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# New Teacher Mentees' Perceptions of Mentorship as an Assimilation Strategy

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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by

Konstance L. Grimble

MA, University of Houston, 2008

BS, University of Houston, 2005

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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March 2017

Abstract

Attrition among new teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience was high in an urban high school in Texas. The high attrition rate is a problem for students, because high teacher turnover can result in teachers with low expertise. In this study, the conceptual framework used was Hord's professional learning community (PLC) model, which emphasizes trust and a utilization of a cycle of inquiry among colleagues to prepare lessons and assessments that affect student achievement. The purpose of this study was to determine new high school teachers' perceptions of assimilation techniques used by their mentors in the new teacher mentor program's PLCs. Also examined were new teachers' reports of what influenced them to remain at or leave the local setting. In this qualitative, single-bound explanatory case study, purposeful sampling was used to interview 10 new teachers in Grades 10 through 12 who had been through the mentorship program. Of the 10 interviewees, 5 were still employed in the local setting and 5 had resigned. Data were analyzed inductively using open coding of emerging themes that were color coded descriptively then organized into explanatory categories. Key findings were that new teacher mentees suggested ways to improve the mentorship program such as being able to choose their mentors and rotating through various mentors throughout the school year so that new teachers can have as many information sources as possible. This study contributes to positive social change by working to increase the retention rate among new teachers, improve classroom instruction, and make PLC more influential.

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my mother, who always knew that I could do it and would not accept anything less. This is also dedicated to all of the people who keep trying because they have nothing to lose.

Acknowledgments

I started this journey in 2009 and it has been a difficult one. At this time, I would like to acknowledge my chair, Mary Lou Morton, because without her I would have never been able to finish this dissertation.

Also, I would like to acknowledge all of the Walden University students who answered the phone, replied to my emails, or just kept encouraging me to keep pursuing this degree because of the doors that this doctorate degree will open.

Table of Contents

iii

List of Tables

Section 1: The Problem

**Introduction**

In 2001, then-U.S. President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) into legislation, making states accountable for the performances of their students on state proficiency tests. To ensure that students received the best level of instruction, the act included, but is not limited to, the following provisions: (a) all teachers must be highly qualified in the subject area they are teaching; (b) all teachers must teach for one probationary year; (c) during the first year of teaching, new teachers must be provided with a mentor; (d) teacher preparation programs and accountability systems must be aligned with state academic goals; and (e) schools must provide their staff with professional development opportunities. Standardized tests are administered to ensure that students perform at the optimum level on learning benchmarks. School districts go to great lengths to provide students with a high-quality education that is mirrored throughout the state.

One way that states are responding to these requirements is to implement new teacher induction programs and professional learning communities (PLCs) that are designed to assist new teachers in assimilating into the profession of teaching by using Hord's (2004) cycle of inquiry, and to enrich the quality of education that is provided to the students when taught by novice teachers (Asiimwe & Khan, 2013; Greenlee & Brown, 2009; Hans-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Serota & Bennet, 2007; Smith, 2007). Focusing on teacher retention and creating a culture that supports new teacher

assimilation in the local school may help meet the needs of students who sit in classrooms year after year with new, inexperienced teachers.

## Definition of the Problem

**Location of the Problem**

The focus high school in this study is located in a multicultural city in Texas consisting of more than 2.1 million people with17 school districts, four universities, and three community college systems. At the time of this study, the high school had 147 teachers and a student population of 2,281 with the following demographics: 54.2% Hispanic, 38.4 Black, 4.3 % White, and 3.1% Asian. The school was an International Baccalaureate (IB) world school that offered advanced placement, dual credit through Lone Star College, and IB courses. An IB school offers courses to students that require them a global focus so that the course work can affect their communities and global society. Once the course work is completed, the students are eligible to receive equivalent college credit for the course. The IB courses include instruction in language and literature, language acquisition, individuals and societies, science, math and the arts to students. The focus school also offers a variety of student programs and activities such as student council, athletics, band, theatre, Future Farmers of America, and the Texas Association of Future Teachers. The faculty consists of certified teachers who have bachelor degrees or higher.

Attrition among new teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience is high in the focus urban high school; new teachers leave the school at an average 11.5% rate each year. For the 2010–2011 school year, the attrition rate was 9.41%; for the 2010–2009

year, it was 12.18%; and, for the 2009-2008 year, the attrition rate was 13.35%. At the time of this study, 63 of the 147-member faculty, or 43.7%, consisted of new teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience. The campus profile from 2011-2010, 2010-2009, and 2009-2008 indicated that there were, on average, 147 teachers employed at the school, and, of that number, 63 teachers, more than half of the staff had 0 to 5 years of experience (see Table 2 and Table 3). With the majority of the faculty having fewer than 5 years of experience, students were at risk of not learning owing to an abundance of educators who left the classroom before helping students accomplish academic gains. This study was developed to help shed light on the elements of the new teacher mentor program PLC that needed to be improved, based on the perspectives of new teachers, to keep them in the classroom so that students could benefit from continuity of instruction and building connections to familiar teachers.

Table 1 presents information about the presence of new teachers that were at the focus school. In the 2010–2011 school year, the focus school's faculty included 42.5% new teachers as compared to the district's 14.7% and the state's 11.9%. This table highlights the prevalence of new teachers at the focus school.

*Table 1.*

*Percentage of New Teachers at Local, District, and Texas State Levels*

| School year | Total number of teachers school | Local number of new teachers with fewer than 5 years | Percentage of new teachers with fewer than 5 years | District total number of teachers | District total number of new teachers with fewer than 5 years | Percentage of new teachers | State number of New teachers with fewer than 5 years | State number of new teachers | Percentage of new teachers with fewer than 5 years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2008-009 | 145 | 54 | 37.2 | 4137 | 1931 | 15.4 | 407,137 | 123,642 | 11.2 |
| 2009-2010 | 143 | 56 | 39.1 | 4238 | 2036 | 11.4 | 416,978 | 123,344 | 11.8 |
| 2010-2011 | 148 | 63 | 42.5 | 3963 | 1869 | 14.7 | 420,412 | 120,652 | 11.9 |

*Note*. From the Texas Education Academic Excellence Indictor System Reports 2008–2011.

Table 2 presents information regarding the teacher attrition that was at the focus school. During the 3 years noted in the table, the focus school's new teacher attrition was higher than the state. This highlights that at the time of this study, the new teachers left the focus school at twice the rate of the attrition at the state level.

*Table 2. The Attrition Rate of New Teachers at the Local Level*

| School year | Number of local teachers employed | Number of new teachers in the local setting with fewer than 5 years | Number of new teacher with fewer than 5 years that left the local setting | Attrition rate at the local level | Attrition rate at the state level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2008–2009 | 145 | 54 | 7 | 13.35% | 6.24% |
| 2009–2010 | 143 | 56 | 6 | 12.18% | 5.14% |
| 2010–2011 | 148 | 63 | 5 | 9.41% | 4.31% |

*Note*. From the Texas Education Academic Excellence Indictor System Reports 2008–2009.

**Context of the Problem**

To increase the retention rate of new teachers, the school participates in the district's new teacher mentoring program that consists of current and past mentors and mentees. Before the school year began, each new teacher is provided with a mentor who

facilitated the new teacher's assimilation into teaching, the school, and familiarity with available resources. New teacher mentees are instructed to meet with their mentors twice a week to discuss any questions or concerns, attend PLC meetings with their mentors to learn rules and regulations, and be involved with the new teacher mentoring program PLCs that would go into depth about the policies and procedures at the school. The new teacher mentoring program PLC is used to aid new teachers in becoming comfortable when engaging in Hord's (2004) cycle of inquiry so that they could seek help with preparing lessons and student assessments. New teachers are required to pay a $500 fee that funds the mentors in exchange for mentors' ability to provide guidance. The mentor also helps to establish an environment where new teachers would feel comfortable seeking out information that could help them feel capable and secure to provide the best quality education for students.

On the local level, new teachers were assigned a mentor who shared common educational levels, subjects taught, or school activities that the two may have been involved in. Mentoring took place during PLCs, during staff development when the staff learned new educational strategies, and during personal interactions between mentors and mentees when best practices were shared that pertain to work/life balance, career advancement, or networking with colleagues.

Different methods had been used to by the school to improve the situation, such as giving the mentor and mentee the same planning and conference periods, so that the mentee teaches the same level as the mentor, and developing a PLC specifically geared toward new teacher mentees, but teachers were still leaving the classroom at alarming

rates. This study may contribute to the literature that suggests what can be done to keep new teachers in the classroom from the perspectives of those new teachers.

**Factors Contributing to the Problem**

Three possible factors contributed to the local problem. During exploratory meetings between four school districts located in Washington state, Colorado, Texas, and Maine, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future's study found that while exploring the critical needs for new teachers, one factor that led to attrition was the lack of information received by new teachers from their mentors and colleagues concerning the best practices for obtaining acceptable levels of classroom management, formulating lessons, and dealing with work related stress (NCTAF, 2002). Horvath, Wasko, and Bradley (2008) noted that another factor was the lack of information obtained from the new teachers who stayed at the local school after their first 5 years of teaching. Horvath et al. (2008) also found that colleges and teacher preparation programs tend to make changes to high school teacher preparation programs without consulting the teachers who are affected by problematic program designs. By consulting new teachers who are retained at a school, methods can be designed or reinforced to aid in the retention of other new teachers. I considered ideas from Horvath et al. in addition to perspectives of new teachers for this study to implement improvements to the new teacher mentoring program in place.

At the time of this study, the trend occurring at the school was not unique; other schools in the region and Texas were also experiencing teacher attrition. Based on the Texas Academic Performance Report (2011), the state of Texas hired 1,614 teachers for

the local region, of which 132 were new teachers. According to the report, of the 107,925 teachers hired for the state of Texas, 14,993 were new to the profession (Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator System [TEA AEIS], 2011). The report showed that the state of Texas replaced large numbers of teachers and filled classrooms with instructors who had fewer than 5 years of teaching, leaving students to learn from inexperienced educators.

As new teacher attrition presented both fiscal and student outcome challenges throughout the nation, strategies to mitigate attrition and augment retention were implemented. Schools with higher retention have teachers with more teaching experience and were shown to have higher test scores and higher rates of student academic success (Bower, 2008; Feinstein, Baartman, Buboltz, Sonnichsen, & Solomon, 2008; Gallant & Riley, 2014). The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) (2002) reported that teacher retention is vital for building a positive culture within a school and efforts should prevent high teacher turnover, as "high turnover diminishes the sense of community, continuity, and coherence that is the hallmark of strong schools" (p. 9). Roness (2011) noted that improvements in teacher induction programs enabled schools to retain teachers so that new teachers exit the program better prepared to make a positive contribution to the academic success of students. However, it is currently unclear what constitutes effective new teacher mentoring programs (Buchanan, 2010; Huling, Resta, & Yeargain, 2012; Mullen, 2011). The purpose of this study was to shed light from the perspectives of new teachers on what support was needed to retain them in the

profession so that they could make a positive improvement on the levels of proximal development and mediated learning in the classroom.

Losing quality teachers affects both student academic performance and schools' finances. The attrition rate of new teachers has been recently shown to affect student outcomes (Kelly, 2013; Lindqvist, Nordanger, & Carlsson, 2014). Greenlee and Brown (2009) found that students who learn in a classroom with inexperienced teachers in the course of several years tend to learn at a lower level as compared with students who learn in classrooms with more experienced teachers. Furthermore, there were significant negative fiscal consequences of new teacher attrition: approximately $35,000,000 yearly was spent on preparing new teachers for the classroom, as noted in a study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching America's Future (2003), but the efforts have not led to higher teacher retention. Losing new teachers year after year has caused the nation to spend large amounts of money training and replacing them, when the money could have be spent on purchasing educational resources that could boost student academic achievement. Teachers are leaving the classroom without explaining what additional resources could help retain them from their perspective, so that programs could be revamped in the most effective ways.

At the focus school, a gap in assimilation practices seemed to exist regarding professional development during new teacher mentoring; improvement in use of cycles of inquiry (Hord, 2004) in the PLC was needed to effectively help new teachers improve teaching methods New teachers are often bombarded with training without information on how to make the training most effective in the classroom, while juggling classroom

management, various meetings, and the demands of preparing students for high stakes testing (Consuegra, Engels, & Struyven, 2014; Nassef, 2009). Teachers were also concerned about the types of instructional materials that new teachers needed to keep students interested and how to relieve instructional pressure that stems from the demand to fill student learning deficits. Another area of concern is mentoring. Insufficient information is available regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the new teacher mentoring program PLC from the perspectives of new teachers. By investigating new teacher's ideas about these three areas, this study may contribute to the literature that suggests what kinds of improvements could be made to make meaningful strides to remedy the gap in practice that was resulting in high teacher attrition.

