) attention to school and district needs; (c) focus on improving student learning; (d) providing skills that teachers could implement in their classrooms; and (e) feedback, coaching, and

observations once teachers had used new strategies in their classrooms. Yarger

recommended that colleges be more flexible in their offerings and develop programs to

meet the needs of districts and inservice teachers in this fashion (Yarger, 1982, pp.35-38).

After reading the position papers, listening to practitioners from all levels of the

education system, and analyzing presentations by many interested parties, the

commission completed and published the Carnegie report, *A Nation at Risk* (Carnegie

Corporation, 1983). The recommendations were in five categories: curriculum content,

the achievement expectations for students at all levels of schooling, instruction time

utilized in classrooms, the quality of teacher preparation programs and teacher classroom

practice, and administrative leadership of and fiscal support for all levels of education.

The commission considered the need for reform urgent, and noted that many educational

institutions were already moving forward with changes (Carnegie Corporation 1983).

Of particular interest to this researcher is the fourth recommendation, which was

about all facets of the teaching profession. The commission intended to promote the

improvement of teacher preparation, raise the level of professionalism, and make the

teaching field more rewarding as a career. This recommendation addressed seven distinct

areas; each one could be a stand-alone area for purposeful educational improvement. The

specific recommendations that spoke directly to the preparation of teachers indicated that

master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in

supervising teachers during their probationary years.

Although none of the information in the Carnegie report was new, essentially the

grim findings and the dire forecast for the future of education in the United States

brought these educational issues to the top of the national agenda. To meet the challenges presented by the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, the Carnegie Corporation created the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy in 1985 (Carnegie Corporation, 2003). The Forum established an advisory council of leaders from government, business, and education. The advisory council, in turn, empanelled a Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. This task force examined federal data, commissioned 12 papers on issues surrounding the preparation of teachers and the profession of teaching, and held several workshops. The task force issued a report (*A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century,* 1987*)* that set forth a proposed foundation for all teacher preparation programs. This foundation included a broad knowledge base, a content area specialty, knowledge of pedagogy, and fieldwork in schools.

In 2003, some organizations were examining the progress made addressing the recommendations of *A Nation at Risk* and achieving the goals of *A Nation Prepared.* The Carnegie Corporation lauded the progress made over 20 years, but acknowledged that there was "plenty of unfinished business" (Carnegie Corporation, 2003). The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also looked at the progress that had been made in the preceding 20 years. Although the AFT verified some student gains, a view of teaching as a profession had been slow to take root. The issues of equity in education for all students, standards for students and teachers, and professional level compensation continued to be central to reform moving forward (Feldman, 2003).

Evolution of Professional Development Schools

While the Carnegie Corporation focused on identifying problems and making

recommendations, other organizations worked on solutions. The Holmes Partnership

(originally the Holmes Group) was established in 1977 to counteract the trend of the best

United States colleges and universities eliminating schools of education. The consortium

formed by the Holmes Partnership included colleges and universities, national

professional organizations, schools, and community agencies. The group focused on

changing the way teachers were trained and restructuring teacher-training colleges to

make it happen, making teaching a true profession, and working collaboratively with

teachers to change their schools through inquiry (Holmes Partnership, 2006).

The Holmes Group Proposal for Educational Reform

A group of deans who were partners in the Holmes Group were frustrated with the

way teacher education was handled at their own universities. These deans wanted a

commitment from leading research institutions across the United State to develop and

implement significant changes in teacher preparation programs. The Holmes Group held

many meetings over a 15-month period, with 50 deans and chief academic officers

discussing all the issues surrounding teacher preparation. Additionally, 34 consultants

with special expertise joined the work at various points to enlighten the discussions of

complex or controversial topics (Holmes Partnership, 2007).

The work of the consortium resulted in a report published in 1986 – *Tomorrow's

Teachers.* This report provided a definition of good teaching, delineated barriers to

developing good teachers, and put forth a set of action steps to address the barriers. The

report highlighted teacher preparation that includes a liberal arts background, studies in pedagogy, and fieldwork experiences. The fieldwork experiences were structured so that preservice teachers were supervised by experienced inservice teachers. The study also recommended that, in order for there to be higher standards for entry into the teaching field, and for schools to be better places for everyone to work and learn, there needed to be a strong connection between the public schools and the colleges of education. For the first time the concept had a name – Professional Development School (PDS) (F. Murray, personal communication, July 16, 2008).

Between July and December 1988, six groups of 20 educators (teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and administrator educators) met in 2-day seminars at the Holmes Group headquarters at Michigan State University. These work sessions focused on changes that needed to take place in schools and teacher training institutions in order for the vision of *Tomorrow's Teachers* to take place. Holmes Group partners took ideas from the six seminars back to their campuses for discussions with college/university faculty and the staffs at schools with which they worked. Discussions centered on how the seminars' ideas and other issues could be expanded, enriched, and implemented in teacher training. At the same time, the Holmes Group brought together leaders in government, business, and education policy to review the rising concepts and offer insights and suggestions for reforming schools and teacher training (Holmes Partnership, 2007).

The Holmes Group Executive Board and the Tomorrow's Schools Steering Committee compiled the data, identified themes, and expanded on the concepts that

emerged from the focus groups. The results were principles for the design of PDS; these concepts were published in 1990 in the report, *Tomorrow's Schools.* The PDS was conceived as being dedicated to (a) professional development for preservice and inservice teachers in a learning community, (b) the use of inquiry and action research to develop effective classroom practice, and (c) promotion of higher achievement for all learners. Direct quotations from the seminar participants supported and elaborated on the PDS framework in ensuing chapters. The Holmes Group emphasized that *Tomorrow's Schools* was not a step by step plan for building schools and programs with prescribed criteria. Rather, the report promoted a concept and encouraged educators at all levels to think, discuss, and work collaboratively to develop PDS that addressed the learning community needs in their own areas (Holmes Partnership, 2007).

The Holmes Group partners knew that the substantial changes envisioned for PDSs could not be sustained without ample alterations to teacher education programs at colleges and universities. By the early '90s, the Holmes Group partner list had grown to 250 institutions. Deans and chief academic officers of many of these institutions actively participated in regional forums to consider carefully the adaptations needed to move reform of teacher training forward. By evaluating the diverse PDS collaboratives that had developed at partner institutions, a set of goals were constructed and were published in the third installment of the Holmes Group work on educational reform - *Tomorrow's Schools of Education (*TSE*),* published in 1995. This analysis focused on what changes the colleges of education needed to institute to move the PDS concept forward. The changes would encompass the professional education curriculum, the instructional

settings, the structure of fieldwork experiences, and the manner in which college faculty delivered teacher preparation programs. As each concept was delivered in the TSE document, the Holmes Group provided examples of similar ideas already in place in partnership schools and colleges. The key to implementing the PDS framework was the collaborative nature of the partnerships between school districts and colleges of education. The relationships between the constituencies were interdependent; success depended on everyone working together (Holmes Partnership, 2007).

The National Network for Educational Renewal Approach to Educational Reform

On behalf of the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER), John Goodlad and his colleagues did extensive research on the quality of teaching in schools and the quality of teacher training at colleges of education preparing the next generation of teachers. The researchers chose six types of teacher education colleges, based on Carnegie categories. This included public and private institutions. The United States was divided into eight regions and a state from each region was chosen to represent that region. From the states of California, Oklahoma, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Georgia 30 teacher education institutions were invited to participate in the study. One college declined the invitation, leaving the researchers with 16 public and 13 private institutions (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik, 1990). The researchers gathered data through a number of methods, examining documents from the participating colleges and universities. They made campus visits to observe institutional life and to observe teacher education activities in the cooperating schools and districts. Questionnaires were

distributed to students and faculty on the campuses. Researchers conducted numerous interviews with college presidents, provosts, chief academic officers, students, and professors in both the arts and sciences divisions of the colleges and the schools of education. On the school side, researchers interviewed supervisors, cooperating teachers, and other school personnel and put the findings together in a case history for each participating institution (Goodlad, Soder, & Sirotnik 1990).

The data analysis provided information regarding the general state of teacher education. The researchers found that no 2 institutions were exactly the same, but shared many commonalities. Based on the research results Goodlad developed an outline for the conditions necessary for a quality teacher preparation programs. The NNER became a conduit for creating partner schools to carry the vision of public school teachers and college education faculty working collaboratively. The mission of the partner schools was to improve the quality of education for their current students and future teachers. As an outcome, there was exemplary professional development for all teachers and school staff, clinical experiences for preservice teachers, and school-wide inquiry to increase the learning of all students (Goodlad, 1994).

<center>PDS as a Model for Improving Teacher Training</center>

In the current atmosphere of NCLB and the attendant focus on high stakes testing, student learning and achievement define school curriculum, affect teacher preparation programs, and affect the content and direction of professional development in the schools. There is wide variation in the specific structures in partnerships between schools and college teacher training programs (Abdal-Haqq, 1995). Abdal-Haqq also gathered

information on 300 PDS partnerships for a Clinical Schools Clearinghouse project

sponsored by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE).

Despite the programmatic differences among those structures, four common goals

emerged. Abdal-Haqq found that PDS learning communities focus on improvement in

learning for all students, preparation of preservice teachers, professional development for

inservice teachers, and inquiry-based research to improve teaching practices (AACTE,

2004; NCATE, 2001a).

 Some teacher education institutions have examined the effectiveness of their

programs in general terms. The University of Nebraska at Kearney had expanded the

field placement component of teacher training program as part of their membership in

NNER. The researchers conducted a survey of inservice mentor teachers, university

supervisors, and preservice teachers. The survey asked for the perceptions of all three

groups regarding preservice teacher understanding and proficiency in eight areas

considered crucial to teacher success. All three groups ranked the preservice teachers as

proficient in the areas of professional responsibility, instructional methods and objectives,

and standards. Planning lessons/activities and collaboration were perceived as

satisfactory, while classroom management, reflection, and assessment of the preservice

teachers were viewed as concerns by the three groups. The researchers planned to utilize

the results of the survey to continue to improve the university's teacher training program

(Ziebarth & Bovill, 2008).

 A research study at a mid-west state university sought to connect aspects of

educational reform and teacher education with what takes place in the PDS environments

(Cary, 2002). The researcher conducted interviews with university professors, administrators, and master teachers from school districts. Additionally, many documents were available for analysis. Themes regarding the value of PDSs as a solution to problems in teacher training emerged, including collaborative relationships, professionalization of the teaching field, shared power and decision-making, and improvement in teacher education.

When the Philadelphia school system was taken over by the state of Pennsylvania, five models, including PDS, were developed to meet the needs of low performing schools. Temple University stepped in to manage six of the 252 schools using the PDS model. The researchers were participant observers, visiting the classrooms weekly and audiotaping the observation. The researchers also took field notes and utilized national test data as part of their examination of the preparation of preservice teachers for teaching mathematics. The results indicate that teachers were better prepared to teach mathematics to the students because all interested parties had worked together to create a plan to meet everyone's needs (Leonard, Lovelace-Taylor, Sanford-DeShields, & Spearman, 2004).

Effects of the PDS Experience on Preservice Teachers

Supporters of the PDS model of teacher training have postulated that the PDS structure, with its extended clinical experience, would produce more successful preservice teachers. Researchers undertook a study comparing the outcomes for preservice teachers trained in a PDS environment to preservice teachers who went through a campus-based program (Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett & Miller, 2005). This 2-year study involved rating the preservice teachers on four measures during their student

teaching experience and follow-up with the two sets of teachers during their inaugural teaching year.

During the preservice year the participants were given an exam related to pedagogy, submitted a lesson plan for evaluation, participated in a videotaped lesson presentation, and completed a reflection piece on the video lesson. The researchers used the exam as an audit framework for the teacher-training program. Trained, experienced raters who were supervisors for the university scored other measures on rubrics. Two raters for interrater reliability scored all measures. Although the scores on all measures tended to be higher for PDS-trained preservice teachers, the effect of the PDS environment on preservice teachers, as measured by a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), was not as strong as might not have been expected[$F(3,17) = .117 \, p = .124$].

During the initial teaching year the participants were assessed on a lesson plan, a videotaped lesson, and a reflection following the video lesson. The same raters scored the items on the same rubrics. The results indicated a more dramatic influence of the PDS training. In this second MANOVA procedure the differences between the performance of PDS preservice teachers and the performance of campus-based preservice teachers was significant [$F(3, 22) = 3.43, p=.035$]. The researchers attributed accelerated professional development of the PDS-trained teachers to the immersion of preservice teachers in the learning community culture. The first-year teachers noted that they had spent more hours in school settings during the preservice experience. In addition, the PDS preservice program was more structured, offered increased technical expertise, and provided more

frequent clinical feedback (Ridley, Hurwitz, Hackett & Miller, 2005). Therefore, although the difference in performance on paper-and-pencil assessments between PDS trained and non-PDS trained teachers was negligible, performance in authentic teaching situations was what made the difference.

A researcher at Southwest Texas State University (Paese, 2003) investigated the impact of the PDS experience on preservice teachers at three points in their training – entry into student teaching, completion of the student teaching assignment, and at the completion of the first year of full-time teaching. Up until the start of the student teaching assignments, university coursework and preliminary fieldwork had been identical. The preservice teachers, divided into two groups, had two assessments prior to student teaching. The Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) and the Teacher Stress Scale were administered and no significant differences between the two groups were found. One group had PDS student teaching experiences and the other group had non-PDS placements. Researchers sent surveys to all participants before the start of the next school year. The participants were surveyed again at the conclusion of the first teaching year, and the efficacy scale was repeated.

Following the student teaching experience, PDS-trained group felt better prepared to teach and felt less stressed than non-PDS group. The survey at the beginning of the next school year found the entire PDS-trained group entering the teaching field, while approximately 20 % of the non-PDS group chose to pursue other career fields. Yet, the follow-up survey at the end of the first teaching year found that both groups had one-third

of the original cohorts not continuing in teaching; retention was still an issue (Paese, 2003).

The perceptions of the preservice teachers are important to consider. A study conducted at a PDS partnership in rural Connecticut centered on the first field experience of elementary preservice teachers. A questionnaire asked the participants to express how they felt about their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The results indicated that the preservice teachers felt that the PDS experience exposed them to excellent teaching models, increased their subject matter and teaching knowledge, and helped them learn classroom management techniques. About the students, the preservice teachers had opportunities to observe student characteristics and that this gave them confidence in their abilities to make a difference for students. As far as professionalism was concerned, preservice teachers perceived themselves as part of a collaborative team and that the field experience was a major contributing factor in their preparation to teach (Singh, 2006).

Although preservice teachers felt that they learned from their mentors in PDS settings, there may be issues that need to be addressed through mentoring relationships. In a study focused on providing data to enhance already positive PDS experiences, Aldritch (2001) utilized preservice teachers' classroom discussions and individual e-mail communications regarding the PDS experience. The preservice teachers were positive about the PDS experiences and valued authentic classroom opportunities with students and inservice teacher mentors. However, the preservice teachers expressed that they also experienced a level of stress due to the varied sets of expectations presented to them by

university faculty, building administrators, and classroom mentor teachers (Aldritch, 2001).

Action research is another feature of PDS that might affect inservice teachers. Two university faculty members in North Carolina did a multiple case study design project that evaluated effects of collaborating on research projects on preservice and inservice teachers (Levin & Rock, 2003). Five preservice teachers and their cooperating teachers volunteered to participate in the study. Each teacher pair was treated as a separate case study. Researchers conducted pre-, mid- and post-semester interviews with all participants. The planning sessions, mid-project and final evaluation meetings were videotaped and analyzed. The researchers also used preservice teacher documents, including inquiry action plans, final research reports, portfolios, and reflective writings. Researchers also used field notes and carried out cross-case analysis to search for themes and patterns.

The case study suggested that preservice teachers learned a great deal about the research process and the part collaboration plays in that process. On the personal level, the preservice teachers had a better understanding of themselves as teachers and the role of teacher as researcher. In addition, the preservice teachers felt that application of the inquiry results gave them insights into the needs of students, and made them more confident in teaching curriculum content (Levin & Rock, 2003).

To explore the impact of preservice grade level experience two researchers at the University of South Carolina conducted a study of preservice teachers who had had a PDS experience in a child development and family center. The study included interviews

and surveys of preservice teachers and focus groups with program graduates over a five-year period. Common themes arose from the data. Participants indicated that intensive clinical experiences gave them opportunities to connect with curriculum, create and deliver developmentally appropriate lessons, apply assessment methods, and test their skills in classroom management with solid support from the cooperating teachers and university faculty. This PDS had an added family focus. The PDS learning community focused on experiences for preservice teachers with children and families who came from varied ethnic backgrounds. Authentic assignments such as accompanying mentor teachers on home visits and conducting mock parent-teacher conferences helped preservice teachers learn how to relate to students' families. Study participants felt that they were more prepared to work with diverse students in the family context (Hooks & Randolph, 2004).

Another study with The Pennsylvania State University and four area PDSs expanded a study to understand the effects many people in PDS learning communities contribute to skill building for preservice teachers. The researcher, as a university supervisor, examined multiple facets of preservice teachers' PDS experience. Data included participant observations, document analysis, semistructured individual interviews of preservice teachers, and researcher field notes. Themes and people were categorized as formal or informal mentoring (Gimbert, 2001).

Preservice teachers included four groups as contributors to their learning: students in their classrooms, parents of students, their fellow preservice teachers, and other professionals in the building and district. Preservice teachers also utilized their own

reflective activities to support their learning. When identifying formal mentors, the preservice teachers named their cooperating teacher and other teachers in the PDS, their university supervisor, and university methods course instructors. Among this bevy of interested parties, the preservice teachers chose the cooperating teachers and the university supervisors as the primary mentors. Cooperating teachers were seen as extremely important for observation, modeling, interaction, and collaboration. The impact of cooperating teachers in all components of the PDS learning community should not be underestimated (Gimbert, 2001).

Preservice teachers are often concerned about classroom management issues. Siebert (2005) found that PDS initiatives provided preservice teachers with opportunities to apply theory in authentic contexts. The results indicated increased preservice teacher confidence and feelings of professionalism. However, this particular study did not address the possible impact that the inservice teacher mentors could have on preservice teachers' ability to practice classroom management skills in the classroom.

