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School-Based Peer Mentoring Programs to Support New Teacher Retention

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

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Denisha Logan

MA, University of Baltimore, 2003

BS, West Virginia University, 1997

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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August 2025

Abstract

An increased rate of attrition among new educators underscores the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by early career teachers. The problem addressed in this study was the high attrition rate of new teachers in middle-low-income urban schools in Maryland. Guided by Kram's mentoring theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of new teachers regarding how the school-based peer mentoring program contributed to them remaining at their schools. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 10 novice teachers who had fewer than 3-years of experience teaching at the study site. Thematic analysis using open coding produced the following themes: (a) teachers had varying opinions regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring program, (b) mentoring gave teachers a sense of emotional support and belonging, (c) classroom observations were an effective component of the mentoring program, (d) mentoring programs affected teacher retention, (e) teachers shared ways to enhance the mentoring program to support retention, and (f) teachers discussed desired support systems and resources. Based on the results of the study, I developed a 4-day professional development program designed to help mentors and leaders support new teachers, and to ensure consistency, clear communication, and collaboration throughout the mentoring program. By investing in strong mentorship programs, school communities are likely to promote professional growth among novice teachers who then will be more likely to remain in the profession, contributing to positive social change over time.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, who have always believed in me and pushed me to be my best. As the oldest in my family, I have often been the first to leave home, to graduate, to lead, to step into new territory, and their support has made all that possible.

To my mother, who showed me what it means to be a strong woman. She held our family together with love, determination, and generosity. Her strength, selflessness, and unshakable faith continue to inspire me every day. She is the rock of our family.

To my father, who is no longer with us on earth but whose words and values guide me every day. He taught me to be a leader, to stay humble, to always have a job, to give back, and to never forget where I come from. He believed in growing others alongside yourself and leading with service. I carry his lessons with me in all that I do.

This is for my Mary and James.

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This achievement belongs to all of you as much as it does to me.

With Much Love!

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Education is considered a public good and need, and countries have prioritized access to all people. Prioritization includes investing in new and innovative ways to engage students through curriculum reforms and investing in teacher education (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). One of the major obstacles in education is the departure of experienced and skilled teachers (Aranda-Comer, 2024). Teachers faced more pressure when schools transitioned to remote learning after closing due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 (Topliss, 2020). They were required to work in uncharted territory without preparation or prior experience (Carpenter & Dunn, 2020; Elgart, 2021; Marshall & Bradley-Dorsey, 2020). When schools reopened to in-person learning, it was with new restrictions, such as mask mandates and social distancing (Marshall & Bradley-Dorsey, 2020). Teaching under the new conditions provided new challenges, such as learning how to use new technology while teaching students simultaneously on Zoom and face-to-face (Bartlett, 2022).

During the 2021–2022 school year, teachers returned to regular classroom routines and expectations. At the same time, they still had to deal with ongoing difficulties from the pandemic. Even though things seemed to be returning to normal, teachers were pushed to their limits, causing more of them to quit their jobs (Steiner & Woo, 2021). The challenges of teaching are intensified and more prevalent with early career teachers. The problem under study was that there is a high attrition rate of new teachers in three low-income urban schools without mentorship programs in Maryland.

Additionally, Farahmandpour and Voelkel (2025) shared that 15% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 3 years. The findings from a RAND report show that 1 in 4 teachers indicated that they were likely to leave their teaching position by the end of the 2020–2021 school year (Steiner & Woo, 2021). New teachers claim that inadequate preservice preparation, lack of mentoring, and unrealistic expectations cause high attrition (Tan & Patrick, 2024). Retention could be improved by focusing on supporting novice teachers through mentorship programs (Aranda-Comer, 2024).

The state of Maryland, like many states, continues to experience problems retaining teachers. Thirteen percent of teachers in 2020–2021 did not return to the same school in 2021–2022 (Taie et al., 2023). Additionally, Taie et al. (2023) stated that the percentage of Maryland public school teachers who did not return as teachers in Maryland in 2021–2022 is 9.1%. The rate of the research site's teachers who did not return to the profession in 2021–22 is 12%. In Maryland, 13.6 % of new teachers left teaching in the 2022 school year. It was reported that data under the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 17% of new teachers depart from the profession within their first 5 years (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021). This national trend was reflected in Maryland, where nearly all school districts entered the 2021–2022 academic year grappling with teacher shortages at levels higher than any previous year. Approximately 2,000 teacher vacancies existed in September 2021.

Stability, shared planning, and collaboration, such as with a mentorship program in place in a district, helps improve the teaching environment for those new teachers (Flannery, 2023). If teachers are hired without proper preparation in their teacher

induction programs, specifically in classroom management, high teacher turnover rates may occur (Peske, 2022). Teachers who do not receive mentoring support in the early years leave the classroom more frequently.

During the first year of teaching, teachers face undaunting challenges, such as classroom management (Flannery, 2023). Pairing new teachers with mentor teachers can help improve their skills more quickly and increase new teachers' retention (Barnett, 2022). A mentor assists novice teachers during their initial transition to the profession and contributes to the increased retention of teachers (Flannery, 2023). Research suggests that mentoring first-year teachers is essential (Marshall et al., 2022). Mentoring cultivates skills in a novice teacher, fosters a sense of pride and camaraderie, and increases the profession's value (Beck et al., 2020). It is essential that first-year teacher feels a sense of belonging and appreciation (Tan & Patrick, 2024). Tan and Patrick (2024) revealed that mentoring was an integral part of lowering the attrition rate of teachers.

Rationale

The problem being addressed in this study was the high attrition rate of new teachers in middle-low-income urban schools in a large urban area of Maryland. The local school district reported in 2019 that 126 schools turned over their new teaching staff more than twice in 7 years. In the 2018–2019 school year, less than 50% of new teachers returned to the school district where the study occurred. Nine out of 10 teachers in the city of the study earned tenure, even though economists suggested that the rate should be closer to 3 out of 5 to impact the district's student achievement growth substantially. The Maryland State Department of Education Comprehensive Support and Improvement team

conducted a root cause analysis of low student achievement for a PreK–8 school in the city where the study occurred. One of the four prioritized root causes was insufficient support for new teachers, resulting in teacher turnover after Year 1. School districts across the United States face the challenge of maintaining a quality teacher workforce (Peske, 2022). Furthermore, Mullen et al. (2022) suggested that the gap in practice is the difference between recognizing the need for strong support systems for new teachers and the poor implementation of these systems in many school districts. To address this gap, districts could focus on specific actions, like creating strong mentorship programs, providing ongoing professional development (PD), and increasing resources for early career educators. These steps could help reduce teacher turnover and build a more stable and effective teaching workforce (Peske, 2022). High teacher turnover rates adversely impact student achievement (Berry et al., 2021).

Although previous studies highlighted the many factors that lead to teacher attrition, such as preservice preparation, challenging work conditions, and unrealistic expectations, these studies provided information about the effects of mentorship on teacher attrition from the perspective of sixth- to eighth-grade teachers. Previous researchers have concluded that there is a link between student achievement and teacher attrition (Holme et al., 2024). Thus, if teacher attrition continues to increase, there could be diverse effects on the state of education at the research site. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of new teachers regarding how the school-based peer mentoring program contributed to them remaining at their schools.

Definition of Terms

Mentor: An experienced (i.e., veteran) teacher who provides support and feedback to novice teachers concerning classroom management ideas, teaching strategies or resources, and assistance to acclimate novice teachers to the culture of the school environment (Cavanagh & King, 2020).

Mentee/novice teacher/early career teacher: A teacher with less than 3 years of experience in the same school district (See et al., 2020).

Mentoring: The assistance given to new teachers designed to assist them in talking to and observing veteran teachers to establish an idea of how they would like the pattern, teaching style, or strategies (Marshall et al., 2022).

Significance of the Study

Attrition poses many problems in a school district. Nguyen et al. (2020) reported that in 2018, it costed the district $10,000 to $17,000 to recruit a new teacher. Nguyen et al. also commented that the change in teachers can interrupt student learning. Because of this shift, the new teachers were unaware of the curriculum, the pedagogy, and policy information unique to the school district. Schools that implement and support mentoring programs for their new teachers see increased benefits for educators, students, and the entire school community (Sparks, 2025). Mentoring is crucial to retain teachers and provide quality education to increase students' academic performance (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Mentoring supports novice teachers while simultaneously transforming the careers of mentors (Will, 2024). Schools look at their policies and practices that might influence the attrition of teachers out of the profession, which threatens the quality of future

teachers (Pivovarova & Powers, 2022).

This study was significant because state and local jurisdictions continuously look for solutions to teacher attrition. Prior educational research showed that teachers leave education for various reasons, including personal circumstances; dissatisfaction with the workplace conditions; adverse student behaviors; and lack of site leadership, effective mentoring, PD, and valued collegial relationships (Will, 2024). Additionally, Flannery (2023) shared that teacher-mentoring programs provide new teachers with the tools to stay in the field. Mentoring programs foster a collaborative culture that increases job satisfaction (Sparks, 2025). This is important for low-income schools where new teachers are more commonly placed due to vacancies but are given little training and support (Sparks, 2025). In this study, I gathered participants' views as to whether novice teachers leave or stay and how the perceived aspects of the peer mentoring program contributed to their decision.

The results of this study could provide an in-depth understanding that school leaders could use to develop mentorship programs that support novice teachers and limit teacher attrition because of teachers feeling a sense of belonging, support, job satisfaction, and commitment to the profession. New teachers could benefit from having a supportive working environment (Sparks, 2025). The results of this study contain an evaluation of the mentorship program, which could, in turn, influence changes that could decrease teacher attrition and support decision making by the school administration.

Research Questions

The high turnover rate of new teachers in middle-low-income urban schools is a

significant issue. In this study, I explored new teachers' views on how peer mentoring programs influenced their decision to stay. I sought to understand the factors that impacted teacher retention by examining their experiences with the mentoring program. Based on existing research, the study was conducted to identify effective mentoring strategies to reduce turnover in these schools. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are new teachers' perceptions of the school-based new-teacher mentoring program as it applies to retention?

RQ2: What supports do new teachers note that impact their decision to return each year to the study site?

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of new teachers concerning the role of school-based peer mentoring programs in their decision to remain at their respective schools. Key themes explored within the literature include teacher attrition, diverse types of new teacher mentoring programs, the advantages offered by mentoring initiatives, the subjective perceptions of new teacher mentoring programs, critical components of effective mentoring programs for novice educators, and the dynamics of the mentor-mentee relationship.

For this literature review process, I searched various databases accessible via the Walden University Library, including EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and the collection of Walden Dissertations. To locate relevant articles and scholarly works, a systematic search strategy was employed,

with the use of specific search terms, including *mentor, new teacher mentor, benefits of new teacher mentors, attrition, teacher attrition,* and *attrition of teachers*. The search parameters were tailored to include peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025, with exceptions for sources contributing to the conceptual framework. Primary sources of information harnessed for this review predominantly consisted of peer-reviewed academic articles, scholarly books, and doctoral dissertations. The central phenomenon under investigation in this study was the role of school-based peer mentoring programs and how they supported and retained new teachers in middle-low-income urban schools. These programs partnered experienced teachers with novice educators to provide guidance, support, and professional learning opportunities during the early years of their careers. I examined how new teachers perceive these mentoring programs and how these programs influenced their decision to stay at their schools.

Kram's Mentorship Theory

The conceptual framework guiding this study comprised Kram's (1983) mentor role theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Although these frameworks originated in the 20th century, Kram's mentorship theory remains relevant in the 21st century and often serves as the bedrock upon which many educational institutions construct their mentorship programs (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021; Rose & Sughrue, 2020). Kram's mentorship model offers a comprehensive blueprint that delineates the intricate dynamics between mentors and mentees as they progress through four distinct phases: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Fitzhugh, et al., 2022; Mullen & Klimaitis,

2021). During the initiation phase, extensive interactions occur between mentors and mentees, aimed at assessing the potential for a fruitful mentor-mentee relationship.

The cultivation phase, as stipulated by Kram (1983), holds paramount significance, serving as the crucible where both career development and psychosocial functions are cultivated and sustained. Clawson and Kram (1984) recommended further career development to assist mentees with further knowledge and skills needed for enhanced job performance and career advancement. Simultaneously, the mentorship process involves interpersonal aspects to strengthen the mentees self-efficacy, personal and professional growth, along with overall interpersonal competencies (Kram, 1988). In addition, mentors are expected to offer guidance, counsel, support, and serve as role models, through meaningful rapport with mentees. Kram (1998) proposed four phases of the psycholsocial aspects of the mentorship relationship: (a) the mentee's development of professional self, (b) problem-solving guidance, (c) respect and support, and (d) offering identification and role modeling.

As the mentorship relationship advances, the separation phase marks a noticeable shift, where mentees increasingly become self-reliant, resulting in a reduction in the frequency of interactions and a corresponding elevation of their autonomy (Nour, 2022). The final phase, redefinition, signifies the transformation of the mentor-mentee relationship into one characterized by collegial friendship and mutual support, accompanied by evolving expectations (Hill et al., 2022; Kram, 1983). This transitional phase is pivotal within the mentorship cycle. Kram's (1985a) model provides an initial framework that establishes the mentorship relationship, delineating its phases and

defining the essential components of mentorship dynamics. Kram posited that these mentorship phases yield mutual benefits for both mentor and mentee, fostering a structured environment for shared learning and growth.

Kram's Theory as it Applies to Educators

The initiation phase of Kram's mentorship model signifies the culminating of the mentorship relationship. In the school setting, this phase involves the pairing of new teachers with their mentor teachers (Mullen, Fitzhugh, et al., 2022). This phase is vital because it involves substantial interactions between mentors and mentees, aimed at assessing the compatibility and potential for a productive mentor-mentee match (Mullen, Fitzhugh, et al., 2022). Effective communication and rapport building are important during this stage. New teachers and mentors established a foundation for their relationship, clarified expectations, and created goals for the mentorship journey.

The cultivation phase, as articulated in Kram's model, represents the heart of the mentee-mentor relationship. Within the educational context, this phase is where mentors take on a pivotal role in guiding new teachers' PD (Kram, 1983; Mullen, Fitzhugh, et al., 2022; Zachary, 2012). Mentors provided guidance, support, and a wealth of experience to help new teachers navigate the multifaceted challenges of the classroom (Luong, 2025). This encompasses guidance in lesson planning, classroom management, assessment practices, and other facets of effective teaching (Mullen, Fitzhugh, et al., 2022). The cultivation phase extends beyond acquiring technical skills and addresses psychosocial aspects (Kram, 1983; Zachary, 2012). Luong (2025) highlighted that mentors offer

emotional support, help new teachers manage the emotional demands of teaching, foster a sense of belonging, and bolster self-efficacy.