## Rationale

### Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

From 2008 to 2010, the focus school hired 15 to 20 new teachers each year to replace teachers who relocated, retired, changed professions, or transferred to other schools (Texas Education Agency Academic Excellence Indicator System 2008–2010). According to the focus campus profile, 63 of the 147 member faculty consisted of new teachers; so 43.7% of the faculty was comprised of teachers who had fewer than 5 years of teaching experience**.** Clandinin, Downey, and Schaefer (2014) indicated the problems resulting from high teacher turnover such as an increase in the stress level of other staff members and administrators when the classroom is staffed by a substitute. In addition to this research, Bower (2008) concluded that teacher retention is important because schools with higher teacher retention have teachers with more teaching experience and are shown

to have higher test scores and higher rates of student academic success. The NCTAF (2002) released a report that stressed teacher retention is essential for building a positive culture within a school and efforts should prevent high teacher turnover, "one-third of all new teachers leave after three years, and 46% are gone within five years. High turnover diminishes the sense of community, continuity, and coherence that is the hallmark of strong schools" (p. 9). These studies further explain the importance of not only hiring new teachers, but keeping them in the classroom to enrich the learning environment that leads to student academic success.

Table 3 presents information about the SAT scores at the focus school. The table shows that during the 4-year period, the focus school's scores surpassed the district level only once in 2010 by three points but fell by more than 100 points below the state average for the other academic years. This highlights how the attrition of new teachers may affect students academically.

*Table 3.*

*Average SAT Scores for the State, District, and Local Levels*

| School year test administration | State level | District Level | Local level |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2008 | 987 | 868 | 821 |
| 2009 | 985 | 870 | 819 |
| 2010 | 985 | 871 | 873 |
| 2011 | 976 | 881 | 873 |

*Note*. From the Texas Education Academic Excellence Indictor System Reports 2008–2009.

In human resource meetings at the focus school, the frequent topic of discussion was how to keep new teachers in the classroom once they have been hired (English Teacher, personal communication, August 5, 2014). The difficulty that school districts were having with decreasing teacher attrition and increasing teacher retention sheds light on the limited amount of research concentrating on how mentors assisted in helping new teachers assimilate into the practice of teaching. The director human resources expressed concern that it costs too much money to bring back retired teachers to take the place of new teachers who do not seem to have the support to stay in the classroom (J. Banks, personal communication, November 15, 2014).

When speaking with a current school principal, it was expressed that the school hired 30 new teachers, but at the end of the year, more than half of them resigned without explaining why or completing the terms of their employment contracts with the district. To replace the missing teachers, the classrooms had to be filled with uncertified substitute teachers (Secretary, personal communication, April 3, 2014). The NCTAF (2002) found that having a high supply of teachers should not be the main focus, because of the following:

No teacher supply strategy will ever keep our classrooms staffed with quality

teachers if we do not reverse the debilitating rate of teacher attrition. We need to

balance our efforts to prepare high quality teachers with strong strategies to

support good teaching in our schools. (p. 3)

In addition, Bower (2008) and Scheopner (2010) found that schools with higher teacher

retention have teachers with more teaching experience, higher student test scores, and

student academic success. With greater retention in mind, successful mentorships can

help school administrators find the best mentor candidates.

**Population Affected by the Problem**

The population affected by the low rate of teacher retention included parents,

students, and other teachers. With high levels of teacher attrition, parents found that

building relationships with teachers was difficult because, as Hughes (2012) explained,

before quality methods of understanding and support are formed, the teacher resigns.

When students sit in classrooms with new or inexperienced teachers, they suffer because

of unpolished execution of course curriculums (Goldhaber & Cowan, 2014; Greenlee

&Brown, 2009; Yates, 2013). Other teachers also suffer from the low retention rate as

there is a constant need to train new colleagues placed in the school (Hancock & Scherff,

2010). In addition, Buchanan (2010) found that reduced quality of education due to

teacher turnover negatively affects the teachers who are retained owing to the constant

need to offer extra support, attention, and classroom management suggestions to newly

hired teachers. The extra time taken to assimilate new teachers into the school can thus

hinder instruction by veteran teachers. Keeping classrooms staffed with experienced,

highly qualified teachers contributes to the increased level of education provided to U.S.

youth (Busch, O'Brien, & Spangler, 2005; Hancock & Scherff, 2010; Scheopner, 2010).

Retaining new teachers in the classroom is beneficial to parents, students, and veteran

teachers because retained new teachers can use previously learned information to better

navigate the school's culture and academic environment.

**Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature**

Gallant and Riley (2014) noted that retaining teachers is important for the

academic achievement of students because teacher resignation disrupts students. Students

in this situation are forced to sit in classrooms with replacements and substitutes who are

not highly qualified and the research indicates their opportunities for achieving a quality

education diminish daily (Greenlee & Brown, 2009). In two widely noted studies,

children who had ineffective teachers 3 years in a row demonstrated academic

achievement gains on state tests that were 54% lower than the accomplishments of

children who had the effective teachers 3 years in a row (NCTAF, 2002; Rajuan, Tuchin,

& Zuckermann, 2011).

To ensure that quality teachers are hired and remain on a faculty, strategies are

being tested to reduce teacher attrition. Teacher attrition is currently a national problem,

with teacher attrition growing by 50% during the past 15 years (Smith, 2007). Indeed, the

teacher turnover rate in this nation has risen, and, in some schools, it is as high as 20%

(Johnson, 2011). Johnson (2011) has added to research finding that keeping teachers in

the classroom is becoming a major problem in the United States and is affecting the

academic success of students. Johnson claimed that teachers are fleeing the classroom

owing to work place stress that stems from high stakes testing, overextended administration, and various work group obligations that are not classroom related. Additional reasons noted that teachers are leaving the profession include an intense focus placed on new educational initiatives, poor student discipline, work place stress, overload, and isolation. Reducing teacher attrition can help school districts find the best candidates.

Often, it is assumed by analysts that teachers who teach in an urban area are more prone to leave the profession, but Sue-Greiner and Smith (2009) found that it is not the demographics of a school that cause teachers to leave; instead, it is the infrastructure in individual schools. Sue-Greiner and Smith (2009) concluded that the inaccessibility of the principal, personal rifts between department and school staff, and increased mandatory training place extreme pressure on new teachers that often leads them to leave. The study found that new teachers most often mentioned that their stress stemmed from classroom overcrowding, the limited availability of supplies, and feelings of isolation and uncertainty that go unresolved and not the external environment or the students. In addition, Greenlee and Brown (2009) suggested that individual schools should look at problems through leadership and teacher preparation and address areas that lack support, such as new teacher induction academies, mentoring programs, and teacher staff development, so that the problems can be resolved and lead to increased teacher retention.

The purpose of this project was to examine high school teachers' perceptions regarding

the assimilation techniques used by their mentors during the new teacher PLC, as well as

the perceptions of what influences new teachers to remain in or leave the field of

education.

## Definition of Terms

In research studies, the researcher may present proposed definitions of terms aid

the reader in comprehending the language used by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The

following terms, originating from the literature, are used throughout the study. Other

essential terms will be discussed as they surface during the research.

*Assimilation***:** Refers to the process by which organization members become a part

of, or are absorbed into the culture of the organization (Heath & Bryant, 2000).

*Assimilation strategies:* Methods that are used to help members become a part of

or absorbed into the culture of the organization (Heath & Bryant, 2000).

*Attrition rate*: the loss of classroom teachers from t2he profession for various

reasons such as retirement, transfer, job change, or death (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland,

2008).

*Cycle of inquiry*: the process of understanding the importance of sharing

knowledge during PLCs to promote learning (Gojda & Koliba, 2008).

*Mentee***:** An individual with no to multiple years of experience who needs

guidance to develop expertise, retention and effectiveness as a teacher within the field of

education (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

*Mentoring*: An interpersonal experience that provides guidance to a beginning teacher from educators with multiple years of teaching in the classroom (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

*Mentor teacher*: An individual with experience in teaching who has been trained to aid a new teacher during his/ her first year of teaching and/ or beyond (Waterman & Ye, 2011).

*Mentor training*: Intense training given to an individual with teaching experience to teach how to adequately assess and provide for the needs of new teachers (Waterman & Ye, 2011).

*New teacher***:** For this study, a new or novice teacher will be one with fewer than five years in the classroom (Hancock & Scherff, 2010).

*New teacher induction program*: Preparation and training that takes place as a new teacher navigates through the first year of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

*Professional learning community (PLC)*: a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students (DuFour, 2005).

*Program evaluation*: The assessment of the merit and/ or worth of a program (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

*School climate*: The degree of morale that exists in a school (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

*Staff development***:** Staff development requires a designated time dedicated to the training and betterment of employees that work for an organization, in this case so they can be better teachers (Waterman & Ye, 2011).

*Teacher retention*: The ability of a school to keep the same teachers employed from one year to another (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

## Significance of the Study

Examining the local problem of high attrition rate of teachers within the first five years at the focus school is significant for two reasons: (a) to decrease the number of new teachers who leave the school, which improves student success and (b) to increase the capabilities of the current assimilation strategies directed by mentors in the new teacher mentoring PLC, developed to aid in the assimilation process of new teachers for retention purposes.

As attrition levels increase in the focus high school, students and teachers can be adversely affected. Students are forced to sit in classrooms with new teachers for years, which can decrease student success, because new teachers seldom know the best practices that pertain to classroom management, lesson planning, and teaching critical skills. Having students' success decrease causes test scores to decrease and sends the school into Academic Yearly Probation (AYP), a situation that can cause the school to lose Title 1 money that is supplied to help schools where the majority of its population falls below the poverty line. This is significant because, as test scores decrease, the graduation rate at the school also decreases, attributing to a higher dropout rate among the students owing to frustration that stems from not receiving adequate instruction that

would allow them to be successful on state tests. Horvath and Davis (2011) found that high school diplomas enable students who live in a high poverty area to get better jobs, have higher self-esteem and wages, and improve the ability to attend college.

Students without high school diplomas will be locked out of employment and educational opportunities and potentially face the cycle of poverty (Haney, Madaus, Abrams, Wheelock, Miao, & Gruia, 2004; Orfield, 2004; Swanson, 2008; Warren & Halpenern-Manners, 2007; Western, 2007). Tilleczek (2008) found that students with high school diplomas are far more likely to lead successful lives and break the cycle of poverty than those who drop-out of high school and choose to forego a high school diploma (Adams, 2006; Barton, 2005; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Hahn, Thomas, Erin, & James, 2004; Scheopner, 2010). To support students who are in danger of leaving school without a high school diploma, quality teachers need to remain in the classroom to provide instruction and support and encourage students to graduate.

As a result of falling test scores, even effective seasoned teachers are held accountable on yearly evaluations for the inefficient teaching given by new, inexperienced teachers owing to aggregated data for each grade level. The lack of retained teachers educate their students diminishes a school's ability to offer the highest level of education owing to the added stress stemming from the uncertain quality of education administered by newer colleagues. While districts do offer staff development to aid new teachers, it does not in any way compare to the experience those teachers who are retained from one year to another have in the classroom (Feinstein et al, 2008; Nassef, 2009; Sue-Greiner & Smith, 2009).

Retaining teachers from one year to helps pass valuable information on to new teachers who come into the profession, so that they can learn from experienced veteran teachers and not solely from books and presentations.

## Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how new teachers perceived the assimilation techniques used by their mentors in the new teacher PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or choose a career outside of the field of education. This study is addressing how the perceptions of the new teacher mentees can be used to restructure the new teacher mentoring program PLC in an attempt to retain more new teachers, and positively influence student success. The NCLB (2002) makes it mandatory that schools hire highly qualified individuals to fill teacher vacancies, so that students in the classroom can receive the best education possible. This process becomes difficult when the teachers who are hired either do not complete the school year, or do not return to the profession the following year.

Teacher attrition affects parents, students, and other teachers because constant turnover leaves the school's infrastructure unstable owing to the various levels of expertise on a campus. Parents often feel that just when they have gotten to know their child's teachers, they have to start over and learn new teachers because they were not retained. Students find it hard to build relationships with teachers who do not last the entire school year. Veteran teachers feel the added stress of teacher attrition because they have to constantly support new, inexperienced teachers in the classroom, as well as maintain their own classes.

Two research questions guided this qualitative research study. The research questions assisted in keeping the study aligned and targeting key elements. These questions were derived from the problem statement and were grounded in the rationale.

1) What are the factors that influence new teachers to stay or leave the local setting described from the perspective of new teachers who have stayed or left the local setting?

2) How do new teacher mentees describe how the assimilation strategies used by their mentors during the new teacher mentoring program PLC affect their decision to remain in the profession?

## Review of the Literature

In this section, the literature focused on the attrition rate of new teachers with fewer than five years of experience, as well as on the assimilation strategies used by mentors who aided in mentees' assimilation while in new teacher mentoring program PLC. The strategies used for searching for literature will be included in this section, as well as the establishment and use of PLCs, what makes up a PLC, how schools can use PLCs to further the mission and vision, and how the PLC can help retain new mentee teachers.

To research the existing literature that supported this research study, searches were made via Boolean logic using the following terms: *cycle of inquiry*, *novice teachers, teacher retention, teacher attrition, professional learning communities, new teacher mentors, new teacher mentees, teacher assimilation, teacher assimilation strategies,* and *student academic performance with new teachers.* The databases included ERIC,

Education Resource Complete, Academic Search Complete, and Sage through the

Walden University library. All literature was peer reviewed between 2004 and 2013. In

addition, the statistics used in the research study were gathered through the American

Federation of Teachers, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National

Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the National Commission on Teaching

and America's Future.