Effects of PDS Supported Inservice and Preservice Teachers on Students in PDS Classrooms

Some research demonstrated the effect of PDS structure and activities on the learning of students in PDS classrooms. In a longitudinal study in Michigan, Pine (2003) compared test scores of students from a PDS with a low-income, minority population to scores from the resident school district, the state of Michigan scores, and a school in an affluent district. Over 8 years of the study, average PDS student scores on reading, math, and science tests either met or exceeded average scores for the affluent school's student

scores. In addition to quantitative data, the researcher reviewed unobtrusive data such as student portfolios, school surveys, action research studies conducted by teachers and college faculty, meeting minutes, and documents related to the on-site teacher education program.

When Pine was looking to uncover reasons for the growth in student scores, several facets of the PDS environment proved to be influential. The active involvement of university faculty spurred teachers to continually evaluate and alter classroom practices. Learning community structure engendered a supportive school climate for teaching and learning. There was a commitment on the part of all participants, inservice and preservice teachers, university faculty, parents and administrators to examine student work continuously. This practice highlighted the central focus of learning and success for all students (Pine, 2003).

Researchers affiliated with San Diego State University examined effects that having student teachers in the classroom has on the children in those classrooms (Fisher, Frey, & Farnan, 2004). Researchers utilized pretest and posttest assessment data comparing reading and phonemic skills of kindergarten and first grade students in PDSs. Approximately 40 % of students had student teachers in their classrooms in the intervening period. All other factors were the same, including access to materials, graduate courses for inservice teachers, and professional development activities. Scores of students from classrooms with student teachers were significantly higher than assessment scores of students from classrooms without student teachers.

Teachers who had been responsible for mentoring student teachers looked at assessment results and researchers interviewed those teachers for their perspectives on the reasons for increased skills in reading. Cooperating teachers attributed gains to a number of things that student teachers did in the classrooms. Student teachers and their mentors experienced many effective teaching strategies through coursework and/or professional development seminars. Working together in classrooms, there were more opportunities for small group activities, one-on-one instruction, and feedback for all learners. The teachers also saw ways that student teacher assignments carried out in classrooms benefited students at all levels. The researchers verified teachers' evaluations of the impact of student teachers through weekly observations; they noted that the partners talked openly and often, and focused on raising student learning (Fisher, Frey, & Farnan, 2004).

Often PDSs have been promoted as a way to address the achievement gap in urban schools. Researchers conducted a study in Florida, comparing learning outcomes for students in an urban PDS with the achievement scores of students from schools with similar socioeconomic backgrounds. A group of researchers from universities across the United States did a research project with a PDS in Miami-Dade County (Klinger, Leftwich, von Garderen & Hernandez, 2004). The researchers tracked PDS student scores on the Stanford Achievement Test and the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Tests over an 8-year period. Researchers gathered additional data through semi-structured interviews of cooperating teachers, preservice teachers, university professors, administrators, and parents. Improvements were confirmed in three areas — academic,

affective/social, and general. Researchers used achievement scores to verify academic gains. Those scores (reported in descriptive form only) were consistently higher than scores of comparable non-PDS schools.

Adults attributed the gains to the PDS support through workshops, demonstration lessons, classroom observations, research-based practices and feedback. Researchers noted affective or social gains such as improved elementary student self-esteem, better student communication with teachers and staff, and increased student participation in cooperative learning activities. In the general area, participants noted improved attendance, and a commitment to whole school change (Klingner et al., 2004).

A research study conducted by researchers at the University of Georgia (Sztajn, Alexsaht-Snider, White, & Hackenberg, 2004) measured the impact of a mathematics education community. No professional development activities focused on math before this project took place. The teachers at the PDS chose mathematics as the project target, and met in groups to discuss mathematics, student learning and the teaching of math. Working with university faculty and graduate students, the group set out to improve math knowledge of teachers in order to meet mathematics needs of all students in the school. At the end of the first year of the project, an outside evaluator conducted focus group interviews to assess if there had been any impact from the initial year of specialized math activities.

The data indicated that teachers detected changes in themselves and in their students. The teachers connected their own growing enthusiasm for math with increased motivation to learn math, more interest in problem solving, greater use of math

communication skills, and a growing appreciation of mathematics among all students. The teachers credited the mathematics education community created in concert with university faculty, graduate students, and student teachers. Teachers perceived that increases in student learning were of paramount importance, and that was reflected in the ease with which ideas from the project could be implemented in their classrooms (Sztajn et al., 2004).

Twenty-one PDSs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were the focus in a research study done by faculty at Kansas State University. Based on previous performance on statewide tests, the PDS partners put together School Improvement Action Plans, with improvement in reading and math as their goals. The professional development support provided for classroom teachers and their student teachers was extensive. Throughout the 5 years that action plans were in place, teachers took great care to keep students and their learning as the hub of the initiative (Shroyer, Yahke, Bennett, & Dunn, 2007). To evaluate the impact of the intensive efforts, the researchers examined documents, conducted interviews with teachers and student teachers; surveyed parents, students, and teachers; and assessed state test results. In school-wide comparisons, there were consistently higher gains in reading and math than state averages. Additionally, there were also significant improvements in science and social studies. When questioned about these gains that were outside the scope of the action plans, participants felt that the project components kept students at the center of the PDS efforts, and all activities were connected to the curriculum and to state standards, so that changes flow smoothly.

Collaborative work helped schools extend their focus on total school improvement (Shroyer et al., 2007).

Researchers from two universities in Michigan (Mariage & Garmon, 2003) developed a PDS relationship with a rural district where achievement scores in four content areas were ranked last among 37 schools in that sector of the state. There were eight separate programs instituted to help teachers build their capacity through a learning community. Grade-level intervention assistance teams with daily common planning time participated in problem solving to meet the needs of students with learning or behavior challenges. Study groups supported community of practice ideals for inservice and preservice teachers. A summer school program provided intensive math and reading instruction, a program gifted and talented students, and professional development for teachers with university faculty and graduate students pursuing special education certification. Parents and community members participated in partnerships to make the educational process more accessible throughout the entire year. A program specific to needs of inservice mentors and their preservice teachers from the universities ran alongside a program to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers for the school district. Each school in the district established a professional development center in the building to provide access to technology and techniques for application in classrooms (Mariage & Garmon, 2003).

Each of the above programs was a stand-alone research project, with its own research questions, methods, and research design. However, the ultimate evaluation concerned student performance on mandated state tests. Test scores in reading and math

increased steadily over the 4 years of the study. The percent of *proficient* students

climbed as well, lessening gaps between the district scores and the state averages

(Mariage & Garmon, 2003).

Researchers in Texas studied perceptions of students in a PDS (Cowart &

Radenbacher, 2003) by conducting focus groups with students from Grades 4 through 8

in a PDS district. Interviewers asked students to rate qualities of the PDS and then vote

for the ones they valued most. In addition to focus groups, a survey was administered to

fourth through eighth graders in these schools and other PDS sites across the state.

Researchers analyzed the surveys and reported findings with descriptive statistics. The

data analyses yielded four themes from the students. Students articulated that university

professors should (a) teach student teachers good disciplinary methods, (b) teach student

teachers to recognize and accept difference among students, (c) teach student teachers

how to make learning interesting, and (d) teach student teachers how to organize and

prepare for anything.

The participating schools implemented plans to address all of these student

concerns. The student outcomes of the study project included improved student

attendance, enhanced student self-esteem, and more school pride. More significantly, the

passing rate on the state tests rose from 19 % to 80 % in 6 years, attributed to be a result

of the schools' participation in the PDS relationships. Researchers and educators valued

linking of student concerns with classroom practice. The student-centered approach

provided the most appropriate curriculum for all students (Cowart & Rademacher, 2003).

Not all studies of student outcomes in PDS partnerships found positive results. Researchers at the University of Maryland did a research study on 12 PDS. These schools met the stringent requirements of Eisenhower Professional Development grant funding and had been in PDS relationships for at least 4 years. The fact that students were learning in a PDS environment was considered a treatment. A control group of schools that were non-PDS were matched for demographic data, socioeconomic factors, and limited English proficiency. The researchers examined the data for score on state mandated tests over a 7-year period. Statistical tests were performed on the data, but there was no clear distinction between the two sets of schools. Neither one could be judged as superior because of state test scores (Cooper & Corbin, 2003).

RAND Education examined the PDS partnerships forged by the Morgantown campus of West Virginia University. Comparison of assessment outcomes and test scores was done on a county-by-county basis. Outcomes and standardized test scores were consistently higher among PDS students, when compared to non-PDS students (Gill & Hove, 2000). A Texas study utilized test scores and observations to assess the impact of the PDS experience for students. Students in PDS worked more frequently in cooperative groups, and spent more time on task. When researchers compared test scores of students before and after implementation of the PDS partnerships, gains students made after experiencing the PDS environment were substantial (Houston et al., 1999). These types of results are reported consistently by other researchers (Fisher, Frey, & Farnan, 2004; Gooddard, Hoy, and Hoy, 2000; Knight, Wiseman, & Cooper, 2000). Additionally, when

students were surveyed regarding the experience of having a student teacher in their classrooms on a regular basis, they reported being very satisfied (Campoy, 2000).

Effects on Inservice Teachers

The PDS framework provides teacher-training programs with opportunities to explore innovative ways to prepare perspective teachers. Two universities in Ohio developed a program to reformulate the preservice/inservice mentoring structure. Annually for 4 years, cooperating teachers were paired with two student teachers and an on-site university faculty liaison. This provided two teaching styles to emulate, two classes to interact with, and two teachers to do observations and provide clinical feedback in addition to university oversight. Data that researchers examined over a 4-year period included minutes of monthly on-site program meetings, researcher field notes and journals, transcripts of weekly on-site graduate courses for inservice teachers, analysis of teacher and faculty documents, and the student teaching handbook revised by cooperating teachers. Preservice teachers responded positively to the supervision by additional inservice teachers. Inservice teachers were an integral part of the transformation of the supervision process for the university and the PDS. The construct of mentoring that emerged from collaboration of all parties represented, for inservice teachers, a commitment to improving teaching and learning at all levels. However, there is no mention in the study of what inservice teachers may have gained, pedagogically, from participating in this novel supervisory framework (Rodgers and Keil, 2007).

There is a reciprocal effect for the inservice teachers working with university faculty in PDS partnerships. In the Pine study (2003) inservice teachers indicated that professional development activities presented by university faculty prompted teachers to assess their classroom practices and adjust those practices to meet the needs of students. Inservice teachers credited university faculty commitment with providing strategies for curricular and instructional change, techniques for thematic presentation of content, support for supervision of preservice teachers, and collaborative leadership. Inservice teachers felt that the presence of the university faculty over the course of the PDS partnership was instrumental in promoting student learning and achievement (Pine, 2003).

In the Levin and Rock case study research on action research in a PDS environment (Levin & Rock, 2003) inservice teachers spoke of action research as having an impact on their understanding of teaching and learning on many levels. When questioned about mentoring student teachers, inservice teachers stressed their commitment to the role of teacher educator, to provide student teachers with verbal feedback, discussion, and joint reflection. Inservice teachers saw their major responsibility as helping student teachers to grow as teachers and inservice teachers saw themselves as learners in the action research process.

About the effects of the PDS experience on mentor/mentee relationships, inservice teachers' answers were in the context of the action research projects. Inservice teachers saw the partnerships as opportunities to collaborate, to understand each other's beliefs about teaching, to communicate more effectively, and to build interpersonal

relationships before the student teaching semester (Levin & Rock, 2003). As far as inservice teachers were concerned, the impact felt by inservice teachers came from the action research project directly, not from the mentoring relationship with preservice teachers.

Even when inservice teachers are asked directly about their experiences in a PDS partnership, their responses do not gravitate to how they, themselves, might benefit. In a PDS relationship between a Texas university and two suburban elementary schools (Aldritch, 2003) researchers held three focus groups for teachers at each school, with a university faculty member as facilitator. The four themes that emerged centered on teachers' decisions to become involved in PDS activities, barriers affecting PDS success, benefits of PDS partnerships for teachers, and recommendations for improvement. Direct discussion of PDS benefits for teachers brought answers regarding lowered teacher/student ratio in classrooms, more one-on-one attention for students, and exposure of preservice teachers to authentic classroom interaction (Aldritch, 2001).

In addition to more attention for students in classrooms, PDS partnerships bring other types of benefits to P-12 schools. The research done by Fisher, Frey and Farnan focused primarily on the effect of preservice teachers in classrooms. However, they noted the impact of other resources. Inservice teachers benefited from professional development activities, graduate course offerings, additional books, and materials (Fisher, Frey & Farnan, 2004). In another research study, inservice teachers did speak about having new ideas for teaching because of professional development activities in the PDS. In addition, inservice teachers implemented new strategies in their classrooms

immediately and felt that their enthusiasm for techniques transferred to their students. Increased motivation of students contributed to their time on task and led to greater student success (Sztajn et al., 2004).

Mentor teachers assume the role of on-site supervisor and teacher educator for the college/university teacher preparation program. The mentor teacher has the responsibility to facilitate, guide, and support the learning and professional development of the preservice teacher. From the preservice point of view, the mentor teacher provides significant support during this formative field experience (Conners & Adamchak, 2003; Melser, 2004).

Despite their all-important role and the impact inservice mentor teachers have on the developmental process of preservice teachers, little is known about how mentor teachers approach and process their experience in the PDS environment. There have been some efforts to provide support for mentor teachers. The University of Memphis developed a "mentoring the mentor" program (Mahmood & Grannan, 1998). The program emphasized rapport building, techniques for maximizing the efficiency of time spent with preservice mentees, teaching strategies that mentors could assist the preservice teachers with, and personal insecurities about the mentor role. Although the University of Memphis program created an environment for more effective mentoring, the focus was solely on the success of preservice teachers.

Sometimes, in the complex, intensive student teaching experience preservice teachers struggle and, occasionally, fail to complete the program. Seibert, Kilbridge, & Peterson (2006) worked with mentors in a PDS who faced this dilemma. The mentors

were conflicted when it came to assessing their mentees in this situation. When a mentor had to confront a preservice teacher's suitability for licensure as inadequate, the mentor began to question his/her own professional judgment. University faculty needed to support and reassure mentors; teamwork promoted the optimum learning environment and maintained high standards. Seibert also found that mentors learned a great deal because of handling struggling preservice teachers; there was clarity about the context of teaching and learning and their place within it. Despite the stress and uncertainty the inservice teachers felt, mentors articulated that the difficulties were worth the effort (Seibert et al., 2006).

In a study that examined the effects on preservice teachers of multiple professionals in a PDS that interact, mentors were co-facilitators of the teaching to learn/learning to teach process (Gimbert, 2001). Researchers examined many specific activities, including reflective journals, a variety of conferencing opportunities, research projects, and building web-based portfolios. Despite scrutiny of all of this material, the focus was always on preservice teachers; researchers did not address the effects on school-based professionals.

In an international comparative study, Ariav and Clinard (1996) researchers were examining the effects of coaching on preservice teachers. Researchers used informal conversations and scripted meetings between university faculty, school principals and mentor teachers to gather data and develop a questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered in the U.S. and Israel in 2 consecutive years. The mentors describe the change in terms of professional pride and increased self-esteem, but not in terms of

improved classroom practice. Other studies (Aldritch, 2001; Conners & Adamchak, 2003) have looked at characteristics that inservice mentor teachers should have, what difficulties these teachers were encountering, and how the PDS learning community could support inservice mentors as they work with preservice teachers.

<div align="center">PDS in the 21st Century</div>

As the PDS movement continued to grow in the 21st century, new research emerged that, for the first time, focused on inservice teachers and their learning in the PDS environment. Researchers used a variety of techniques utilized to evaluate inservice teacher attitudes. There were also self-assessments of personal and professional gains that came about because of their involvement in the PDS experiences (Fountain, Drummond and Sentefitt, 2000) reported on the PDS partnership between the University of Florida and the Jacksonville Urban Educational Partnership (JUEP).

This study used a professional norms scale, a climate scale, and an open-ended question. In addition to supporting project goals, teacher responses indicated two major themes. Inservice teachers appreciated the team approach utilized by the group of university faculty, preservice teachers and inservice teacher mentors. Increased collegiality and improved communication that resulted from the PDS project also impressed inservice teachers (Fountain, Drummond & Sentefitt, 2000).

A study of Texas PDS (Cooner & Tochterman, 2004) used a storytelling format inspired by the Joint Storytelling Project (Wallace, 1996). This format encouraged inservice teachers to move from reflection on the mentoring process to problem solving and action. Twenty inservice teachers had the opportunity to share their stories with

colleagues in a setting led by an experienced faculty facilitator. There was guided

reflection, themes were identified, and dialogue was encouraged to move toward

developing solutions for problems, issues, or conflicts. The faculty facilitator recorded

the storied and wrote session summaries. Teachers were challenged to change their roles.

Although they continued to support the learning and teaching of the preservice teachers,

they were also engaging in new forms of learning for themselves, changing the way they

worked, and organizing innovative ways of participating in the academic life of the PDS.

Teachers examined their personal educational philosophies, led discussion groups of

preservice teachers, and taught methods courses on-site. With their voices heard recurrent

themes of equality of all participants and teacher leadership for change, inservice teachers

felt like full partners in the renewal that was taking place in the PDS learning community.

Researchers at East Stroudsburg University did a study of inservice teachers'

perspective of mentoring. University faculty conducted one-on-one interviews with

inservice teacher mentors in their PDS collaborative (J. Scheetz, personal

communication, March 17, 2008). A limited number of questions in a single protocol

surfaced identifiable themes. Participants were 25 teachers at the middle and high school

levels who had been involved in the PDS partnerships for at least 2 years. Researchers

coded responses in four areas: program logistics, impact on relationships, impact on

professionalism, and instructional practices. Program logistics had to do with the

parameters of the program – how inservice teachers became involved, matching of

inservice to preservice teachers, and intrinsic versus extrinsic benefits. All respondents

reported positive experiences and were eager to serve in the mentoring capacity again.

The area of impact on relationships centered on the value of working with other mentors in the learning community, as well as providing guidance for preservice teachers. Inservice teachers felt that their departments or teams were dedicating more time and energy to issues of student learning and best practices. Relationships between inservice and preservice teachers generally developed from mentor/mentee to that of professional colleagues. When they discussed the impact on instructional practices, inservice teachers indicated that they felt they needed to present best practices as models for preservice teachers at all times. Although this added a level of stress for inservice teachers, they did have a sense of mutual learning gained from reflecting on lessons and discussing classroom practices with student teachers. The mentors noted that they had refined some of their teaching techniques and added innovative instructional strategies because of the program. Inservice teachers also discussed impact on professionalism. Most mentors said that they felt more professional for having had a role in introducing preservice teachers to the authentic classroom setting. The exposure to current trends and improved relationships with peers expanded their own knowledge of teaching while moving preservice teachers toward their goals.