As per Kram's theory, the separation phase marks a significant shift in the mentorship relationship. In the educational context, this phase signifies the gradual development of autonomy and self-reliance among new teachers (Kram, 1983). Having gained essential skills and confidence in their roles, new teachers begin to rely less on their mentors. While mentors remain accessible and supportive, the frequency of interactions may decrease (Ambrosetti, 2014; Kram, 1983). New teachers become more self-assured in their classroom practices and decision-making, embodying a greater sense of independence (Martin & Mulvihill, 2020).

The last phase of mentoring is established when the mentor and novice teacher develop a strong partnership. Commentaries (2024) commended that a well matched and consistent coaching helps novice teachers feel more supported. When mentors take time to build trust and focus on real classroom needs, new teachers grow in their roles and tend to stay in the profession. This kind of connection makes a big difference in helping new teachers succeed. The dynamics of the mentorship relationship evolve, fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and continuous professional growth. Mentors and mentees continue to share insights, engage in reflective discussions, and support each other's ongoing development as educators (Kram, 1983; Stewart & Jansky, 2022). In mentor role theory, Kram outlined the structural phases of mentoring, while Maslow's (1943) hierarchy highlights the psychological drive for self-actualization and realizing one's full potential.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow (1943) developed the hierarchy of needs theory in 1943, listing five levels of needs that must be met for human beings to thrive. This hierarchy is organized in a pyramid, indicating the basic human needs of survival at the bottom to the self-fulfillment needs, where self-actualization can be attained by recognizing one's full potential at the top (Fisher & Royster, 2016). In the theory, Maslow (1970) postulated that the lower levels of the pyramid must be met before progressing to the next layer. Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been regularly used to ensure that students' basic needs are met so teachers can facilitate their learning.

Maslow's Theory as it Applies to Educators

In examining the alignment between Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the distinct needs of educators, Fisher and Royster (2016) drew connections between each level of the hierarchy and the specific requirements encountered by teachers in their professional roles. For instance, they equated physiological needs to the foundational requirements of beginning teachers, emphasizing the necessities crucial for their professional sustenance. Safety needs were associated with salary, benefits, and the overall perception of fairness within their positions, reflecting the financial stability and job security crucial for teacher well-being. Belonging needs were linked to the relationships educators form with their professional peers, teams, and support networks within their personal lives. Self-esteem needs centered on the sense of accomplishment, self-perceived capabilities, and the recognition received from others within the educational community. Lastly, self-actualization in teaching was equated with the aspiration to reach the pinnacle of

professional fulfillment, denoting the pursuit of excellence, innovative teaching practices, and the continuous journey toward becoming exemplary educators (Fisher & Royster, 2016).

Martin and Mulhill (2020) found that 24% of teachers were considered food insecure which linked depression and food insecurity among parents and teachers in their Oklahoma study. Also, the food insecurity was tied to low pay teachers received, in turn can influence a cause of teacher attrition aligning with Maslow's safety needs which were unmet. Also connected to Maslow's (1970) second level hierarchy that coincides with one's perception of safety, including insufficient income, maintenance of health, and personal safety. While the third level of Maslow's hierarchy includes a sense of belonging. Garcia and Weiss (2020) found that educators expressed needing a nurturing relationship with their administrators, in their study on how teachers view their professional status. They also indicated that teachers needed access to professional networks that offer support, and collaboration, which could offer feelings of connectedness and affiliation to foster well-being and success.

In addition to having a feeling of love and a sense of belonging, teachers also needed to feel respected, boost their self-esteem, and increase their status, recognition, strength, and freedom (Swanson & Duncan, 2025). These needs are associated with teachers feeling confident and supported by the administration in executing their teaching assignments. Teachers who are given opportunities to develop their expertise and mastery of professional competence will experience self-esteem (Fisher & Crawford, 2020; Swanson & Duncan, 2025). This comes through giving them access to tools, resources,

and professional learning on best practices to leverage instruction. The mentorship program at any institution should be structured to provide educators with the opportunities to develop essential classroom skills (i.e., relationship building, differentiation, classroom management, and instructional planning) that will have greater self-efficacy, resulting in lower stress levels and reducing the possibilities of burnout (Fisher & Crawford, 2020). When teachers' needs of safety, belonging, and esteem are met and sustained, this will help with the attrition rate of teachers, their overall effectiveness will increase, and there will be high creativity within the classroom (Chan, 2023).

Current Attrition Data

Van den Borre et al., (2021) indicated that teacher attrition is a global issue which continues to influence various countries, states, school districts, schools, teachers and families. Additionally, Goldhaber and Theobald (2022) mentioned that "a disproportionate amount of teacher attrition occurs in teachers' first 2 years in the workforce" (p. 9). Mitani et al., (2022) mentioned the term "leavers" as those who leave the education field, and "movers" as educators who move from one teacher position to the next. Both the number of college students selecting the teaching field and the number of veteran teachers remaining in the teaching profession have declined. The National Education Association conducted a survey and discovered that approximately 55% of teachers are considering resigning or retiring prior to retirement age (van den Borre et al., (2021). As a result, the president of the National Education Association declared a "five-alarm crisis" when discussing teacher attrition (Thompson, 2024). Hobson (2021) and

Sasson et al. (2020) both indicated that the attrition rate among educators in the U.S. schools during the teachers initial 5 years of teaching was approximately 50%. Ingersoll et al. (2018) in a comprehensive longitudinal study, found that approximately 45% of teachers elected to exit the profession within their initial 5 years within the teaching profession. This high rate of attrition among new educators reinforces the urgency of addressing the challenges encountered by novice teachers.

According to research, teacher shortages are caused by large numbers of teachers leaving the profession (Fuller, 2023). These rates were even higher at Title I schools (Education Resource Strategies [ERS], 2025). Public school districts with increased rates of Title I students also have a higher-than-average teacher attrition rate, ultimately leading to new hires every year (ERS, 2025). Ingersoll and Tran (2023) indicated that 7.68% of the teacher attrition rate equals a loss of 238,000 teachers in 2021. This teacher attrition rate contributed to 100% of open positions for teachers during the following school year (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). This high turnover ultimately leads to low test scores and student performance (Tan & Patrick, 2024).

After surveying 1,000 educators in 2020, the EDWeek Research Center shared that 545 respondents stated that it is somewhat or very likely that they will be leaving the teaching profession in the next 2 years (Hester et al., 2020). Researchers continue to determine the reasons for the significant departure of teachers across the K–12 area in the United States and other countries (Fütterer et al., 2023). Empirical studies have shown that teacher shortage results from the education systems' inability to retain and support newly hired teachers (Guthery & Bailes, 2022).

Factors Leading to Attrition

The factors of teacher attrition vary as widely as teachers' age and demographic makeup. Research has shown that the reasons teachers stated that they have left the profession include compensation, working conditions, workplace environment, teacher education, and lack of support for new teachers (Mitani et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2020). In the following subsections, I delineate these above factors.

Compensation

A substantial body of research underscores the pivotal role of compensation in the retention and recruitment of teachers. Salary considerations assume particular significance in retaining novice teachers in high-poverty or high-needs schools, where teacher attrition rates and the imperative for maintaining educational quality are especially critical (Garcia & Weiss, 2020; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Teacher dissatisfaction with their compensation has been documented in various studies (Billingsley et al., 2020).

When compared to professionals in other fields with comparable average salary ranges, the salary disparity for teachers continues to widen. This growing discrepancy is exacerbated by the perception that the extensive responsibilities and assignments expected of teachers often appear disproportionate to their compensation (Brownell, 2021). Furthermore, educators who specialize in high-demand areas, such as mathematics, special education, and science, have been known to exit the teaching profession in pursuit of opportunities offering more competitive compensation (Glazer, 2020).

A survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau revealed a concerning trend in compensation disparities and indicated a substantial increase in the wage gap, ranging from 5.5% to 18.7%, between college graduates and teachers from 1979 to 2017 (Albert, 2020). This disparity expanded, reaching a 20% discrepancy between teachers and their peers in other professions with similar educational backgrounds in 2020 (Topliss, 2020).

Student Behavior

Research findings have highlighted the influential role of student behavior on the attrition rates of early career teachers (Admiraal, 2023; Maready et al., 2021; Topliss, 2020). A significant proportion, approximately one third of teachers who depart from their teaching positions each year cite difficulties in managing student behavior as a primary reason for their resignation. While disruptive student behavior has emerged as a progressively influential factor contributing to teacher attrition in recent years (Topliss, 2020). One noteworthy aspect is that new teachers frequently encounter unanticipated challenges regarding students' inappropriate behavior. This lack of preparedness in effectively addressing and managing students' disruptive conduct significantly amplifies the attrition rates among teachers (Stevenson et al., 2022; Svendsen, 2020).

Inadequate Preparation and Lack of Mentoring

Insufficient preparation and the absence of effective mentoring emerge as prominent factors contributing to the attrition of early career teachers within their initial years in the teaching profession (ERS, 2025). The presence of mentoring programs is deemed crucial for fostering the growth and PD of new teachers. A combination of

factors, including teachers' self-perceived readiness to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession, the rigor of their preparatory programs, and the limited emphasis on ongoing PD and support for novice educators, contribute to the elevated rates of teacher attrition (Kwok et al., 2022; Schwan et al., 2020).

The inadequacy of induction processes and the absence of robust mentoring initiatives are recurrently cited as pivotal factors prompting early career teachers to exit the profession. In support of this perspective, Hanks et al. (2020) underscored the significance of well-structured induction programs in both retaining teachers and addressing the persistent issue of teacher shortages. Echoing these sentiments, the phenomenological research conducted by Farahmandpour and Voelkel (2025) yielded a resounding conclusion—that the issue of disproportionate early career attrition would persist unless schools proactively prioritize establishing formal mentoring programs.

Other Factors

Additional factors beyond those previously mentioned have been identified as significant predictors of elevated teacher attrition rates. Empirical research has demonstrated that factors, such as large class sizes; facility-related issues; the presence of multitrack school systems; and shortages of essential instructional materials, including textbooks, are all associated with an increased likelihood of teachers leaving the profession (Farmer et al., 2021; Herman et al., 2020). These contextual challenges contribute to the burden placed on educators and contribute to their decision to leave the profession. Furthermore, the weight of heavy workloads and the enduring professional stress experienced by teachers have emerged as critical themes in the literature on teacher

attrition (Farmer et al., 2021; Herman et al., 2020). The demands placed on teachers, both in terms of classroom responsibilities and the broader organizational context, can lead to feelings of burnout and dissatisfaction, further accentuating the attrition rates among educators.

Nguyen et al. (2022) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis which included 120 studies examining teacher-attrition. Nguyen et al. (2022) classified the contributing of teacher attrition into three categories. The first contribution was that personal correlates with encompassing teacher characteristics and qualifications. The second contributing factor was school-related factors, including resource availability, racial and gender congruence, and organizational characteristics. While the third factor contributing to teacher attrition was external correlates, consisting of variables, such as the teacher evaluation system, teacher merit pay, teacher-student racial matching, and student racial matching, and comprehensive school reform.

New Teacher Mentoring Program to Reduce Teacher Attrition

Reducing attrition rates among new teachers can be achieved by implementing mentoring and induction programs (Parker et al., 2021). Many early career educators grapple with overwhelming emotions stemming from a perceived lack of support, which can contribute to their decision to leave the profession (Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025). Melzak et al. (2025) indicated that through a teacher mentoring initiative, there were several positive outcomes for novice educators. These novice educators indicated an increase in self-efficacy, reduced stress levels, and improved sense of belonging, and development of positive teaching experiences. Ingersoll et al. (2021) and Pan and

Mutchler (2000) stated that mentoring programs significantly influence new teachers' capacity to support their students in the learning process. Parker et al. (2021) claimed that the professional growth experienced by new teachers within the classroom setting often surpasses the gain experience through their preparatory courses and training in the teacher preparation programs. While Barak (2021) commented that mentoring programs are facilitated through various mechanisms including oversight by the school district, educator self-selection, or incorporated into traditional school-based PD structures.

Educational institutions that prioritize investment in high-caliber mentoring programs underpinned by research-based strategies stand to yield substantial benefits regarding teacher retention and the effectiveness of new educators (Hobson, 2021). However, it is worth noting, as explained by Bartlett (2022), that not all mentoring initiatives are created equal. Within the spectrum of mentoring programs, there exist informal arrangements that resemble more of a buddy system, often characterized by a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities (Crawford et al., 2021; Margevica-Grinberga & Odina, 2021). Consequently, novice teachers frequently require additional training and structured supervision to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession effectively (Smith & Gillespie, 2023).

Findings from a survey conducted by Kardos and Johnson (2010) shed light on the uneven nature of mentoring experiences for new teachers. Of the surveyed cohort, comprising 78% of new teachers, a 41% reported having been observed by their mentors at least once during the academic year. Many of these teachers were not paired with mentors who specialized in the same subject area or grade level. This incongruity in

mentorship experiences underscores the need for more comprehensive and tailored mentoring programs.

Research findings further accentuated the value of high-quality mentoring programs for new teachers, demonstrating that those who have access to such programs exhibit superior performance across multiple domains, including effective classroom practices, heightened student engagement, and the ability to differentiate instruction to meet diverse student needs (Ingersoll et al., 2021; Mullen, Fitzhugh, et al., 2022).

School-Based New Teacher Mentoring

In school-based mentoring and induction programs, program effectiveness hinges upon a sturdy foundation characterized by support mechanisms, accessibility, and collaborative frameworks (Hobson, 2021). The quality and rigor of the mentoring and induction initiatives directly wield influence over the development and performance trajectories of novice educators (Svendsen, 2020). An effective induction program should focus on classroom practices, imparting strategies to manage and balance the multifaceted demands of the teaching profession (Thomas et al., 2021). A central objective of teacher mentoring programs is the cultivation of meaningful relationships within the mentoring process, underscoring their pivotal role in supporting early career teachers (Parker et al., 2021; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017; Smith & Gillespie, 2023). These programs systematically, structurally, and intentionally acclimate teachers to the teaching profession, with a dual aim of socialization and information dissemination regarding professional norms and instructional routines (Roegman & Kolman, 2020; Svendsen, 2020; Tang et al., 2021).

In a noteworthy study, Billingsley et al. (2020) observed that early career teachers who participated in induction programs characterized by ongoing feedback and emotional support demonstrated notable improvements in their instructional competencies. Comprehensive early career teacher induction programs facilitate teachers' adjustment to the classroom environment and the rigorous demands of the teaching profession (Bressman et al., 2018; Wexler, 2020a). The establishment of diverse professional learning communities, catering not only to early career teachers but to educators across experience levels, emerges as a beneficial practice (Tan & Patrick, 2024). These communities may take shape in small group mentoring sessions, promoting collegiality among novice teachers or they can manifest on a larger scale as collaborative communities (Roegman & Kolman, 2020). These collaborative teams are instrumental in assisting early career teachers in acclimating to the school's culture and orienting them toward school objectives and partnerships (Roegman & Kolman, 2020; Svendsen, 2020; Tang et al., 2021). PD activities embedded within comprehensive early career induction programs are meticulously designed to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and expertise, all of which are indispensable for their success (Luong, 2025).