**Conceptual Base**

This conceptual framework section included information from various authorities

on PLCs and new teacher mentoring programs. The components of a PLC are derived

from Hord (1997) who detailed how the cycle of inquiry and what is needed in a PLC to

make it beneficial to a school instead of a disadvantageous entity. The influence on the

retention of new teacher mentees category utilized Ingersoll and Strong's (2011) and

Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) research examining how PLCs that are geared toward new

teachers can curtail the number of new teachers who leave the field before teaching for

five years. The implementation of the PLC was aimed at encouraging growth through

continual communication that pertained to the best practices to use to provide quality

education to students.

This conceptual framework addressed the problem because, in a PLC, individuals

work to establish a cycle of inquiry which establishes a purposeful culture of

encouragement and change by committing to the enhancement of student academic

performance for students and adult learners (Dufour, 2005; Dufour, Eaker, & Dufour,

2005; Baccellieri, 2010). According to Hord (1997), a PLC is staff development that is

regularly scheduled for teachers to mutually benefit from collaboration that will enrich student learning, the school community, and the profession (Bates, 2012; Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012). By providing a designated time, place, and members, the best practices that pertain to classroom management, teaching and professional enrichment can be discussed among people who have the same educational goals and interests. The group setting helps maximize the opportunity for groups of teachers to perfect best practices, instead of teachers growing in different directions in isolation.

Many schools are embracing PLCs as a way to improve teacher effectiveness because of the need to assess the best educational practices of "groups" of teachers and not just the best practices of "individual" teachers on the educational achievement of students and school outcomes (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Across the country, education agencies are encouraging the discontinuation of hierarchically comprised organizations and supporting the use of the PLC to use high-quality teacher collaboration to attain essential school outcomes (AFT, 2004; Fletcher & Zuber-Skerritt, 2015; NASSP, 2004; NBPTS, 2004; NCTAF, 2003). In a PLC, teachers come together to focus on how teaching can be improved through the cycle of inquiry to enhance student growth and better teacher practices. The focus is not just on teaching; it is on best methods of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1996; DuFour, 2004; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010; Fletcher 2015; Smith, 2007). By designating a specific time and location for the PLC, it allows for the advanced preparation needed to address educational or professional concerns that may hinder the academic achievement of students.

## Components of a PLC

Hord (1997) contributed to the literature on PLCs that Gajda and Koliba (2008) studied to present an updated view on the characteristics and functions of a PLC. Gajda and Koliba developed these aspects in six attributes: (a) increased collaboration literacy (b) identified and inventoried communities of practice (c) reconfigured teacher teams (d) assessed collaboration quality (e) established corrective measures and (f) recognized accomplishments. These attributes are intertwined with one another to provide an environment where teacher collaboration can be used to increase student academic performances. PLCs enable professional to review new research that can enhance student success.

**Increased collaboration literacy.** Since the inception of the PLC, the word has been used in many different settings, some, that do not actually constitute a true PLC. To keep the PLC as a valuable component in raising student achievement, teachers have to understand that PLCs can build communities of practice by providing training to teachers and faculty in the form of workshops, presentations, celebrations, the reading of research articles and mutually beneficial dialogue, so that all members are on the same page, instead of information being imposed in a hierarchical supervisory fashion (DuFour, 2005; Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Increasing collaboration literacy focuses on teachers learning how to work together so that the term *professional development* is not misused and seen as a dreaded task. Professionals work together and focus on shared problems so that a cycle of inquiry can be used to address common goals (DuFour, 2005; Gajda &Koliba, 2008; Fletcher & Zuber-Skerritt, 2015). Once the goals have been reached, the professionals who are within the PLC are re-grouped with different colleagues to help them reach their full potential so that professionals do not get complacent with the functions of the PLC.

**Identified and inventoried communities of practice.** Schools keep track of which individuals are working with whom to purposefully and equitably distribute the membership in PLCs, because the teams are mostly responsibly for decision making (Barnard, 1950; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). PLCs keep track of the effectiveness of the communities so that teams can be reconfigured if needed. Various methods of keeping track of members, such as in-person observations, online accountability systems or hard copy sign-in sheets, are used to assess if teachers are overextended or underutilized to

avoid burnout or boredom, which in part can be used to increase retention efforts (Gajda &Koliba, 2008; Gallant & Riley (2014); Gardiner (2011). By keeping track of a teacher's abilities and availability, administrators can find ways to best utilize the staffs' talents instead of overworking or underutilizing teachers, which can lead to exhaustion or apathy. The PLC is structured so that it can continually evolve to prevent stagnation.

**Reconfigured teacher teams.** For teacher teams to be purposeful and equitable, membership in PLCs is shifted so that members can work without the hindrance of being overextended or underutilized (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Often, teacher teams are created for specific purposes, but are not disbanded after the goal is accomplished, leaving many people dedicated to a non-essential team, when they could be better utilized elsewhere. By keeping track of and reconfiguring teacher teams that make up PLCs, the restructuring allows teachers to be stretched to their full potential, instead of staying in groups where they are simply comfortable. Membership in PLCs is monitored to keep up with the number of people who are in each group, so that groups do not get too large and mismanaged or too small and ineffective (DuFour et al., 2005). Making sure that each teacher in the group has a task and understands what to do once the task is completed keeps down indifference for the school's mission that leads to teacher attrition. By avoiding indifference, the participants within the PLC are able to collaborate on the best practices that enrich the educational environment.

**Assessed collaboration quality.** PLCs are not designed so that teachers can simply gather; rather, they are designed so that educators can use designated time to engage in quality mutually beneficial communication that will enhance student learning

and the school community (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). For quality communication to occur, the members engage in two-way communication, decision making, implementation and evaluation (Little, 1987, 1990). The PLC is so designed to make sure that every effort is made so that the members do not feel that the meetings are a waste of time. PLCs are a place where teachers can effectively resolve differences in practice, so that students can reap the benefits of best practices (Hord, 2004). The dialogue that takes place in the PLC leads to decision making (Valli & Buese, 2007) and the implementation of actions (Pounder, 1998) that is used to increase student learning and enrich the school environment. The PLC is not only for discussion and making decisions; it is for the implementation of strategies that transform the educational climate. When new methods do not lead to positive change in student achievement, the PLC is able to re-access student strengths and weaknesses so that ineffective teaching practices can be corrected.

   **Corrective measures.** By using student assessment to frame the dialogue in the PLC, the members make decisions that will lead to increased student achievement. A PLC addresses student needs by examining classroom-level student work and by performing peer observations (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). PLCs are not designed to operate on assumptions; instead, they make corrections to teaching practices based on research and group analysis. Teacher teams use their students as evidence as to whether teaching initiatives are working, needed and /or need to be corrected. To make sure issues are addressed, teacher teams use structured group discussions, agendas, and keep track of meeting minutes, so that teachers can reflect as well as make corrective actions (Pappano, 2007). By correcting mishaps that occur along the way, it is possible to curtail issues that

can lead to a teacher leaving the classroom. When the PLC can show evidence of effective teacher retention and student growth strategies, it is able to celebrate these victories and get inspired by the accomplishments.

**Recognized accomplishments.** PLCs are not solely focused on work; they are also responsible for celebrating the accomplishments of the team as well (DuFour et al., 2005). It is important that teams take out time to accept that a task has been done well to renew the need to keep working towards a common goal. When teacher teams do well, the principal of the school shows appreciation for the teams' accomplishments, to show that the teams' efforts are not made in vain (Gajda & Sprague, 2006). Ways in which appreciation is shown is by throwing parties, presenting gifts, or by making school-wide announcements. By taking out time to recognize successes of the PLCs, it encourages interdisciplinary team work in the school community (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Using celebration may help teachers to feel included and appreciated by the school, which leads to teacher retention. Placing new teachers in a PLC with veterans, who often serve as mentors, allows for the development of successful best practices that can lead to teacher retention.

**The Role Mentoring Plays in Teacher Retention**

In response to the NCLB (2002), many schools added a mentoring component to their new teacher induction programs (Allen, Eby & Lentz, 2006; Education Reforms, 2012; Shriner & Ganguly, 2007). Schools have often used optional mentoring in the past, but the practice has become a requirement for new teacher to earn a standard teaching certificate (Kane & Francis, 2013). To increase the academic performance of students,

new teachers often seek out veteran teachers for advice; other new teachers are assigned

mentor teachers for that specific purpose (Allen & O'Brien, 2006; Fletcher & Strong,

2009). Mentoring aids in the availability of information to new teachers, because the new

teacher is able to meet with another experienced individual and share mutual goals and

problems and, in return, exchange ideas that can lead to student achievement and reduce

the feeling of isolation, often expressed by new teachers (Fosnot, 2005; Lave & Wenger,

1991; Vygotsky, 1978). Providing new teachers with a veteran teacher can help them to

feel included and develop methods to defuse work place stress, so that the educational

provided has the most effective educational influence on teachers in the classroom.

Students benefit from the mentoring of new teachers, because when new teachers

are given proper support, they are more likely to stay in the classroom from one year to

another (Horvath et al., 2008). Schools with high levels of teacher turnover have been

linked to lower test scores and unsatisfactory student achievement (Smith & Ingersoll,

2004). Low student achievement leads to higher dropout rates, teen pregnancy and an

increase in the cycle of poverty (Waddell, 2010). Focusing on research, best practices,

and scholarly articles can aid in presenting and developing strategies that can help the

local setting by (a) getting new highly qualified teachers hired, (b) retaining newly hired

teachers, and (c) increasing student achievement owing to increased expertise of retained

highly qualified teachers in the classroom. By accomplishing these three goals, a school

increases teacher expertise, which in turn, improves student academic success.

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) have done extensive research on mentoring of

beginning teachers and how mentoring can aid in retaining new teachers, but literature is

lacking on the effectiveness of assimilation strategies to increase retention. Mentors are assigned so that new teachers can be trained, owing to the fact that most successful teacher training can only be implementation on the job (Gardiner, 2011; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Payne & Huffman, 2015). Schools added the mentoring component to the new teacher induction programs, along with the creation of PLCs that are structured specifically for new teacher mentees and their mentors (Greiman, 2007; Krutts, 2011). Research shows that pre-teaching programs are not enough to make sure new teachers are successful in the classroom, but there is a limited amount of research that is reflective on the best practices as they pertain to teacher retention (Alhija & Fresko, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ganser 1994; Ganser 1996; Ganser, 2002; Hegstad, 1999). This study seeks to identify processes for quality teacher mentoring that may promote retention of effective teachers by effectively assimilating new teachers into the field of education.

Schools use teacher mentoring to give new teachers local guides who aid in the assimilation process. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) noted that mentoring has numerous objectives, including assessment, socialization, and adjustment of new teachers to the work place. It is also used to identify teachers who may be ill-suited for a career in teaching. Numerous studies support the use of induction programs in various designs (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Bubb, Earley, & Totterdell, 2005; Mullen, 2011). After a review of scholarly articles pertaining to new teacher induction programs, PLCs, the cycle of inquiry, mentoring, teacher retention, and increasing student academic performance, it is evident that mentoring new teachers is a widely used method implemented by schools to aid in the reduction of teacher turnover that affects student

academic performance in the classroom. This logic was the basis for why the PLC was the appropriate framework for this study.

The PLC was chosen as the conceptual framework for this study so that it can be used to investigate how to use Hord's (2004) cycle of inquiry improve the mentoring of new teachers within a new teacher mentoring program PLC from their perspective. The PLC was designed to investigate problematic issues that arise in teacher professional development (Stoll, 2013; Zuber-Skeritt, 2015). Little has been done to explore the relationship between the PLC and the retention of new teachers. Literature about PLCs indicated the framework may help build needed collaboration and provide support so could be helpful in increasing teacher sustainability (DuFour et al., 2006). The issue of teacher attrition is not unique to the locals setting; in fact, other areas are investigating techniques that may increase the retention rate of new teachers.

**Methods Geared Towards Teacher Retention in Other Areas**

In other areas across the country, different methods are being employed in efforts to retain new teachers. To motivate new teachers to stay in the classroom, some schools make sure to provide opportunities for growth and leadership to show that hard work pays off in and outside of the classroom (Johnson, 2011). Since many new teachers feel that they work in isolation, many schools encourage collaboration among the teachers within the school (Sharplin, O'neil, & Chapman, 2011). Waddell (2010) reported that to foster relationship between the new teachers and the administration, the leadership within the school encouraged feedback from teachers concerning restroom breaks, state testing, and class schedules so that frustrations can be curtailed before they spiral out of control.

These efforts show that new teacher retention a problem all over the country and not just at the focus school. The longer a teacher stays in the classroom, the higher the possibility of the teacher transforming into a mediating agent that can have a positive effect on the academic achievement of students.

**Mediated Learning**

Mediated learning uses a mediating agent (a teacher) to use the stimuli in the environment to transform the life of the learner (the student). For this to happen, the learner has to be able to trust the mediating agent, which emphasizes the need for teachers to stay in the classroom so that the two will be in the same proximity for the trust to develop, as described in Vygotsky's theory of proximal development (Gredler, 2012; Smargorinsky, 2011; Nordlof, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). Retaining new teachers in the classroom is a necessity so that students can develop trust in the teachers that allows teachers to become mediating agents that may improve academic success for students.