At City University of New York, data from a study with a similar hypothesis came from a variety of qualitative methods (Ross, 2005). In an effort to look at the professional impact of participation as a PDS mentor, Ross did two rounds of individual interviews, held support group meetings, facilitated reflective conversations as part of an inservice teacher action research project, and took extensive field notes. Inservice teachers indicated that the presence of a student teacher in the classroom spurred them to

be more reflective about their own teaching. Quite deliberately inservice teachers were questioning the details of classroom practice. The reflection was also perceived to be deeper, examining the who, what, when and how of lessons. As a matter of course, inservice teachers believed they were doing more thorough planning, preparing to answer student teacher scrutiny and inquiry. Additionally, with another adult in the room, collaborative reflection, brainstorming and problem solving happened immediately. Inservice teachers saw this interaction as improving their instruction and thereby improving learning for children.

There are research studies regarding the effects/benefits for inservice teacher mentors when mentees are novice teachers rather than preservice teachers (David, 2000; Holloway, 2001). Researchers arranged the results into some general themes – increased classroom competence, personal rejuvenation, and professional development. Working with novice teachers seems to result in mentors being more reflective about learning and teaching (Odell & Huling, 2000). Interaction with preservice teachers, peers, and college faculty can expose everyone to new ideas about learning theory, curriculum dimensions, and content areas. Additionally, inservice teachers felt that they enhanced their own classroom competency by listening and providing non-judgmental feedback. Classroom management skilled also improved with the extra attention the process received.

Researchers generally reported that inservice teachers felt rejuvenated, both personally and professionally; being a mentor to a perspective teacher validated expertise in the field. Mentors had enhanced self-esteem, self-confidence and self-satisfaction and they were strengthening their commitment to education by developing the next

generation of educators (Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts, 2000). Mentoring also helped

move inservice teachers forward in their careers. Collaboration in the PDS environment

helped inservice teachers develop a clear set of beliefs about teaching and learning. This

helped teachers build their capacity for leadership through mentor training and

experience observing and coaching novice teachers. Inservice mentor teachers often

moved into positions involving curriculum development, group or grade level leadership,

or action research (Freiberg, Zbikowski, & Ganzer, 1996). The nature of these studies is

parallel to the focus areas for study of mentors of preservice teachers.

<div align="center">Research Methodology</div>

The constructivist theory of learning often influences teaching practice

(Vadeboncoeur, 1997). Since the education reform movement and the inception of PDS,

constructivist theory has influenced teacher training as well (Richardson, 1997).

Constructivism is a way to understand the world; a researcher also strives to understand

and interpret the experiences of others (Crotty, 1998). This researcher has chosen a

phenomenological qualitative research method for this study. This method examines the

lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994).

Researchers have utilized a wide variety of methods to examine inservice mentor

teachers and their roles in preservice teacher training. A small number of research

studies used quantitative methods, such as analyzing national test data (Leonard et al.,

2004) or rating scales (Fountain, Drummond, & Senterfitt, 2000). A few researchers

used mixed methods approaches, following up quantitative analysis of questionnaires

with focus groups to enrich the data (Aldritch, 2001; Conners & Adamchak, 2003).

The vast majority of research methods applied to studies involving inservice teachers have been qualitative in nature. Some researchers have analyzed reflective activities or journals (Cooner & Tochterman, 2004; Gimbert & Nolan, 2003). Many research studies relied on combinations of qualitative methods, such as observations, field notes, and meeting transcripts (Rodgers & Keil, 2007; Ross, 1995). Educational organizations doing research on a national scale used interviews and focus groups as well as document and program reviews, literature searches, meetings, and public hearings (Carnegie Corporation, 1983; 1986; 2003; Holmes Partnership, 2007). Some studies depended solely on individual interviews to gather data (Scheetz et al., 2005; Seibert et al., 2006).

This researcher sought to discern patterns of meaning from inservice teachers' mentoring experiences (Hatch, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Looking at the procedures other researchers use to gather data, the methods that seemed to provide the most direct and richest data came from participant interviews. One-on-one interviews would give inservice mentor teachers opportunities to express their insights and perceptions in personal ways (Merriam, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition, because PDSs are learning communities, focus groups would present favorable circumstances under which mentor teachers could make known their collective judgments (Kreuger, & Casey, 2000) regarding the effects of the PDS environment on their professional development. The addition of unobtrusive data (Hatch, 2002) in the form of college records regarding professional development activities would provide context for inservice mentor teachers' views.

Conclusion

Professional Development Schools have developed in response to the need for improved teacher training. The PDS model seeks to provide extensive field experience for a seamless theory to practice connection. The bulk of the research done on PDSs has examined the effects on and benefits for preservice teachers. Educators have begun to recognize that inservice mentor teachers also derive substantial benefit from interaction with preservice teachers, students, and college faculty involved in the PDS learning community. Inservice teachers, with their classroom expertise, commitment to the education of their students, and contribution to the future of teaching, are the center of the success of Professional Development Schools. However, professional gains for inservice teacher mentors have not been documented adequately. Therefore, this researcher conducted a phenomenological qualitative study to understand more about the mentor teacher process and experience.

SECTION 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goal of this study was to examine the experiences of inservice teachers who

have undertaken the role of mentors for preservice teachers in PDS partnerships. This

study sought to determine whether inservice teachers perceived their experiences of

mentoring preservice teachers as contributing to implementation of new strategies in

classroom practice, personal professional growth, and confidence in leadership

capabilities for their inservice schools. This research study was qualitative in its design,

examining how people interpreted their interactions with the world. Because "qualitative

researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular

point in time and in a particular context" (Merriam, 2002, p. 4), this was the most

appropriate choice of method. The researcher strove to understand inservice teachers'

interpretations of the effects of their mentoring experiences in the PDS environment. This

section describes all aspects of this study's methodology in detail, including the strategies

for inquiry, methods of data collection, and data analysis.

Qualitative Tradition

The intent of this qualitative/interpretive study was to examine the experience of

mentoring preservice teachers in a PDS through the eyes of inservice cooperating

teachers. This researcher did this study in the natural setting of schools, spent time with

participants while collecting data, and focused on the meaning of the mentoring relationship for participating inservice teachers (Creswell, 2003). Facets of a phenomenological study included describing the meaning of the lived experience for participants in the study and putting those direct experiences into a form that explained recurring themes of the experience (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2003). This researcher was interested in seeing the mentoring experience from the vantage point of inservice teachers, ascertaining what inservice teachers had learned in terms of professional development.

Individual interviews and focus groups were methods that captured inservice teachers' experiences as preservice teacher mentors. These methods have been used effectively in many qualitative studies covering a wide variety of research topics. Researchers at the University of Alabama conducted a study on teacher resilience in urban schools and utilized individual interviews together with researcher observations, and archived school data (Patterson, Collins & Abbott, 2003). A study of teachers' perceptions of professional development used interviews in combination with teachers' writings and teachers' artifacts (Engstrom & Danielson, 2006). Leatherman (2007) relied solely on individual interviews for data in her study of teachers' perceptions of inclusion classrooms, while Morris and Nunnery (2002) used individual interviews and focus group interviews to extend the quantitative results of questionnaires. This researcher assembled data via individual and focus group interviews and college records and then proceeded to the construction of meaningful interpretation from that data (Hatch, 2002).

Research in an educational environment can be conducted using a variety of techniques. Researchers can answer important questions by conducting surveys, by analyzing official data, or by examining the impact of change in experimental situations. However, these research techniques, reported in statistical terms, may not communicate effectively with broad-based audiences. Qualitative studies provide context, evaluate complex issues, and convey the experiences and perspectives of study participants in rich, realistic detail (Coleman & Briggs, 2002; Creswell, 2003).

The current study was descriptive and interpretive in nature. This researcher gathered data by talking with and listening carefully to the inservice teachers participating in the study. Other qualitative methods were considered but rejected. The biographical approach focuses on exploring the life of a single individual; this study involved multiple individuals. A grounded theory research study has the development of theory from data gathered in the field as a focus; this research project did not seek to create any theory. Ethnography sets out to describe and interpret interactions in a social group; this research study examined only individual experiences. Case studies can be in-depth analyses of single or multiple cases; this research project addressed only the mentoring facet of the inservice experience in PDS learning communities.

The phenomenological study, while investigating and describing individual experiences of a concept or phenomenon, the ultimate result is a meaning that is common to all of those experiences (Creswell, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2003). This researcher felt that this research study enlightened a structure that unified the experience of mentoring preservice teachers in PDS environments for inservice teacher mentors.

Research Questions

The central focus question for this study was: How do inservice teachers perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional practices? Subquestions were as follows:

1. In what ways do inservice teachers perceive the interaction among preservice teachers, inservice teachers and college faculty in relationship to any application of new instructional strategies in their classroom?

2. How do inservice teachers perceive the mentoring experience in relationship to any application to professional growth?

Context of the Study

Centenary College sponsors the PDS partnerships in northwest New Jersey. Centenary is a small, "New American College" as promoted by Ernest Boyer (Boyer, 1990). The college is committed to developing highly qualified preservice teachers to serve New Jersey's P-12 student populations. In order to provide authentic fieldwork experience for all preservice teachers, the college has created 38 PDS relationships in 12 school districts in four counties. In each of those 38 PDS learning communities four to six inservice teachers make the year-long commitment to mentor preservice teachers. The inservice teachers are a crucial facet of the learning dynamic for all students and preservice teachers. At the same time, inservice teachers are strengthening their leadership skills and fostering change in their schools.

The 20 inservice teachers who were the focus of this study taught at four elementary schools partnered with Centenary College. This researcher chose one school from each of the four counties surrounding Centenary College for this study. There were two schools that house Grades K-8, one school with Grades K-5, and one school that serves Grades 6-8. The state of New Jersey rates all school districts in New Jersey on socioeconomic measures called District Factor Groups, with A being the lowest and J being the highest socioeconomic level. One district was a CD district, one district was rated a GH district and two of the districts were I districts. To maintain anonymity, the schools were designated Alpha School, Beta School, Gamma School and Delta School. Alpha School, located in Warren County, (rural with many small towns) was an I district. Warren County consists of 25 districts, with the majority of districts classified as DE or FG; there is one B district, and many districts improved their ratings between the 1990 and the 2000 censuses. Beta School is in Hunterdon County (rural in nature but developing rapidly) and has 31 districts. Most of the districts are GH or I; the lowest rated district had a DE rating. Gamma School was one of 27 districts in Sussex County. The range of ratings was broader, with some CD districts, many FG and GH schools and a few I ratings. There was one B rated district in this predominantly rural county. Finally, Delta School, in Morris County was among many highly rated districts in this suburban area. There were 41 districts, rated predominantly GH, I, and J. However, there was an A rated district, as well as several districts that have seen their ratings lowered to DE between the last two censuses (NJ Department of Education, 2006) (See Table 1).

The schools ranged in size from under 150 students to 1200 students. The portion

of students needing special education services ranged from 9.2 % to 16.2 %. Students

requiring English language learner attention varied from 0 to less 1 %. All of these

schools had been PDS partners for 5 years. Each of the schools' administrators had a

long-term relationship with the author's college so it was convenient to use these schools

in the study. These four administrators taught undergraduate and graduate courses for the

education department on-site, on-line, or on-campus. Three of the four administrators

were members of the Education Department Advisory Board.

Table 1

Participating PDS Schools

School	Alpha	Beta	Gamma	Delta
Students	356	141	500	1223
Special Education	9.8%	9.2%	9.6%	16.2%
English Language Learners (ELL)	0.3%	0.0%	0.8%	1.0%
District Factor Group	I	I	CD	GH
Teaching staff degree attainment Masters Degrees	27.5%	20.8%	42.7%	52.3%
Doctorates	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%

Population and Sampling

The population for this study was the approximately 175 general education and

special education teachers from the four PDS schools described above. All teachers were

highly qualified for their classroom assignments. The level of advanced degrees among these teachers ranged from 20.8 % to 52.3 % (see Table 1) in the different schools. The female to male ratio of teachers was nine to one.

For phenomenological studies such as the current one, it was necessary that all teachers invited to participate in the research study have shared the common experience under investigation. This was purposeful sampling (Coleman & Briggs, 2003; Creswell, 2002). For a research project the criterion for inclusion was that, the people had been cooperating teachers for preservice teachers in their PDS during the last three years. This researcher invited all such teachers in the four target schools to participate.

This researcher chose 20 teachers to interview from among the 175 respondents invited. The 20 participants were selected using criteria so that several criteria were represented in the sample. The intent was to interview teachers who represented all grade levels. This researcher solicited general education teachers and special educators who possess dual certification. Another criterion was to have both male and female teachers, in proportion to their participation as mentors to preservice teachers. A fourth criterion was varying years of experience among the teachers.

The researcher made preliminary contact with administrators in each school/district through the college's PDS liaison (see Appendix A). Personal one-on-one meetings were held at each school to discuss the purpose and intent of this study. Each administrator gave consent, and forwarded formal letters of request to each Board of Education, notifying them of the research project (see Appendix B). This researcher

submitted a proposal for the present study to the Walden University Institutional Review Board and received approval to collect data (IRB # 12-05-08-0334786).

The researcher then met with faculty of each school on site to solicit possible participant and presented the reason for this study and the procedures that would be followed. Teachers were to fill out informational questionnaire to ascertain whether they filled the criteria needed for participation in this study (see Appendix C). All teachers who wished to participate signed an agreement to participate (see Appendix D).The researcher and perspective participants discussed issues of privacy and confidentiality. This researcher answered all questions and assured everyone that they would participate in member checking to ensure validity and have access to the final product.

At the point of data collection, concerns arose among potential participants from one of the schools. Citing increased responsibilities at school and at home and time constraints, a number of teachers from Delta School asked to be removed from the participant pool. When a cohort of five teachers from Delta School could not be enlisted to participate, this researcher made the decision to complete the study utilizing only the cohorts from Alpha, Beta, and Gamma Schools.

This researcher made every effort to maintain privacy for all constituents. The confidentiality of the study participants and the host schools were protected using pseudonyms. In addition, a professional transcriptionist, unacquainted with the individuals taking part in the study, transferred data from audio tape to disc and hard copies. Documents and copies were stored in college archives for additional security.

Role of the Researcher

The role of this researcher was one of an active learner, while the interviewees were experts in the field (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). By listening to the perspectives of inservice teachers and recorded and transcribed interviews, this researcher expected to have a better understanding of inservice teachers' PDS experiences.

In addition, this researcher, in the role of assistant professor of education at the PDS-sponsoring teacher training institution, taught a practicum seminar and a student teacher seminar every semester. Field supervision of practicum and student teachers were typically also part of this researcher's departmental responsibilities. The focus of frequent PDS classroom visits was growth in performance and skills of preservice teachers. However, this researcher did not supervise any practicum students or student teachers during the semester in which she was collecting research data. This research project was an opportunity to examine mentoring relationships from the viewpoint of inservice teachers. To solicit varied perspectives, this researcher chose inservice teachers from different grade levels, including general and special education assignments. All the teachers who acted as mentors to preservice teachers had a minimum of 4 years teaching experience. By having teachers with different experience levels, there were different views of the effects and value of the mentoring experiences.

This researcher is a certified teacher at the elementary level (K-8), teacher of English (K-12), and teacher of students with disabilities, with 13 years of classroom experience in the public school arena. She also holds a supervisor's certificate and has had the role of mentor to preservice teachers on several occasions. This researcher shared

her professional background with inservice teacher participants at their regularly scheduled staff meetings in order to put them at ease (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The teachers appeared to feel comfortable in sharing their experiences and opinions with this researcher.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through two types of interviews. The researcher followed individual interviews with focus group interviews with each school cohort. College program records and PDS documents added more information for analysis. This researcher utilized one-on-one interviews of study participants to gather data regarding their experiences mentoring preservice teachers. The mentoring process is difficult to observe directly. Interviews, as a form of shared conversation (Merriam, 2002), provided information via the perspectives and views of mentor teachers.

Focus groups supplied an opportunity for the mentor teachers to engage each other in discussion of topics related to mentoring and PDS learning communities. The focus group format was useful because the participants share the common experience of mentoring preservice teachers. The mentor teachers in each school cohort work together daily, and the conversation built on the collective thought and opinions of the participants.

College program records and PDS documents were used as supplementary data. The researcher could access this data without interference with the day-to-day activities

of the study participants. The information provided a context for the perceptions, views and opinions of the mentor teachers.

This researcher developed open-ended questions to use during individual one-on-one interviews (see Appendix D). When possible, this researcher used interview questions similar to related studies in the field to further the discussion. Interviews were approximately 40 minutes long and were audiotaped. The researcher made every effort to hold the interviews in each teacher's classroom for ease and comfort. If another area was necessary, this researcher depended on the teachers to identify spaces that they felt were familiar and comfortable for them.

The goal of interviews was to exchange information regarding the experience of mentoring through the interview question protocol (Merriam, 2002). This researcher then worked to construct meaning regarding the experience and its value for inservice teachers and designed the formal questions to address the research problem (Hatch, 2002). She used responses to the initial questions to follow up on issues, challenging concepts and garnering more specific responses (Rubin & Rubin. 2005).

The researcher held focus groups at each of the three participating schools. Preliminary data analysis of the individual interviews showed emerging themes. This provided a foundation for questions during the focus groups (Appendix E). This researcher facilitated the group discussion with guiding questions and a junior colleague assisted with field notes and audiotaping. These group interviews extended and enriched data acquired through the individual interviews (Hatch, 2002). In addition, group

dynamics, fostered by the common experience in the PDS provided alternative views of the mentoring process.

This researcher exercised care in handling data. Pseudonyms protected the anonymity of the study participants. When individual interviews and focus group audiotapes were transcribed, the transcriptionist identified mentor teachers only by number. The researcher archived copies of data were on disc and in printed form in college files to maintain security. In the future, the researcher will share data with Education faculty and staff. Based on that data, the department can address issues and concerns pertinent to the teacher training and professional development programs.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

The data analysis approach that was utilized was data analysis spiral. In this process, the researcher began with collecting data and organizing it. Then the researcher commenced analysis, returning to the data many times, to read and write notes. She chose words, sentences, or passages to represent categories or themes. The researcher read again, then described and classified the data. The researcher reflected on the data and continued to return to the data to put it in context, interpret it, and represent its meaning (Creswell, 1998).