Similarly, Jacobsen and Lejonberg (2024) conducted an extensive investigation into an early career induction program model that integrated mentoring, coaching, and self-mentoring as integral mechanisms to support new teachers. Their comprehensive research indicated that incorporating coaching, mentoring, and self-mentoring substantially diminishes the turnover rates among newly appointed teachers during their transition into the school environment (Ingersoll & Tran, 2023). The primary objective to

an induction program was to enhance the effectiveness of novice teachers through a spectrum of PD initiatives and individualized mentoring programs (Diab & Green, 2024). The findings of this review did not reveal any statistically significant effects on the retention rates of beginning elementary teachers.

These investigations shed light on the multifaceted nature of induction programs, with Jacobsen and Lejonberg's (2024) research highlighting the potential of mentoring, coaching, and self-mentoring in mitigating new teacher turnover, while the systematic review of the New Teacher Center induction model did not demonstrate significant influence on the retention of novice elementary teachers. This underscores the complexity of factors influencing teacher retention and the need for a nuanced approach to induction program design and evaluation.

Components of a Strong Mentoring Program

Scholarly research has highlighted vital components essential for the effectiveness of mentoring programs in the retention and support of new teachers. One critical facet involves intentionally selecting mentors possessing demonstrable expertise and matching grade and subject area proficiencies with the mentees (Albert, 2020; Hobson, 2021; Roegman & Kolman, 2020). Institutional structures should be in place to facilitate structured observation processes and dedicated collaborative learning opportunities. This structured framework will facilitate a purposeful exchange of insights and expertise among mentors and mentees (Barnett, 2022). According to Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020), there are three strategies for supporting new teachers: focusing mentoring on

instructional improvement, providing mentors with professional learning tools, and ensuring that mentoring aligns with school and district priorities.

Another component of a high-quality mentoring program is that it prioritizes pedagogical and instructional aspects that have a substantial impact on teacher's teaching methods and learning practices (Margevica-Grinberga & Odina, 2021). The selection of mentors should be based on their ability to exemplify and model advanced instructional practices (Crawford et al., 2021). The school should invest in adopting a research-based instructional framework or rubric that delineates exemplary teaching practices across various domains and indicators of pedagogy (Kwok et al., 2022). The instructional rubric should serve as a unifying language that mentors and mentees can employ to engage in meaningful discussions regarding teaching practices (Kwok et al., 2022). A purposeful shift in the school's organizational structure is imperative to allocate dedicated collaborative time for mentees to engage with their mentors. This allocation of time not only underscores the significance of mentoring within the school community but also furnishes mentors with the requisite time and space to effectively fulfill their roles (Ceballos, 2020; Kwok et al., 2022).

Transitioning from examining the constituent elements comprising a robust mentoring program, it becomes evident that these components play a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of induction programs designed for novice educators. A well-structured mentoring program, guided by experienced mentors, offering collaborative learning opportunities, and emphasizing instructional improvement, serves as the foundational cornerstone of successful teacher induction initiatives (Ceballos, 2020;

Kwok et al., 2022). As discerned from empirical evidence, these elements exert a substantial influence on the commitment of educators to their institutions and their retention, which are paramount goals within the induction process (Melzak et al., 2025). Consequently, it is prudent to embark on a deeper exploration of how these components are integrated within the broader context of new teacher induction programs, illuminating their role in providing guidance and support to educators as they embark on their educational careers.

Induction Programs

These programs for novice educators share a primary objective, which is to provide guidance, support, and assistance to newly appointed teachers as they embark on their educational journey (Schwan et al., 2020). In their quantitative study involving a sample of 1,013 elementary teachers, Diab and Green (2024) examined the impact of mentoring program attributes, including their frequency, comprehensiveness, and opportunities for engagement, on the institutional commitment of new teachers. Their research revealed that new teachers' institutional commitment was most pronounced when they received high-quality mentoring. High-quality mentoring was defined by frequent interactions, occurring biweekly or more frequently, comprehensive guidance encompassing various facets of teaching, and opportunities for teachers to actively engage with classroom practices (Diab & Green, 2024). Inclusive guidance within these mentoring programs addressed essential elements, such as instructional strategies, classroom management, student assessment, parent communication, and compliance with district mandates and procedures (Diab & Green, 2024).

Caven et al. (2021) conducted a study involving 222 novice teachers in their first or second year of teaching within a large urban school district. These educators were participants in a new teacher induction program, and the study revealed three significant findings. The school retained 97% of novice teachers who engaged with their mentors for a 4 to 9 hours per month and 94% of those who met with mentors for at least 10 hours monthly. However, the retention rate dropped to 78% for novice teachers with less than 4 hours of monthly engagement with their mentors (Caven et al., 2021). The new teacher mentoring programs included one-on-one mentoring opportunities for colleagues to collaborate observations with feedback, and participation in PD (Colognesi et al., 2020).

Supporting Mentors

Administrators play a crucial role in facilitating mentors' ability to function as instructional leaders for their mentees within the educational framework allowing the mentor-mentee relationship to foster (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). It is important to offer mentors comprehensive training and continuous support, regardless of their existing skills and expertise levels. Effective mentor training entails establishing explicit expectations and a well-defined job description for the mentoring process (Albert, 2020). Additionally, it encompasses equipping mentors with knowledge in various domains, including instructional strategies, a profound understanding of the assessment and grading framework applicable to teachers, and proficiency in lesson planning and classroom management. Furthermore, providing high-quality training is necessary to cultivate mentors' knowledge and coaching capabilities (Hobson, 2021; Mullen et al., 2022; Roegman & Kolman, 2020).

Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020) documented that mentor effectiveness experiences a slight improvement following training efforts. These training programs allowed mentors to contemplate and refine their understanding of teaching practices, enhance their observation skills, and the ability to evaluate the progress made by new teachers. Consistent and ongoing support are essential to address queries and defeat challenges that appear during the mentoring process.

PD and continuous training for mentors are essential, enabling them to anchor their coaching activities in the analysis of student work and data (Parker et al., 2021). This data-driven approach empowers mentors to guide teachers in a manner that is highly responsive to both teachers' needs and the needs of their students (Margevica-Grinberga & Odina, 2021). Additionally, mentors should receive guidance and support in facilitating mentees' growth in self-awareness regarding their instructional practices and improvement. This holistic approach to mentorship, enriched by strong training and ongoing support, is important in nurturing effective mentor-mentee relationships within the educational context.

Mentoring programs within educational settings should demonstrate a seamless alignment with district initiatives and priorities, especially those concerning the implementation of novel curricular frameworks (Bartlett, 2022). When there is a tangible connection between the mentor role and the advancement of district initiatives, mentors tend to exhibit increased engagement and a more profound sense of their impact and contributions to the educational environment (Glazzard & Green, 2025). Leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering this alignment and encouraging collaborative efforts among

mentors. A potent strategy involves convening districtwide mentor meetings providing mentors with a forum to engage in collaborative endeavors and establish meaningful professional connections (Glazzard & Green, 2025). Furthermore, integrating mentors within both district and school leadership teams becomes instrumental. This inclusion empowers mentors to actively participate in the decision-making processes that revolve around the support and development of new teachers (Parker et al., 2021).

Implications

I investigated how school-based mentoring programs influenced novice teachers' decisions to stay in the profession within the first 3 years. While recognizing the limitations of qualitative research, such as subjective data interpretation and a small sample size (Lantos, 2020), strategies were implemented to address them in this study. These included managing potential biases through a diverse sample and fostering participant honesty (see Creswell, 2013). Additionally, it was crucial to address the power imbalance between me, as the researcher; the executive director; and participants. Measures, such as emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality during informational meetings, were taken. In addition, I honed my interview skills through practice sessions to ensure an accurate representation of participant perspectives.

The data collected shaped a PD plan customized according to the study's findings. This appears in the final report in Appendix A. If the mentoring program proved effective, the plan was to prioritize creating best practices and training materials for long-term use. If weaknesses were found, the plan would have focused on recommendations to address specific challenges teachers and mentors face. I concluded that more research on

how mentoring affects student outcomes or different mentoring methods are needed. Overall, the deliverables were based on data, highlighting practical recommendations to develop the mentoring program's support for new teachers and reduce turnover.

Summary

In education, the implementation of mentoring and induction programs has been proven to be an invaluable strategy to mitigate attrition rates among novice educators, who are often feel inadequate professional support (Glazer, 2020; Sparks, 2025). Mentoring initiatives yield several advantageous outcomes for early career teachers, including increased self-efficacy, reduced stress levels, a sense of belonging, and the development of positive teaching experiences (Keese et al., 2023). Collaboration between mentors and mentees facilitates the development of support plans to target the distinct needs of new teachers (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Wexler, 2020a). These programs allow for an influence on the capacity of new teachers to effectively facilitate their students' learning experiences (Parker et al., 2021).

Empirical research underscores the essential role of high-quality mentoring programs in developing professional growth of novice educators, surpassing the influence of their initial teacher training endeavors (Mullen et al., 2022). These mentoring programs can adopt diverse modalities, encompassing oversight by educational districts, voluntary participation by teachers, or integration into conventional PD structures (Salani et al., 2024). It is imperative to acknowledge, however, that not all mentoring initiatives exhibit equivalent effectiveness, and some may manifest as informal arrangements characterized by ambiguous roles and responsibilities (Thomas et al., 2021)

Teacher attrition rates within the first 5 years of their careers are high, emphasizing the urgency of addressing this issue (Hobson, 2021; Sasson et al., 2020). High-quality mentoring programs have helped to improve teacher performance, including classroom practices and student engagement (Parker et al., 2021). The effectiveness of school-based mentoring and induction programs depends on their support symptoms, accessibility, and collaborative frameworks (Hobson, 2021; Mullen et al., 2022). These programs should focus on classroom practices, fostering meaningful relationships, and adapting to meet the profession's demands (Hobson, 2021; Mullen et al., 2022).

Effective mentoring and induction programs are central to supporting and retaining early career educators within the educational landscape (Ceballos, 2020; Kwok et al., 2022). These programs should be characterized by a well-structured framework, an emphasis on refining instructional practices, and opportunities for collaborative professional learning (Ceballos, 2020; Kwok et al., 2022). They play a pivotal role in guiding novice teachers through the challenges of their initial career stages, with potential benefits extending to both educators and their students (Mullen et al., 2022). Furthermore, the alignment of mentoring programs with district priorities and the integration of mentors into leadership structures holds the potential to enhance further their efficacy in supporting novice educators (Ceballos, 2020). In this project, in the form of a PD plan, I explored how the elements can be strategically implemented in the school to maximize the positive impact on teacher retention and overall educational quality.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of novice educators regarding the impact of a school-based peer mentoring program on their decision to continue their tenure at their respective schools. In this section, I comprehensively examine the basic qualitative study methodology and design, detailing the identified population and sample for the study and expounding upon the materials and instruments used. Additionally, this section includes an in-depth discussion of the procedures involved in data collection and analysis while acknowledging and addressing pertinent considerations, such as assumptions, limitations, and delimitations (see Markham et al., 2023).

Given that school-based mentoring programs influence teacher attrition (Doherty, 2020), it was important to gather data that explained teachers' views on the effectiveness of the programs in their schools. To understand the viewpoints of educators regarding mentoring programs, the study addressed two research questions:

RQ1: What are new teachers' perceptions of the school-based new-teacher mentoring program as it applies to retention?

RQ2: What supports do new teachers note that impact their decision to return each year to the study site?

A qualitative research methodology was appropriate for this investigation because it aligned with the study's goal of acquiring an understanding of school-based mentoring programs from the perspective of participants. The qualitative research methodology

enabled me to immerse myself in the participants' perspectives, which gave a holistic comprehension as opposed to a reductionist viewpoint (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, the qualitative research allowed me to provide a detailed, contextualized description of the research setting, participants, and their experiences, ultimately facilitating an analytical process that unveiled conceptual meanings for the readers (see Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). It is important to note that data derived from qualitative research is inherently nonquantifiable, precluding simplistic counting or measuring methodologies.

In contrast, as defined by Creswell and Poth (2018), quantitative research is centered on gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data primarily through numerical observations and patterns. Applying the quantitative research method to this study was unsuitable because there were no predefined variables connected to hypotheses prior to data collection. A quantitative approach was initially considered to gather data; however, a qualitative approach was ultimately used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives on collaborative learning strategies.

I strategically chose the employment of a descriptive basic qualitative study design to obtain tangible, contextually embedded, and profound insights into the impact of school-based mentorship programs on novice teachers' decisions to remain at their respective schools or in the teaching profession. The information derived from basic qualitative studies directly influence policy formulation, educational practices, and future research endeavors, aligning with the assertion made by Tenny et al. (2022) regarding the transformative impact of basic qualitative findings. By design, the basic qualitative study

mitigates biases by incorporating diverse perspectives. Additionally, it includes tools, like member checking, to strengthen credibility by allowing participants to confirm the accuracy of the data analysis and findings (Kushnir, 2025). Burkholder et al. (2020) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) emphasized the rationale for choosing basic qualitative research as its ability to support in-depth exploration and analysis within a real-world context. Burkholder et al. (2020) described it as a design that allowed researchers to present findings from a defined group or setting focused on a specific phenomenon.

The ethnographic research design was considered unsuitable for this study due to its inherent focus on examining a social or cultural group to gain an enhanced understanding of a phenomenon through firsthand participant observations (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ethnography necessitates the active participation of the researcher within the group to attain an insider's perspective, a position facilitated by shared experiences with the participants (Lassiter et al., 2024). I deemed ethnography as inappropriate for the current study because the data collection methodology centered on interviews rather than direct observations (see Van Oudheusden et al., 2024). An ethnographic design demands a substantial investment of time due to its requirement for prolonged engagement and observation to grasp the beliefs and attitudes of community participants (Sangaramoorthy & Kroeger, 2020). Given that the primary focus of the current study revolved around understanding participants' perceptions of the impact of school-based mentoring programs on their decision to stay at their respective schools, deep involvement in the environment was deemed unnecessary for achieving the research objectives.

The adoption of grounded theory was also dismissed as an unsuitable research design for this study due to its process of analyzing and developing theories post data collection, as Denzin and Lincoln (2018) outlined. Unlike the objectives of grounded theory, the findings of the current study were not intended to construct a theoretical framework. According to Zaidi (2024), grounded theory is designed to generate theories about processes or actions aligned with participants' views, which does not align with the explicit intent of this study. Instead, I aimed to understand novice teachers' perspectives on the impact of school-based mentoring programs on their decisions to stay in the profession.

Participants

I employed a sampling approach to select a cohort of 10–12 teachers from the larger population. The determination of the study's sample size was guided by the need to strike a balance, ensuring it was sufficiently small to facilitate the management of qualitative intricacies yet large enough to yield a comprehensive, detailed understanding of the experiences under investigation (see Berndt, 2020). According to Berndt (2020), it is recommended to have a moderate sample size for conducting in-depth interviews, which aligned with the qualitative nature of the research.