School districts across the country have instituted different systems that use proximal development to improve student academics. One method that is used is a check-in and check-out system that has students meet with one teacher at the beginning of the day and another at the end so that two teachers ae used to keep tabs on the student's behavior and academic success and assessments about the student can be compared daily, weekly, or after each grading cycle (Iver, 2011). Another method that is being used is assigning students with teacher mentors that follow the students from one grade level to another, so that there is a person who keeps up with the goals, areas of weakness, successes so that the student does not fall through the cracks because the student did not

have anyone following up with them (Knesting-Lund, Reese, & Boody, 2013). For these programs to work, students have to trust their teachers, and for the trust to be developed, teachers have to be retained so that a support system can be implemented (Gredler, 2012; Hallam et al., 2012; Nordlof, 2014). This research may give support to current research that indicates that the effective mentoring of new teachers may decrease the attrition rate of teachers who choose to pursue other careers outside the profession within the first five years of teaching.

## Implications

This research study may give strength to the research conducted by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) that shows mentoring serves as an important form of support for new teachers. For this study, first, I will begin by offering knowledge and understanding that can aid school districts improve PLCs geared towards new teachers. The discussion that may stem from this study may offer valuable answers to the research questions. Secondly, this study will exhibit current and pertinent information connected to new teachers' perceptions of the school district's mentor program, with an interest as to why new teachers are perceived to stay or leave the focus school. Lastly, this study's findings may influence positive social change by providing assimilation strategies that can be used to ensure that assimilation strategies that are directed by mentors in a new teacher program mentoring program PLC are effective in helping new teachers stay in the classroom and are retained beyond their first five years of teaching. I hope to use this study to investigate what new teachers think about the effectiveness of this PLC at the focus school.

The results of this study may be used to help school districts determine whether or not assimilation practices used in the new teacher mentoring program PLCs are suited to meet the needs of new teachers. This study may be able to provide valuable insight to administrators who need to support new teachers. Information derived from this study may be used to offer recommendations that may lead to the retention rate of new teachers.

Some recommendations that may come from this research study may include strengthening the development of mentor programs and new teacher mentoring program PLCs, presenting a proposal to the superintendent on the difficulties faced by new teachers, and finding ways to offer valuable support to new teachers. The information that this study made provide information to school districts and schools on whether or not their new teacher PLCs are adequately formatted for new teachers. Possible projects that could be developed based on the results of this research study could include additional new teacher mentoring program professional development courses with a focus on assisting new teachers assimilate into the education profession. Another possible project could be the creation of a help line geared towards new teachers where they can seek help with educational issues anonymously so that they will not be afraid to ask questions about best practices in an attempt to reduce the attrition rate of new teachers.

Because of the high attrition rate in the local setting, exploring the assimilation strategies used by the focus school's new teacher mentoring program PLCs may be beneficial in creating new professional development programs geared towards retaining new teachers who have fewer than five years of teaching experience in the local setting.

This study could provide information about what to include in a professional development that would include ideas suggested by participants who have gone through the program.

## Summary

Attrition among new teachers with 0–5 years of experience was high in an urban high school in the United States. The purpose of this study was to explore how to make the mentorship element of the new teacher mentoring program PLC activities aid in the assimilation of new teachers to increase the retention rate of new teachers so that highly qualified teachers can continue to contribute to student academic success. This project will be used to influence social change by gathering information about how the mentor portion of the new teacher mentoring program PLC can be designed to best aid new teachers by taking suggestions from new teachers who have stayed or chosen to leave the local setting. After the project has been completed, the hope is to understand what needs to be done to keep new teachers in the classroom to increase student achievement from the perspectives of new teachers who have gone through the new teacher mentoring program PLC with a mentor.

By using interviews, I interacted with 10 new teachers to record their experiences in a mentor program. As a result of these interviews, school districts, schools, and other new teachers may be able to develop quality new teacher preparation programs that are best suited for new teachers. In Section 2, I describe my research methodology. My methodology will include data collection, participant selection, and data analysis. In Section 3, I describe my project. Section 4 includes the conclusion to this research study,

recommendations that may derive from this study, and possible implications for further

research.

Section 2: The Methodology

**Introduction**

To address the problem of high teacher attrition and the resulting low student achievement, I proposed a study to determine how current mentor-directed assimilation strategies in a new teacher mentoring program PLC influenced the retention rate of new teachers from the perception of new teachers who stayed in or left the focus school. I proposed a qualitative explanatory case study. In a case study research design, participants are selected from a bounded group (Creswell, 2008). I chose this methodology to gain information from participants who had a common mentoring experience, increasing the chance that participants completed similar new teacher mentoring program PLC activities (Creswell, 2012). To provide an explanation for, or possibly decipher a cause and effect relationship, explanatory case studies are used (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). I hoped to uncover what could be done to improve the retention rate of new teachers from their perspectives.

For this study, I sought to understand, describe, and explore the assimilation strategies used in the new teacher mentoring program PLC from the view point of 10 participants (Lodico et al., 2010). Merriam (2009) explained, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). Based on this research, a qualitative design is appropriate to use to fully understand the experiences of the participants in this study and obtain the information needed to answer the research questions in this study.

I did not use a quantitative design because it does not lend itself to in-depth discussions with participants that could explain how new teachers perceive the assimilation strategies used in the new teacher mentoring program PLC. Creswell (2012) explained, "Qualitative research can lead to information that allows individuals to 'learn' about the phenomenon or to an understanding that provides voice to individuals who may not be heard otherwise" (p. 206). So that I would be able to understand the issue that was being studied from the perspective of the participants, instead of my own, I chose to use a case study to understand the experiences of beginning teachers through the development of two research questions.

I addressed two questions in this study: (a) What are the factors that influence new teachers to stay or leave the local setting described from the perspective of new teachers?, and (b) How do new teacher mentees in the new teacher mentoring program PLC describe the assimilation strategies used by their mentors that influence their retention in the profession? The goal of this research was to determine if new teachers who went through the new teacher induction academy with mentor-directed assimilation strategies had an increased perception of classroom readiness during the beginning years of teaching. I gathered data using explanatory case study research methods to meet this research goal, because other forms of qualitative research methods did not fit this study.

Creswell (2006) discussed other types of qualitative research such as narrative, phenomenological, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. Narrative qualitative research focuses on stories told by the interviewees (p. 53). For this study, my aim was to uncover what affect assimilation strategies had on the retention rate of new teachers, not

the stories that occurred due to positive or negative results of the strategies, or the research participants' experiences as they related to teaching while in the new teacher program PLC.

Phenomenological studies focus on an experience that all participants shared (Creswell, 2006, p. 57). At the time of this study, four of the 10 participants were still teaching at the focus school and four had resigned; therefore, they all did not share the same attrition experience. Ethnographical research has participants that are in close enough proximity for durations long enough to begin sharing the same patterns of behavior, language, and beliefs (Creswell, 2006, p. 68). I did not examine shared patterns of behavior in this research study. In grounded theory a theory is created about a certain situation that is being studied. I did not work towards creating a theory, so grounded theory was not used for this study. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2006) phenomenology seeks to find meaning in the lives of people who are connected to a certain phenomenon and that research design did not meet the goals of this study.

After careful review of the different types of qualitative research approaches, I decided that the case study would be the best choice for conducting this research. With case study research, the researcher makes and effort to gain insight about a phenomenon and understanding for those involved (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). For this study, I developed an understanding of the possible gap in practice of existing school procedures related to teacher retention and assimilation strategies. This qualitative interview case study helped me understand how 10 teachers perceived the mentor-directed assimilation

strategies in the new teacher mentoring program PLC and the factors that influenced new teachers to stay or leave the local setting.

In this section, I focus on a qualitative case study. The subsections that are included in this section include a description of my research design and approach that includes a literature review on qualitative design. Also included in this section are the description and my justification of my sample and setting, data collection methods, data analysis methods and, last, a discussion of this study's limitations.

## Research Design and Approach

The research design for this qualitative case study was used to explore how new teachers perceived the assimilation techniques used by their mentors in the new teacher mentoring program PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or leave the field of education. With this research I attempted to gain insight into whether or not the new teacher mentoring program PLC designed by a school district had any effect on how new teachers perceived the support they received while in the program, what kind of support that new teachers felt they needed, and if the level of support led them to remain or resign from the local setting.

This study was a qualitative, single-bounded explanatory case study. According to Creswell (2009), case studies are done to explore different processes, events, or programs for one or more individuals. Glesne (2011) explained that qualitative researchers should select a case that will show various perspectives on a problem or process. The problem that I explored was the high attrition rate of new teacher who have been teaching for fewer than 5 years.

To analyze the experiences of individuals in their natural setting case study research is used (Creswell, 2012). Researchers use case study research to collect data from multiple perspectives and sources (Lodico et al., 2010). Through this research I attempted to probe the collective behavior, structure, development and interaction of an organized group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). By using a case study approach, I studied the participant's feelings, perceptions, and experiences obtained through thick, rich descriptions gathered by interviews (Creswell, 2012; Glense, 2011; Lodico et al., 2010). Creswell (2009) explained that qualitative researchers obtain data by interviewing participants, studying documents, and observing behavior (p. 175). In this study I used qualitative methods to further an understanding of how new teachers perceived the assimilation techniques used by their mentors in the new teacher mentoring program PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or leave the field of education. Also, using a qualitative approach assisted in providing a more in-depth understanding (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam 2009) of the assimilation activities that were perceived to be the most useful to the new teachers in the new teacher mentoring PLC.

A holistic, interpretive approach to what is being examined is "the essence of qualitative research" (Creswell, 2009, p. 176). Qualitative research was chosen for this study because it adequately explores the question of how and what. In this study, the qualitative method furthers an understanding of how 10 new teachers interpreted and perceived their experiences in a new teacher mentoring program PLC. Qualitative researchers conduct analysis on a limited number of participants, instead of studying

large groups (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al, 2010). For all of the aforementioned reasons, a quantitative research methodology was deemed inappropriate for this research.

Because case study research design provides the most adequate research design due to the fact that it involves the deep study of a single case (Creswell, 2012), it was used to examine a schools district's new teacher mentoring program PLC. For this study, I was interested in how new teachers perceived assimilation strategies in their new teacher mentoring program PLC, and the factors that influenced new teachers to stay or leave the local, so an intrinsic case study was used. Intrinsic case studies are used when a researchers is interested in a certain organization, event, individual, or group (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Since I was looking at a group of new teachers, this research style was appropriate for the focus school.

The study site was a high school located in an urban school district in Texas. The high school was chosen for this study because the focus school has identified a concern to be addressed: the school had an attrition rate that is twice as high as the district and state averages. Creswell (2009 and Merriam (2009) noted that the site where the participants experience the issue is where researchers conduct their study.

<div align="center"><strong>Participants</strong></div>

**Criteria for Selecting Participants**

For this study, the participants were specifically selected from the teachers who had participated in the school's new teacher mentoring program PLC creating a purposeful sample. Creswell (2008) noted that purposeful samples are used in qualitative research to learn or investigate a specific issue.

When using purposeful sampling, the researcher must identify the sampling strategy and defend its use. According to Patton and Patton (1990):

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (p. 169)

These teachers were purposely chosen because they represented successful and unsuccessful assimilation into the field of education and could offer insight into what could be done to close the gap in practice and problem because only two of the five teachers that left the focus school were still employed in the field of education. The participants selected for this sample were five new teachers who participated in mentoring situations and had been retained and five new teachers who participated in mentoring, but had left the local setting and were willing to participate in the research. These sources provided rich information about how to make improvements to the new teacher mentoring program PLC, if any were needed. These participants were teachers in grades 10 - 12 who had been through the new teacher induction academy held in the local setting and had worked in the classroom as the teacher of record. The number of participants selected for a case study deviates (Glesne, 2011), the choice to include 10 participants in this study was adequate because it reflected roughly 17% of the population of new teachers. With this sample size, I had the chance to explore the phenomenon from many different perspectives.

**Description, Justification, and Criteria for Number of Participants**

Of the five teachers who stayed in the local setting, two had been teaching English for three years; one had a bachelor's degree and the other had a master's degree. Another teacher held a master's degree and had been teaching math for one year; the other math teacher held a bachelor's degree and had been teaching for 6 months. The social studies teacher held a bachelor's degree and had been teaching for 8 months. Of the teachers who left the local setting, two had been teaching math for 3 years and both had a bachelor's degree. One math teacher transferred to another school district, while the other left the profession to pursue a law degree. The other three had been teaching science for four years. One of the science teachers transferred to another school district, one started a flight attendant program, and the other started a career in retail management. The teachers were carefully selected so that an adequate representation of new teacher mentoring program PLC participants could be studied.

To be chosen for this study, a participant had to have gone through the mentor program, stayed in the local setting for at least 6 months and been responsible for providing instruction in a core subject. Teachers from core subjects (English, math, science, and social studies) were chosen because they were responsible for providing instruction that was used by students when they took high stakes tests for graduation.

These 10 participants were chosen because they could be examined within a reasonable time frame, each had been teaching fewer than 5 years, and they were deemed information rich due to being employed at the focus school that had an attrition rate that was twice as high as the district and state average.

By focusing on 10 participants, I collected information that could provide a rich description of the setting and allowed me to probe more deeply into why new teachers were leaving the local setting.