Data analysis began with transcription of all audiotaped interviews. Transcription entailed listening to audiotapes and typing what was said, word for word. This researcher engaged a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the audio tapes. This researcher read the transcripts carefully in order to be very familiar with the data. This researcher wrote

summaries of main points for each interview to help with coding that followed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

When the researcher read the transcripts and had an understanding of the interviews as a whole, the data was broken down into manageable units such as words, phrases, or sentences. She wrote memos in the margins of transcripts and summaries. From there the focus was on describing emerging themes, creating codes for those themes, classifying data according to those themes and then interpreting the meaning of those themes. The formal questions provided the initial themes and the researcher addressed subthemes as they arose. Unanticipated themes were also coded and analyzed. This researcher will construct an overarching framework of the inservice teachers' perceptions. Finally, selected quotes from the data will become part of the summary to support the findings of the research project.

This researcher added unobtrusive data to the data collection and analysis. As part of the record keeping for the PDS program, the college maintains data on preservice and inservice teachers. One feature of PDS learning communities is often on-site master's degree courses for the inservice teachers. PDS inservice teachers can also enroll in on-campus offerings at reduced tuition rates. To assess the effectiveness of this facet of PDS relationships, it was important to ascertain the extent to which PDS inservice teachers (study participants in particular) were utilizing the college's professional development offerings. The researcher examined college records to determine the number of courses that teacher took at each school and the number of master's degrees that have been awarded to study participants. Additionally, the college actively advertises the

professional development workshops and the Teachers' Academy in all PDS partnership schools. Records of attendees at all campus-based offerings provided levels of PDS teacher participation. Comparing perceptions of study participants of the usefulness, scope, and variety of professional development activities was necessary to integrate inservice teacher needs into college-sponsored programs.

This researcher systematically searched for any discrepant data during the coding and analysis processes. When cases were exceptions to the patterns or themes in the data, the researcher reviewed the transcripts for alternate explanations. Any cases of discrepant data were identified, analyzed, and reported in the findings (Huberman & Miles, 2002).

Validation

Sound research mandates validity. Creswell (2003) identified validity as one of the strengths of qualitative research. To ensure validity from the viewpoint of participants and the varied audiences for the resulting report, this researcher used several processes. Triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing enhanced the validity of this study.

Triangulation (Merriam, 2005) came from individual interviews, focus group sessions, and examination of unobtrusive documents regarding professional development activities in the PDS. The evidence from these three areas provided a solid foundation for the themes that arose throughout the study.

This researcher used member checking (Hatch, 2002) to verify information presented in this study. The 17 teacher participants had the opportunity to read the transcripts and the final report in order to judge whether their viewpoints were

represented accurately and fairly. The participants could notify this researcher with any discrepancies or comments they had regarding the research project.

The colleague chosen to be peer debriefer (Creswell, 2003) for this research study holds an Ed.D. from Lehigh University. He has taught courses in qualitative research for Centenary College. The peer debriefer has been a mentor for preservice teachers, has presented professional development workshops both on campus and on site, and knows the PDS framework. He has been a willing consultant to this researcher throughout her doctoral process and was thoroughly familiar with the goals, the qualitative tradition, and the data gathering strategies. The peer debriefer reviewed the work in progress at multiple stages of the research study. The peer debriefer and this researcher engaged in face-to-face conferences on a weekly basis to clarify the content of the document.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This phenomenological qualitative research study addressed how inservice teachers perceived the experience of mentoring of preservice teachers and the value they drew from the mentoring relationships. This researcher interviewed inservice teachers individually, conducted focus group interviews at each of the PDS sites, and examined unobtrusive data regarding professional development activities. A professional transcriptionist transferred audiotaped interviews and focus group sessions to hard copies. The researcher coded data and wrote a study report draft. She utilized triangulation of data, member checking, and peer debriefing to validate the study. Results of this research project are presented in sections 4 and 5. The summary includes data that emerged from

individual participant interviews, focus group interviews, and assessment of professional

development documents. When any discrepancies emerged during analysis, the

researcher examined the data in light of differences that exists between the three schools.

SECTION 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND RESULTS

Introduction

This section presents data in four areas. The initial section delineates the methods

utilized to gather and record data. The quality of the evidence generated is discussed in

the second section. A segment regarding coding and analyzing the data follows. Finally,

the outcomes of the data analysis address the research questions that were the focus of

this research study. The research study answers the question: How do inservice teachers

perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional

practices?

Data Gathering and Recording

There were three stages of data gathering. The first phase was one-on-one

interviews with each of the mentor/teachers who volunteered to take part in the study.

This researcher conducted individual interviews and the followed up with separate focus

group sessions with the participants at each school. Finally, unobtrusive data – college

records and documents - were obtained regarding the mentor/teachers' utilization of other

programs and professional development offerings at the college.

This researcher made presentations at four PDS schools, explaining the purpose of

the study and the time commitment required of participants. Teachers filled out an

information questionnaire (see Appendix C) and indicated their willingness to participate

in the research study.

This researcher contacted all the teachers who expressed an interest in participating in the research project via e-mail and telephone. Teachers at the Alpha, Beta, and Gamma schools responded quickly and made appointments for the individual interviews. The Delta School is a much larger middle school, with a substantially larger student population and a greater number of faculty and staff. Despite the support and encouragement of the building principal, teachers hesitated to commit to the research process, citing other professional and personal responsibilities. When a baseline cohort of 5 participants could not be reached, this researcher decided to remove the Delta School from the study and concentrate on the cohorts in the other three schools. The researcher obtained signed consent forms from every participant (see Appendix D).

Participants included 17 teachers from three elementary schools in northwest New Jersey. The researcher chose participants as a purposeful sample. Those participants are listed in Table 2. Pseudonyms were used to maintain the confidentiality of the research process. The three schools are among 38 schools that have PDS relationships with Centenary College. Preservice teachers do their student teaching in these learning communities each semester.

Table 2

Background of Participants

Participants	Grade/Subject	Years/This School	Certificate(s)	Degree
		Alpha School		
Sal	3-8 Math	12/9	Elementary (K-8) MS Mathematics	Master's
Joan	8th Social Studies	14/9	Elementary(K-8) Social Studies(K-12)	Master's
Tessa	6th Math/Science	10/7	Elementary(K-8) MS Mathematics MS Science	Master's
Dina	3rd	4/4	Elementary (K-5)	Bachelor's
Flora	2nd	20/11	Elementary (K-8) Nursery School	Bachelor's
Caitlin	K (Full Day)	9/9	Elementary (K-5)	Bachelor's
		Beta School		
Lissa	6th	20/20	Elementary (K-8)	Bachelor's
Lily	4th	29/18	Language Arts(7-12) Elementary (K-8) Nursery School	Bachelor's
Laura	Special Education	14/10	Elementary (K-8) Teacher of Students with Disabilities	Bachelor's
Celine	1st	31/31	Elementary (K-8)	Bachelor's
Rona	6-8 Math	8/5	Mathematics (7-12)	Bachelor's
Lydia	6-8 Language Arts	20/7	Elementary(K-8) English (K-12)	Bachelor's

			Gamma School		
Leila	1st	17/14	Elementary (K-8) Nursery School	Bachelor's
Rita	Special Education	33/33	Teacher of the Handicapped	Master's
Gretchen	1st	22/22	Elementary (K-8)	Bachelor's
Krystal	4th	7/4	Elementary (K-5)	Master's
Judy	5th	36/29	Elementary (K-8)	Bachelor's

This researcher collected the initial set of data through individual interviews, utilizing a set of open-ended questions created by the researcher (see Appendix E). The researcher arranged a convenient date and time for each interview. Each interviewee listed by pseudonym in Table 2 designated a prep period (40-50 minutes) during the regular school day to meet with the researcher. The interviews took place in participants' classrooms, the teachers' lounge, or in available non-instructional spaces.

At the beginning of each interview, this researcher reviewed the research topic. The researcher disclosed her connection to the college's teacher training program and the PDS. The researcher also shared some of her personal background as a classroom teacher and mentor of student teachers. She informed he participants that the interviews would be audiotaped, transcribed word for word by a professional transcriptionist, and archived in a secure place on the college campus.

Each interview followed the questions outlined in Appendix E. This researcher used variations to clarify the questions and utilized probes to encourage the participants to elaborate on their answers. Often participants answered other interview questions either partially or completely in their narratives. In order to avoid being redundant or repetitive, the researcher adjusted the order or content of questions to move the interviews forward.

The researcher made notes in a research journal following each individual interview session. She documented emerging themes that were evident within each cohort and across all three school groups. She developed a set of questions (see Appendix F), based on themes and patterns that emerged from the individual interviews, for use in the focus group sessions. The goal in doing the focus group sessions was to reaffirm the intended meanings expressed by the participants and address the target research questions more fully. Repeated themes in the focus group sessions would support the validation of the study data.

The building administrators assisted in scheduling the focus group sessions. At Alpha School, the principal provided coverage for the six participants near the end of the school day and reserved the library for the hour-long session. A junior colleague in the Education Department at Centenary acted as a scribe for the focus group at Alpha School The Beta School chief school administrator mediated the participants' personal schedules to provide a common available date and provide the Teachers' Lounge for the meeting at the end of a school day. The principal of the Gamma School coordinated participant availability and the focus group took place at the end of the school day in one of the

teacher's classroom where all the participants felt comfortable. Due to a conflict with the junior colleague's own graduate course schedule, a recent graduate of the college's teacher training program stepped in and performed scribe duties at the Beta School and Gamma School focus group sessions.

Keeping Track of the Data

A professional transcriptionist transcribed audiotapes interviews in a word-for-word format. The transcriptionist had no connection to any of the schools or participants, and this researcher removed all identifiers to preserve confidentiality. This researcher read each transcript and wrote a summary of themes and/or strands that addressed the research question and subquestions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The researcher protected transcripts in three ways: as hard copies in the Education Department archives, in a separate file folder on the researcher's computer hard drive, and downloaded to a removable memory drive. All of the audiotapes were labeled with date and time and stored them for future reference. Audiotapes were copied onto discs for long-term storage. All data will be maintained for a minimum of 5 years.

Participants received hard copies of their individual interview transcripts. Participants read the transcripts carefully and communicated any additions or deletions needed to represent their comments fully and fairly. Each participant signed his/her transcript, verifying agreement with the data. In addition, participants received copies of the transcript from their school's focus group session. As with the individual transcripts,

participants examined the material, noting additions for clarity or deletion for fair representation. Signatures indicated agreement with the data from the sessions.

This researcher maintained a file on each participating school and individual participants. School files contain initial administrator contact letters, Letters of Cooperation from the administrators, and demographic information questionnaires that teachers had completed. Individual participant folders contain signed consent forms, appointment dates and times, any notes about the individual interviews (see sample research journal and summary of notes, Appendix G), and transcripts of the individual interviews.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The purpose of this study was to research the views of inservice teachers regarding their experiences as mentors of preservice teachers in PDS environments. The study investigated their perceptions of the effects of the mentoring process, including the contributions made by the preservice teachers and college personnel to the PDS learning community, the relationships that developed, the instructional strategies introduced into the classrooms, and the professional development of the inservice mentor teachers themselves.

The researcher designed interview questions to provide information that answered the research question. The research question was: How do inservice teachers perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional practices? Sub-questions included:

1. In what ways do inservice teachers perceive the interaction among the preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and college faculty in relationship to any application of new instructional strategies in their classrooms?

2. How do inservice teachers perceive the mentoring experience in relationship to any application to professional growth?

The following section presents the efforts made during the research study to ensure quality of the data collected and conclusions reached based on that data. The coding protocol is explained to clarify how the findings were ascertained.

<div align="center">Evidence of Quality</div>

This researcher collected data in this research study through on-on-one interviews of the 17 participants and as well as a focus group session with each school cohort. A professional transcriptionist converted audiotape interviews to hard copies. Member checking gave study participants opportunities to react to the preliminary data generated from the interviews (Hatch, 2002). For member checking each participant received a hard copy of his/her individual interview and a hard copy of the cohort focus group session to review. All participants verified the transcripts by signing, dating, and returning them to the researcher. The researcher communicated with each participant to see if any revisions to the transcripts were necessary. For the most part the records stood as transcribed. A few participants clarified incomplete thoughts or clarified statements, but did not change the content of the data.

Participants received drafts of the final report for their examination and reaction. This researcher received no comments from some participants. For those who did respond, the researcher edited the report to reflect participants' comments, if necessary. This researcher used the additional member check to ensure that the findings were accurate and that she represented mentor teacher views fairly. The goal of this effort was to address the internal validity of the study, assuring that inferences drawn from the analysis were precise. In this case, internal validity verified the trustworthiness of the conclusions drawn by the researcher (Merriam, 2002).

During data collection and interpretation, the researcher consulted with a peer debriefer for guidance in the process. The peer debriefer holds a doctorate from Lehigh University, and is thoroughly familiar with the current research study. He is also an Education Department colleague at the College. The peer reviewer commented on the plan for the study and the data as the research continued. He made suggestions, asked questions, and read all drafts of the report as the researcher wrote (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2002). The researcher detailed her bias in Section 3, and informed all the participants of her connections to the PDS program and Centenary College. The researcher also disclosed the bias of the peer reviewer, which was identical to that of the researcher.

This researcher crosschecked the data through triangulation to establish the study's validity. Triangulation involves comparing the data from multiple sources to ensure its accuracy (Patton, 2001). In the present study, there are several types of

triangulation. There is respondent triangulation - asking the same questions of many different respondents. In addition, the participants came from three separate PDS schools, each with its own unique character and learning community environment. In addition, the researcher conducted focus groups at each of the schools, providing a range of collective perspectives. She utilized the focus group information to supplement and enrich the data from the individual interviews (Kreuger & Casey, 2000).

Unobtrusive data were also reviewed (Hatch, 2002). This included records of inservice teachers from the three target schools who enrolled in Centenary College masters' level courses/degree programs hosted at each school site and participant attendance at other college sponsored professional development programs. The researcher used unobtrusive data in several ways. References to the professional development opportunities sponsored by the College as part of the PDS relationships helped gauge the mentor/teachers' familiarity with the PDS components. She also determined the level of participation of the mentor/teachers in those components, provided context for the analysis of data, and stimulated interaction during both the individual interviews and focus group sessions.

At the Alpha School, two of the study's participants are part of a cohort seeking the Master's in Special Education. The other participants stated that they were not interested in either because they already possessed masters' degrees or family responsibilities precluded their taking advantage of the course offerings at this point. The on-site masters' cohort at the Beta School is pursuing the Master's in Instructional

Leadership. None of the study participants is currently enrolled in the program, citing similar reasons as the Alpha School participants. Additionally, the Beta School participants expressed that at this point in their careers (many are veteran teachers), formal academic study is not a priority. A Gamma School cohort is working toward the Masters' in Educational Leadership, which can include supervisor or principal certification. None of the Gamma School study participants is enrolled in this program; they expressed that they have no interest in an administrative degree or certification.

Another source of unobtrusive information is the records of the PDS teacher attendance at campus-based professional development workshops or the Teachers' Academy, which is a three-day series of professional development workshops. Several of the Alpha School study participants have attended either workshops or the Teachers' Academy or both. Every teacher at the Beta School, not just study participants, has attended campus professional development workshops, or the Teachers' Academy, or both. None of the teachers at the Gamma School had attended any campus-based programs.

Two of the schools had taken advantage of the PDS relationship to have college faculty conduct targeted profession development series on-site. The Alpha School has had one of the Education Department faculty members with expertise in technology assist teachers in creating podcasts about the school's environmental area to supplement instruction. The Beta School has enlisted another Education Department professor with expertise as a Literacy Coach to present a series of workshops on Writers' Workshop to augment classroom instruction.

Coding Data

To analyze the data, this researcher utilized Creswell's data analysis spiral. The data analysis spiral began with organizing the data, then taking the data through multiple readings, describing, classifying and interpreting the information (Creswell, 1998). Prior to the interview process, this researcher formed three major categories for coding which were facets of the research questions. These categories were Relationships, Classroom Practices, and Professional Development (see Appendix H). This researcher established the categories based on the literature review, the experience of the researcher, the purpose of the research, and the research questions. The researcher read the transcribed data four times to become thoroughly familiar with the information. The researcher read the transcripts for the fifth time, with the individual categories in mind.

After reading and highlighting words, phrases, and sentences that aligned with the three categories, emerging themes within the three categories were noted – Relationships. Classroom Practices, and Professional Development. Once the analysis of the individual interview data was complete, the researcher developed the focus group questions based on the responses from the individual interviews. When the researcher followed the mentor teachers' leads during the discussions, the research questions as the focal point of the information gathering may not have been sufficiently explained or interpreted in detail. Therefore, the researcher designed the focus group questions to guide the participants toward original interview questions that needed further exploration or explanation. Additional data gathered through the focus group sessions made it clear that 2 more categories needed to be added – Mentor Teacher Renewal and the PDS as a

Learning Community – to the coding system. The researcher used same categories to evaluate the results of both the individual interviews and the focus group sessions.

The researcher condensed the responses of each participant in a table. Data tables summarized the answers the participants gave during the interviews and the focus group sessions. Each theme was color coded for organization of the data. An example of a summary table is in Appendix H. The researcher compared the participant summaries continually and referred to the transcripts repeatedly while analyzing the data and writing the report.

Findings

The inservice mentor teachers who volunteered to participate in this research study were enthusiastic about the process and the part they were contributing to it. During the one-on-one interviews, each teacher appeared comfortable with the setting, the researcher, the questions, and goals of the research. The focus group session settings were pleasant and each cohort displayed camaraderie.

The data suggested that the participating mentor teachers were willing to learn from preservice teachers and that what they learned would enhance their ability to teach. In addition, the participants perceived there to be enhancement of their professionalism as an outcome of their mentoring experiences in the PDS environment.