The rationale for selecting a sample size of 10–12 was grounded in data saturation. Braun and Clarke (2021) revealed that qualitative research achieved saturation with sample sizes as few as nine to 17. Additionally, Guest et al. (2020) explained that data saturation denoted the juncture in data collection and analysis where introducing new data contributed little to no additional insights to the overarching study. This

approach ensured that the researcher acquires an adequate volume of data to reach a point of saturation, thereby allowing for a nuanced and thorough exploration of the experiences in question (Naeem et al., 2024). Additionally, Mason (2010) contributed to this perspective by emphasizing that a larger sample size had the potential to generate redundant data without offering meaningful or additional information. Hence, the selection of 10–12 participants was intended to strike an optimal balance, avoiding data redundancy while providing enough information for a thorough and insightful exploration of the targeted experiences. The goal was to invite the teachers at my school to participate, and all 20 nontenured teachers were invited. If 10–12 could not have participated, a nearby school would have been contacted for new teachers to participate.

I recruited participants through email invitations to engage in an one-on-one, semistructured interview, once receiving permission and approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Written consent was obtained from teachers and administrators in the school, which aligned with the three ethical principles articulated in *the Belmont Report*: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (see Lantos, 2020).

To uphold the principle of respect for people, participants voluntarily entered the study with comprehensive information provided through an informed consent form. This document covered participants' rights, the study's purpose, procedures, potential outcomes, and associated risks and benefits. Informed consent was part of the IRB process and used to ensure participants were informed about the purpose of the study, participant expectations, and potential risks. The informed consent form was presented in

easily understandable language and communicated the study's timeline, data collection details, duration of data retention, and data storage and access procedures (see Kazembe et al., 2024b). Participants provided explicit, signed consent indicating their understanding of their rights to access information and the option to withdraw from the study without fear of reprisal.

I honored the principle of beneficence by anticipating and addressing potential distress or discomfort experienced by participants. Although complete anonymity was not feasible due to my affiliation with the research site, participants' identities were safeguarded by removing all identifiers. Pseudonyms were used to describe the data and participants' responses, minimizing the risk of self-identifying statements and information.

Ensured fairness in participant selection aligned with the ethical principle of justice. Participants were not chosen based on preconceived beliefs aligned with my perspectives. This approach promoted a balanced and unbiased representation of diverse viewpoints, as noted by Leavy (2022).

Data Collection

Yin (2018) emphasized that data collection for a basic qualitative study involves various methods, including interviews, observations, questionnaires, and document analysis. For this study, I examined the design documents of the mentoring program and compared them to the participants' semistructured interview responses (see Appendix B), which I employed to answer the research questions. The interview questions were created and structured into four sections:

1. Demographic information (i.e., preliminary data).
2. Teachers' perceptions of the importance of the school-based mentoring program. (These helped answer RQ1.)
3. Teachers' perceptions of the challenges associated with a school-based mentoring program. (These helped answer RQ1.)
4. Teachers' perspectives on the skills and structures requisite for the successful implementation of a school-based mentoring program. (These helped answer RQ2.)

I designed each section of the interview to connect directly to the research questions, ensuring that this structure confirmed that the data collected were directly relevant to answering the research questions. Interviews with participants were conducted face-to-face or via Zoom, and each lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The literature review of this study served as a foundational guide in shaping the interview questions. The qualitative nature of the interviews aligned with Yin's (2018) assertion that qualitative interviews, functioning as guided conversations, facilitate the collection of information about perceptions. This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of participants' views that contributed to an in-depth analysis that provided a clear and comprehensive understanding of the research findings (Lim, 2024).

A field test of the semistructured interview instrument and the preonline questionnaire questions was conducted as a preliminary tryout to assess the viability of the proposed instruments for the actual data collection stages of the study (see Kushnir, 2025). This validation process, performed in advance, aimed to refine and enhance the

research instruments. I invited five tenured teachers who did not participate in mentoring to take part in the field test and considered them an independent group. It is essential to note that these professionals were not required to respond to the questions during this phase because they were not contributing data for the study. Instead, their role was to provide valuable feedback on the order and overall flow of the questions.

The insights and feedback from these experts served as a crucial resource to refine the semistructured interview instrument and the preonline questionnaire. The objective was to address any ambiguities, biases, or redundancies in the questions and enhance the instruments' overall authenticity. Importantly, it was emphasized that the field test, a preparatory and validation exercise, did not involve data collection and, therefore, did not require IRB approval.

The study commenced when I solicited permission from the school's board and principal at the research site through email. Upon securing their approval to use the research site and obtaining potential participants' email addresses from school administrators, a formal research proposal was submitted to the Walden University IRB for research approval. This comprehensive proposal delineated sampling particulars, communication strategies, procedures, and data analysis methods integral to the study. After receiving approval from the IRB (Approval #09-25-24-0744830) and the school administrator, I crafted a recruitment email encompassing the study's purpose, procedural details, potential outcomes, associated risks and benefits, the significance of participant involvement, and the requirement for informed consent. This communication was sent to potential participants via their work email addresses directly from the school

administrator. In the emails, I requested that those interested in participating to respond by providing a contact number.

Subsequently, I contacted all potential participants via phone to facilitate a review of the informed consent form and address any queries they had. The eligibility criteria for the study were reaffirmed during this conversation. Participants also received detailed information about the study, the data being collected, the duration of data retention, data storage, access procedures, the study timeline, and ethical assurances. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to participate or withdraw consent at any point without facing repercussions. Following the participation agreement, verbal consent was obtained during the phone conversation. For participants who opted for an individual interview, either through Zoom or face-to-face, based on their preference, the consent forms were emailed for their signature and returned before the scheduled interview. Alternatively, participants who opted for face-to-face interviews signed the consent form in my presence.

Primary data were collected through the one-on-one, semistructured interviews. The cohort consisted of 10–12 novice teachers and took place over 4 weeks. The semistructured interview format afforded flexibility in the sequencing of questions, enabled in-depth follow-ups to participants' responses, and facilitated the introduction of new inquiries based on emerging insights.

I obtained explicit consent from participants to record each interview with an audio recorder or Zoom's built-in recording functionality. For interviews conducted via Zoom, I utilized the platform's built-in transcription service to ensure accurate and secure

transcription. After each interview, I securely downloaded and stored the audio recordings, transcripts from Zoom, or any additional audio recordings on a password-protected device. For in-person interviews, the audio recordings were securely transferred to a password-protected device and then transcribed verbatim using a reliable online transcription program, to ensure the precision of the recorded responses. I redacted all identifying information to safeguard participants' identities during the transcription process and subsequent reporting of findings, and pseudonyms were used to describe the data and participants' responses.

Before the analysis phase, a copy of the transcript was sent to each participant via email, allowing them to review and verify the accuracy of the statements made during the interviews (see Enriquez, 2024). Participants were also invited to engage in a check of the preliminary analysis, confirming or refuting my interpretations of the data. Member checking was done at different stages of the research. First, after analyzing each participant's data, the initial interpretations were shared with them to ensure their experiences were captured correctly.

As I continued analyzing and combining data from all participants, I sent summaries of the findings to all participants for their feedback. If the feedback led to significant changes, I contacted them to confirm that the conclusions accurately reflected what the participants shared. This approach ensured that the results were accurate and meaningful from the participants' perspectives. This process was aligned with the concept of member checking, a practice essential for validating, verifying, or assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative results (Motulsky, 2021). As emphasized by Motulsky

(2021), member checking allowed participants to the overall credibility of the research outcomes.

Role of the Researcher

I am an employee at the study site and played a major role in this study. My position involves managing school operations and school programming; however, my current and past professional roles and relationships with participants, such as teachers and mentors, had the potential to impact data collection. While these relationships helped build trust and encourage open conversations, my leadership role also had the potential to pressure participants to give positive feedback or hold back critical opinions.

I understood that participants' experiences and potential biases could affect how the data were interpreted; therefore, steps were taken to minimize these effects and ensure the research is fair and accurate. To ensure fairness and accuracy, trust was built with participants, confidentiality was maintained, and members checked verified responses. Peer debriefing, consistent coding, and careful review of conflicting data helped reduce bias and strengthen credibility.

Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure employed to investigate teachers' perspectives on the impact of school-based mentoring programs on their decisions to remain in the teaching profession was thematic analysis. I selected this method to manage the extensive volume of data effectively, condense information, discern significant patterns, and construct a comprehensive framework (see Kushnir, 2025). Thematic analysis, involved identifying, organizing, synthesizing, describing, and reporting themes derived from the data

collected through semistructured interviews. The six-step recursive process that guided the thematic analysis ensured a rigorous and methodical examination of the study's data. These steps, delineated by Braun and Clarke (2021) encompassed:

1. Becoming familiar with the data collected.
2. Capturing the semantic and conceptual coding of the data.
3. Triangulating and searching for themes.
4. Reviewing themes based on patterns identified from the codes, including combining multiple codes into a single theme and subthemes.
5. Defining each theme distinctly.
6. Communicating the narrative cohesively by interpreting the data and presenting arguments that support the claims.

Alphanumeric codes, reflective of the categories and descriptors within the study's conceptual framework, were assigned during thematic data analysis. I examined key terms from Kram's mentorship theory, including initiation phase, cultivation phase, separation phase, and redefinition phase, to assess their influence on mentees' self-efficacy, personal and professional growth, and overall competence. I also explored key terms from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, such as physiological, safety, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization, within the framework of mentorship phases.

Manual coding facilitated the determination of codes, categories, and themes arising from teachers' experiences and perspectives on collaborative learning strategies. The induction process involved manually reading interview transcripts, utilizing a word-based technique to identify word repetition and keywords, and employing a scrutiny-

based technique to identify missing information (see Bernard et al., 2016; Isangula et al., 2024). Manual coding, such as word frequency queries, word visualization tools, and manual text marking, aided in identifying themes.

The assumption was the participants would respond honestly to interview questions. I used open-ended questions to avoid leading participants and encourage honest responses. Emphasis on confidentiality and anonymity in the consent forms helped create a comfortable environment for participants to be truthful during the interviews.

Additionally, I assumed the small sample size would be enough to achieve data saturation. Data saturation was reached when new information stopped emerging, even with more participants. This belief aligned with qualitative researchers, like Mason (2010), who suggested that smaller groups could provide rich, detailed data on factors that influenced retention.

Finally, I assumed all participants would complete the study from start to finish. This expectation assumed that participants would remain committed throughout the study. According to Cohen et al. (2011), limitations are factors beyond the researcher's control that needed to be acknowledged. One potential area for improvement was my role as the executive director at the research site. My position might have led participants to withhold their true feelings which introduced bias. To address this, informational meetings were held before the study to address any concerns and reassure participants that their participation would not affect their employment. Confidentiality measures and data storage protocols were also discussed.

My professional relationship with the participants was expected to build trust, which helped reduce the risk of biased responses and encouraged participants to express their genuine perspectives. One limitation of the study was my level of interview experience, which could have affected how accurately I captured participants' views. To address this, I conducted test interviews with peers and volunteers to refine my interview technique and improve the accuracy of the data collection process. These practice transcripts were shared with participants for feedback to ensure their perspectives were correctly represented. This process supported the development of my interviewing skills and enhanced the study's credibility.

As defined by Cohen et al. (2011), delimitations are the boundaries established by the researcher. A key delimitation of this study was the selection of a sample of 10 novice teachers with up to 3 years of experience. I set this boundary to ensure an appropriate and focused sample for exploring the impact of school-based mentoring programs on teachers' decisions to remain at their schools.

Several key steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness and quality of this research. Credibility was supported through member checks, allowing participants to review and confirm that the findings accurately reflected their views. I provided a thick description of the findings to support transferability, enabling readers to determine the relevance of the results to other contexts. Dependability was established through rigorous data collection procedures, and confirmability was strengthened by using a clear and consistent coding system to minimize researcher bias and ensure transparency in the analysis.

Peer debriefing was used to help reduce potential bias. Given my role as executive director, I remained transparent about my position and maintained strict confidentiality to protect participants and limit researcher bias. Conflicting data were addressed and examined thoroughly, further strengthening the study's credibility. These efforts contributed to generating accurate findings that genuinely represented participants' experiences.

I conducted this qualitative research to understand the impact of school-based mentoring programs on novice teachers' decisions to continue teaching. The focus was on early career teachers with up to 3 years of experience. I explored their perceptions and experiences with the mentoring program and its influence on their commitment to remain in the teaching profession.

I used a purposeful sampling approach to select 10 teachers with 3 years or less of teaching experience. This approach aimed to provide a detailed understanding of school-based mentoring programs' challenges, benefits, and impact on retaining novice teachers. I gathered in-depth information about the participants' experiences with mentoring programs through methods, like online questionnaires and semistructured interviews. Following *the Belmont Report* principles, ethical considerations ensured voluntary participation and confidentiality.

The expected outcome of this research was a thorough understanding of how school-based mentoring programs influenced novice teachers' decisions to stay in the teaching profession. I expected the findings to provide valuable insights to inform

educational policies, practices, and future research, especially in supporting and retaining early career teachers.

Data Analysis Results

The problem addressed in this study was the high attrition rate of new teachers in middle- and low-income urban schools, particularly in schools that lacked structured mentorship programs. Teacher retention is a huge issue, and research shows that approximately 30% of new teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years (Craft, 2024). The challenges faced by new teachers, such as inadequate preparation, lack of professional support, and unrealistic expectations, contribute to the turnover, according to a recent study (Farahmandpour & Voelkel, 2025). In the current study, I examined how school-based peer mentoring programs impact new teachers' decisions to remain in the profession and what support systems are most effective in fostering long-term success.

School-based mentoring programs are designed to provide new teachers with structured guidance, emotional support, and PD opportunities. These programs pair experienced educators with novice teachers to help them navigate classroom management, instructional strategies, and professional responsibilities. This study was guided by Kram's mentorship theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which highlight the importance of career development, psychosocial support, and fulfilling teachers' fundamental professional and emotional needs.

Through semistructured interviews with 10 novice teachers withing their first 3 years of teaching, I identified key themes in their experiences with the mentoring program. Participants valued structured mentorship, emotional support, and a strong

sense of community but also pointed out gaps in personalized mentor pairings, the frequency of classroom observations, and the need for expanded preservice training. New teachers expressed that having mentors who actively engaged with them inside the classroom provided real-time coaching and increased confidence in their instructional abilities. They also emphasized that the mentorship program contributed to their decision to stay at the school. No discrepant cases were noted.

Data analysis for this doctoral project study involved thematic analysis to identify repeated themes from the new teacher interviews. I identified patterns in the data that provided insights into the new teachers' experiences with the mentoring program, emotional support, factors influencing retention, and areas for improvement. Six themes emerged based on the two research questions. These themes focused on the new teachers' perceptions of the mentoring program and the supports that new teachers noted impacted their decision to return, are detailed below. All analysis of interviews, including coding, categories, and themes can be found in Appendix C.

Results of Research Question 1

In RQ 1, I asked new teachers their perceptions of the school-based new-teacher mentoring program as it applies to retention.