Six of the participants went through alternative certification programs to become teachers, and four had traditional degrees in education. Five out of the ten teachers had left the local setting. Of the five teachers who were still teaching in the local setting, two were currently enrolled in the new teacher mentoring program PLC and three had exited the new teacher induction program and were full-time teachers in the local setting.

**Procedures for Gaining Access to Participants**

Permission to conduct this research study and interview new teachers was granted by the school principal. It was my responsibility to protect the data collected in this research study, the research site and the participants (Creswell, 2012; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam, 2009). I used all proper protocols to identify and gain access to the interviewees (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

I used email to approach the selected participants for this study. Once the participants had been identified, they were invited to participate in the research by email, a phone call, or through personal contact. To maintain confidentiality, I did not send the emails out as a group email; instead, each email was sent out individually so that the participants did not know each other. After the emails had been sent, I followed-up with a phone call to confirm receipt of the email. In the event that a potential participant did not respond to email, he/she was contacted in person or on the phone in a secure location that kept their identity concealed.

I also contacted the mentor coordinator on the campus to get access to the archival data from the new teacher mentoring program PLC so that I could gain access to the participants by looking at the sign-in logs for the meetings to determine which teachers fit the criteria for the research. The logs included the focus of each meeting, how often each participant attended, and up-to-date contact information for new teacher mentees. Using archival data helped me see the PLC activities as they took place throughout the school years, so that I could analyze any patterns that developed, if any.

**Protection of Participants' Rights and Confidentiality**

To establish trust and credibility and protect confidentiality, each participant was presented with the informed consent form that had my name and the reason for the study clearly explained. The voluntary nature of the project study and the participant's right to refuse and/ or withdraw at any point was included in the consent form. All participants were assured that their confidentiality was protected during and after the study. Also, I explained the participants' rights to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time and discussed my strategy of using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity throughout this research study. Anonymity was also maintained through the use of codes on the interview transcripts instead of the names of the participants. Once all protections had been discussed, participants were asked to sign the Informed Consent.

I provided an authentic account of all the information that I received. I was truthful and honest when I reported my findings. At the conclusion of this study, the finding were sent to each participant and at that time they were able to express whether they agreed with the findings or if there needed to be any corrections. An informed

consent form that explained the confidentiality, conditions of voluntary participation, and contact questions were signed by all participants before they can took part in this study. The consent form also informed the participants that the interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and locked in a secure location.

King and Horrocks (2010) noted that using interviews in qualitative research helps explore views, beliefs, experiences and/ or motivations of individuals on specific terms. The authors also explained that interviews present the interviewees the opportunity to discuss the subject matter in an atmosphere where they feel comfortable so that the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the social phenomena.

**Establishing Researcher/Participant Working Relationship**

To start this research process, it was important that I established a rapport with the participants so that a level of trust and acceptance could develop. So that the one-on-one interviews could flow smoothly, the processes took a great deal of strategic planning and hard work (Johl & Renganathan, 2009). I used the data that I had obtained on the attrition rate for the local, district, and state levels to share with participants why my research may be influential at their school and in the field of education in general. To make the research relevant, I discussed the current school year and the number of resignations, teacher vacancies and the difference in the quality of instruction given to students by teachers who had been in the classroom with fewer than 5 years, as compared to the quality of teaching offered by teachers who had been teaching for more than 5 years.

Making the participants feel that they were giving their time to contribute to the efforts of reducing the attrition rate of new teachers helped develop an invested interest in this research.

**Measures for Ethical Protection**

A number of processes were used to protect rights of the participants. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted for approval to Walden University. I also submitted proof that the National Institute of Health web based training had been completed. After the IRB had been approved the study (01-29-16-0157992), I obtained a signed consent form from the focus school and then approached the participants about participating in this study. The data collection process was outlined in the participants' applications and contained an example of the informed consent form. Information regarding the procedures, nature of the study, benefits, risks, name of the researcher, the school the research was being conducted through, and confidentiality statement was provided to the participants during one-on-one meetings. After the information had been presented, each participant then signed the Walden Informed Consent form assuring them of the voluntary nature of participation and each received a copy of all the forms that they signed while participating in the study. I assured participants that I would take all necessary steps to ensure the participants' anonymity by using pseudonyms during data collection and write-up. I also assured them that I would honor confidentiality by not discussing their comments with others and that they would receive a copy of their signed informed consent form and confidentiality forms. During this study, the participants did not suffer any adverse health effects, psychological stress

(emotional or social), coercion, privacy violations or deception. I made sure to protect the research site, participants' identities, and data that were collected.

## Data Collection

In this study, I conducted interviews and reviewed information about existing mentoring assimilation strategies and possible factors that may have affected the retention rate of new teachers with fewer than 5 years of teaching experience who had stayed employed or resigned from the local setting. Creswell (2009) and Merriam (2009) noted that collecting information with interviews is a common method educational research. This information supports the fact that interviewing is a form of data. The interview questions were aligned with my goal of acquiring a better understanding of how the implementation of assimilation strategies in the new teacher induction academy may have affected the retention or loss of new teachers from the perception of 10 new teachers who had been through the new teacher mentoring program PLC. I used semi-structured interviews that consisted of important questions I had developed that helped identify the areas that were explored and allowed for additional information the participant may have wished to offer. If more information was needed, I prompted the participants to offer more information (Appendix D, Appendix E). Qualitative researchers use "richly detailed description" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 270) to acquire understanding of a phenomenon. This research study focused on how to address the needs of new teachers and make improvements at the focus school, if any were needed.

**Processes for Collection of Data**

Once I received IRB approval (01-29-16-0157992), I conducted this study over an 8 – week period. With permission from my school administrator and the school district of the study site, I began to collect data for this research study. The new teachers who agreed to participate in this study were given a copy of the informed consent to complete. I gave each participant a copy of the interview protocol. Once the interview protocols had been completed, I scheduled a time to start the interview with each participant.

I collected data through dialogue with the 10 participants in this study. The open-ended interviews granted first-hand accounts of the participants' experiences, thoughts, and ideas (Appendix C). Beginning teachers were interviewed for the purpose of gathering the participants' perceptions of the assimilation techniques used by their mentors in a new teacher mentoring PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or leave the field of education. Several questions were prepared to gain insight into the new teachers' perceptions of their new teacher mentoring program PLC (Appendix D, Appendix E).

Interviews were set up during a week when the majority of the participants could participate in the first 45-60 minute interview and then scheduled around the availability of any other participants who were not available during that week. A 45-60 minute audio recorded semi structured, one-on-one interview took place with each of the participants using questions I developed (Appendix D, Appendix E). According to Glesne (2011) during interviews:

> Researchers ask questions in the context of purposes often important primarily to themselves. Respondents answer questions in the context of disposition (motives, values, concerns, and needs) that the researcher needs to unravel in order to make sense out of the words that their questions generate. (p. 102)

I arranged interviews with the new teachers who consented to participate in this study. I contacted all 10 of the new teachers that were participating or had participated in the mentor program. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and were scheduled at a time and place that ensured the anonymity of the participants. After each interview, I thanked the participants for taking part in my study and ask them if they had any questions that pertained to the study. Using open-ended interviews allowed me to observe the participants' experiences, thoughts and ideas firsthand. The purpose of this research was to explore how new teachers perceive the assimilation techniques used by their mentors and their new teacher mentoring and their new teacher mentoring PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or leave the field of education.

Interviews were audio recorded and each participant was assigned a code to maintain their anonymity. I personally transcribe each tape verbatim after each interview. I only had one participant per interview. All participants were interviewed in a private location within their workplace or other agreed upon location (Creswell, 2012). New teachers were asked open-ended questions that aligned with how they perceived the assimilation techniques used by their mentors in their a new teacher mentoring PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or leave the field of education (Appendix D, Appendix E).

For this study, I chose to use semi structured face-to-face interview questions because they allowed a researcher to closely follow and explore emerging ideas that may come up during a study that concerned the new teacher mentoring PLC that was in place at the focus school (Glesne, 2011).

The open-ended questions used in the interviews were structured to allow interview participants to detail fully on their perceptions of the expectations of the mentoring program, the mentoring strategies used in their new teacher mentoring PLC, and any improvements, if any, that could be made to the new teacher mentoring PLC. Semi structured face-to-face interviews granted the researcher the opportunity to explore emerging ideas that may have needed to be examined during the interview process (Glesne, 2011).

Another data method that was used was the collection of PLC agendas from the 2011- 2012 through the 2015-2016 school years.  These agendas were stored in the mentor coordinators records and I photocopied each one and stored the photocopies in my research binder. I created a list in order to analyze which topics were and were not covered by the new teacher program and the frequency that the topics of were covered.  I chose to compare the perceived needs of the new teachers who were interviewed with the presence or absence of certain topics, such as classroom management, work/life balance, and lesson development, to see if any changes needed to be made with the PLC sessions.

**Role of the Researcher**

According to Lodico et al (2010) the role of the researcher is to gather data that captures the participants' experiences with a phenomenon from their perspective.

The researcher becomes a social change agent, collaborator, teacher and facilitator (King & Horrocks, 2010). As the researcher, I did work at the school where the study took place, but I was not, nor have I ever been in an advisory position at the school. I have worked in the field of education for 8 years. At the time of this study, I was employed as a classroom teacher who provided instruction in English Language Arts and Reading. At the time of this study, I was not on any English departmental levels teams with any of the participants who had consented to this research. I made every effort to set aside all of my personal feelings that pertained to this mentor program so that could provide valid and accurate information.

I worked in the area of the study site for over 8 years. I had a good rapport with the faculty and staff that worked at the school. Since I had been employed with the district for over 8 years, I had worked with many of the faculty and staff on various projects, and therefore; I had developed a level of trust due to the quality of my work. I had overheard teachers from this site mention the challenges that they faced that stemmed from working with new teachers and the negative effects that came from placing substitutes in the classroom with students, until a highly qualified replacement could be hired. There had also been discussions about how several new teachers had gone through the new teacher mentoring program PLC, but were not retained at the school. It may be possible that there was an ineffective new teacher mentor program PLC in place at my school based on episodic discussion with experienced and novice teachers. I pursued my research at this location so that I could examine the new teacher mentoring program PLC as it was perceived by first year teachers and make recommendations, if any were needed.

The staff members at this school had the same concern about the high rate of new teacher attrition and I believed that working with them would be beneficial. I had experience with the new teacher induction academy and best practices pertaining to assimilating new employees into the workplace. These experiences enabled me to use my credentials and work experience to establish credibility with participants. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), when the researcher assumes the role of an author, he/she listens to the participants' experiences and then puts the experiences into narrative form (words). This information was used to further understand how the assimilation strategies were designed with the purpose of increasing the retention of new teachers in their beginning years of teaching.

By interviewing the participants with open-ended questions, I was able to hear from the perspective of the interviewee, how the assimilation strategies used by their mentors while in the new teacher mentoring program PLC resulted in to their leaving or being retained in the local setting in their own words. The purpose of the interviews was to get more detailed information about the teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of assimilation strategies used by mentors on their decision to stay in the local setting.

**Interview Plan**

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approve my application (01-29-16-0157992), I interviewed five teachers who stayed in the local setting, two had been teaching for three years one for 8 months, and another for 8 months. I also interviewed five teachers who left the local setting; two have been teaching for 3 years and the other three have been teaching for four years.

The teachers were carefully selected so that an adequate representation of new teacher mentoring program PLC participants could be studied and because they provided instruction in a core subject.

The initial interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions that allowed for the further exploration of the perspectives of the participants' experiences during their first years of teaching. Each interview was followed by a second interview with member checking. Creswell (2008) and Merriam (2009) noted that, with member checking the researcher asks the participants to check the responses for accuracy. In the second interview, I shared commonalities that came up in the interviews with each participant as well as similar perceptions and possible reasons for the perceptions. During the second interview, the participants were asked if they wished to add any more information and were advised to clear up any misconceptions. For this study, triangulation involved comparing the perspectives of 10 new teachers who had varying view points on the mentor program. Through the process of triangulation, I was able to compare and contrast the commonalities, themes, and data retrieved during this study. Themes emerging from the ten interviews were organized into categories.

To conduct the interviews in an organized fashion, I scheduled one interview a day during the first and third weeks of every month and then scheduled follow up interviews during the second and fourth weeks. I audio recorded each interview and transcribed the recording myself. The time in-between the two interviews allowed for participants to reschedule interviews as needed and provided time for the transcription of

interview responses. Table 4 illustrates the organization and time table for the interviews during month one.

*Table 4. Project Study Interview and Transcription Schedule Month 1*

|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | Interviewee 1 Initial Interview | Interviewee 2 Initial Interview | Interviewee 3 Initial Interview | Interviewee 4 Initial Interview | Interviewee 5 Initial Interview |
| Week 2 | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription |
| Week 3 | Interviewee 6 Initial Interview | Interviewee 7 Initial Interview | Interviewee 8 Initial Interview | Interviewee 9 Initial Interview | Interviewee 10 Initial Interview |
| Week 4 | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription |

Table 5 indicates the plans for the second interviews and transcription of the member checking meetings in Month 2.