The findings of the mentor teachers' perceptions are in five categories. Three of the categories (Mentor Teacher Renewal, Relationships, and Classroom Practice) address Subquestion 1: In what ways do inservice teachers perceive the interaction among the

preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and college faculty in relationship to any

application of new instructional strategies in their classrooms? The other two categories

of Professional Development and PDS as Learning Community inform the second

research subquestion: How do inservice teachers perceive the mentoring experience in

relationship to any application to professional growth? The findings are in five sections

under their respective subheadings.

Mentor Teacher Renewal

The mentor teacher participants in this study reported their experiences as being

overwhelmingly positive. They saw the mentoring of preservice teachers as

acknowledgement of their value. Sal, a mathematics teacher with 12 years experience,

spoke about how he felt after his interactions with preservice teachers.

> One of the benefits of having a student teacher is that it is a stroke to your ego …
> I have had student teachers come in and say that they appreciate how I teach math
> and how they never had a teacher teach it the way I did. …I have had (preservice)
> teachers comment on the relationships that I built with students, and I think those
> are some of the positives that having a student teacher have brought to light.

Some of the teachers saw the fact that their school was part of the PDS

relationship, added to their sense of importance. Flora, a 20-year veteran who teaches

second grade expressed the feeling of being appreciated by the Education Department at

the College.

> I think we begin to see ourselves as the professionals we are because you, from
> the college, come to us and value us. You appreciate our knowledge, our
> experience; and you come to us and say, "Impart this to our students. Part the

water and show them the way" sort of thing. It makes us …step up and you rise to the occasion. I like that feeling. I was born to teach.

Lily, a 4th grade teacher of 29 years, put the recognition received through mentoring a pre-service teacher in terms of positive feedback that teachers may or may not receive from other sources.

> …teachers don't get much positive feedback; we get negative feedback from parents….You hear from the parents who are not happy more than you hear from the parents who are happy. So when you have a student teacher, you're seen for yourself. Wow, I remember when I just started; I was making mistakes like that. You begin to realize how much you've grown in your own profession. I think that's a big part of it.

> In addition, Celine, with more than 30 years in the classroom expressed surprise

at the appreciation of her teaching. What she considers ordinary classroom activity, the preservice teachers consider special. "I don't think of it as 'Wow', but they think it's WOW. It's a booster for me because then I realize, well? See? I'm not stale …they think it's good."

Relationships

The mentor teachers become familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of their preservice teachers during the extended PDS field experience. The mentors also helped the preservice teachers become familiar with the culture of the school, teaching expectations, and the logistics of being a teacher. The mentors felt that there were many opportunities in PDS settings for the preservice teachers to develop relationships with other professionals in the school community. All the mentors felt that the relationships

were generally professional. Leila, a teacher for 17 years, spoke about her relationship

with a traditional age preservice teacher:

> We had a very close relationship; a very easy, comfortable relationship. J____
> was very professional; always here on time and always ready to work…she came
> in prepared, so it was very easy for me to give up the reins. We just a very
> comfortable, mutual respect… It was just a very positive relationship all the way
> through. We actually still talk to one another and we email. So we have become
> very close.

> For many, the relationships become more collegial over time and some grew into

personal friendships. Rona, teaching math for eight years, talked about her relationship

with a non-traditional age student teacher with a sense of honor in working with her.

> She was amazing! We still get together for coffee on weekends every now and
> then. It was interesting because she was an older person like myself … and we hit
> it off instantly. I think she was just an amazing teacher; so concerned about the
> kids, really hands-on with the kids, gave herself to them and they received her so
> well…It was so exciting to have her… Every now and then I get an email saying
> "OK, how did we do this?" so it's an on-going thing. It didn't end when she left
> here.

> Many of the mentors speak about building long lasting relationships with the

preservice teachers assigned to them. Often the roles the inservice mentors moved from

teachers to coaches to colleagues. Joan, a social studies teacher with 14 years in the

classroom, explained how this happened for her.

> I have built a really nice relationship with the young lady who was my student
> teacher…because she turned into my colleague….We enjoyed each other and I
> saw that she was turning into a teacher. She was making the transformation from
> student to teacher in such a way that I wanted her here….and she has been here
> ever since. So we are colleagues; we are friends. We bought Christmas presents
> for each other's kids and it's turned into, now, a professional working
> relationship.

As the study participants examined the reasons for successful mentor/mentee relationships, their view was that openness and flexibility of both partners was paramount.

Dina: I think the fact that I was very open to her ideas; we talked about everything. She was very open to my ideas. Again, we talked all the way through…emailed back and forth. We actually met over the summer. I had met her the year prior working on something with Dr. S___, and so it's been a very close relationship, and it's been a good experience, cooperating in the classroom. It has been an excellent experience.

Gretchen: I believe that it's my willingness to let go and my willingness to appreciate and respect that these people are coming into my room with the latest research and education and needing to try thing out.

Leila: Well, I think that J____ was very prepared and so it gave us time to talk, not just about the lessons, but about the children, and then about our own lives and what we were bringing into teaching, too. …I think, too, she was very mature, and at the Same time, she was about the Same age as my daughters. So I just related well to her and she related well to me.

In addition, all the partners of the PDS community contribute to the preparation and support of the preservice teachers.

Joan: Well, I think they come out of Centenary really understanding that it is not going to be easy. I think for anyone coming into the profession, that is the make or break moment… That really goes a long way for them: thinking it is going to be hard and I better be up to it, because it is; it's student teaching.

Rona: I think the way the student teacher was selected to be here – it was presented to my boss. Dr. P_____ interviewed her, met her first, and that was the first step. She wasn't coming in cold. Dr. P_____ put her stamp of approval on her and that says a lot. If she meets Dr. P_____'s criteria then that's a huge thing right there. If Dr. P_____ says this is OK, you know you're getting a good one.

Sal: Also, the openness of the staff; everybody here at A_____ is very welcoming. And that makes it a positive experience.

Occasionally mentor teachers experience relationships with preservice teachers that are less than satisfying or unsuccessful. Those mentors felt that the preservice teacher's personality or personal style could be determining factors. Other mentor teachers attributed this to lack of motivation or a poor attitude. One teacher even went as far as to say that an unsuccessful candidate did not have the heart of a teacher. That opinion may have evolved because the mentor teacher and the preservice teacher did not develop a working relationship.

Rona: I would think that, if they do not genuinely want to be teachers as they need to be, that would be a huge thing for me. This is such a gift to be able to teach these kids and if you don't see it that way, and this is just a job, I personally don't think this is what you want to be doing with your life. You really have to commit to this, to being an effective teacher or it's just not going to work.

Celine: I have had a not so positive experience 2 times – one junior practicum and one student teacher. They didn't listen. They didn't change. I'm pretty open to doing your own thing; try it; see if it works. Even if I know that it probably won't work, I think it's better to fall on your face now than later and there is somebody to catch you and guide you…but when I see something and then we talk about is later and they don't change and they do it over and over and over again, that becomes very frustrating.

Rita: For the one who didn't work out well, it was so blatantly bad. Never did a lesson plan; did not show up on time; did not stay the whole day; could not remember the children's names. When I sat down and spoke with her time after time after time because I did not want her to fail. She would say, "Oh, I'm trying …." And I would say, "I can't leave you with these students because I can't afford for you to erase six weeks of their lives." It made no impact.

Gretchen: (P)eople who have had negative experiences where the person coming in was not even sure this is what they wanted to do as this point in their lives….you have somebody who does not want to be there; who doesn't like what they are doing. Now that puts a whole different light on the situation.

Although all the study participants reported having good experiences with preservice teachers, the mentoring relationship can and does carry a certain amount of stress. There was an extensive discussion of the pressure cooperating teachers experience during the focus group session at Alpha School.

Flora: On the practical side, it's the commitment to be here every day…. you feel obligated to be here under any circumstances; so sometimes that's a little bit of a challenge. Because, sometimes we just need a mental health day. But when this person's in your room, you're thinking, "Oh, I guess… I'm going to school today."

Joan: I've got one and it's selfish, really; having someone with you all the time. When we get our preps, it is time to get your stuff ready for the next period or the next day. But it is also a time to decompress. When those kids leave the room, it's almost like, OK, I can be me. But if someone is with you, even if you have a good relationship… my prep is the only time I'm alone all day.

Flora: Right! … And sometimes you get somebody who doesn't understand the boundaries…. You want to say, "You have got to back off and just give me a minute to breathe."

Tessa: …. It's time consuming and it is exhausting sometimes.

Flora: You're somebody's teacher all day. You get tired of being the grown-up's teacher too.

A similar discussion came up at Beta School, centered on the pressures that come with a class of students who had extensive needs.

Lily: Yes, you have to have the kind of class that you know that you can devote time to that student teacher. This year in particular, I don't have that kind of class. So I wouldn't want one this year…

> Cindy: That's the tricky thing. If you have a class with a lot of needs, it is really hard to have a student teacher, even a really good one. (We) work until 4:30-5:00 pm.…she has lots of questions and I should be answering them. Luckily, I don't have young ones at home, so I can do that. So, it is exhausting.

Krystal, from Gamma School, was also concerned with the needs of her students. She echoed the sentiments of many of the mentor teachers when she indicated that she did not know what kind of a person she was getting. Even though it could be a wonderful thing, the classroom teacher is responsible for making sure that the students were still learning.

Joan expressed what many of the mentor teachers said regarding the maturity level of the preservice teachers. The life experience of preservice teachers often eased the tension of the close, collaborative nature of the mentor/mentee relationship in the classroom.

> I had a (preservice) teacher last semester and she was a returning student. She was an older woman and she said to me the first day, after a couple of periods,…"You don't have to entertain me. …If you need to go do something, I'll be OK. "I thought, we're going to be fine. This will be alright."

Classroom Practices

Many mentors indicated that, because they had a preservice teacher in their classrooms, they needed to be very well prepared and ready to model best practices.

> Lily: When you have someone else in the classroom you always try to do the best job you can. Just having her in the classroom and knowing that she is watching me and emulating me, maybe, or at least looking to me for guidance. I have to be on my tip-top game here. I always come prepared …but it has to be more than that. It has to be definitely everything that you could possibly put into it.…So yes, I did notice that I am definitely trying harder if I have an audience.

Collaboration between the veteran and novice teachers; working with preservice teachers is a source of new ideas about curriculum and teaching; preservice teachers help inservice teachers by giving them feedback on modeled lessons and sharing teaching techniques and lesson plans.

> Sal: They just finished their studies in education and they know the latest technology; they know the latest teaching styles and developments in teaching. So when they come into our classrooms and they bring those ideas with them; we can only learn from them.

> Flora: Some other things – simple things –like centers that they have developed and brought in … that I have kept; especially the language arts, because we started balanced literacy and you are always looking for a new idea.

> Leila: When it's my turn to do a lesson, I look at it through a different lens because I know … someone is supposed to be learning from me. Sometimes I'm questioned why I am doing it this way … Watching the new teachers coming, they are so bold to try something different many times and that frees me to try something different and to do something in a different way, too.

Mentor teachers saw having preservice teachers in their classrooms as opportunities to share classroom responsibilities. All of the study participants indicated that the additional assistance in the classroom was greatly appreciated. Often it means giving additional time and attention to individual students in the classroom. Leila, who has been teaching for 17 years, described the benefit of the preservice teacher's work in the classroom as additive.

> … it's just phenomenal to have 2 teaching adults in the room; … We are doing reading … and writing workshop and we conference with the kids every day. To have another adult who knows what she's doing, walking around and conferencing with kids is amazing. When J____ came last year, I had four real struggling readers. While J____ conferenced, I pulled them over and did a skills and strategies group. So, I would never have been able to do that, had I not had another person.

Judy, a 36-year veteran teacher summarized her perceptions this way:

> …having a student teacher meant having another pair of hands and so that freed
> me up to be attentive to others that I might not have the opportunity to do. Also,
> the student teacher, while working with a small group did pick up on some of the
> nuances of inappropriate behavior that was going on in this classroom…So it was
> helpful to have the extra ears, the hands, the eyes to really get a very strong
> awareness of what was going on.

Most of the mentor teachers avoided talking about the strengths they have that

help in classroom practice. When the mentors did speak about strengths, they seemed

surprised by others' recognition of effectiveness of their practice for the preservice

teachers. Joan said:

> … but sometimes they will say to me, "I don't understand it…they (students) are
> good for you, but they (students) are not good for anyone else." So I guess it's a
> strength that they have pointed out. Having (preservice teachers) in with me, the
> kids do what I ask them to do and they are well behaved. I really don't know why.
> It is a kind of intangible I guess…

Dina, just recently tenured, expressed amazement at how she expanded her

receptivity to novel concepts by working with a preservice teacher; her views mirrored

those of other participants in the study.

> Well, I know that I am a person open to new ideas. I don't know if I realized I
> was that open to having somebody in my classroom and teaching…but now I am
> much more open to the experience because it has been such a positive experience;
> and for that I am grateful….to have someone in my classroom every day, writing
> lessons – it's been a very opening experience…She's made me realize how open I
> am to it.

Eleven of the 17 mentor teachers were quick to delineate their personal challenges

when it came to improving everyone's experience. Four of the mentor teachers indicated

that that they had to be better prepared and more organized while guiding student

teachers. Krystal said that, "it was an eye-opener, too, to make sure that I am sticking to the time and the schedule so that she was seeing the way a full day runs."

Four of the participants felt that giving feedback was an issue. Often the mentors found it easy to give praise, but finding the right way to let preservice teachers know when their teaching skills need improvement was harder. Celine said:

> I have difficulty saying negative things to people. I don't know how to be assertive enough to say, "Look; we need to sit down and we need to talk here." So I'll do things like, "How's that bulletin board coming?" Instead of saying, "You're required to do 2 bulletin boards and we really need to do them."… I can say positive things. I have some difficulty saying less-than-positive things strongly enough so that they understand I'm serious; because I say things with a smile and they don't think I'm serious. So that's a challenge for me.

Five of the teachers expressed difficulty in ceding control of the classroom to their preservice teachers and also allowing the student teachers to learn from the mistakes they make in delivering instruction. Rona, a teacher with eight years experience teaching mathematics, found it hard to let things take their natural course.

> Rona: I think the challenge of having a student teacher was letting her – not that she made many mistakes – but letting her make those mistakes and find her way out of them as opposed to just telling her. I tend to be controlling… But I had to say nothing, basically, and let her learn that you can't always do that; and that this hands-on thing is not always going to work; and you've got to be really, really flexible…

> Leila: I tend to kind of sit back and let them make their mistakes, which was OK. But it was hard for me to say, "Next time do it this way." I really wanted them to discover on their own what worked… I think we all have to bite our tongues sometimes. It's hard when you feel your class isn't quite under the control you had them in or the routine is a little bit different…But then there have been some times when I've discovered it's OK to do it a different way…

More than half of the mentors spoke about preservice teachers making them more cognizant of things they should be doing in the classroom. The skills, strategies, and techniques have been part of their repertoire, but may have fallen into disuse.

> Lily: …a small thing that I noticed (was that) I moved around the room more when she was in there because I know that's what you're supposed to do. But after 29 years you tend to stay in one spot or 2 spots, not all the way around…I did notice that I was definitely trying harder if I had an audience.

> Flora: I have to work on my patience and I see that when a student teacher comes in and they're more patient than I am with little mundane things that second graders will do .sometimes. I have worked on that over the past several years since I have had people in and out of my room….so I am a little bit more patient – a little kinder to the students' emotional needs, not just their academic needs.

> Krystal: …she definitely came up with the anticipatory set before the lesson. Once you start teaching you forget about that. Or, you don't forget about it, but you are not necessarily as creative because you know what you need to get done in the day. She came up with a few openers that were quick and easy that I can implement in the timeframe…

Every participant in the study gave examples of novel strategies or techniques, which they have adopted as a result of preservice teachers' classroom performances. Those activities ranged from organizational tactics to application of journal writing to classroom management techniques, in addition to specific instructional strategies. The bold way preservice teachers think outside of normal parameters gave mentor teachers the courage to implement novel strategies in their own classroom practice.

> Leila: I think it's been about trying something new. I had one student teacher that dressed up in a costume to read a book and I thought, "Oh, my goodness!" Seeing the kids' reactions gave me the idea that you can be a little bit more… you know, wear a crown when you talk about the pilgrims and the king…

> Rita: … I did have one student teacher who was really good with puppets…she had this puppet have problems because we had 2 children with (oppositional)

defiant disorder. When they say this poor puppet was flunking, they'd come over to help…. It didn't take a lot of research, but it was new… to have a puppet have so many awful problems… and I thought that was a very innovative, insightful approach that the student teacher had.

The mentor teachers appreciated the preservice teachers' familiarity with the

application of technology in the classroom and adopted much of it.

Lily: Now this year we have Smart Boards, so that has to be integrated. So I felt less apprehensive about the Smart Board because I saw her doing this technology and it worked… and the kids enjoyed and she was very good at it.

Dina: I think (having a preservice teacher) has made me more open to somebody else's ideas, not just mine, but her experiences as well because she is learning new things in the classroom. What has made this experience very different is that we're using more technology than has been used in the past. Plus she created an iPod Podcast, so that was an awesome experience…

Ultimately, inservice teachers felt that students in their classrooms benefitted

from having the preservice teachers as part of the learning community. The mentor

teachers acknowledged the weight of responsibility for the learning of their students. The

study participants agreed that the advantages far outweighed their concerns.

Flora: I am concerned about the responsibility I have toward my students rather than the student teacher because the student teacher comes in for a short time and then leaves me. …So that's the part that concerns when I allow someone to come in and take over. Are the children getting what they need? But they survive. They survive and they do OK. I am their teacher day in and day out. Then here comes somebody who is practicing being a teacher and it makes the children step up to the plate and be the best that they can and practice their learning in a different way.

Gretchen: The benefit of just having another person in the room is huge and I think the children benefit from that also. They get not just everything from me; they have somebody else. Sometimes it's a different viewpoint, sometimes a different perspective, sometimes better patience at a time when it's needed.

Professional Development

The view of professional development activities was specific to each of the PDS schools. The combination of on-site graduate courses, support for graduate study at other institutions, and inservice programs sponsored by the schools varied from school to school. Although the commitment of the districts was unwavering, the level and nature of involvement by the schools' administrators varied.