Theme 1: Teachers had Varying Opinions Regarding the Effectiveness of the Mentoring Program

This theme helped answer RQ 1 and captured the varying views of new teachers. New teachers' responses about the mentoring program's effectiveness via structure, benefits, and areas for improvement varied. Some participants shared that the program

was effective, while others felt it could be enhanced. Participant 7 described the program as "a 10, I think it is phenomenal," while Participant 2 rated it as "an eight," and Participant 3 noted "an eight or a nine." Participant 4 highlighted, "That would be a nine because most places do not even have a mentoring program or space for new teachers to connect and learn together." Similarly, Participant 10 shared, "I would say it eight." But, Participant 5 expressed some caution, sharing, "I would give it a six. It is too early to give it higher."

Participants appreciated aspects such as mentor accessibility and the program's foundational support. Participant 9 explained, "Mentors let me know, like, hey, if you need advice or somebody to pop in and check your classes." Some participants identified areas for improvement, specifically with more personalized matching of mentors. Participant 6 stated, "Instead of being assigned a mentor, I would like to see the pool of teachers and have a choice." A few new teachers would have liked to have a say in who their mentor would be by completing an interest survey prior to being assigned a mentor.

Additionally, new teachers expressed the need for more frequent classroom observations and real-time feedback from their mentors. Participant 3 remarked, "Mentors coming into the classroom more often to see the real challenges would be helpful." Participant 4 noted, "Classroom evaluations from mentors have been useful, but more targeted feedback is needed." While many new teachers found the mentoring program beneficial, their responses highlighted the need for ongoing adjustments to meet their specific needs.

Theme 2: Mentoring Provided Teachers a Sense of Emotional Support and Belonging

This theme also helped answer RQ 1 and highlighted how mentorship went beyond professional guidance to create a sense of emotional support and community for new teachers. Some participants reflected on how their mentors fostered connections, helped navigate challenges, and made them feel part of a supportive network within the school. Several teachers described how they felt supported by their mentors. Participant 5 noted, "I feel very supported by the mentors and my peers," while Participant 9 shared that mentoring "gives me a good place to vent sometimes... it just makes you feel more human." The mentors' encouragement and understanding were crucial in helping new teachers overcome challenging moments. Participant 7 remarked, "She has my back, and when I do have a rough day, I can contact her if I need to."

For many, the mentoring program established a broader sense of community within the school. Participant 4 shared, "I feel at home here. They don't judge us if we don't know things and need help." Participant 8 highlighted the family friendly atmosphere: "I feel like I belong to the family and the community." New teachers shared that group meetings and check-ins played a significant role in creating this collaborative environment. Participant 3 added, "It's made it easier for me to really invest and just be taken under a wing and become part of the community." While the program created a strong sense of belonging for most, some participants acknowledged challenges in maintaining consistent emotional support. Participant 10 appreciated weekly or biweekly check-ins, sharing, "Just having that person to tell me, look, first it was great for me to

tell me what my struggle was," but highlighted the need for continued check-ins and accessibility.

New teacher comments suggested that the mentoring program positively influenced new teachers' emotional well-being and connection to the school community. These supportive relationships helped new teachers navigate their roles and duties and helped to facilitate a sense of belonging which supports professional growth.

Theme 3: Classroom Observations Were an Effective Component of the Mentoring Program

This theme also helped answer RQ 1 by highlighting how mentors' and administrators' classroom observations are valued as tools for professional growth. Teachers consistently expressed that real-time, targeted feedback helps refine their teaching strategies and address specific challenges. Participant 3 stated, "My mentor teacher was able to come in and evaluate two of my classes within the same day, one with older students and one with younger students." This showed the value of timely and actionable feedback. Participant 7 shared, "She comes into my classroom and watches my practices, then provides a lot of informative and impactful feedback," which the new teacher noted as key in their development as an educator. Participant 8 added, "My mentor comes to class, gives us feedback, and I found that very, very informative," underlining the importance of direct classroom engagement by mentors.

Other teachers focused on how observations supported classroom management and improved instructional techniques. Participant 5 stated, "I need some more help with things like classroom management because these kids are different," and highlighted the

role of classroom visits. Additionally, Participant 9 shared, "Definitely with getting ready for observations, I would not have been ready for observations without them," showing how mentoring through observations prepared them for formal evaluations. Participants also shared the need for more frequent observations. Participant 6 suggested, "Maybe instead of once a month, meetings could be every 2 weeks," while Participant 10 expressed the benefit of mentors reviewing lessons more frequently: "He looks at two or three of my lessons for the week, and he'll say, 'Hey, this looks good, but you can also add this.'" These examples show how regular feedback fosters improvement and builds teacher confidence. New teachers view classroom observations as key components to their professional growth. The comments suggest a belief that they help them improve lesson delivery, support better classroom management, and affect the overall effectiveness of teaching.

Results for Research Question 2

In Research Question 2, I asked new teachers what supports impact their decision to return each year to the study site.

Theme 4: Mentoring Programs Affect Teacher Retention

Moving to RQ 2, this theme emerged to explore how the mentoring program influenced new teachers' decisions to remain at the school. Some participants identified the program as a factor in their retention. Participant 1 stated, "I think that's one of the reasons why I'll return for sure," while Participant 6 added, "The mentoring program is one of the reasons why I will return next year." Teachers emphasized the role of structured support, resources, and a welcoming environment in their decisions to stay.

Participant 4 shared, "The mentoring program is definitely one of the reasons why I am choosing to stay." Participant 8 stated something similar: "I love my school, and I'm so excited to become part of being integrated fully."

The mentoring program also contributed to fostering confidence and independence among teachers. Participant 7 shared, "It just shows that you guys want us to succeed as much as I want to succeed," and Participant 9 reflected, "It impacted us last year, so, you know, it's definitely impacting it this year." Additionally, the sense of being supported was a recurring theme, as Participant 10 shared, "That gave me a confidence boost that I needed." The new teachers' statements highlight the mentoring program's role in new teacher retention through fostering a supportive environment and ensuring teachers feel valued and prepared to succeed. The support has encouraged teachers to see the school as a place for long-term professional growth.

Theme 5: Teachers Shared Ways to Enhance the Mentoring Program to Support Retention

This theme, which also helped answer RQ 2 focuses on teachers' suggestions for refining the mentoring program. A recurring recommendation was implementing presurveys to gather data that would help create mentoring goals for mentors and teachers. Participant 5 emphasized, "A presurvey would help mentors focus on the exact areas we need support in." Participant 2 shared a similar idea that surveys would open the space for mentors and mentees to discuss similar and focused areas for growth. Participants also suggested increasing the frequency of mentoring sessions and creating more informal opportunities to meet. Participant 6 shared, "Meeting more frequently,

even casually, would be helpful." Participant 1 stated, "I think meeting more would actually do more of a service to us all." This was reinforced by Participant 9, who suggested the inclusion of a consistent schedule for mentor meetings to avoid conflicts with planning periods, "Maybe having a set time that works for everybody next year, so that way people aren't double dipping in their planning and lunchtime."

Another area to improve was content-specific training and preservice preparation training. Participant 6 recommended, "Definitely a more immersive summer program, maybe 2 weeks, to get us better prepared before the school year starts." Participant 8 emphasized the importance of clear expectations, especially for international teachers: "It would be good for new teachers, especially international teachers, to be taken through expectations more clearly." Teachers stressed the need for targeted, frequent, and context-specific mentoring support, accompanied by preservice preparation. Addressing these suggestions would make the program more effective and improve teacher retention.

Theme 6: Teachers Discussed Desired Support Systems and Resources

The sixth theme, also created to help answer RQ 2, highlights how new teachers rely on support systems and access important resources. Some participants shared they wanted to feel important both professionally and emotionally and have adequate tools and materials to meet their students' needs. Participant 1 shared, "Knowing that if I need help or some sort of support, I can text a group chat and somebody is going to come to the rescue." This reiterated the collaborative environment they depend on in the workplace. Similarly, Participant 5 stated, "In terms of support, I feel very supported by the mentors and my peers," reflecting the impact of peer relationships in creating a strong network of

assistance. Participant 7 described the layers of support available: "I feel if I ever feel uncomfortable about a lesson or something going on, I know that there's several different layers of support," highlighting the accessibility of help when needed.

Access to resources continued to come up in the new teachers' comments. Participant 4 stated, "I have all of the teaching materials I need and can get supplies I ask." This expresses their satisfaction with resource availability to new teachers. Alternately, Participant 6 shared a different perspective, "We need all of the supports. It's never enough." This new teacher pointed out a desire for additional resources and tools. Participant 8 emphasized the importance of having resources that were tailored to specific new teachers' needs, stating, "Recognizing our student need, like I've been asked to do some of the SEL stuff, having those resources allows me to level with the kids." This illustrated how targeted materials improve their ability to connect with students and improve instruction. New teachers also appreciated emotional and psychological support in their school. Participant 10 shared, "If I need a break, I get one. I'm allowed to have one, and I think everybody that I talk to, I feel comfortable being open with about where I'm mentally." This stressed the value of a supportive school culture. Participant 9 added, "She stops and makes sure I'm okay and just makes sure I have everything," which puts a focus on the importance of consistent check-ins and attention to personal-emotional care. All these systems contribute to their ability to manage challenges, connect with students, and feel valued as educators.

In summary, the thematic analysis revealed that the new teacher mentoring program supports new teachers by focusing on their professional and emotional growth in

teaching, which directly influences their decision to stay at the school site and in the teaching profession. New teachers emphasized the value of a structured mentorship program, attention to emotional support, and creating a collaborative school culture to help them navigate the challenges of teaching and build confidence in their work. They also shared areas for improvement, such as incorporating personalized mentor matching and goals, increasing the frequency of classroom observations and classroom session supports, and offering more comprehensive preservice training and frequent meeting opportunities. Addressing these recommendations will refine the mentoring program, enhance teacher satisfaction, and ultimately increase teacher retention.

The above results will inform the development of a project in the form of a comprehensive PD plan. I hoped that this project could lead to higher teacher satisfaction, improved instructional practices, and a more stable educational space, ensuring that mentorship programs are structured, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of novice teachers.

Section 3: The Project

I created this PD program in response to the findings from the study on new teacher retention and mentorship in an urban school. The research highlighted new teachers' challenges in their first 3 years, including a lack of structured mentorship, limited classroom support, and insufficient preparation before entering the profession. Many teachers desired more personalized mentor pairings, frequent classroom visits with feedback, and better pre-service training to help them adjust and succeed in their roles.

I found that high teacher turnover negatively impacts school stability, instructional quality, and student achievement. New teachers reported feeling overwhelmed and unsupported, which led to low job satisfaction and burnout. Teachers struggled with classroom management, lesson planning, and work-life balance without consistent mentorship and real-time coaching. They also noted that stronger mentor relationships, ongoing support beyond the first year, and hands-on coaching would make a significant difference in their decision to stay at their school.

This project will provide PD training for mentors, instructional coaches, and school leaders to address strengthening mentoring practices and teacher support systems. The goal is to equip mentors with strategies to guide, support, and retain new teachers by fostering relationships, providing real-time classroom feedback, and creating a welcoming school environment. I designed this PD program to be interactive, structured, and based on real teacher experiences. By focusing on effective mentorship, increasing classroom visits, and improving new teacher training, the initiative aims to help schools support and retain their teachers. The program will provide tools and strategies that

mentors and school leaders can use immediately, ensuring new teachers feel supported, confident, and equipped to succeed in their careers.

Rationale

Based on the study results, I discovered that a strong mentoring program is essential to supporting new teachers and increasing retention. This 4-day PD workshop will equip school leaders and mentors with the knowledge and skills needed to build an effective mentorship culture. The PD series was created to strengthen the mentoring program for new teachers by addressing key challenges identified in the project study. The findings showed that while a mentoring program exists; its effectiveness varies; and some new teachers lack consistent guidance, meaningful feedback, and structured support. New teachers struggle with classroom management, lesson planning, and job satisfaction without these elements, leading to higher attrition rates. This PD session will provide practical strategies to improve mentoring, enhance teacher support, and increase retention. After reviewing the findings, I determined that PD, in a form of a workshop for mentors, instructional coaches, and school leaders is the best approach. Ongoing training is important to ensure mentors have the skills to provide effective feedback, build strong mentor-mentee relationships, and offer real-time classroom support. This workshop will focus on interactive training sessions that help mentors better support new teachers and create a more structured, effective mentoring process.

I chose a PD workshop because it directly addresses the concerns of new teachers in the study. Research has shown that well-structured mentoring and consistent, research-based training for mentors can improve teacher confidence, increase job satisfaction, and

reduce turnover (Fairman et al., 2022; Smith & Gillespie, 2023). I also found that many new teachers lacked emotional support and regular check-ins with their mentors, making it harder for them to adjust. Some teachers wanted more input on mentor selection, while others requested frequent meetings and targeted classroom feedback. This PD session will address these gaps by providing tools for better mentor matching, structured mentor-mentee interactions, and ongoing support strategies to ensure meaningful and effective mentoring relationships.

This series of PD workshops will focus on practical, research-backed strategies for helping mentors provide new teachers with clear guidance, classroom feedback, and emotional support. It will also train mentors to conduct compelling classroom observations, provide structured feedback, and help teachers develop confidence in their instructional skills. Implementing this PD will improve teacher support and increase retention rates. The goal is to create a mentoring program that ensures new teachers feel supported, confident, and prepared for long-term professional success.

Review of the Literature

Maintaining teachers' enthusiasm and high standards requires ongoing opportunities to grow and refine their skills (Stavermann, 2025). Research has emphasized that PD should be continuous and embedded within educators' practice to ensure lasting impact (Hertz et al., 2022). The University of San Diego's Professional and Continuing Education Department (2024) discussed how the federal, state and local organizations place an elevated importance on PD for teachers. Effective PD is critical in

teaching and enhancing student outcomes (Avalos, 2023). Studies have shown that well-structured PD improves student academic success (Arifin et al., 2024).

Building on this foundation, it is essential to equip teachers with the strategies and knowledge needed to navigate diverse student needs, strengthen instruction, and address changing educational challenges. After reviewing 25 peer-reviewed articles from 2021 to 2025, in this literature review I examine key characteristics of effective PD and its influence on teacher retention and overall school success. To guide the review, a comprehensive was conducted using databases accessible through the Walden University Library, such as ERIC and Google Scholar. Keywords included *mentor teacher professional development, teacher retention, mentoring programs, instructional coaching,* and *new teacher support*. My search criteria focused on peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2025, with a specific emphasis on K–12 education settings in the United States. I selected articles based on relevance to their connection to urban schools and evidence of measurable outcomes related to teacher growth and student achievement based on mentoring new teachers.