*Table 5. Project Study Member Checking and Transcription Schedule Month 2*

|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | Interviewee 1 Member checking | Interviewee 2 Member checking | Interviewee 3 Member checking | Interviewee 4 Member checking | Interviewee 5 Member checking |
| Week 2 | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Coding and analysis |
| Week 3 | Interviewee 6 Member checking | Interviewee 7 Member checking | Interviewee 8 Member checking | Interviewee 9 Member checking | Coding 10 Member Checking |
| Week 4 | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Transcription | Coding and analysis |

**Systems for Keeping Track of Data**

To keep track of data while conducting the interviews, I kept a journal so that I could record my thoughts before and after each interview so that I was prepared to ask follow-up questions during the second interview if further clarification was needed. The journal remained with me at all times while in use and was locked in my home office for participant confidentiality when not in use.

The printed data of transcribed interviews was kept in a notebook formatted specifically for this qualitative research study, as well as digitally on my personal universal serial bus (USB) flash drive. When the notebook and/ or USB were not in use, it was be stored in a locked desk in my home office. The notebook had sections for the necessary documents in Appendices A – I, as well as separate sections for each individual research interview participant. A calendar was placed in the front of the notebook, so that I stayed on track for the completion of the research.

## Data Analysis

### How and When Data Were Analyzed

To analyze the data for this qualitative case study, I listened to recorded interviews, personally transcribed the interview responses, read the notes, categorized the information, coded or labeled the emerging data themes. Common responses in the interviews were grouped together and that information was compiled into categories. The teachers' responses and archived data notes were compared to information found in literature. I generated my own forms and codes to record teacher responses during the one-on-one interviews. To conceal the identities of the participants, I gave each one a special code that kept them from being identifiable. All demographic information was reported in aggregated form to honor the confidentiality of the participants and kept strictly confidential. I analyzed and categorized all data myself. The analysis began following each week after four interviews had taken place.

The data were collected and analyzed to gain an understanding of new teachers' perceptions of their mentor program PLC. I used inductive and deductive reasoning to

identify themes and patterns in the data collected from interviews. The theming of data and coding of emerging themes were used to conduct the data analysis. During this study, I continuously compared gathered data and sorted them into categories.

After the interviews were completed, the data were then categorized and coded based on the new teacher's perceptions of what influenced new teachers to stay or leave the local setting and how assimilation strategies influenced the rate of new teachers who are retained in the local setting. The codes I established were based on the differing responses and assisted in sorting, synthesizing, and summarizing the comments made by the new teachers during the interviews. The new teachers' responses were compared to observe similarities and differences. Since my goal was to identify similar ideas that the participants may have expressed, coding the responses into themes was beneficial.

**Coding Procedure**

According to Lodico et al. (2010) "qualitative researchers typically continually read, reread, and reexamine all their data to make sure that they have not missed something or coded them in a way that is inappropriate to the experience of the participants" (p. 313). For this study, I coded open-ended responses to interview questions by developing a list of the responses to a certain question. After that process was complete, I read through the interview responses and identified themes that could possibly emerge. These themes were coded and used to develop categories.

I carried out coding for each individual interview, recorded those coded themes in a file on my computer, then, as I coded each additional interview, I wrote the emerging themes in the paper and recorded it in the file to keep a running file of emerging themes. I

then had the total list of various themes at the end plus a tally of how many times each theme occurred that was documented in a list. These tallies were reported and discussed in my final write-up on this research.

For this study I also analyzed the PLC agendas for commonalities and themes. I looked at the agendas that were provided to me by the mentor coordinator and the following list explains what was covered in the PLC meetings for new teachers. I used this data to compare what the interviewees perceived the program needed to offer to participants and gain an understanding as to why they perceived that the program did not offer enough of the necessary supports. After reviewing the agendas the following topics were covered most often:

- maintaining classroom management;

- creating lesson plans;

- creating student seating charts;

- designing classroom layouts;

- developing relationship with students and colleagues;

- establishing a reward system for students

The following topics were not covered or appeared infrequently on the PLC agendas:

- systems for maintaining a healthy work/life balance;

- choosing quality professional development;

- understanding teacher appraisal systems;

- utilizing mentors;

- procedures for handling legal issues;

- implementing technology in the classroom;

- joining teacher support organizations

By analyzing the agendas, I was able to examine how the information that was or was not provided to the mentees led to their perceptions of what structural changes needed to be added to the mentor program. I also was able to gain insight on which topics were perceived to be the most important to the mentor program based on the frequency or infrequency that the topics were presented to the participants. This information contributed to the establishment of the emerging themes that were documented in this study.

**Methods to Address Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Several sources of data were used to triangulate data, such as interviews with new teacher mentees, analyzed agendas from PLCs, and electronic data that detailed the teacher retention and attrition that is logged on the state website. Triangulation was used to find themes in this research because it was a credible way to address trustworthiness (Creswell, 2006). Through the process of triangulation, I was able to compare and contrast the commonalities, themes, and data derived during this study. Themes emerging from the ten interviews were organized into categories (Lodico et al., 2010). Making sure that my research was credible was important in producing an authentic true picture of the phenomena that was being studied.

I used member checking to allow participants to comment on my interpretation of the data (Spaulding, 2008). Creswell (2008) explained that member checking is when the researcher brings data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants

to ensure that they are accurate. Stake (1995) noted that member checking gives the

participants an opportunity to make sure that the researcher correctly recorded and

interpreted their responses. The confidential member checking interviews allowed for the

participants to approve or disapprove of what was interpreted from their responses and

supported integrity of the data. The participants expressed that I correctly understood that

the program was important for new teacher retention, so it needed for structural input

from the present and past participants.

**Procedures for Dealing with Discrepant Cases**

In qualitative research, discrepant cases are instances that occur during the

research process that may be contradictory to the researcher's original assumptions.  In

this study, I used member checking during the second interview to keep my biases from

tainting the results of this research.  All 10 participants that were interviewed were given

time to look at the interview responses that were transcribed after the initial interview.

After reading the responses, I asked follow up questions to make sure that I accurately

captured the perceptions that they expressed.  By using member checking, I was able to

make sure that I correctly understood the perceptions about the assimilation strategies

used in the new teacher mentoring PLC and those that pertained to perceptions about why

new teachers chose to stay or resign from the local setting.

After the member checking interviews, participants were able to discuss any

discrepancies that were interpreted incorrectly during member checking interviews.

Participants were interviewed one at a time to ensure that their confidentiality was

maintained. During the 30-minute member checking interview, the participants were

asked if there was any additional information that they would have liked to add to further explain their experience with the assimilation strategies directed by their mentor while in the new teacher induction academy and their perception of the factors that influenced new teachers to remain employed or resign from the local setting. The results were reexamined and any discrepant information was reported in the study to provide a rich narrative that reports the perceptions of how assimilation strategies directed by their mentor affected their decision to stay or resign from the local setting. My biases were that I believed that the assimilation strategies were not done well and I also did not believe that mentors provided enough support to mentees in the local district. My personal perspective was not revealed to the participants and I constantly worked to keep my biases in check. Even though interview responses conflicted with my biases at times, they were reported.

## Limitations

I planned to conduct a qualitative explanatory case study to determine how new teacher mentees perceived the assimilation techniques used by their mentors in their new teacher mentoring program PLC and their perception of what factors caused new teachers to stay or leave the field of education. However, this case study did have its limitations. First, this study was limited to the relationship between new teacher mentees and mentors. I did not study how other interpersonal relationships may have factored into the retention rate. Also, only teacher mentees in grades 10 – 12 were invited to participate because those were the only grades offered at the local setting. The mentors were not interviewed for this study because I wanted to explore the perceptions of new teacher

mentees, and not the mentors. Third, I was using a purposeful sample, so I contacted the participants, instead of using a random sample. Since this study used interviews to gather information from the participants, I had to take into account that each person's recollection of events could have been distorted by the amount of time that had passed between the initial events and the interviews that I conducted.

In addition to the previous mentioned limitations, this study did not probe into other factors that may have had an effect on the retention rate of new teachers, such as family life, travel distance, teaching assignments, changes in administration, and the disciplinary histories of the teachers. This study focused on exploring the new teacher mentoring program PLC to make improvements to the program that could increase the retention rate of new teachers in the local setting, if any were needed.

## Data Analysis Results

For this study, I interviewed five teachers who stayed in the local setting and five teachers who left the local setting; all teachers had participated in the new teacher mentor program PLC. The initial interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions and follow-up questions that allowed me to study the perspectives of the participants' experiences during their first years of teaching. So that the interviews could be conducted efficiently, I scheduled one interview a day during the first and third weeks of every month and then proceeded to schedule follow up interviews during the second and fourth weeks. I audio recorded each interview and transcribed the recordings myself. The time in between the two interviews allowed for participants to reschedule interviews as needed and provided time for the transcription of interview responses.

After the first round of interviews was completed, member checking was added to the second round of interviews. According to Creswell (2008) and Merriam (2009) during member checking the researcher requests that the participants check the transcribed responses for accuracy. During the second interview, I discussed commonalities that occurred in the interviews with each participant as well as related perceptions and potential reasons for the perceptions. When the participants met to the second interview, they were asked if they would like to expound on the information that they had previously shared and they were advised to clarify any misconceptions. The participants expressed gratitude for my interest in this topic and the hope that changes would actually be implemented, instead of just continuing the program as it is. Through the process of triangulation detailed by Morrow (2005), I was able to have breadth, depth, and richness in this study by gathering information from the participant interviews, new teacher mentor PLC agendas, and electronic data retrieved from the teacher retention and attrition that is logged on the state website at the time of this study. The four themes emerging from the ten interviews were organized into the following categories: the importance of being able to complain anonymously, the lack of structure, and the need for mentees to self-select mentors, the need to reduce mandatory professional development.

To present the findings in a clear and concise manner, I will begin by explaining how the participants responded to the research questions. Once the interview responses have been thoroughly explained, I will explain the themes and detail how they link the similarities and differences of the 5 teachers who remained at the local setting and the 5

who chose to resign. The two research and interview questions, research design and analysis, as well as the conceptual framework were aligned with this study because each component established the ground work to understand how Hord's (2004) research on the PLC and the cycle of inquiry may address the problem of increased attrition of new teachers at the focus school that was presented in section one. In the next section, I will explain how the participants in this study responded to Research Question number 1.

**Research Question 1**

This area pertains to how retained and teachers who resigned perceived the structure of the mentoring program and whether or not assimilation strategies had any bearing on the retention of new teachers. The information will be presented as it relates to Research Question Number 1.

Research Question number 1 was, "What are the factors that influence new teachers to stay or leave the local setting described from the perspective of new teachers who have stayed or left the local setting?" To obtain the answer to this question, data were collected from 10 teachers, five who were retained and five who had resigned from the local setting, to explore their perceptions of how the PLC was structured and whether the assimilation strategies reduced or attributed to attrition or retention. The following sections will detail the perception of the new teachers who were in the mentor program PLC.

Although there were two different types of participants, they shared similar views as it pertains to the structure of the new teacher mentor program PLC. The participants as a whole agreed that mentoring is a vital part of a new teacher's first years in the

classroom, but they felt that both the mentor and the mentee needed more direct instructions that helped define the responsibilities of each role so that the mentee could receive the desired support.

Participant 4402 stated:

Each day you are "supposed" to check in with your mentor but sometimes when the school year gets hectic that turns into once a week. At the end of the month you and your mentor are "supposed" to sit down and fill out a form to say what you worked on and both of you signed off on it. No one actually monitor if any of these meetings actually take place.

This participant explained that the program did not have an oversight function that made sure that the mentee received all of the required services.

Participant 4410 added:

When you start going to the new teacher mentee meetings, it seems like it is just an open forum for people to talk about how they have messed up, gotten in trouble, spent their time brown nosing, or passed a certification test. There was no systematic progression of the meetings, and some new teachers who had "good excuses" such as being a coach, a sponsor of an organization, or having children, were excused from the meetings and no one questioned it. It was about an extra hour or two after work that could have been easily done by sending out an email. I really think that it was a huge waste of everybody's time.

This participant added to the opinion of the new teacher mentees that the mentor program PLC needed more structure so that the cycle of inquiry can be used to generate

meaningful discussion pertaining to educational practices. Also, all of the participants desired more information on what the program format was based on so that whenever the mentee needed more assistance from the mentor, there would be reference material to guide their needs.

As far as giving insight into how the mentorships affected the retention or attrition of new teachers, the data were split with the five teachers who stayed in the local setting expressing that their mentor had a positive effect on them staying in the local setting.

Participant 4401 stated:

My mentor was able to get to know me on a personal basis. She knew when I was trying to buy a house, about to get married, and she was the first person that I called when I went home and could not get back to school after a holiday because of a snowstorm. Any time that I had a problem she was there for me and would even answer a phone call or text message in the middle of the night just to make sure I was ready for the next day. Her availability made my school year wonderful.

This participant expressed that developing an interpersonal relationship with the mentee was a helpful factor in allowing the mentorship to be beneficial.

However, the teachers who resigned from the local setting expressed that their mentor both did not lessen their desire to leave the local settings, and at times, intensified their desire to resign from the local setting, and /or the entire teaching profession as a whole.

Participant 4408 commented:

We met when we were supposed to meet and he gave me advice here in there but
it was nothing that was so wonderful that it kept me from wanting to leave and
find something else to do with my life. Teaching is a calling and no one can make
you hear the calling if it's not there for you. My mentor saw this and I don't think
he made any efforts to convince me to stay in the classroom, because maybe he
knew I wasn't coming back.