Alpha School teachers indicated that most of their in-house professional development focused on improving their skills in using classroom technology. Alpha School has invested substantial resources into providing cutting edge technology for all classrooms. Kathy said, "We have inservices to train us in the technology that we have in our classrooms. It's a necessity to be trained on the Phonic Ear and our new Mac computers. So (the inservices are) beneficial and (the administrators) always take surveys so that they're doing what we want to do and that is meaningful to us." On the other hand, Flora indicated that there was room for improvement:

> When we do have professional development through our coordinator here at school, they are good. But I don't think there's enough and I miss it. Years ago, when I first started teaching here we had half days and we had things that were relevant to our classrooms. Sometimes I don't feel like they're very relevant to our classrooms…so it's good but I definitely see lots of room for improvement.

Only three teachers from Alpha School had attended workshops on the college campus; one of them was a participant in the current study. Of the six Alpha School mentor/teachers, three of them have already earned their master's degrees at other

institutions. Two of the study participants were pursuing their master's degrees in special

education through the college's on-site program at the time of the study. The remaining

mentor/teacher appreciated the presence and convenience of the on-site graduate

program, but she did not enroll.

During the Alpha School focus group session voiced feelings that the on-site

professional development activities were valuable. The mentor teachers felt that the

development activities they had the opportunity to participate in supported them well

professionally. Professional development was a natural part of their experience. Joan

summarized her view of it.

> Professional development doesn't happen when you pay $190 and go to a
> workshop. Professional development, if it's what it's supposed to be, it happens in
> the hallway when you catch one another. It happens when you have someone
> come into your classroom to observe. It happens all the time, every day if you're
> doing it right. It's not 100 hours (New Jersey requirement for teachers), it's 180
> days.

Schoolteachers were unanimous in their view that the chief school administrator

was presenting cutting- edge best practices as a regular feature of the school's

professional development activities. Lissa's view of the administrator's role in promoting

district sponsored professional development:

> Lissa: I like to keep up with whatever is new and innovative, so if there is
> something new out there, bring it on. (With) Dr. P_____, we never feel like we
> don't know what's going on out there. She is right there. If it's the new thing,
> we're doing it. Whatever is the latest and the greatest at the time…we are all
> pretty receptive.

The administrator also actively supports her teachers' attendance at college professional development offerings. A cohort of teachers (including one of the study participants) was working toward master's degrees through their on-site program. Sixteen Beta School teachers attended the 2008 Summer Teachers' Academy, with all six of the mentor/ teacher participants in the present study. The Beta School faculty had pre-Academy orientation sessions conducted by a Centenary College faculty member.

> Lily: Dr. S___ came here three or four times to orient us, at least introduce the Smart Board. (That) was very good because we knew what it was; we weren't afraid of it. So we felt a little more comfortable when we went into this three-day session.

There is a cohort of seven teachers pursuing their master's degrees at the Beta School site. Only one of the research study mentor/teachers is currently part of that cohort. She saw the professional development in a broader view.

> Laura: I think our administration really lets us do what we are interested in…pursue what we need to. A lot of things they do here. We do things for the whole staff and those are generally, lately, technology oriented, which is good because we are getting all this new equipment… And then we have the professional development school here, right at school, which I like to take full advantage of. At my snail's pace towards my degree, taking one class at a time; and that's what they do here.

Even mentor/teachers not involved in the on-site graduate program see its value.

> Rona: I think that we benefit a lot from having professional development. Dr. P_____ has been able to bring in people from Centenary to coach us at in-services and staff meetings …I know that there are courses offered here that I don't personally take part in; but I know that there are teachers who do and they absolutely love it. It's really cool because Dr. P_____ is our boss but then she's also the teacher of those classes. That's pretty neat, too, to see her in a different light. I think it gives us a lot… and without Dr. P_____, we would not have had the opportunity.

Another veteran teacher had a totally different viewpoint.

Celine: …I have 30 graduate credits and beyond. But I don't like to work toward a master's degree because I find a lot of the classes don't really help me in the classroom… I don't need the label of Master's Degree … but I like to take classes that are going to help me in the classroom the next day.

All the Beta School mentor/teachers expressed the belief that professional development meant learning for them. They were all open to new ideas and new ways of teaching the Same concepts to students. Celine summed it up with (professional development is) "anything that helps you grow as a teacher."

Gamma School mentor teachers saw their professional development activities as centering on vendor support for programs purchased for use across the grades. The school district had sponsored teachers' attendance at summer workshops at a major university in support of reading and writing instructional methodology. Outside consultants presented model lessons to the teachers on a regular basis. Gamma School teachers also appreciated district sponsored articulation professional development with teachers from other level schools and surrounding sending districts.

A group of teachers at Gamma School, not including the study participants, comprised a cohort for master's degrees in educational leadership as part of an on-site graduate program. Two of the mentor/teachers already had master's degrees. The other three study participants did not see the on-site graduate courses as meeting their needs at this time. Practical issues such as family responsibilities at home or no strong interest in

the particular master's program currently offered on-site, have caused those teachers to choose not to take advantage of the course offerings.

The Gamma School group echoed the sentiments of the mentor/teachers from the other two schools when they discussed professional development. However, the socioeconomic makeup of their community had an impact on what the mentor/teachers needed to get from professional development activities. Gretchen put it rather succinctly: "(It's) more like our professional survival! It's not just development; we need to be able to work with the children of today. The children of today are different than the children of previous years."

During the focus group sessions the study participants had a chance to directly voice their views on the place that their mentoring of preservice teachers has in their personal professional development. Every mentor/teacher expressed that the extended contact with their preservice teachers provided them with rich collegial interactions.

> Sal: I feel like the student teachers bring the best of what they have been studying in their methods classes and preparing to become teachers. So things that we know but have forgotten, or things that have gone out of practice, they remind us of. Modern techniques and theories that we may not have been privy to, they share with us. So, in that way, it helps us to develop professionally.

> Gretchen: We have an opportunity to not only demonstrate what we're doing, but perfect it through the eyes and the ears and the workings of a student teacher. They bring things to us that we haven't really been exposed to, and in the interaction with the cooperating teacher and the (supervisor) from the college who comes to observe, there are a lot of things that could be learned all the way around.

The mentor teachers also revealed that they felt more confident through working with adults – the preservice teachers. The mentor teachers valued feedback they received from

preservice teachers on demonstration lessons, shared literature, instructional techniques, and unit plans. This helped mentor teachers add to their professional growth.

Professional Development School as Learning Community

The concept of a Learning Community is one of the cornerstones of Professional Development Schools (NCATE, 2001; Teitel, 2003). In the focus group sessions mentor/teachers had the chance to discuss how the concept of the learning community was contributing to the teaching, learning, and professional development taking place in their schools. The mentor/teachers saw all sides of the PDS relationship. All of the study participants acknowledged the placement of graduate programs at each of their school sites. Even teachers who were not taking advantage of PDS tuition reduction saw the benefits that accrued to the district by others achieving their master's degrees.

Mentor teachers perceived hosting student teachers as linking the school and the college together in a special, mutually beneficial way. They recognized that best practices flowed both ways between mentor/teachers and preservice teachers. There was also a sense of pride when the mentor/teachers spoke about the part they played in training novice teachers.

> Sal: And we know we have had a hand in providing some of the local schools with really good, new teachers. We keep in touch with some of them that have been here and happen to find a position locally, and that is rewarding also.
>
> Joan: On occasion, locally means in the classroom next door. My student teacher actually became a permanent member of the faculty. So (hosting preservice teachers) is also enriching us on a long-term basis.

One of the hallmarks of PDS is a commitment by all parties to provide quality fieldwork experiences for preservice teachers. In each of these three schools that commitment began with the administrators being actively involved in the choice of inservice teachers to mentor the preservice teachers. All of the mentor/teachers felt honored to be chosen for the assignment. The mentors' own experiences influence their eagerness to serve. Thirteen of the study participants had positive preservice teaching experiences and wanted to provide their charges with a similar process. Four of the mentor/teachers had less than satisfying preservice experiences of their own; the negative experiences made them intent on giving affirmative support to their mentees. Rita expressed gratitude for the value College supervisors add to the experience: "The supervisors who come and evaluate them – those have always been excellent experiences….a supervisor can make or break a program. Luckily we have always had very good ones."

The mentor/teachers saw their PDS learning communities in a much broader context than just the training of novice teachers.

> Sal: (As a PDS) our school is perceived as an open-door school where we welcome young people who are in school and older people coming back to school. We welcome these people into our building and want to share our experience with them. I like the idea that not only our community, but in communities around us, people going to the college know that they are welcome here in whatever capacity they need to come.
>
> Dina: I see all age groups. We have our preschool, which is housed here, as well as our regular population, our general population. And then we have our professional development in the afternoon with people trying to achieve their master's, as well as the older people in the community who come in for special

technology courses at night. So, I think we are a learning community serving the community very well.

Mentor teachers were also engaged in activities with faculty and supervisors from

the College. Rona talked about the energy a college faculty member brought to staff

meetings at one of the schools.

> A couple of months ago we had a staff meeting and Dr. P_____ brought in a person from the college who helped us with writing skills. As a math teacher I don't use them as much, obviously, as a language arts or reading teacher. I sat there mesmerized by how excited this woman was about what she does and it was contagious. I do writing assignments with my students and we do journaling, and we do all that in a math classroom. I still found myself fascinated by how encouraging this woman was. "OK, so you're a math teacher but you still can do this," … I think everybody walked out of there going, "Wow, that woman loves what she does."… I've never worked in a school where we had those kinds of relationships before; where we have other people coming in and helping us. Not somebody standing over you saying, "You have to do this, and this, and this" but someone saying, "Well, how about this?" and "Why don't we try this next time?" and encouraging. She's been here, even after the staff meeting. She comes back and she pokes her head in and says, "How's it going?…Can I do anything? … Are you following this?" I think it's been great!

Another mentor/teacher talked about the relationship that can evolve between

mentor teachers and college supervisors within the PDS arrangement.

> Flora: I would like to say that the supervisors who have been in and out of my room are very professional and I appreciate that they treat me as a colleague; they appreciate my opinions about what's going on in everyday classrooms. They look to me for guidance as far as the student teacher in my classroom. Any supervisor I have ever had in my room has always been willing to help out if they're in there for the long term. I always train my children to speak up. If you need help, and there is an adult and I am busy, go talk to the other adult in the room; they will help. Poor Dr. S___; he was having to do the little leaf thing back in the fall…

> Tessa: For instance, Prof. S___; he comes and he has been in my classroom several times and has been involved with projects that third graders have done. So we have developed a very professional, open relationship and I can call him and say this is what's going on… He was helping a practicum student, but he came on the field trip; he ate pizza with the kids; he hung out with the kids in the

afternoon, and it just became very nice. The kids loved it! They loved that he went on the field trip. They were asking him questions; so he became part of what's going on.

The mentor/teachers also include the students in their classrooms as part of the learning community contributing to the training of preservice teachers in the PDS environment. Rita explained how she prepared her students so that they feel a part of the teacher training team.

There's another thing that happens a lot … I will say to my students, "You know, a student teacher is coming in." They always think they are going to be observed. So I say, "She's not here for you; she's in here because she is practicing to be a teacher ." It brings the kids up to a different level. I'll say, "It's very important: she is going to be trying new skills. It's important that you let her know if this is something that you can handle or not. Make sure you don't hurt her feelings. You've got to help."Kids step up to the plate, too and you actually get a higher level of functioning because they're trying to help this person get her grade.

Mentor/teachers at all three schools felt that students rise to the occasion. As the preservice teachers develop rapport with students, the students, in turn, are eager to contribute to the success of preservice teachers.

Summary

This section exhibited the finding of this qualitative research study. The process utilized to gather, record, and organize the several sources of data were delineated. This section also presented the protocol for data analysis, the themes which emerged from the data, and the resulting research findings. Those findings were explained and interpreted, in order to answer the research question and the two sub-questions.

Essentially three themes emerged from the individual interviews with mentor teachers. The themes were Mentor Teacher Renewal, Relationships, and Classroom

Practice. The focus group responses reinforced the initial themes and raised additional themes of Professional Development and PDS as Learning Community. All of the study participants found mentoring preservice teachers to be a positive experience. Mentor teachers felt that being open and flexible and developing a good working relationship with preservice teachers was critical to success. Inservice teachers perceived the exchange of strategies, techniques, and new ideas as benefitting the students in their classrooms academically. The learning communities that existed as a result of the PDS arrangements contributed to the learning of everyone in the schools. Although there were varying levels of involvement in college sponsored professional development activities, all participants saw the mentoring process itself as being an important form of professional development. These themes were discussed in greater detail in section 5.

Section 5 presents a summary of the data analysis and an interpretation of the meaning of that data in terms of the research question and sub-questions. There is also an examination of the implications of the findings, consideration of the possible applications of the research study results, and recommendations for additional research. Finally, there is a discussion of how the findings of this research study can be utilized to effect social change.

SECTION 5:

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

Overview

Teachers, and the decisions they make, have a profound effect on the students they interact with on a daily basis (Marzano, 2003). In order for teachers, both novice and experienced, to be better prepared, they need background and experience with instructional strategies, curriculum design, and classroom management.

Preparing preservice teachers for entry into contemporary classrooms has long been the purview of colleges and universities. Traditionally teacher training has been done in college classrooms, exposing preservice teachers to educational theory and pedagogy. Preservice teachers then completed coursework with a brief classroom teaching experience to practice teaching skills (Levine, 2006).

Providing practicing teachers with worthwhile, on-going professional development was not, in most cases, systematic. Most often school districts delivered professional development activities through discrete workshops with outside consultants. Teacher training programs made few efforts to connect professional development activities to teacher interests or perceived classroom needs.

Educational reform initiatives have put pressure on colleges and universities to produce teachers who can deliver quality instruction. Federal and state mandates for accountability led to district efforts to improve student performance through enhanced efficacy of inservice teachers. Educational research organizations promoted Professional

Development Schools (PDS) as a solution that could address the preparation of preservice teachers and the improvement of inservice teachers. PDSs were the result of partnerships between teacher training programs at colleges and universities and public schools across the P-12 spectrum. PDS learning communities seek to supply solid structures for fieldwork based preparation for preservice teachers, utilizing well-qualified inservice teachers as mentors. In return, the college faculty/staff provide support and professional development activities for the participating school staff. Ultimately, the goal is to provide increased learning opportunities for students and teachers at both institutions.

Research studies have been conducted to assess the efficacy of PDS partnerships, including advantages for students in the classrooms where preservice teachers were practicing instructional strategies (Fisher, Frey, & Farnam, 2004; Pine, 2003). Many studies have documented the professional benefits gained by the preservice teachers during the extended experience in PDSs (Levin & Rock, 2003; Paese, 2003; Singh, 2006). When inservice teachers were included in the investigations, their role as support for the teacher-training component of the PDS was usually the focus (Aldritch, 2001; Gimbert, 2003; Rodgers & Keil, 2007). Inservice teachers as the target group in studies have been rare. Schussler (2006) reviewed research on how inservice teachers' roles change as the result of PDS. Although the studies highlighted positive effects attributed the PDS environment, there seems to be little research on effects of mentoring relationship between mentor teachers and preservice teachers.

The purpose of this interpretive qualitative study was to investigate how inservice mentor/teachers perceived their experiences with preservice teachers in PDS schools.

This study focused on the views and perceptions of inservice mentor/teachers regarding what they may have gained from their experiences mentoring preservice teachers assigned to their classrooms.

The teachers participating in this study taught at three elementary schools, each located in a different county in northwest New Jersey. The three schools hosted four to six preservice teachers for the yearlong PDS fieldwork arrangement during the period covered by this study. Interview participants were inservice teachers who had mentored preservice teachers from Centenary College. This researcher chose participants were by purposeful sampling to represent a range of years of experience, grade levels, and subjects taught. None of the participants worked with the researcher in a professional capacity during the research study period. She informed all participants of the focus of the study before signing a consent form. Seventeen inservice teachers agreed to participate in the study and the researcher scheduled interviews to accommodate their teaching responsibilities.

One research question and two subquestions were the center of this research study. The researcher sought data to answer the question: How do inservice teachers perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional practices. The subquestions were: (a) In what ways do inservice teachers perceive the interaction among preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and college faculty in relationship to any application of new instructional strategies in their classrooms? (b) How do inservice teachers perceive the mentoring experience in relationship to any application to professional growth?

The primary research method was the one-on-one interview, conducted face-to-face. This researcher designed open-ended interview questions to give the participants opportunities to share their perceptions and opinions regarding their mentor teacher experiences. The second source of data was three focus group sessions with study participants at each school. This researcher augmented information from these two sources with unobtrusive data regarding the inservice teachers' involvement in other professional development programs sponsored by the college.

The researcher evaluated Interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and other documents collected from the participating mentor/teachers through a data analysis spiral. She read the data multiple times and assigned codes to words, sentences, and paragraphs in the transcripts. Clear common themes emerged between and among the participants, regardless of their school sites.

Summary of Findings

The experience of mentoring empowered experienced teachers and gave them a greater sense of their significance in the field of education. They derived satisfaction from helping less experienced colleagues. Many of the mentor teachers described their contributions as a way of giving back to the teaching profession or building the next generation of teachers. Also, mentor teachers found themselves being more reflective about their teaching. Within the collegial relationships the mentor teachers found themselves analyzing and discussing teaching and learning. They focused on the collaborative relationships with their preservice teachers.

Study participants observed that their beliefs about teaching and curriculum were refined, and their reflections on their own teaching were more objective, as a result of mentoring preservice teachers. They revealed that teaching, students' learning, and teaching as a career had taken on renewed importance. Inservice teachers also voiced new feelings of validation for the experience and expertise they had attained over the years.

Mentor teachers expressed confidence in much of the professional development opportunities provided for them through the PDS collaborative relationships. A few of the mentor teachers were pursuing master's degrees through the PDS partner, Centenary College. All of participants valued professional development activities, all of which they found immediately applicable in their classrooms to improve student learning.

Interpretation of Findings

A few studies have focused specifically on the positive effects of mentoring preservice teachers on the mentors themselves (Conner & Tochterman, 2004; David, 2000; Holloway, 2001). Participants in this study had diverse backgrounds and varied teaching assignments; most were seasoned classroom veterans. However, when the participating mentor teachers were asked to elaborate on their experiences with preservice teachers in their PDS learning communities, common, positive perspectives emerged. Five themes were evident from mentor teachers' perceptions, thoughts, and feelings captured in the interviews and focus group sessions.