Understanding PD

PD is critical in ensuring teacher effectiveness, improving instruction, and enhancing student learning. PD allows educators to refine their teaching practices, integrate new instructional strategies, and adapt to changes in education policies and reforms (Fairman et al., 2022; Sims et al., 2023). Effective PD programs are structured, research based, and tailored to the needs of educators, ensuring they can apply new knowledge directly in their classrooms (Haug & Mork, 2021; Smith & Gillespie, 2023). It

also incorporates high-quality design elements that enhance teacher satisfaction and lead to meaningful changes in instructional practices (Meyer et al., 2023). PD is impactful when it is sustainable, job-embedded, and collaborative (Admiraal et al., 2021). Teachers benefit from PD experiences that are interactive, engaging, and relevant, which allow them to participate in peer learning, mentorship, and structured feedback cycles (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Literature on teacher PD has identified essential evidence-based features that contribute to long-term instructional effectiveness (Asterhan & Lefstein, 2024). PD programs that integrate formative assessment strategies into the training can enhance instructional quality by helping teachers collect and analyze student learning data, adjust lesson plans, and refine instructional methods (Berisha et al., 2024). Additionally, PD must cater to adult learning principles, such as ensuring that teachers engage in meaningful and self-directed learning experiences (Guțu, 2023).

Development of PD Programs

Developing effective PD programs requires planning and alignment with a focus on teachers' needs, instructional goals, and student learning outcomes. PD should be teacher driven, responsive to changing educational demands, and embedded into daily teaching practices (Haug & Mork, 2021; Prenger et al., 2021). Schools that implement mentorship programs, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities provide educators with ongoing opportunities for collaboration and professional growth (Soodmand & Doosti, 2022). Successful PD programs ensure a personalized approach, continued collaboration, and is sustainable (Islami et al., 2022). Smith and Gillespie (2023) commented on the PD effectiveness when teachers have an influence on their

learning experiences. This allows teachers to concentrate on professional growth aligning with instructional challenges and purposes.

Additionally, integrating technology into the PD allows schools to provide more flexible and interactive learning opportunities, making PD more accessible and engaging to teachers in various educational settings (Chandran et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022). Schools that incorporate structured follow-up and feedback sessions, mentorship programs, and data-driven refinements ensure long-term success in their PD initiatives (Fairman et al., 2022).

Implementing an Effective PD Model

Implementing a successful PD model requires a structured and collaborative approach that prioritizes ongoing learning, mentorship, and reflective practice (Fairman et al., 2022). Research highlighted four key strategies for implementing mentorship-based PD models: First, mentor training must be comprehensive, equipping experienced teachers with coaching techniques, leadership skills, and strategies for guiding new educators (Soodmand & Doosti, 2022). Second, classroom observations and structured feedback sessions allow teachers to receive targeted instructional support, refine teaching strategies, and improve student engagement (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Third, PLCs provide collaborative spaces where educators can share instructional strategies, engage in reflective dialogue, and develop a collective vision for school improvement (Admiraal et al., 2021). Finally, blended PD models that incorporate virtual mentorship, asynchronous learning opportunities, and online instructional resources expand the accessibility and flexibility of PD, allowing teachers to engage in professional learning at their own pace

(Cebesoy & Rundgren, 2021; Chandran et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2024). By embedding structured mentorship, instructional coaching, and PLCs into PD initiatives, schools create a culture of continuous professional learning that enhances teacher retention, instructional effectiveness, and student achievement (Bartley & McKay, 2022).

Effective Mentorship Relationships

Strong relationships between mentors and new teachers are key to helping teachers feel supported and confident. Cells et al. (2022) found that when mentors build trust and share helpful teaching strategies, new teachers are more likely to feel prepared and stay in the profession. These supportive relationships help new teachers feel a sense of belonging, reduce stress, and improve their classroom practice (Diab & Green, 2024). When mentors take time to truly connect and listen, new teachers feel more empowered and less isolated (Cells et al., 2022).

Mentor-mentee relationships rooted in trust, consistency, and mutual respect contribute to a school culture where novice and veteran teachers thrive. Mokhtar et al. (2021) stated that these relationships create emotional safety and encourage collaboration, which helps new teachers navigate challenges confidently. When mentoring is viewed as a shared journey, it leads to higher morale, stronger communities of practice, and a greater likelihood that teachers will stay (Diab & Green, 2024). Overall, Mokhtar et al. claimed that effective training and relationship-building help schools retain quality educators and foster a more positive, stable learning environment.

Regular check-ins and open lines of communication are important for fostering strong mentor-mentee relationships. Haidusek-Niazy et al. (2023) found that when

mentors communicate frequently with their new teacher mentees and provide helpful, timely feedback, it fosters trust and supports the new teachers' professional growth. These ongoing conversations and interactions help new teachers feel supported as they learn how to navigate real situations (Sarabipour et al., 2021). They also felt more connected to their school community and more confident in their role, which can increase their likelihood of staying in the profession (Richter et al., 2022).

Training Mentors

Effective mentorship relationships depend on how well mentors are trained. Studies have shown that mentoring programs are most successful when mentors are given time to reflect, set goals, and engage meaningfully with their mentees (Parker et al., 2021). Well-prepared mentors are more likely to offer helpful advice, encouragement, and timely feedback (Weimer, 2020). When mentor training encompasses both task-specific strategies and guidance on relationship building, mentors can provide more effective support to new teachers, both emotionally and professionally, which is an essential factor in improving teacher retention.

Mentor training is a key part of any effective mentoring program. Even experienced teachers may struggle to mentor without structured preparation. Wexler (2020b) indicated that mentors need clear guidance, time for reflection on their practice, and training in providing constructive, actionable feedback, managing difficult conversations, and supporting the emotional well-being of new teachers. This preparation helps ensure that mentoring is consistent and aligned with school and district priorities. When mentors are trained in areas, such as culturally responsive teaching and

instructional coaching, they are better able to address the varied needs of new teachers and contribute to student achievement (Parker et al., 2021).

Ongoing PD for mentors strengthens their capacity to lead and support others over time (Weimer, 2020). Regular check-ins, peer collaborative learning communities, and opportunities for feedback help mentors strengthen their skills and engagement. This continuous learning model establishes a strong culture of collaboration and shared leadership within schools. Supporting the growth of mentors benefits not only new teachers but also the professional growth of veteran educators, reinforcing the long-term impact of mentoring programs on retention and school success (Parker et al., 2021).

Evaluating the Effectiveness of PD

The effectiveness of PD programs should be evaluated through data collection and analysis. This ensures that training initiatives meet educators' needs and contribute to meaningful instructional change (Arifin et al., 2024; Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Best practices for PD evaluation include pre- and postassessments or surveys to measure teacher growth and knowledge, classroom observations to assess instructional implementation, and feedback surveys to gauge the impact of PD (Smith & Gillespie, 2023; Zimmer & Matthews, 2022). Research demonstrated that PD programs that integrate formative assessment-driven evaluation models allow educators to reflect on their instructional effectiveness and make data-informed decisions about their teaching practices (Berisha et al., 2024). Schools implementing ongoing assessment and structured follow-ups into PD initiatives create adaptive, responsive, and effective professional

learning environments supporting teacher growth and retention (Cavendish et al., 2021; Guțu, 2023).

Conclusion

The literature review highlights the importance of structured mentorship, instructional coaching, and collaborative PD models in supporting teacher retention, quality instruction, and student achievement (Fairman et al., 2022; Kong & Wang, 2024). Schools prioritizing ongoing mentorship, real-time feedback, and professional learning communities create professional learning environments that foster teacher confidence, engagement, and effectiveness (Smith & Gillespie, 2023). By ensuring that new teachers receive sustained support, continuous professional learning opportunities, and collaborative growth experiences, this PD program aims to reduce burnout, strengthen instructional confidence, and improve long-term teacher retention (Soodmand & Doosti, 2022).

Project Description

After conducting research interviews, it became evident that a structured mentoring program is necessary to support new teachers, foster a sense of belonging, and improve long-term retention. This 4-day PD workshop will provide school leaders and school-based mentors with the skills, strategies, and resources needed to support new teachers. Through collaborative discussions, real-world scenarios, and hands-on activities, participants will develop plans to strengthen mentorship, improve classroom observations, and foster a school culture supporting teacher retention.

Potential Resources

To ensure a high-quality PD experience, participants will have access to qualified and experienced facilitators with mentoring and instructional leadership experience. Training materials will include mentor handbooks, professional articles, case studies, observation videos and templates, and best-practice guides. Technology will consist of projectors, laptops, document cameras, and online discussion platforms. These will ensure that the learning experience was meaningful and engaging. Additional materials, such as articles, digital worksheets, journals, and professional reflection guides, will be provided to participants to document their journey through the 4-day experience.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Implementing a comprehensive mentoring PD can present challenges, but proactively thinking of solutions will ensure success. To limit scheduling conflicts with the school day and school year activities, the PD will be scheduled during summer or designated district PD days to maximize attendance. To address varied experience levels, the training will feature small breakout groups of new and experienced mentors. To sustain engagement after the PD training sessions are done is important, so ongoing coaching and quarterly check-ins with mentors by facilitators will reinforce mentorship strategies and provide continued support.

Roles and Responsibilities of Others

I would be responsible for planning and presenting the project to the school's administrative team. I would secure the location and funding for this project. The administrative team would be responsible for the implementation of the PD. They would

also be responsible for the purchase of material and booking guest presenters, once I secured funding. The school leadership would find dates for professional development for staff and faculty.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

This PD program will take place over 4 consecutive days (9:00 p.m.–1:00 p.m. each day) ideally during the summer. To maximize participation, the training will be scheduled during the summer or early in the school year. School leaders will receive communication regarding dates and expectations through emails and school announcements. Each session will include interactive discussions, scenario-based learning, and strategic planning activities to ensure participants leave with actionable insights.

Day 1 will set the foundation for successful mentoring relationships. Participants will explore best practices, discuss mentor-mentee relationships, and examine the leadership role needed to ensure mentorship success. Sessions will focus on the importance of structured support, setting clear expectations, and providing meaningful engagement in development.

Day 2 will focus on classroom observations and feedback strategies. Participants will practice observation techniques, analyze real-world scenarios, and learn to deliver constructive feedback that fosters growth. The goal is to ensure mentors provide targeted, actionable steps to help new teachers strengthen their instructional practice.

Day 3 will focus on emotional support and teacher wellness. This session will highlight the importance of fostering a sense of belonging among new teachers.

Participants will explore strategies for managing stress, maintaining a positive school culture, and prioritizing teacher well-being. By supporting teachers holistically, mentors can help prevent burnout and promote retention.

Day 4 will ensure the long-term sustainability of the mentoring program. Participants will develop individualized mentorship plans, establish accountability measures, and create structures for ongoing mentor-mentee engagement. The session will focus on creating a culture of mentorship that extends beyond the new teacher induction period. Each day will conclude with an exit ticket assessment to gather participant feedback to improve programing outcomes.

Project Evaluation Plan

The effectiveness of this PD workshop will be measured by using formative and summative evaluation. The formative evaluation will be a daily reflection and exit ticket at the end of each day. This will allow me to modify the following day's presentation. A summative evaluation will be in the form of a postsurvey (see Appendix A) for the purpose of modifying the presentation for future use. Postsurvey data can reveal participants' knowledge growth and confidence in mentoring. Exit tickets at the end of each session will capture feedback for continuous improvement of the program and PD. This outcomes-based evaluation will help determine if the PD met its goal of improving mentoring practices and increasing new teacher retention. I chose an outcomes-based evaluation because the goal of this PD is to improve new teacher retention by strengthening mentoring. It will assess whether participants gained skills and confidence and whether mentoring improved over time. Measures include post surveys, exit tickets,

mentor-mentee feedback, and retention data. The PD aims to help mentors and school leaders better support new teachers and create a more connected, supportive environment. Key stakeholders include new teachers, mentors, school leaders, and students all who benefit from a stable, well-supported teaching staff.

Project Implications

Possible Social Change

My goal is to support and empower teachers so they can ensure their students have the skills needed to thrive in today's world. This project will help new teachers gain confidence, improve teaching practices, and create engaging, caring environments where students can succeed. Mentorship and targeted PD will help teachers obtain the tools and support they need to stay in education and make an impact. Educators, policymakers, and researchers can use these findings to create more effective and relevant PD programs that address teachers' challenges. We know that change does not happen instantly, change takes time, but investment in teacher support leads to stronger instruction, better student achievement, and happier and healthier school communities.

This project has the potential to extend beyond the project school site and school district, influencing teachers, school leaders, and education decision-makers. The goal is to invest in teachers to gain the skills and support they need to serve their students and school community better.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

I created this project using feedback from new urban teachers, ensuring it reflects their needs. Research shows that PD is most effective based on teachers' experiences and focused on their challenges (Talafian et al., 2024). One strength of the project is that it focuses on what new teachers need, such as helpful feedback, emotional support, strong mentoring, and a sense of connection. These supports are linked to higher job satisfaction and lower teacher turnover. Additionally, Daly et al. (2023) emphasized that mentors who also serve as instructional coaches can significantly improve new teachers' classroom effectiveness and confidence, further supporting this project.

Given the changing demands on educators in the post-COVID era, Anis (2024) emphasized the need for PD to adapt by offering more personalized and flexible tools, which this project also supports. If PD sessions are not the best format, a mentorship toolkit, including reflection journals, check-ins, feedback templates, and wellness strategies, could offer ongoing support. These tools are easy to adapt across different school contexts and could help build a stronger, more sustainable support system for early career teachers.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

While the problem is commonly viewed as high turnover among new teachers, another way to define it is that schools often lack simple and effective support systems that help new teachers succeed., Another practical option to support this work would be to create a mentorship toolkit and implementation guide. This project could include

resources, such as sample check-in questions, reflection journals, feedback templates, social and emotional support tools, all aligned with what new teachers have identified as essential to their success in the profession. Another idea is to create a virtual space where mentors and new teachers can talk, share ideas, and support one another. This would help extend the impact of the PD and help build stronger relationships over time.

Additionally, developing a white paper could help communicate the importance and effectiveness of mentoring programs to school leaders and policymakers. A well-crafted mentoring curriculum could also be designed to guide implementation and ensure training and support consistency for mentors. These flexible resources could be used across schools, helping create a sustainable and lasting support system for new teachers beyond just one training session.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

This PD project plan bridges scholarly research and practical application. Through the qualitative study and developing the PD plan, I strengthened my skills as a researcher, listener, and writer. I also grew as an educational leader working in the day-to-day realities of school life. Listening to new teachers and focusing on their voices and experiences has helped me gain a deeper and more empathetic understanding of their daily challenges. I was also able to understand the support they need to thrive in education.

The implementation of this project has the potential to spark positive social change. Improving support for new teachers will help schools reduce teacher turnover, improve instruction, and foster stronger relationships between students and teachers. This

project also supports leadership development, encouraging principals and instructional leaders to prioritize mentorship and build more collaborative and affirming workplace cultures. This will all cause a ripple effect, leading to better learning environments, higher student achievement, and stronger school community trust. Designing this project gave me the tools to respond to those needs in a sustainable and realistic way that is aligned with the school and district's goals. It also allowed me to step into a more strategic leadership role by shaping systems and training to help school leaders build their capacity to nurture early career and seasoned educators.