This participant did not indicate that their assigned mentor had any effect on their
decision to leave the local setting. The first research question aimed to gather information
on the factors that either led to the retention or resignation of new teachers. After
interviewing the participants, the data uncovered that there were various factors that led
to a new teacher deciding to remain or resign from the local setting, but the new teacher
mentoring program PLC could be structured in a way to provide additional support to
new teachers from their perception.

**Research Question 2**

This section pertains to how the new teacher mentees perceived the quality of
assimilation strategies implemented by their mentors while in the mentor program PLC
and whether or not the strategies had any influence on the retention rate of new teachers
in the teaching profession. Research Question Number 2: "How do new teacher mentees
describe how the assimilation strategies used by their mentors during the new teacher
mentoring program PLC effected their decision to remain in the profession?" To address

this question, data were gathered from two types of participants: new teachers who stayed and new teachers who left the local setting.

While two different types of participants were interviewed, they all agreed that assimilation strategies were pivotal in their decision to remain working in or resign from the local setting. When interviewed, the participants mentioned that the assimilation strategies that were used the most were developing an interpersonal relationship with their mentee, celebrating victories in the profession, and having mentors share their personal teaching histories with the mentees to should resilience in the occupation. Participant 4003 stated:

> My mentor was able to get to know me on a personal basis. She knew when I was trying to buy a house, about two get married, and she was the first person that I called when I went home and could not get back to school after a holiday because of a snowstorm. Any time that I had a problem she was there for me and would even answer a phone call or text message in the middle of the night just to make sure I was ready for the next day. Her availability made my school year wonderful.

This response indicated that the mentee found that the most beneficial assimilation strategies dealt with workplace training and leadership preparation.

The mentees that resigned from the local setting felt differently about assimilation strategies developed to foster interpersonal relationships.

Participant 4010 stated:

This really depended on how well the two people got along. There were also unspoken racial issues. For instance, my mentor was a white guy and he would make some really inappropriate comments in reference to how the minority students behaved. I was actually bothered by it and I would not go to him when I needed classroom management problems.

This participant expressed that the assimilation strategies did not aid in fostering interpersonal relationships for workplace assimilation and was one of the aspect of the program that added to the workplace stress.

Additional findings in this study indicated that mentees desired for their mentor to serve as an active participant in helping them to privately navigate the local setting during the first years of teaching. When the mentor was surrounded by other people, it made it difficult for the mentee to have confidential communications with the mentor.

Participant 4409 stated:

I needed more time with just my mentor and myself. I feel that whenever you are speaking with your mentor other people try to chime in and fix your problem when they are not responsible for your teaching. I needed more one-on-one support from my mentor without interruptions.

This participant explained that they needed their mentor to be available without other outsiders trying to take over the communication process.

Also, it was revealed that when the mentoring program PLC used workplace celebrations as assimilation strategies.

Participant 4401 reported:

The strategies that are used are the little celebrations along the way, for instance, celebrating the 100th day of school, completing tasks, job shadowing, working lunches, group gatherings outside the school day and New Teacher of the Year.

It was concluded that the mentees enjoyed being told that they were doing a good job and the celebrations were beneficial the assimilation activities for those that were retained.

For the mentees who went through the mentoring program PLC and remain employed in the local setting, the celebrations encouraged them to remain in the local setting or the occupation. For those mentees who did decide to resign from the local setting, the mentoring program PLC celebrations did not sway their decision to leave the local setting, and in some cases the profession entirely.

Participant 4408 stated:

The support that I feel I really needed was to talk to the other teachers and hear about their failures and successes. New teachers celebrate when the world is going great and everybody knows about it, but when things are not going very well, we seem to crawl inside ourselves and think that the sky is falling just on us. That is often not the case; there needs to be more open dialogue and discussion where new teachers can feel like they can tell people what is really going on without being judged.

They mentioned that the celebratory part of the program could have been improved so that so that the program could have been more pleasurable. Another assimilation strategy that was mentioned was the benefits of having veteran teachers discuss their teaching career. The participants mentioned that hearing about how other veterans resolved workplace issues gave them examples of how to navigate the profession.

> Participant 4405 mentioned:
>
> I just think that all the stories that my mentor told me had a huge impact on me staying for the rest of this year and looking forward to next year. I really think that more veteran teachers need to tell about all of the bad things that went through so that new teachers don't feel like they have to come out the box being perfect. They need to make sure new teachers understand that it is okay to make a mistake just as long as you learn from it and come back being better having gone through whatever situation you have to do with.

This participant explained how valuable it was to be able to hear about their mentor's failures and successes in the profession. This strategy was noted to be one of the assimilation strategies that kept this new teacher in the profession.

**Retained Teacher Response to Research Questions Versus Those who Resigned Research Question Number One**

In this section, I will discuss how new teachers who were retained in the local setting responded to interview questions compared to how the new teachers who resigned responded. RQ 1: "What are the factors that influence new teachers to stay or leave the local setting described from the perspective of new teachers who have stayed or left the

local setting?" The following information regarding how retained teachers responded to

the first research question is based on retained participants' answers to interview question

10 and additional information was gathered from interview Questions 11 - 16. The same

information was gathered from the answers that the participants who resigned from the

local setting gave to interview Question 2 and additional information as obtained from

Question 3. The interview questions 2 and 10 asked beginning teachers' perceptions of

the following aspects of the mentor program PLC: (a) what they felt was a positive or

negative factor that kept them employed at the local setting or lead to their resignation,

(b) encouraged or discouraged their ability to develop a positive interpersonal

relationship with their mentor, (c) request additional resources that would improve the

assimilation process facilitated by their mentor. Findings are presented grouping

information from retained teachers first, and then from teachers who resigned.

**Retained Teachers.** During the interviews with the 5 participants who were

retained at the local setting, they shared that having a mentor was a great tool that new

teachers need to navigate the school and the profession. Participants 4401, 4402, and

4404 said that the factors that led them to stay was the ability to receive countless

amounts of training, such as lesson planning, classroom management, and school safety

that helped to make them a better teacher. Participants 4403 and 4404 noted that while

they did receive training in their content area, they desired more training on how to

navigate the interworking of the school and the profession so that they could have been

more marketable. All of the participants who were retained mentioned that they were

assigned a mentor from the very beginning of the program, but none of them knew the

factors that led to the pairings. They all also mentioned that it would have been great to have a say in the mentor / mentee partnering since it was mandatory for all first year teachers.

The new teachers who stayed felt that developing an interpersonal relationship with their mentor was beneficial, particularly participant 4403 reflected:

My mentor would come in and check on me on a daily basis just to make sure that I was doing well. She would also remembered important events in my life such as my birthday, wedding anniversary, and we celebrated the day that I received my official teaching certificate.

Comments from other participants to support this participant's indications that the establishment of a positive interpersonal relationship led to new teachers being retained include the following:

- Luckily I had a really good mentor who by happenstance had a really bad mentor before me and she filled in the blanks that I needed help with. Sometimes my mentor could just look at me and tell if I was having a bad day and she would drop everything that she was doing just to hear about it and offer some advice (Participant 4401).

- My mentor would check in with me all the time to see if I was satisfied with my teaching position (Participant 4403).

- Having a mentor that cares about you inside and out of the classroom is priceless (Participant 4402).

- My mentor served as a listening block because he would listen when I was having a bad day and when I was having a good day and be there to encourage and support with the same intensity during both (Participant 4407).

- My mentor did not forget that she had a job and that was to make sure that I was having an enjoyable teaching experience (Participant 4403).

**Resigned Teachers.** In addition to the 5 participants who were retained in the local setting, 5 participants who resigned from the local setting were also interviewed. During this study, it became a common consensus that having a mentor was beneficial, but the participants who resigned had a negative view of how the mentoring program was structured and felt that inconsistencies hindered their mentor's effectiveness. Participants 4406 - 4410 communicated that the mentors that were assigned to them did not facilitate their professional development, growth, or encourage them to stay teaching in the local setting. Participants 4406 and 4408 expressed that they were dissatisfied with the lack of support from their mentors due to the fact that the mentors often served several different functions at the school, particularly participant 4406 reflected:

I really did not have the time to work with my mentor because he worked on another hallway than me and he taught a different level than me. It was really difficult. I just went through the motions so that I could get my teaching certificate.

Participants 4405, 4407, and 4409 mentioned that they did not feel that they received adequate support from their mentor and that had a major influence on why they felt that

the assimilation into the school and the profession was unsuccessful and participant 4408 mentioned:

> There needed to be more time spent with the mentors because most mentors did only what was required and did not go above or beyond what they were being paid to do. In many cases, the mentors would harshly let the mentees know when they were being asked to do something that was "not their job".

Participant 4407 noted, "Mentors need to be taught how to give constructive criticism because often, the mentees were told what they were doing wrong and not how to fix their mistakes." This participant mentioned that there is pressure placed on new teachers to be perfect in the classroom, but no direction on how to accomplish that feat. As an example of this Participant 4406 reflected:

> My mentor would come by and tell me that I was doing a good job, but I really think it was just to keep me in the classroom so that I would not quit. It did not work. When we had a department luncheon one time, I sat by him, and he looked so uncomfortable. I believe that we went the entire meal and he did not talk to me.

Comments from other participants to support the perceived indication that the lack of a positive interpersonal relationship between the mentor and mentee lead to resignations included the following:

- I saw that mentors and mentees were nice to each other on a professional level but as soon as people stop looking they went their own separate ways. I think that people were just trying to play nice for the duration of the mentorship and they were not actually trying to

build friendships that could be used to make the teaching better
(Participant 4407).

- I needed my mentor to be a person I could go to and confide in, but
instead he had a clique that would meet in his room and they would be
mentors as well, so they would sit there and swap horror stories about
their mentees (Participant 4408).

- I was able to work with my mentor at the beginning of the year when it
came to suggestions for planning, but that was about it, because she
made me uncomfortable. She would curse a lot and make really bad
comments in reference to the things that would change in the school
(Participant 4409).

- When I started to cry because I was overwhelmed, he just gave me a
pat on the back and walked away from me. I could not believe the way
that he treated me (Participant 4410).

- All he did was check on me and try to keep me from quitting, because
he needed a "warm body in a room" for the students and did not want
to train a new teacher or deal with a substitute (4406).

The teachers who stayed mentioned that having strong interpersonal relationships with
their mentors had an influence on whether or not they were retained in the local setting.
Of the teachers who resigned, they mentioned that the lack of support from their mentor
did play a role in whether or not they were retained for the next year. In the next section,
the second research question will be discussed.

**Research Question Number Two**

In this section, I address RQ 2: "How do new teacher mentees describe how the assimilation strategies used by their mentors during the new teacher mentoring program PLC influenced their decision to remain in the profession?" The information was based on responses given by the participants' responses to Questions 13 and 16 from those who were retained and Questions 4 and 7 for those who resigned from the local setting. These questions asked about specific mentor-directed assimilation strategies used in the mentoring program that retained new teachers felt aided their decision to stay and the assimilation strategies used that new teachers who resigned felt hindered their growth in the profession. Although two different types of new teachers were interviewed, most held the sentiment that the relationship that was developed with other co-workers was more influential than the assimilation strategies directed by their mentor.

**Retained.** Several of the teachers who were retained felt as though their co-workers were seen as an asset when it came to the assimilation process. The participants mentioned that they would go to their co-workers for assistance when their mentor was not available. Many of the participants mentioned that they felt like they had a team of mentors, instead of just one person because their team was so helpful. Participant 4401 addressed this by stating:

> I felt supported by my team members. I came from out of state and I was afraid that they would judge me or say I didn't know what I was talking about, but they listened to my ideas and they embraced my differences and thought they were attributes. I also enjoy the school culture and the focus on academics.

I find that when they put certain groups of English teachers together they do a really good job of making sure they work well with each other and can cover the subject in the best ways. I really enjoy my team and the area in which I teach.

Comments from other participants to support the perceived indication that developing a strong relationship with co-workers lead the retention of new teachers included the following:

- The strategies that my mentor were used was asking me often how I enjoyed my teaching, making sure that I had a strong support system whenever she was not around, and also making sure that I could come to her anytime I needed her without feeling like I was bothering her (Participant 4404).

- The factors boil down to whether or not the new teacher feels welcomed, supported, and appreciated. So many people easily forget what it's like to be new. I think that for the most part most people are pretty happy teaching here so I think I will stay until something else comes along. Seeing other people happy while they're at work means a lot to me so I think that's what I want to do as well (Participant 4405).

- The factor that influenced me to stay teaching at my school was the relationships are built with my coworkers. They noticed how much time I was spending at school after the school day during the first semester and they made a point to make sure that I did not do that the second semester because they saw how stressed I would make myself.

> They really helped me understand that students are humans and you can plan as much as you want but they are going to do whatever they want in return (Participant 4403).

One of the interview questions asked was about the specific mentoring strategies used in the new teacher mentoring program PLC that new teachers felt helped acclimate them into the school and the field of education. Seven out of the ten participants who were interviewed noted that their mentor would make sure that they checked on them, reminded them of important dates and tasks, and found training that would help strengthen them as teachers.