It was often difficult to separate the data into discrete themes. This researcher often attributed single statements to multiple theme areas. This overlap could be

explained by the interactive, interpersonal nature of fieldwork in the College's teacher training program. Interpreting the results as a set of five themes gave a comprehensive view of the value of mentoring for the inservice teachers who took on the challenges of hosting preservice teachers in their classrooms. However, there was also merit in disaggregating the data and illuminating specific mentor teacher perceptions within the distinct themes.

Mentor Teacher Renewal

A few studies have focused specifically on the positive effects of mentoring preservice teachers on mentors themselves (Sandholtz & Dadlez, 2000; Steffey, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000). Many cooperating teachers compared the PDS preservice teacher experience favorable to their own student teaching experiences. The cooperating teachers in that study also described personal and professional renewal. Shroyer et al. (2007) investigated simultaneous renewal in PDSs. The perceptions of the teachers in Shroyer's study were that they were rejuvenated by the collaboration, which took place and the reflections they had on teaching and learning.

This present research project examined and exhibited viewpoints of inservice mentor teachers and yielded similar results. They cited increased awareness of the benefits for everyone in their classrooms, from collaboration with preservice teachers. They felt stimulated to revisit familiar teaching strategies and to attempt more creative techniques. The voices of these mentor teachers who have worked closely with preservice teachers throughout the practicum and student teaching field experiences affirmed the

themes that have arisen from the individual and focus group interviews. In particular mentor teachers expressed feelings of validation from the responsiveness and success of preservice teachers. Mentor teachers revealed feelings of being appreciated and being satisfied that their experiential backgrounds were acknowledged by preservice teachers, faculty, and supervisors from the college. The mentor teachers asserted their identities as master teachers. All participants in this study reported that most mentoring experiences were positive. Several mentor teachers had had more than one experience mentoring preservice teachers. A few of those previous experiences with preservice teachers were not successful or positive. Those mentor teachers had resolved to try again with new preservice teachers and felt rewarded when the match was better.

Mentor teachers were eager to host preservice teacher because they felt that teaching and learning could be more effective with prospective professionals involved in the process of educating a classroom of students. Every one of them expressed a willingness to take on the challenge of mentoring a preservice teacher again in the future, just as teachers in a study by Scheetz and his colleagues (2005) revealed. They judged the personal and professional benefits as far outweighing the responsibilities or any disappointments they had encountered. The sentiments of the mentor teachers in the present study mirrored what participants in a study by Seibert et al. (2006). Both sets of teachers still learned a great deal about teaching others to teach and about themselves as teachers. Both groups felt that they received as much as they gave in the mentoring relationships.

Relationships

There have been some studies on success of teacher training programs in regard to the relationships between mentor teachers and preservice teachers. All of the studies cited trust and communication as critical to successful fieldwork relationships (Beck & Kosnik, 2002; Glenn, 2006; O'Brian, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007; Whitney et al., 2002). Close examination of the relationship between mentor teachers and preservice teachers was done in only a few studies. In studies by Glenn (2006) and O'Brian et al. (2006) cooperating teachers were asked to comment directly on their relationships with preservice teachers. Cooperating teachers indicated that, when personal interest in the preservice teachers was added to the professional dynamics, this led to greater collaboration, yielding of classroom control, acceptance of difference teaching styles, and sharing of constructive feedback.

 Participants in the present study verified that solid relationships with preservice teachers promoted successful experiences for all constituencies. Conversely, when character, attitude, or lackluster effort interfered with the establishment of a good working relationship, the mentor/teachers perceived the resulting experience as negative. Nevertheless, study participants revealed that there was still a great deal to learn from such occurrences, despite the contradictory nature of those experiences.

The perceptions of the study participants demonstrated that professional development for mentor teachers through the mentoring of preservice teachers was closely linked to the mentor/mentee relationship. Mentor teachers described the

relationship as collegial rather than hierarchical. When good communication patterns were in place, they could entrust their students to the preservice teachers, see the value in the methods they used, and feel more comfortable giving preservice teachers constructive feedback.

<p style="text-align:center">Classroom Practices</p>

Several researchers have reported results indicating that mentors experienced a sense of renewal of their professional practices through their mentoring experiences. Those teachers expressed feelings of professional rejuvenation and strengthening of their commitment to teaching as a profession (Scheetz et al., 2005; Steffey et al., 2000).

Mentor teachers in this study did feel renewed professionally as a result of the mentoring assignments. Participants asserted that mentoring preservice teachers provided confirmation of the efficacy of teaching techniques they were using in their classrooms. Also, preservice teachers' tentative first lessons reminded mentor teachers of classic learning strategies that had faded from use in their classrooms. Mentor teachers acknowledged improvement in their professional skills through their collaborations with preservice teachers.

Collaboration in classroom instruction between preservice teachers and inservice teachers had been the topic of investigation by some researchers. In those studies veteran mentor teachers expressed a sense of growth in professional practices as the result of working together in a joint effort rather than mentor teachers dictating what was to be done and how. Mentors teachers also noted that the collaborative interactions with

preservice teachers were collegial and rich (Boreen et al., 2000; Odell & Huling, 2000). These same sentiments were echoed by the participants in this research study. The mentor teachers reiterated the benefits to their classroom practices, which emanated from their work with preservice teachers. Additionally, the collaboration of professionals led to trying novel lessons together which each partner may not have attempted individually. Often mentor teachers asked to keep materials which preservice teachers has created and intended to use strategies, techniques, and whole lessons in their classrooms in the future

Professional Development

Educational reform, including legislation such as No Child Left Behind, supported professional development as a means to improve teaching quality and, ultimately student achievement (Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, & Garet, 2008). The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) produced a set of standards for the professional development of teachers (NSDC, 2001). Other research studies have investigated issues of delivery of training activities and teachers' views of the value of development activities that they were experiencing; teachers felt that the best professional development activities should be on-going, school-based and be related to the everyday challenges that teachers face in terms of academic content and methodology (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Engstrom & Danielson, 2006). The mentor teachers who participated in this study echoed those sentiments. Every participant declared that the learning of students in their classroom was and should continue to be the focus of professional development activities at PDS sites. Study participants appreciated

administrators' efforts to survey teachers regarding pressing issues in classrooms and then tailoring on-site professional development activities to their perceived needs. Although mentor teachers acknowledged the value of graduate courses and the merit in earning master's degrees, comprehensive offerings that could be applied in classrooms immediately for improved learning were preferred.

Some research studies pointed out that mentors not only shared their expertise and experience with preservice teachers, but also received novel ideas from their student teachers. In this way, mentoring was exhibited as a reciprocal process (Seibert et al. 2006; Sinclair et al. 2006). Mentor teachers in the present study benefitted from the same sort of mutual learning.

In this study, the theme of professional development overlaps with the previous theme of classroom practice. Mentor teachers applied coaching skills such as listening, asking questions, providing non-judgmental feedback, and assessing classroom management protocols as part of their responsibilities while working with preservice teachers. Sharing such skills and strategies brought mentor teachers professional renewal, revived energy, and validation of their commitment to the teaching profession while helping preservice teachers transition into classrooms. During this process mentor teachers were exposed to current theory and research in the field, which preservice teachers brought with them from the college campus.

The enthusiasm and novel ideas preservice teachers displayed in classrooms made collaborations into mutual learning opportunities. Participants stated that mentor teacher responsibilities were professional development activities because the experiences

helped them grow and change. Also, assuming the leadership role with preservice teachers led to recognition of their valuable knowledge and expertise in classroom skill areas. As a result some are sought out for campus roles (Sal teaches courses) or had district leadership roles (Gretchen and Judy serve on professional development committee). These opportunities helped them build on what they learned as mentors or combine elements of teaching and mentoring.

PDS as a Learning Community

From the very beginning of the reform movement that led to the creation of PDSs, learning communities has been an integral part of the concept. The Holmes Group (2007) set forth the learning community as central to the design of a PDS. When the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) delineated qualities for PDSs to adhere to, learning community was the number one standard (NCATE, 2001b). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) describes the learning community as central to the PDS process (AACTE, 2004).

PDSs were envisioned as sites where, in addition to structured field experiences for preservice teachers, continuing professional development of experienced teachers would be a priority (Brindley, Field, & Lessen, 2008). The concept of learning communities would carry the process forward so that exemplary schools would develop, improve classroom practices of teachers, and increase social and academic learning for students (Doolittle, Sudeck, & Rattigan, 2008).

The participants in this study saw the concept of learning community in a very broad sense. The college's involvement was acknowledged and welcomed at all levels of the schools. College faculty could be seen teaching graduate classes on-site, conducting workshops on-site or on-campus, observing preservice teachers, consulting with mentor teachers regarding program issues, participating in field trips, and being actively engaged in classroom activities. It was just as likely to find school administrators and mentor teachers teaching classes and/or workshops on-site or on-campus. All study participants echoed sentiments that supported those activities enthusiastically. Every mentor teacher stated that PDS learning communities made their schools better places to teach and to learn. Centenary College's PDS relationships appear to fulfill the promise of learning communities.

<div align="center">Implications for Social Change</div>

A recurring concern that emerged in this research study was the challenges mentor teachers face in preparing preservice teachers for effective service in 21st century schools. Education in the United States underwent intense scrutiny in the 20th century, and many solutions were touted to solve myriad problems and concerns. Strategies that led to improved teaching were promoted as the way to ensure increased student learning. PDSs were inaugurated primarily to address the issue of training competent preservice teachers preparing for careers in classrooms. Inservice teachers could also be supported, by this model, with on-going professional development. Always central to this educational reform were improvements in learning for all students (Holmes Partnership, 2007).

Numerous research studies have been done on the effects that the PDS model and the central concept of a learning community had on the achievement of students. PDS students' test score met or exceeded state averages over multi-year periods (Pine, 2000). Another study reported that students at PDSs improved at greater rates than comparable students at non-PDS schools (Castle, Arends, & Rockwood, 2008). Other research examined what preservice teachers were contributing to the classroom (Fisher, Frey, & Farnan, 2004). The collaboration of the two professionals was perceived helping students perform successfully. Many other studies corroborate these findings.

The mentor teachers in this study were determined to help preservice teachers build a solid foundation that will provide long-term benefits for children in classrooms, schools where everyone learns, and a society that benefits from well-prepared students, ready to contribute to their communities. The Centenary College teacher-training program intends to maintain and expand the PDS partnerships in order to produce quality preservice teachers for school districts in New Jersey. The education department at Centenary College has committed its resources and expertise to serve the rising generation of teachers and learners better. It is also the intent of this researcher to circulate the findings among teacher training colleges statewide, regionally, and nationally. The results can be useful to any teacher-training program striving to improve the quality of graduates put forth to states for licensure.

Another concept, which evolved from the data, was that mutual learning happened as a result of the mentor teacher to preservice teacher relationship during the

field placement experiences. Mentor teachers acknowledged the satisfaction and rejuvenating nature of working with preservice teachers. Coupled with professional development activities that took place in PDS learning communities, the mentoring experience could lead to improvement in classroom instruction, and ultimately, better meet the needs of all learners. The focus on developing teachers during preservice and throughout their careers can transform schools into learning communities. With the dissemination of the finding of this study colleges and universities can become leaders in the field of professional development, assessing inservice teacher needs and providing relevant quality workshops, seminars, and graduate courses. When schools are better places for learners and teachers, everyone is more successful. The final result would be citizens better prepared to contribute to their communities and society.

Recommendations for Action

If teachers are going to meet the challenges of educating a diverse student population in 21st century America, colleges and universities need to train preservice teachers thoroughly and efficiently. The data gathered during this research study has implications for mentor teachers and teacher educators if they are to promote productive preservice teaching experiences and continue with satisfying classroom careers.

To meet the needs of mentor teachers the College should address those needs within the framework of research on adult learning. Daloz (1986; 1999) wrote of the best type learning for adults as transformative in nature. People develop through interaction with their environments. That interaction was influenced by perceptions of the process.

When people are aware of their part in the process, they can integrate learning into their personal frames of reference.

A few researchers examined adult learning theory as it applied to professional development activities for teachers (Caffarella, R. S., 2002; Lawler, 2003; Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000). Their findings indicate that the most successful professional development for teachers focused on respecting teachers' experience and expertise in the field, while inviting them to participate and collaborate in professional development activities. Also, teachers make connections with their learning and want to apply that learning in meaningful way in their classrooms immediately.

Traditional classes, courses, or inservice workshops may not be as effective as this study's participants would like. The education department at Centenary College has determined from this study's data that mentor teachers and other teachers would welcome professional development activities that motivated them for growth, learning, and change. Combining the mentor teachers' assessments of their own needs for classroom practices with principles of adult learning could make for more efficient and effective professional development offerings at school sites and on campus. The education department at Centenary College intends to continue research projects with PDS partners to stay abreast of changing inservice teachers' requirements in the field.

Study participants raised issues that were not connected to the research question or sub-questions. These issues were centered on program logistics and program policies. In the interest of promoting smooth program operations and continuing collegial efforts,

the education department has agreed to review the issues and concerns, which were outside the designed focus of this research project. The education department will act upon suggestions that are judged to promote positive growth and change in the quality of training for preservice teachers as well as fulfilling professional development requests of area school districts.

Centenary College has a large number of PDS partnerships for an institution of its size. The recommendations that have emanated from this study can be implemented throughout the PDS network. Many of the suggestions for improvements in the PDS model can be applied to PDS partnerships sponsored by teacher training colleges and universities regionally and nationally. Mentor teachers could be very helpful in collaborative efforts to revise teacher education programs. Mentor teachers could add their expertise in formative and summative evaluation of preservice teachers, curriculum planning and instruction, assessment, and professional development initiatives.

Leadership development happens on a very small scale in PDSs. Colleges and universities sponsoring PDS partnerships need to make concerted efforts to recruit and train teachers and administrators to expand current leadership roles and assume new ones. This would expand the pool of quality resources across the institutions. Additionally, teacher-training programs should consider adding mentor teacher representative to their advisory boards. This could ensure the maintenance of good communication among all of the partnership stakeholders. Additionally, the perspectives of inservice practitioners could provide an additional dimension to PDS programs.

One of the challenges that public schools continue to struggle with is recruiting and maintaining a highly qualified teacher corps to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. PDS partners should work together to encourage preservice teachers to enter high need content areas. PDS schools need to be open to preservice teachers throughout their academic careers, not just during their capstone fieldwork assignments. When school administrators cooperate with college faculty to enlist quality veteran teachers to mentor preservice teachers in mathematics, science, special education, or middle school core content areas, a cadre of well-prepared novice teachers will become available.

In order for PDSs to fulfill their potential in the areas of student achievement and teacher quality, colleges and school district need to broaden and deepen their partnerships. The PDS learning communities need to be more than just the preservice teachers, the mentor teachers, and the college supervisors in any given semester. PDSs within and among school districts need to be networked so that efforts and resources can effect social change throughout the region. The work done at each of the sites in this study has extended the thinking of educators in important ways. Building on the findings of this study can expand the potential of all teachers and learners.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Further Study</div>

The value of this research study lies with the findings that inservice mentor teachers view their experiences with preservice teachers predominantly in a positive light. Positive, collaborative relationships led to effective mentoring and successful field

experiences for preservice teachers. This was a small study, with 17 participants from three schools. The college maintains relationships for field placement of preservice teachers with more than 50 schools in 38 districts; there are many other inservice mentor teachers to survey or interview for their perceptions. Perceptions and views of mentor teachers from those schools could provide addition data for program improvement.

The cohorts utilized for this research study included five or six inservice mentor teachers each. There were many other teachers in each school who had been mentor teachers, but chose not to participate in this study. Another study, perhaps using an on-line survey may be seen as less invasive of teachers' limited time resources. Additionally, it would be advisable to recruit more male inservice mentor teachers in a study of this topic. Other male teachers had fulfilled the mentor teacher role in the past, but did not come forward for this research project. More male teachers could provide new and different insights into the mentor/teacher experience.

The focus of this study project was two K-8 schools and a lower elementary school in rural northwest New Jersey. There are numerous middle schools and high schools that maintain PDS relationships with Centenary College, and contribute effectively to the training of preservice teachers at those levels. Teachers in different school structures and environments may cast alternative views of their experiences as mentor teachers. In addition, the environments and cultures of PDS schools in more suburban and urban areas could bring more variegated perceptions of mentoring preservice teachers completing their studies at Centenary College.

Even though PDS relationships make up the bulk of the placement opportunities for Centenary preservice teachers, there are substantial numbers of non-PDS schools that host Centenary College preservice teachers. It would be valuable to have information on perceptions of mentor teachers regarding their experiences with preservice teachers and professional development, when PDS learning communities are not part of school frameworks.

For the teacher-training program at this researcher's college, the data from this study brought valuable feedback. In the past, face-to-face interaction between the mentor teachers and the college faculty was limited. This researcher needs to investigate ways to integrate the mentor teachers in all facets of the teacher-training program. The expertise of these professionals has been underutilized. Perceptions, feelings, and suggestions from the mentor teachers charged with molding the preservice teachers from observers into professional educators can assist in moving the program to another level of excellence.

The PDS model is idiosyncratic. Each teacher training institution identifies the needs they wish to address. Colleges and universities then work with school districts and choose the strategies they would use to implement in developing their relationships. Their efforts should be guided by suggested set of principles (NCATE, 2001 b; Teitel, 2001; Wise & Levine, 2002). The present study was limited in scope. It would be beneficial to the understanding of PDSs, teacher training, inservice teacher professional development, and student achievement if research were to be conducted at institutions of varying sizes, in communities at different socioeconomic levels, and with student populations of diverse

ethnic and/or culture backgrounds. Research findings could provide each site with distinctive ways of building on the successes of their PDS partnerships.

Reflection

At numerous times throughout the journey that led to this research study, this researcher was counseled by colleagues, instructors, and mentors to use personal passion in the education field. As an assistant professor working in the teacher training program at a small, private, liberal arts college, this researcher's respect and appreciation grew for the contributions inservice mentor teachers make to the preparation of preservice teachers. The College's PDS relationships provided added opportunities for college faculty to interact with inservice teachers in more meaningful ways. This researcher has observed how the mentor teachers both support and enhance the learning experiences of the preservice teachers. However, the education department faculty had given minimal attention to benefits for, or learning of, mentor teachers charged with the important work of guiding preservice teachers through their capstone field experiences. This researcher was inspired to investigate the perceptions and views of the mentor teachers regarding their interactions with the preservice teachers assigned to them. Therefore, this researcher's concerns centered on whether or not inservice teachers were receiving full value from their participation in the PDS learning communities.