One of the most meaningful outcomes of this journey has been my growth in understanding how research can directly inform change. I have grown as a leader in using data and feedback to design research-based programs that are responsive, practical, and actionable. The PD plan I developed is not simply about delivering training, but it is about shifting culture. It empowers mentors and school leaders to become more effective supporters and coaches while reinforcing that teacher development must be ongoing and not a one-time activity.

As an educator, this process pushed me to think intentionally about how school systems operate to support new teachers and how leadership can either support or hinder teacher success. It confirmed what I have often observed how new teachers are more likely to stay and succeed when they feel connected, guided, and valued. I can connect to this as a career changer who would not have made it through those first years without my mentor and the organized program that was available to me. She is still my mentor, friend, and one of my biggest cheerleaders.

I am committed to creating spaces where teachers feel seen, supported, and equipped to do their best while leaders grow and build better relationships with their staff. This project reflects that commitment and is a step toward a more stable, supportive, and student-centered school community. It also reinforces that teacher development is not a one-time, one-size-fits-all event but an ongoing journey.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

This qualitative research study and project have been meaningful to me both personally and professionally. As a school leader, I have seen how important it is to support new teachers and how easy it is for them to feel lost or overwhelmed. This research allowed me to better understand what new teachers go through and how mentoring can make a real difference in whether they stay in the profession. Hearing directly from them reminded me that having someone in your corner, especially early on, can be life changing.

This project helped me grow as a writer, researcher, and leader. I took what I learned from this study and turned it into a plan that schools can use, which made the work feel real, urgent, and relevant. I created a PD program grounded in what teachers need, which are practical strategies, emotional support, and strong relationships. It felt good to turn what I learned into something that could help others and is sustainable. I am also passionate about developing strong school leaders. School leaders play an important role in creating environments where teachers feel supported and want to stay. This project empowers mentors and administrators to be more intentional in coaching, supporting, and

uplifting new teachers. Helping leaders grow in this way has always been important to me, and this work reflects that commitment.

This project has the power to make a larger impact. When new teachers feel supported, they are more likely to stay, which leads to stronger instruction, more stable classrooms, better relationships with students, and a strong school culture. In schools like mine, where consistency really matters, that kind of change can make a big difference for students, families, and the community. Most of all, this experience reminded me why I do this work. I want to help build schools where teachers feel seen, supported, and encouraged to grow, and where leaders are equipped to create those conditions. This project reflects that goal. It is not just about training, but it is about building a stronger community for educators and students. I am proud of this work and excited to keep moving forward with it.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This study shows that school-based mentoring programs can help new teachers feel supported, connected, and more confident, which are factors that may influence their decision to stay in the profession. The mentoring program gave teachers a trusted person to turn to, which helped them manage stress and feel more prepared for the classroom. The study findings support Kram's mentorship theory, highlighting how mentors support professional growth and emotional well-being. Teachers shared how mentors helped them build relationships and skills, navigate challenges, and feel like they belonged in their first years. The study also reflects Maslow's hierarchy of needs, showing that when teachers feel safe, valued, and part of a supportive school community, they are more

likely to stay and succeed. These findings add to research on teacher retention by offering real insights from new teachers in urban schools. They show that well-designed mentoring programs can make a lasting difference by helping teachers feel ready, supported, and committed to their work.

Enhanced mentoring can benefit teachers at various levels. It increases teachers' confidence, emotional resilience, and job satisfaction at the individual level, helping them remain in their roles and thrive. At the family level, consistently supported teachers seek to foster strong relationships between school and families, creating a village approach to education where everyone works together to support each child's growth and success. At the organizational level, improved teacher retention lowers turnover costs; builds a more experienced, like-minded, and collaborative staff; and contributes to a healthier, more stable school culture. On the societal and policy levels, successful mentoring programs can lead to greater financial investment and involvement in teacher development and retention, ultimately supporting more robust and equitable education systems for all communities.

This PD project could serve as a model for other schools or districts that want to improve how they support and keep new teachers. Future studies could look at how ongoing mentoring helps teachers over time or how this model works in different kinds of schools. It would also be helpful to explore whether matching mentors and new teachers by subject, grade level, or personality makes a difference. Another important area to study is how the school's environment and leadership can help mentoring programs succeed.

Conclusion

I designed this study to address the high attrition rate of new teachers in middle- to low-income urban schools in Maryland—a challenge that disrupts student learning and weakens school stability. Many new teachers leave the profession early due to limited support, guidance, and connection. To combat this issue, a 4-day PD program was created to strengthen mentoring relationships, enhance instructional feedback, and foster a school culture where early career teachers feel supported, capable, and valued.

When schools invest in structured mentorship and a supportive environment, they retain teachers as well as build stronger schools and healthier communities. Consistently supported teachers build lasting relationships with families and students, contributing to a more connected and engaged school community. Over time, this support system also helps grow confident, skilled educators who can become the next generation of teacher leaders, which ensures long-term success for schools and the communities they serve.

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Appendix A: The Project

Schedule for Implementing Professional Development

The 4-day professional development (PD) workshop will be offered twice during the year, once in late June and again in early August, to give school leaders flexible options before the school year begins. Each session runs in person from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the school site. Light snacks during breaks and lunch will be provided. All participants are expected to attend all 4 days.

Day 1: Foundations of Mentoring

The workshop kicks off with an overview of the mentoring program's goals. Participants will review research on effective mentorship, discuss strong mentor-mentee relationships, and explore the leadership role in mentoring. Small group discussions and case studies will support learning. The day ends with a short reflection activity and optional reading.

Day 2: Classroom Observations and Feedback

This session covers how to observe classrooms and give helpful feedback. Participants will participate in simulations, role-playing, and practice giving constructive, data-based feedback. Feedback will be collected at the end of the day.

Day 3: Emotional Support and Wellness

The focus shifts to supporting new teachers' emotional well-being. Topics include stress management, building a culture of belonging, and using mentorship to prevent burnout. Participants will share ideas and complete a daily feedback form.

Day 4: Sustaining the Program

The final session will help participants create long-term plans for mentorship at their

schools. They will develop personalized mentor plans, define accountability steps, and prepare systems for continued mentor-mentee support. A final evaluation will be completed, and participants will leave with clear action steps.

Day & Time	Theme	Activities	Presenter
Day 1 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Foundations of Effective Mentoring - Overview of mentoring research and best practices.	- Small group discussions on mentor-mentee relationships. - Case studies: What makes mentoring effective? -Role of school leadership in mentoring success. - Exit Ticket: Formative evaluation of session.	Facilitator
Day 2 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Classroom Observations & Effective - The impact of classroom observations on teacher growth.	- Best practices in conducting structured observations. - Giving constructive, data-driven feedback. - Practice: Simulated mentor-mentee observation sessions. - Exit Ticket: Formative evaluation of session.	Facilitator, Administrators, Team Leaders
Day 3 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Emotional Support, Teacher Wellness, & Retention - The role of mentoring in teacher emotional	- Creating a culture of belonging and support. - Strategies for	Facilitator, Administrators, Team Leaders

	well-being.	mentor-led problem-solving discussions. - Supporting teachers through challenges and stress. - Building a professional learning community for mentors. - Exit Ticket: Formative evaluation of session.	
Day 4 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Strengthening the Mentoring Program & Long-Term Support - Developing an individualized mentor plan for new teachers	- Long-term mentor-mentee engagement strategies. - Creating accountability and tracking progress. - Evaluating mentor effectiveness and making improvements. - Action planning for the upcoming school year. - Final Summative Evaluation & Next Steps	Facilitator, Administrators, Team Leaders

Day 1 Agenda: Foundations of Effective Mentoring

Topic: Developing an Effective Mentor-Mentee Relationships

9:00-9:15 Welcome & Session Objectives

The facilitator will review the 4-Day PD series as well as the objectives for the first day. And the facilitator will review the expectations for participants.

9:15-9:45 Multimedia Segment: *The Power of Mentorship*

Participants will watch a short inspirational video describing the impact of a mentorship program. The facilitator will introduce the research-based aspects of an effective mentoring program.

9:45-10:30 Small Group Discussions – Qualities of a Successful Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Participants will divide into small groups of 3-4 participants and share their previous mentoring experiences. They will also reflect on the qualities of a successful mentor-mentee relationship. Guiding questions and a graphic organizer will be used.

10:30-10:45 Break - Light Refreshments &Informal Peer Networking

10:45-11:30 Case Study Analysis – Small Groups

The participants will form small groups of 3-4 participants. Participants will work in small groups to analyze real-life mentor-mentee case scenarios. Each group will chart their observations and prepare to share insights with the larger group.

11:30-12:15 Large Group Debriefing & School Leadership

The facilitator will lead this debriefing session discussing key takeaways and

aligns the discussion to the role of the school leadership in facilitating the success of the mentoring program.

12:15-12:45 Mentor Profile & Hands-On Activity

Each participant with create a mentor profile for the school. They will also include the leadership needed supports to sustain the mentoring program.

12:45-1:00 Reflection & Feedback (Lunch to go)

Each participant will reflect on the days activities and complete a formative assessment. The participants will also receive an optional reflection reading to prepare for the second day.

Day 1: Exit Ticket

Please complete this 5-minute survey. This will help us better understand an evaluation of the day's events.

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel starting a strong mentor-mentee relationship? (1 = Not confident, 5 = Very confident)
2. What is one quality you think every good mentor should have?
3. What is one thing you learned today that you want to try or use in your role?
4. How do you think school leaders help mentoring programs work well?
5. Is there anything you would like to learn tomorrow about classroom visits and giving feedback?

Optional Reading & Reflection for Day 2

Title: *Giving Helpful Feedback: Support vs. Evaluation*

Why this matters: Tomorrow, we will dig into classroom visits and how to give helpful

feedback. This short 2-page reading gives a few tips to consider before our session. As you read, think about:

- What is one helpful idea from this reading that you would like to try when supporting a new teacher?
- What challenges might you face when giving feedback, and how could you handle it?

You do not need to turn anything in; bring your thoughts to our group discussion tomorrow.


Day 1 Agenda:
Foundations of Effective Mentoring
Building Strong Mentor-Mentee Relationships

1


Welcome & Objectives
Overview of the 4-day PD series
Goals of Day 1
Expectations for participation
Norms

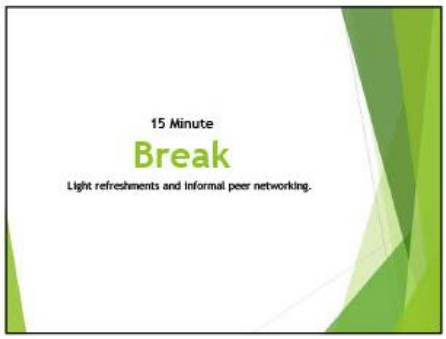
2


Multimedia Segment:
The Power of Mentorship
Watch a short video on mentorship
Introduce research-based components of effective mentoring.
Discussion

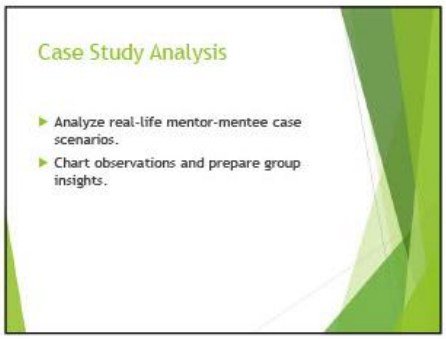
3


Small Group Discussions
Share mentoring experiences and reflect on successful mentor-mentee relationships using guiding questions.

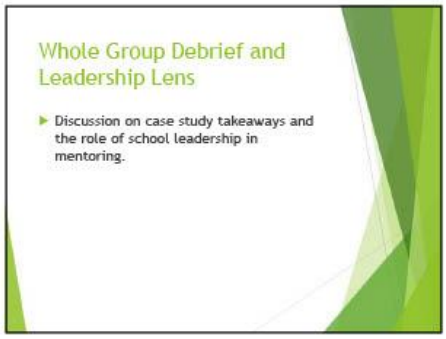
4


15 Minute
Break
Light refreshments and informal peer networking.

5


Case Study Analysis
Analyze real-life mentor-mentee case scenarios.
Chart observations and prepare group insights.

6


Whole Group Debrief and Leadership Lens
Discussion on case study takeaways and the role of school leadership in mentoring.

7


Hands-On Activity
Draft a mentor role profile for your school and identify leadership supports for sustainability.

8


Exit Ticket and Reflection
Complete a short assessment and receive optional reading for Day 2.

9

Day 2 Agenda: Feedback & Observations

Topic: The topic for day two involves building skills to observe classrooms and giving effective feedback to new teachers

9:00-9:15 Welcome & Review

Participants will share thoughts on the optional reading: *"Giving Helpful Feedback: Support vs. Evaluation"*

We will also review day 1 as well as giving a preview for Day 2

9:15-9:45 Mini-Lesson & Supportive Feedback

As the large group, we will discuss how observations can assist new teachers

We will also discuss the differences between supportive feedback and evaluations.

The final portion of this lesson, we will watch a short video: "What Does Supportive Feedback Look Like?"

9:45-10:30 Practice Observing & Notetaking

This session will begin with watching a short video During the video we will use a sample observation form to write down feedback

Next, we will form small groups of three to four people in each group. During the small group session, groups will discuss examples of the teacher in the video and anticipate what you would say to the teacher.

10:30-10:45 Break - Light Refreshments & Informal Peer Networking.

10:45-11:30 Role-Play & Feedback

The larger group will divide into twos and role play a scenario taking turns being the

mentee and the mentor

The dyads will be given conversation prompts to guide the feedback The participants are encouraged to provide feedback that is positive, clear, and specific

11:30-12:15 Planning Session

The group will create small groups with three to four people in the group

The small groups will create a plan for observing teachers at the school

Include in the plan the timing to visit, how to provide feedback, and following up patterns

12:15-12:45 Share with Larger Group & Generate Ideas

The small groups will report out to the larger group and share the next steps for the school's observation plan The participants are encouraged to collect ideas for sharing with others and/or implementation strategies

12:45-1:00 Reflection & Feedback (Lunch to go)

Participants will be asked about what was most helpful in today's session Also, what is one thing that you will use? What would you like to learn more about creating an effective mentoring program?

Day 2 Exit Ticket

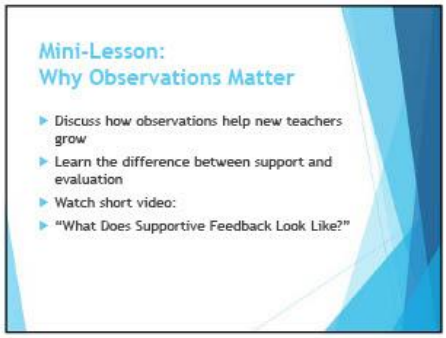
1. What is one strategy you learned today that you can use to give effective feedback to a new teacher?
2. What was the most useful part of today's session? Why?
3. What is one question or concern you still have about classroom observations or giving feedback?
4. On a scale of 1–5, how confident do you feel about applying what you learned today in your school? 1 – being the most confident, and 5 – being the least confident
5. Anything else you would like to share or suggest for tomorrow's session?


Day 2 Agenda:
Classroom Observations & Feedback
Building skills to observe classrooms and give helpful feedback to new teachers

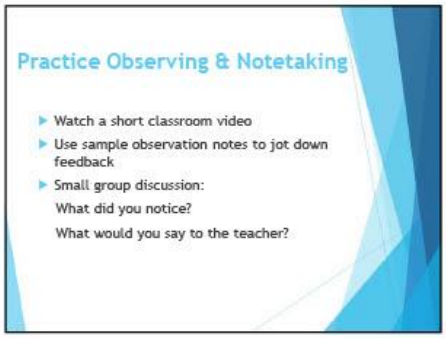
1


Welcome Back
Quick Review
Share thoughts from yesterday's reading:
"Giving Helpful Feedback: Support vs. Evaluation"
Review Day 1 check-in
Preview Day 2 goals

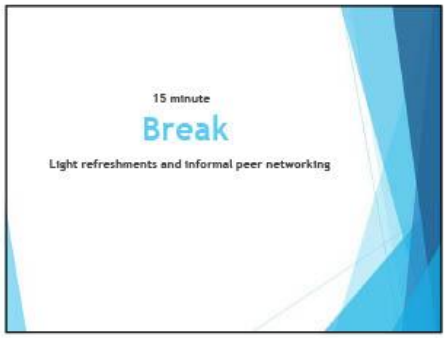
2


Mini-Lesson:
Why Observations Matter
Discuss how observations help new teachers grow
Learn the difference between support and evaluation
Watch short video:
"What Does Supportive Feedback Look Like?"

3


Practice Observing & Notetaking
Watch a short classroom video
Use sample observation notes to jot down feedback
Small group discussion:
What did you notice?
What would you say to the teacher?

4


15 minute
Break
Light refreshments and informal peer networking

5


Role-Play Feedback Conversations
Partner up and take turns being the mentor and mentee
Use conversation prompts to guide your feedback
Focus on being positive, clear, and specific

6


Planning Together
Work in small groups to create a simple plan for observations at your school
Think through:
When to visit
How to give feedback
How to follow up

7


Team Share-Out & Tips
Share your school's observation plan or next steps
Write down ideas you want to try or share with others

8


Exit Ticket
Reflection & Feedback
What was most helpful today?
What's one thing you'll use right away?
What do you still want to learn more about?

9

Day 3 Agenda: Emotional Support, Wellness & Retention

Topic – Teachers feeling more support, reducing stress, and remaining in the profession. :

9:00–9:15 Quick Review & Today's Session

Facilitator will organize a discussion on participants reflections on the reading - "Small Things That Build Belonging."

The larger group will discuss insights from Day 2 i and preview Day 3 session objectives

9:15–9:45 Safe & Supportive Environment

The facilitator will direct a discussion on how emotional support can influence teacher satisfaction and retention

Also, the discussion will continue by discussing the meaning of creating a "safe and supportive" school culture

The large group will watch a video: "Why Teachers Leave and What Helps Them Stay"

9:45–10:30 Group Activity & School Supports

The larger group will form smaller groups with three to four people in a group

Within the small groups, participants will brainstorm ways mentors can help teachers feel a sense of belonging and value

Within the small groups, participants will create a "Support Menu" of wellness ideas

Share examples of how your school supports staff well-being

10:30–10:45 Break - Light Refreshments & Informal Peer Networking.

10:45–11:30 Dyad Role-Play & Problem Resolution

Form dyads for a role-play exercise by practicing a mentor conversation during a

stressful situation

The dyads are encouraged to use real-world scenarios and wellness response tools

Dyads will also reflect on how mentors can respond in a caring supportive style

11:30–12:15 Planning Session

- In small groups of 3 to 4 people, create wellness and belonging strategies

Discuss how to normalize mentees asking for help and how to check-in with new teachers

12:15–12:45 Large Group Share & Takeaways

Each team shares one wellness support idea to try

Also, participants are encouraged to write an idea learned today

12:45–1:00 Reflection (Luch to go)

The large group will discuss what was most helpful during today's session Also, write down a way to support teacher wellness

Describe your additional learning areas

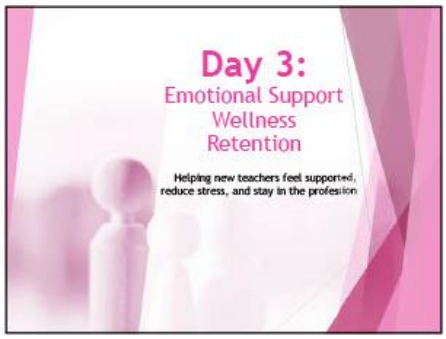
Optional reading for Day 4: *Sustaining Mentorship: Building Structures That Last*

Day 3 Exit Ticket

Please take a few minutes to respond to these questions:

1. What is one practical way you plan to support a new teacher's emotional well-being this year?
2. What part of today's session (video, discussion, activity, role-play) was most useful to you, and why?
3. What's one thing you'll bring back to your school or team?
4. What questions or concerns do you still have about supporting teacher wellness or preventing burnout?

Optional reading for day 4: *Sustaining Mentorship: Building Structures That Last*


Day 3:
Emotional Support
Wellness
Retention
Helping new teachers feel supported, reduce stress, and stay in the profession

1


Welcome Back
Quick Review
Reflections from "Small Things That Build Belonging"
Review Day 2 insights
Preview Day 3 goals

2


Mini-Lesson:
Why Wellness Matters
How emotional support impacts teacher satisfaction and retention
What it means to create a "safe and supportive" school culture
Watch video:
"Why Teachers Leave and What Helps Them Stay"

3


Group Activity:
What Support Looks Like
Brainstorm how mentors help teachers feel included
Create a "Support Menu" of wellness ideas
School staff well-being examples

4


15 minute
Break
Light refreshments and informal peer networking

5


Role-Play:
When Things Get Tough
Practice mentor conversations during stressful situations
Real-world scenarios
Reflect on mentor responses with care and clarity

6


Planning Together
Map out simple wellness strategies for your school
Consider check-ins and normalizing asking for help

7


Team Share-Out & Takeaways
Share one wellness idea to try this year
Note something that changed your view on mentorship

8


Exit Ticket Reflection
What was most helpful today?
One way you'll support teacher wellness this year?
What more do you want to explore?
Optional reading for Day 4:
Sustaining Mentorship: Building Structures That Last

9

Day 4 Agenda: Strengthening the Mentoring Program

Topic: Planning for long-term support, consistency, and impact

9:00–9:15 Day 3 Reflections

In the larger group, share important takeaways from Day 3

The facilitator will conduct a brief discussion on the optional reading: *Sustaining Mentorship: Building Structures That Last*

9:15–10:00 Sustaining Mentoring Programs

The larger group will explore successful schools do to sustain mentoring

The facilitator will continue to discuss the importance of leadership, scheduling, and accountability

A short video will be shown: "From Initiative to Culture"

10:00–10:45 Action Planning Session

In small groups of 3 to 4 people, create a mentoring plan for your school

Also, define mentor roles, schedules, and check-in systems

And identify potential roadblocks and brainstorm solutions

10:45–11:00 Break - Light Refreshments & Informal Peer Networking

11:00–11:45 Peer Review & Feedback s

In the small groups, share mentoring

Next, offer feedback and suggestions using a quick review checklist while capturing new ideas to bring to your school

11:45–12:30 Final Reflection & Planning

The participants will be asked to set one short-term and one long-term goal

Also, list additional school personel who need to be included

And, decide how you can share and lead this work

12:30–1:00 Program Wrap-Up & Celebration Luncheon

Group photo & shoutouts

Final Exit Ticket:

Share s one commitment you can make to support mentoring at your school

And determine what you need from your leadership to be successful

Day 4 Final Exit Ticket

1. How can you continue to strengthen your school's mentoring program?
2. Describe how you can continue the mentoring program beyond 2 months.
3. Describe your confidence level with the mentoring plan and what seems challenging.
4. Who are other contributors you can collaborate with for implementing your mentoring plan?
5. Describe additional tools and support needed to sustain the mentoring program.


Day 4
Strengthening the Mentoring Program
Planning for long-term support, consistency, and impact

1


Welcome Day 3 Reflections
Share key takeaways from Day 3
Brief discussion of optional reading:
Sustaining Mentorship: Building Structures That Last

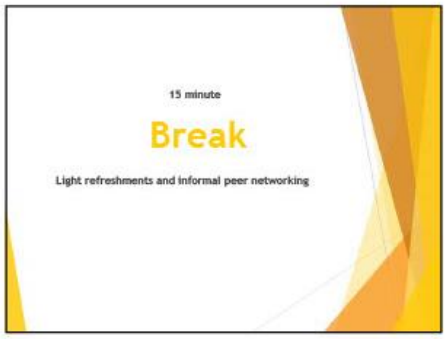
2


Mini-Lesson:
What Makes Mentoring Stick
Explore what successful schools do to sustain mentoring
Discuss the importance of leadership, scheduling, and accountability
Watch a short clip: "From Initiative to Culture"

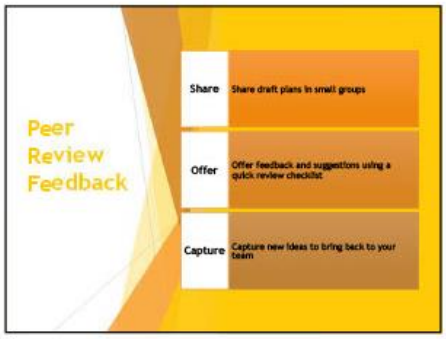
3


Action Planning Workshop
Draft a simple mentoring plan for your school
Define mentor roles, schedules, and check-in systems
Identify potential roadblocks and brainstorm solutions

4


15 minute
Break
Light refreshments and informal peer networking

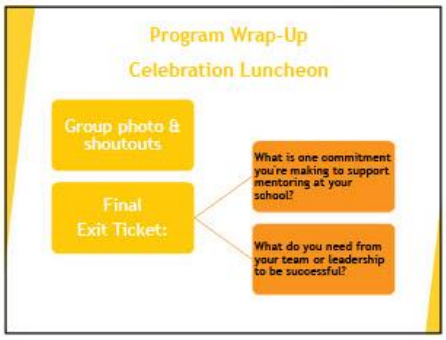
5


Peer Review Feedback
Share
Share draft plans in small groups
Offer
Offer feedback and suggestions using a quick review checklist
Capture
Capture new ideas to bring back to your team

6


Final Reflection
Planning Next Steps
SET ONE SHORT-TERM AND ONE LONG-TERM GOAL
IDENTIFY WHO ELSE AT YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS TO BE LOOPED IN
DECIDE HOW YOU'LL SHARE AND LEAD THIS WORK

7


Program Wrap-Up
Celebration Luncheon
Group photo & shoutouts
Final Exit Ticket:
What is one commitment you're making to support mentoring at your school?
What do you need from your team or leadership to be successful?

8

End-of-4 Day Proffesional Development Feedback Survey

Thank you for participating in the professional development sessions. Your feedback helps us improve future sessions and better support your role as an educator and/or mentor.

1. Overall, how satisfied were you with this PD sessions?

☐ Very satisfied

☐ Satisfied

☐ Neutral

☐ Dissatisfied

☐ Very dissatisfied

2. How relevant were the sessions' content to your work?

☐ Very relevant

☐ Somewhat relevant

☐ Neutral

☐ Not very relevant

☐ Not relevant at all

3. What was the most valuable part of the Professional Development?

Short answer: _____

4. What strategy, resource, or idea do you plan to use right away?

Short answer: _____

5. How confident do you feel applying what you learned?

☐ Very confident

☐ Somewhat confident

☐ Not sure

☐ Not very confident

☐ Not confident at all

6. Were the presenters/facilitators clear and engaging?

☐ Yes

☐ Somewhat

☐ No

(Optional comments) _____

7. Did the PD help you feel more prepared to support new teachers (if applicable)?

☐ Yes

☐ Somewhat

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

8. What mentoring skill or concept stood out to you (if applicable)?

Short answer: _____

9. Do you feel the PD addressed both the technical and emotional sides of mentoring or teaching?

☐ Yes

☐ Somewhat

☐ No

Comments (optional): _____

10. What could be improved in future sessions?

Short answer: _____

11. What additional support or follow-up would help you use the learning in your role?

Short answer: _____

12. What future PD or mentor training topics would you find helpful?

Short answer: _____

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Research Question 1:

What are new teachers' perceptions of the school-based new teacher mentoring program as it applies to retention?

Interview Questions:

1. Can you describe your experiences with the school's new teacher mentoring program?
2. Describe how the mentoring program has supported you in your role as a new teacher.
3. Have there been specific aspects of the mentoring program that have been particularly beneficial to you?
4. How would you rate the effectiveness of the mentoring program in helping you navigate challenges and develop professionally?
5. Describe how the mentoring program influenced your sense of belonging and connection to the school community.
6. Describe any changes in your teaching practice or confidence you have experienced from participating in the mentoring program.
7. Do you have any suggestions for improving the mentoring program to support new teachers and enhance retention?
8. Overall, how would you describe the impact of the mentoring program on your decision to stay at this school?
9. Did mentorship help you gradually develop autonomy and self-reliance in your teaching practice?

10. How did your mentor offer emotional support, help you manage the emotional demands of teaching, foster a sense of belonging, and bolster your self-efficacy?

Research Question 2:

What supports do new teachers note impact their decision to return each year to the study site?

Interview Questions:

1. What factors or supports have influenced your decision to return to teach at this school each year?
2. Can you describe any specific support systems or resources provided by the school that have been helpful in your decision to stay?
3. Can you describe any specific support systems or resources provided by the school that have not been helpful?
4. Describe the way that you felt supported by school leadership in your role as a new teacher.
5. Describe how the transition with your mentor from mentorship to supportive friendship affect your job satisfaction, professional growth, and commitment to teaching?
6. Describe how your needs as a new teacher met. Describe how your psychological and safety needs were met or not met.

Appendix C: Themes and Categories From the Research Interviews

Theme	Corresponding Categories
Theme 1 Teachers had varying opinions regarding the effectiveness of the mentoring program	Program Evaluation, Effectiveness of Mentoring Program
Theme 2 Mentoring gave teachers a sense of emotional support and belonging	Inclusive School Culture, Community Building, Emotional and Professional Support
Theme 3 Classroom observations were an effective component of the mentoring program	Impact on Teaching Practice, Professional Development and Instruction
Theme 4 Mentoring programs affect teacher retention	Impact on Teacher Confidence, Retention and Support, Factors Influencing Retention
Theme 5 Teachers shared ways to enhance the mentoring program to support retention	Program Improvement Suggestions
Theme 6 Teachers discussed desired support systems and resources	Teacher Well-Being, Instructional Resources