Interactions with mentor teachers over the years may have given this researcher preconceived ideas about what benefits inservice mentor teachers accrue from the mentoring experiences This researcher identified and bracketed her feelings (Hatch,

2002) during the study, rather than trying to remove bias (Merriam, 2002). In the past, this researcher had been a general education classroom teacher and had taken on the role of mentor to preservice teachers. Therefore, this researcher could identify with the perceptions and feelings of the inservice mentor teachers during the one-on-one interviews. Mentor teachers' acceptance of this researcher as a colleague contributed to putting her preconceived ideas aside and enabled her to listen to participants in an open unbiased manner.

At the beginning of the research study this researcher expected that inservice mentor teachers would express that their interactions with preservice teachers were positive experiences. For the most part this proved to be true. All of the participants indicated that they were eager to mentor preservice teachers again in the future. However, the researcher's expectation that the professional development activities that were offered on-site in the form of master's degree programs were meeting the needs of inservice teachers did not prove to be true. Providing effective instruction for students was always paramount in their minds. Therefore, the inservice teachers want techniques and strategies that are immediately applicable in their classrooms. From the perspective of veteran teachers, the PDS custom of offering graduate courses leading to master's degrees does not meet immediate classroom instructional needs.

Utilizing the qualitative methodologies was exciting and rewarding. Each of the mentor teachers was so generous with time and information. Having previously interacted with teachers in the role of college supervisor, this researcher understood the data that the

study participants contributed. One-on-one interviews and focus group sessions affirmed the researcher's appreciation of the value mentor teachers add to the teacher-training program. Gathering data from mentor teachers highlighted the successes preservice teachers experience under the guidance of these veteran teachers. Spending time at each site added valuable context to the data and expanded the opportunities to serve the needs of PDS partners in the future.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Inservice mentor teachers play a vital role in the development of preservice teachers as they move from students in college classrooms to novice practitioners in schools. Mentor teachers face the challenge of guiding preservice teachers throughout their field assignments, while at the same time meeting the needs of students in their classrooms.

As Katie Rovaris delineated in *Perspectives on Mentoring* (2005), mentor teachers have exposed the preservice teachers to visible and unseen facets of school environments – routines, district curricula, administrative and family expectations, and school culture. Although balancing dual responsibilities was a daunting task, this researcher found that mentor teachers still enjoyed having preservice teachers working and learning in their classrooms. Rita, in this study, stated it this way:

> The responsibility you have as a cooperating teacher is the same responsibility you have to the students in your room. This is *student* teacher, so it just meshes together; it's just at a different level. That student teacher came to you to learn how to apply what she knows to a classroom. So it's your job to help that student teacher learn to apply just as much as it is to help students learn math or how to sit

in a chair. I think when you're an educator, no matter what level you're educating at, it's the same responsibility.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how inservice mentor teachers perceived their relationships with preservice teachers and how inservice mentor teachers viewed the effects of that interaction as it affected classroom practice. The participants in this study shared their views and experiences openly with this researcher.

Merriam (2002) suggested that qualitative research has an impact on researchers in ways that were not anticipated. As a teacher of teachers, this researcher was confident that she knew what mentoring was, what it entailed, and how it was experienced. However, so much more emerged from investigation and analysis of this group of mentor teachers. By sharing classrooms and students, seasoned mentor teachers were guiding preservice teachers toward nuances that make good teachers. In the majority of cases there was great trust and respect between the parties and experiences benefitted preservice teachers preparing to enter the teaching field. Inservice mentor teachers culled value from new concepts, strategies, and techniques brought to the classroom. Students, as the focus of teaching and learning, also gained from vital interactions between pairs of committed professionals.

As the college continues to support inservice teachers with professional development activities and graduate degree programs for improvement of classroom instruction, the education department needs to be more sensitive to the perceived needs of inservice teachers at varying stages of their careers. Novice teachers, mid-career teachers, and veteran teachers, may or may not desire the same topics or intensity for their personal

professional development growth. This researcher did not expect to be moved to action

by this research study. Meetings were already held with education department faculty and

staff to revise, adjust, and adapt procedures and protocols so that mentor teachers are

thoroughly integrated into the entire process of training preservice teachers. Specifically,

at the beginning of each semester the mentor teachers will be invited to workshops on

campus with their preservice teachers and college supervisors. PDS administrators have

already committed to providing support and classroom coverage so that all mentor

teachers can attend. The agenda of each workshop will focus as expectations of each

group of participants, clear understanding of assignments, and sharing of resources to

support each set of stakeholders. Inservice teachers at all levels need advocates who will

promote their needs to the college community. The challenge remains to fulfill that

advocate's role more adequately and move teaching and learning forward for all students.

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APPENDIX A

INITIAL ADMINISTRATOR CONTACT

Dr. T. S., Principal
Dr. K. P., Chief School Administrator
Mr. S. R., Principal
Dr. T. F., Superintendent

Thank you for continuing to partner with the Education Department at Centenary College. Several of your teachers have participated in our graduate course offerings, and several have served as cooperating teachers for our student teachers, thank you. One of my colleagues, Marianne Pratschler, is engaged in a research project on the mentoring relationship between cooperating teachers and student teachers. With your permission, she would like to interview your teachers who have worked with our student teachers. This would take place during the fall 2008 semester. Attached to this message is the formal request from Professor Pratschler. Within the next few weeks, she'll contact you for your approval for her to meet with some of your teachers. Please feel free to be in touch with me if there are any questions I can help with.
Again, thanks for your continued support of our Professional Development School collaborative.

John

Dr. John F. Autore
Associate Professor of Education
Centenary College
Hackettstown, NJ 07840
Office 908-852-1400 x2326
Fax 908-813-1984

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW-UP ADMINISTRATOR CONTACT

CENTENARY COLLEGE

Dear Professional Development School Administrator:

Centenary College and your school have had a solid collaborative relationship over the last several years. Centenary College's vision for high quality professional development in your school focuses on standards, the daily work of teaching and student success at all levels. The Education Department is reviewing all facets of the Professional Development School Program to assess the effectiveness of the Program and its impact on classroom practices.

The focus of the initial phase of this assessment effort is a research project on the effect of the mentoring relationship on the inservice teachers who share their classrooms, students and expertise with Centenary College practicum and student teachers. We would like to discuss with the inservice teachers their experiences, both positive and negative. The activities will include an informational survey, one-on-one interviews and focus groups.

With your permission these meetings would be held at your school for the convenience of your teachers. Participation is voluntary, but we value the input of your faculty. The time commitment should not exceed a few hours over eight weeks in the early Fall of 2008.

The Education Department will utilize the information and perspective your faculty provide to continue to support the development of preservice teachers, to improve current professional development offerings, and to initiate additional activities to meet your instructional needs. We would appreciate the participation of your school in our research project.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Marianne Pratschler
Marianne Pratschler
Assistant Professor of Education
pratschlerm@centenarycollege.edu
(908) 852-1400, extension 2150

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

1. What is your current teaching assignment?
_____ K – 2
_____ 3 – 5
_____ 6 – 8
_____ 9 – 12
_____ Special Education
_____ Other   Area(s) _____

2. What Teaching Certifications do you have?
_____ Elementary teacher (K – 5)
_____ Elementary teacher (K – 8)
_____ Middle school subject area endorsement

Area(s)? _____

_____ Secondary content area (K – 12)

     Area(s)? _____

_____ Teacher of students with disabilities/teacher of the handicapped

3. What degrees do you hold?
_____ BA or BS
_____ MA or MEd
_____ EdD or PhD or PsyD

_____ 4. How long have you been teaching? (Number of years)

_____ 5. How long have you been a teacher at this school? (Number of years)

6, Have you been a co-operating teacher for a student teacher from Centenary?
_____ Yes   _____ No

7. When was the last semester you were a co-operating teacher? _____

8. Are you interested in participating in this study? _____ Yes   _____ No

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

Centenary College

You are invited to take part in a research interview of the effects of mentoring preservice teachers on the professional practices of inservice teachers in Professional Development Schools.. You were chosen for the interview because you have mentored preservice teachers in the past. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the interview.

This interview is being conducted by a researcher named Marianne Pratschler, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. Marianne Pratschler is also Assistant Professor of Education at Centenary College

Background Information:
The purpose of this interview is to learn about the participant's experiences with mentoring preservice teachers and the effects of that relationship on your professional practices.
Procedures:
If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview, lasting 35-40 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of the Interview:
Your participation in this interview is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the interview. No one at Centenary College will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the interview. If you decide to join the interview now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Interview:
There is the minimal risk of psychological stress during this interview. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may stop at any time. There are no benefits to you from participating in this interview. The interviewer will benefit by practicing interviewing skills.

Compensation:
There is no compensation for participating in this interview.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this interview project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the interview.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Marianne Pratschler. The researcher's advisor is Dr. Cheryl Keen. You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 908-852-1400, x 2150 or pratschlerm@centenarycollege.edu or the advisor at 937-477-2126 or cheryl.keen@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

☐ I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the interview.

Printed Name of

Participant

Participant's Written or

Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or

Electronic* Signature

       pratschlerm@centenarycollege.edu

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

APPENDIX E

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Question – How do inservice teachers perceive the effects of their interactions with preservice teachers on their professional practices?

Interview Guide   Describe the research project; review confidential form; address any questions or concerns.

1. How did you become a cooperating teacher?
        What influenced your participation?
        Was your participation influences by your own preservice experience?

2, Tell me about your experience with preservice teachers.
        How many times have you had a student teacher in your classroom?
        How were you matched up with your student teacher?
        How would you describe your relationship with each of your student teachers?
        What do you think might have contributed to that relationship?
        What obstacles might have interfered?

3. What were some outcomes, if any, for you, from the relationship with the student teacher(s)?
        How has the framework of the PDS and the teacher training program affected your classroom practice?
        How have your teaching strategies been influenced by having preservice teachers in your classroom?
        What new or different techniques have you implemented as a result of mentoring a student teacher?
        What strengths/challenges in your practice have been brought to your attention as a result of being a cooperating teacher?

4. What differences do you notice between the way your student teacher has been trained and the way you were trained as a preservice teacher?

5. What would you say are the benefits of mentoring a preservice teacher?
        How did you benefit from this relationship?

6. How do you feel about the responsibilities of being a cooperating teacher?

7. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about your experience as a cooperating teacher?

8. What is your view of the professional development activities offered through the PDS partnership?
   > How have you developed your own professionalism as part of the learning community?
   > In light of your current teaching assignment, what other teaching/learning activities would you like to see offered as part of the PDS partnership to advance your classroom practice?

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that we have not already covered in this session?

Review follow-up procedures; reinforce confidentiality and remind the interviewee of his/her role in member checking.

Thank the interviewee for his/her time and contributions to the study.

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Review the purpose of the study
Emphasize the confidentiality of the research process; explain today's activities
 introductions – Junior Colleagues – Emily or Jeri

Define Professional Development School (PDS) and Learning Community
1. How does the _____/Centenary College PDS partnership reflect the concept of a learning community?
2. How does you interaction with the Centenary preservice teachers, faculty, staff and supervisors fit into the learning community model?
3. How do you feel that you have benefited professionally from mentoring a preservice teacher in this environment?
4. What are the challenges to making the partnership successful for all participants?

Comments to help move the discussions along –
    Are you saying …?
    I hear you saying …
    If I could summarize …
    Is there anything else you would like to add …?

CATEGORIZE THE CHALLENGES FOR THE NEXT ACTIVITY
1. What suggestions do you have for addressing these challenges?
2. What kind of institutional support is needed?
3. What resources are needed?
4. What else is needed to take co-op mentoring of preservice teachers to the next level?
5. What else would you like to see implemented in the _____/Centenary PDS partnership for your continued professional development?

APPENDIX G

PAGE FROM RESEARCH JOURNAL

Person interviewed: Dina

Teaching experience: 4th year teaching; 4th year at Alpha School

Teaching assignment: 3rd grade

Time/location of interview: 2 p.m.; counselor's office

Notes: My 4th and final interview for today. I opened a new tape, labeled it, and checked the volume before Dina arrived. We got reacquainted; Dina had graduated from the College's teacher training program 4 years ago. We had a full prep period to do the interview.

First I explained the purpose of the interview. Dina seemed relaxed and things went smoothly. She was thoughtful and gave detailed answers. I followed the interview guide, but used some probes when I thought more information might be helpful.

Dina had the unique experience of having been a preservice teacher in this very school. So she felt confident that another Centenary student would be well-prepared when she came to the classroom. Dina reported an excellent relationship with the preservice teacher assigned to her. She enjoyed working with her as co-teachers very much.

Dina noted that there are some substantive changes in the training at Centenary, even in the short time since she graduated. Technology has an increased emphasis and preservice teachers are much better prepared to meet the needs of students with special needs in inclusion classrooms. Dina feels that all of this has made her realize how open she is to trying new things.

Dina is utilizing many of Centenary's professional development activities to improve her teaching. She has been to several workshops and last summer's Teachers' Academy. Her focus is on using technology in the classroom. She is also taking advantage of PDS discount to pursue her master's degree in special education at Centenary.

Dina has been quite pleased with all the facets of the PDS collaborations. She is enthusiastic about acting as a mentor for more preservice teachers in the future.

Summary of notes/themes from all individual interviews

1. Becoming a mentor teacher
- Chosen by administrator
- Asked by administrator personally
- General request of faculty by administrator, then volunteered
  A. Influence of own preservice experience
  - Most positive experience; wanted to pass it on
  - A few with poor experience; wanted to do something positive
2. Relationship with student teacher
   - Overwhelmingly positive
   - Grew into a peer relationship
   - Became friends
   - A few were strictly professional
   A. Contributions to positive experience
      - School environment
      - Preservice teacher preparedness and openness
   B. Potential obstacles to positive relationship
      - Preservice teacher unwilling to listen and change
3. Effects of having a student teacher in the classroom
   A. Co-op teaching strategies
      - Need to be totally prepared
      - Model good teaching and classroom management
      - Needs of the students paramount
   B. New/different strategies implemented as a result
      - Refreshed memory of reminded of previous successful strategies
      - Research-based strategies introduced
      - A fresh approach to existing ideas
   C. Co-op strengths and challenges highlighted
      - Acknowledgement by preservice teacher of effective techniques
      - Good classroom management techniques
      - Rapport with students
      - Need to let go of classroom control
      - Need to allow preservice teacher to take risks
      - Need to allow preservice teacher to make mistakes

4. Differences between co-op teacher training and preservice teacher training
   - Some saw the training as very similar
   - Some acknowledged the contributions of technology
   - Many recognized the addition of training in special education
5. Benefits of mentoring for the cooperating teacher
   - Extra eyes and hands in the classroom
   - More time to devote to individual student needs
   - A fresh perspective on individual students
   - New and different approaches to teaching
   - Opportunities to try new activities
   - Cooperative planning, teaching, and decision making
   - Gained a colleague and a friend
6. Feelings about the responsibilities of mentoring a preservice teacher
   - Most felt that the benefits far outweighed the additional effort
   - Some felt that ensuring success was important work
   - A few found the responsibility to be daunting
7. Additional comments
   - Many reiterated their positive experience as a mentor
   - Most said that they learned a lot from the experience
   - Most look forward to being a mentor again
8. Professional development activities
   A. Personal professional development
      - Some are enrolled in Centenary masters programs
      - Some have masters degrees from other institutions
      - Many have attended workshops and/or the Teachers' Academy on campus
      - Many acknowledged the value of the school/college partnership/influence on professional development activities at the school
   B. Topics for continuing professional development
      - Other masters degree programs offered
      - Workshops on using technology, at a variety of levels
      - Writing across the curriculum
      - Anything hands-on that can be used immediately in the classroom
      - More Teachers' Academy offerings

APPENDIX H

DATA CODING

Mentor Teacher Renewal (MTR)

MTR.ego   – stroke to ego
MTR.imp   – importance of work
MTR.app   - appreciated
MTR.stfdbk – student teacher feedback
MTR.pride   - sense of pride
MTR.confld – contribution to the field

Relationships (R)

R.prep   - partners well-prepared
R.mutres   - mutual respect
R.mat   - maturity level
R.comf   - comfortable
R. frnd   - friendship
R.coll   - collegue/peer
R.open   - openness/flexibility
R.pers   - personality
R.bound   - boundaries
R.strss   - stress

Classroom Practices (CP)

CP.prep   - well-prepared
CP.bstprac – best practices
CP.lessn   - lesson feedback
CP.tech   - technology
CP.coll   - collaboration
CP.new   - new ideas
CP.exp   - expand repertoire
CP.ref   - refresh skills
CP.xtra   - extra eyes/hands
CP.needs   - meet student needs
CP. crit   - constructive criticism
CP.cont   - control

Professional Development (PD)

PD.grd   - graduate courses
PD.inh   - in-house
PS.adm   - administrative support
PS.daily   - take place daily
PS.campro   - campus programs
PS.clssapp - classroom applications
PS.vend   - vendor support
PS.ment   - mentoring as professional development
PS.needs   - needs specific
PS.view   - broader view

PDS as Learning Community (LC)

LC.mem   - all members contribute
LC.welc   - welcoming
LC.grad   - graduate programs
LC.link   - links to the college
LC.best   - best practices
LC.build   - build own faculty
LC.spect   - spectrum of activities
LC.sup   - college supervisors
LC.stu   - students contribute

CURRICULUM VITAE
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EDUCATION

Walden University   Minneapolis, MN
Doctorate in Education   August 2009
Teacher Leadership

Montclair State University   Montclair, NJ
Master of Arts in Counseling   January 1994

Centenary College   Hackettstown, NJ
Bachelor of Science in Education   May 1979
Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education   May 1978

CERTIFICATIONS
Elementary Teacher (K-8)   Nursery School Endorsement
Teacher of English (K-12)   Teacher of Psychology
Supervisor   Teacher of Students with Disabilities

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Centenary College   Hackettstown, NJ
2003 – present   Assistant Professor of Education
1999 – 2003   Director, The Career Center

Caldwell College   Caldwell, NJ
1989 – 1999   Director, Experiential Learning Office

New Jersey Youth Corps   Stanhope, NJ
1988 – 1989   Director
1986 – 1988   Career Counselor

Diverse School Districts   Northern New Jersey
1968 – 1986   Classroom teaching assignments