Based on this data, the most important aspect reported was that mentees felt that building a relationship with other co-workers, as well as their mentor, was a beneficial strategy that helped new teachers during the school year. This team of coworkers decreased the chances that the new teachers would experience isolation in the workplace. The participants felt surrounded by a team of people who helped with the assimilation process, instead of it coming just from their mentor.

Also, Participant 4402 stated:

> The strategy that my mentor used that gave me enough confidence was to attend all of the staff development training that she recommended to me. Most mentors direct their mentees to sign up for all these trainings and take all the time away from their summer vacations, but any of the training that I went to my mentor was always there and was able to talk about how we will implement the training in the classroom and that really helps and spoke volumes.

This participant explained that the mentor led by example, which helped show the mentee how to assimilate into the workplace and the profession. The teachers who stayed mentioned that the assimilation strategies used by their mentors had a positive influence on whether or not they were retained in the local setting.

**Resigned.** Of the teachers who resigned, they also mentioned that it was developing relationships with other colleagues that helped assimilate them into the work place and not the assimilation strategies that had a role in whether or not they were retained for the next year. The teachers who resigned indicated that their co-workers were able to give them assistance whenever they needed it and that they were able to bonding with their team was beneficial during the first year of teaching, even though they still resigned.

Comments from other participants to support the perceived indication that developing a strong relationship with co-workers lead the retention of new teachers included the following:

- I am doing so much better in my current teaching position because I am supported by the team of teachers that teach with me, just like at my last school. The lead is truly an inspiration because she knows so much about the subject area. I was scared to leave, but I am so happy that I did (Participant 4406).

- Half of the time I could not find my mentor, so I would have to go to my team members for help. If it was not for them, I would have completely lost my mind. I am so happy that they were willing to take

time out of their day to steer me in the right direction (Participant 4407).

- My mentor would always give me instructions in the team planning meetings and luckily there were other team members present to overhear these conversations. A lot of my mentor's suggestions were out dated and impractical, so after she went back to her classroom, they would redirect me and make the assignment much easier (Participant 4409).

Even though these participants chose to resign from the local setting, their perceptions shed light on how new teachers value comradery amongst other co-workers. Research question number 2 sought out to find out what assimilation strategies led to the retention or resignation of new teachers. The data from the interviews suggest that the assimilation strategy that was valued the highest was the technique of providing the new teacher with as many accessible information sources when the mentor is unavailable.

**The Perceptions of Retained Teachers Versus Those who Resigned**

There were 10 participants in this study and each was assigned a number to insure their anonymity. The participants with numbers ranging from 4401 - 4405 were retained at the local setting. The participants with numbers ranging from 4406 - 4410 resigned from the local setting. Although two types of participants were interviewed, most of the perceptions of the new teacher mentor program PLC were similar in nature.

All 10 participants mentioned that the local setting made sure that they knew who their mentor was before the first day of classes began. They all noted that the mentor

coordinator contacted the mentor and then the mentors contacted the mentees so that everyone could get acquainted. Participant 4402 stated "You meet in the cafeteria with all the other teachers or staff development and you're introduced to your mentor. It's usually the person who teaches the same level of subject that you do." This explained how quickly mentors were assigned. Although the mentors were assigned quickly, the mentees were uncertain about how the pairings were assigned.

The uncertainty of how the pairings were made was a constant complaint from all of the mentees. Participant 4409 stated:

I think that mentors should post a bio about themselves so that the mentee can choose the best mentor that would help them for the school year. I really do believe that if the mentee is paying $500, they should be able to have more say in who they are paired with. Otherwise, you end up with haphazard situations like mine.

These two statements explain that the mentees, whether they were retained or resigned, did not like random pairing and wanted the mentor that they were assigned to have a systematic purpose.

None of the participants interviewed knew what structure the mentoring program was based on, but linked it to the professional development books that were popular at the local setting at the time. Participant 4401 stated that the monthly meetings were focused on what was in the table of contents of the book that was assigned to all of the mentees, and not based on the needs of the mentees. Participant 4406 stated that once the school year began to get hectic, many of the monthly meetings were shortened or

cancelled all together, so many of the much needed components were never addressed due to time constraints. The perceptions from these two participants explained how the structure of the program attributed to some of the frustrations that the new teachers encountered.

The five participants who were retained felt that there were more benefits to the mentor program PLCs than those who resigned from the program. The benefits that the retained teachers mentioned were: (a) Having a person that they could vent to, (b) The district providing a person who would help assimilate a new teacher into the school and profession as a whole, and (c) Being able to have a specific person to oversee the best practices as they pertained to teaching during the first year. The teachers who were retained expressed enjoyment of the program for the most part and mentioned that it was one of the things that kept them working in the local setting.

The 5 teachers who resigned felt that the mentor program had several flaws that could be improved upon: (a) mentor should always be in the same area as the mentee, (b) mentor should always teach the same level as the mentee, (c) mentor should always teach the same subject as the mentee. These were the main elements of the mentor program that led to the resignation of participants 4406 - 4410.

Both the retained teachers and the teachers who resigned had similar feelings as to how the mentor program could be adjusted to help future mentors and mentees. The suggestions were: (a) mentors should be rotated so that the mentee has more than one mentor a year, (b) the mentor / mentee pairing should be compatible, (c) the personalities of both the mentor and mentee should be considered before the pairing are made

permanent (d) the mentee should be able to complain about the mentoring process anonymously, and (e) the mentor should not be able to sign the mentee up for training with the written and verbal consent of the mentee so unscheduled training will be seen as optional and not mandatory. These were some of the most frequently mentioned changes that the participants wanted to see occur within the program.

**Themes**

Each of the 10 participants in this study was unique in their own way and perceived how their mentoring program PLC influenced their decision to stay in the field of education differently. During analysis, I identified four major themes that connect the similarities and differences among the 5 new teachers who remained employed at the focus school and the 5 new teachers who resigned from the local setting. The four themes that developed during this study and tied the participants' similarities and differences together were the following: (a) The importance of being able to complain anonymously, (b) the lack of structure in the new teacher mentor PLC, (c) the perceived need for mentees to self-select mentors, (d) the need to reduce mandatory professional development. Each theme will be discussed at length.

**Importance of being able to complain anonymously.** The first theme that materialized from the data was the importance of the mentees to complain about the mentor program anonymously. Of the ten participants who were interviewed, six (Participants # 4401, 4403, 4405, 4406, 4407, 4408, and 4409) stated that the school needed a way for the mentees to be able to complain about their mentors anonymously as to avoid repercussions. They reported that although they did like certain aspects of the

mentoring program, it was hard to complain about their mentors' inadequacies without

fearing that they were putting their certification in jeopardy. Common complaints from

the six participants were that their mentor was not on campus enough, that there was not

a beneficial interpersonal relationship developed, that the mentor was inexperienced, and

that the mentor did the bare minimum that the job required and was not a beneficial part

of the mentoring PLC. The importance of there being a way to complain without being

left to teach in fear was a common comment from these six participants.

Participant 4406 stated:

I think there should be a system that allows teachers to complain about their

working conditions anonymously. I feel that a lot of teachers would still be

teaching if there was an outlet for the frustrations. We suffer in silence because

the schools hold our certifications hostage. If we complain, they may not

recommend that we get our standard teaching certificate.

This participant expressed that they were unhappy with their mentor, but were too afraid

to speak up. Having a way for the complaints to be submitted anonymously was echoed

by other participants as well.

Participant 4407 noted:

There needs to be a person who is in between the mentee and the mentor so that if

the mentee has a complaint about the performance of the mentor or vice versa

there can be a mediator who can solve those problems or rematch the mentor and

mentee with people that are a better fit. I guess that is supposed to be the mentor

coordinator, but this function was not done.

This participant wanted to express their displeasure with the mentor aspect of the program, but did not know the proper channels to use or if any existed. These two participants reflect the common theme from the six participants that they wanted to issue complaints about their mentor, but were not instructed about how to do so in a constructive manner, so they endured the program, although the participants that resigned from the local setting were dissatisfied.

**Lack of structure.** The second theme that emerged from the data was the perceived lack of structure in the mentoring program PLC. All 10 participants who were interviewed mentioned that they were not certain what to expect from one mentor PLC meeting to the next besides from being issued a calendar that was based on the tables of content from the assigned new teacher textbooks for the year. Each participant mentioned that the mentor PLC sessions were planned out before the school year began and they were not adjusted to suit the needs of the mentees. Not one participant was able to give a definitive answer about what the mentor PLC was based on or what guided how the sessions were prioritized. The structure of the mentor program was a common topic of displeasure for the participants.

Participant 4404 mentioned:

When I started the mentor program three years ago that wasn't really a structure we were just paired with our mentors and told to report back to the mentor coordinator what our activities were. The school was not big on PLCs at the time.

I do not remember what the source of the PLC content was, but I do think it had a

huge Harry Wong influence, because that was one of the books that was really

popular when I started teaching.

Most of the participants were oblivious to what the structure of the program was based on

and many did not question the mentor coordinator.

Participant 4409 stated:

All the new teachers hated going to the PLC meetings because it was seen as

something that was forced on everyone, on top of what everyone already had to

do. Most of the participants felt that the meetings were a "dog and pony show".

No one liked it, because no one enjoyed giving up an hour or more after school

for it.

This information expressed that since the mentees did not know the source of the mentor

PLC structure or have the topics of discussion tailored to how the teaching year was

going for them, they did not feel invested in the PLC meetings or the program. All of the

participants expressed having a detachment from the program because the structure was

based on the table of contents of a book, instead of customized to meet their needs. Many

expressed that the mentoring PLC should have been tailored to what the mentees were

experiencing as teachers, and not prioritized according to the way certain topics were

organized in a book.

**Need for mentees to self-select their mentor.** Another prevalent theme that

came from the data was the fact that the participants felt that the mentoring program

should not force the pairings of the mentees and mentors, but instead allow the mentees

to self-select their mentor. After the data were analyzed, I found that seven of the 10 participants (Participant 4403 - 4410) expressed a great deal of anguish when it came to discussing the mentor with whom they were paired. The seven participants either wanted to choose their own mentor or have the mentors rotated amongst the mentees so that if a pairing was not benefitting a mentee, they would not have to keep the same mentor the entire year. Individual reports are presented below.

Participant 4410 stated:

I wish the mentor program would have allowed me to switch my mentor when I realized that I was not getting any support from him. They 'imply' that changing or firing your mentor will keep you from your standard teaching certificate. They make you scared to complain. I did not like how the program was handled. I was so happy to be done with it.

This participant made it clear that the mentor that they received was not a beneficial part of the mentoring PLC, but endured the incompatibility out of fear of not receiving a teaching certification.

Participant 4409 added:

I believe that the mentor program should have had a rotation where each teacher received a new teacher every 9 weeks that would focus on different things. Maybe one would focus on networking, another would do classroom management, the other would touch on workplace stress, and the last would focus on workplace advancement and certifications. I really do not think that a mentee should have to be stuck with just one mentor for an entire school year.

This participant highlighted how the pairings of the mentor and mentee could be perceived as a hindrance to the effectiveness of the PLC.

   **Need to reduce mandatory professional development.** Staff development is added to the school year to help employees learn the necessary skills to survive in the classroom, but new teachers expressed a need for the mentoring PLC to reduce the amount of training that is considered required for new teachers to attend because the extended hours before and after school and during the summer led to exhaustion and burnout. Six out of 10 of the participants (Participants 4402 and 4406 - 4410) expressed that they had been pressured into attending numerous professional development training sessions. One participant out of the 10 who was interviewed mentioned that it helped when the mentor attended the training with the mentee.

   Participant 4402 stated:

   The strategy that my mentor used that gave me enough confidence was to attend all of the staff development training that she recommended to me. Most mentors direct their mentees to sign up for all these trainings and take all the time away from their summer vacations, but any of the training that I went to my mentor was always there and was able to talk about how we will implement the training in the classroom and that really helps and spoke volumes.

This participant expressed that the mandatory training was not seen as punitive when the mentor accompanied the mentee to the sessions.

With the mentor present, the mentee could bounce ideas about how to implement strategies, instead of having the mentee attend the sessions alone resulting in the situation seeming punitive, as some participants mentioned.

Participant 4407 mentioned:

I think that the professional development that you chose on your own was useful. The professional development stops being useful when the district starts making certain sessions mandatory, whether you need them or not. When the district or school does that, people seem to get bored with repeating things. I know I was forced to go to a couple of trainings because the session needed more people to attend.

For this participant, the training sessions were seen as a punishment and not as a reward. This data revealed that once the participants were unable to tailor the staff development training according to their own availability and interests, the information was received with resistance.

Although participants responded to the interview questions based on their own individual experiences in the new teacher mentoring PLC, the data revealed that this study had four themes. The participants offered insight on what was enjoyed, disliked and could be changed, but were not able to offer recommendations because they did not want to jeopardize their chance of receiving a teaching certificate. All of the participants expressed a desire to offer constructive criticism if a system were developed that would allow them to do so.

Another data source that was used was the analysis of new teacher mentor program PLC agendas.  I collected the agendas from the 2011 - 2012 through the 2015 - 2016 school years and used highlighters to group and color coded similar topics that were covered over those years.  The interviewees mentioned that they needed more assistance avoiding burnout due to being over scheduled, understanding how to navigate career advancement opportunities, using technology in the classroom, and how to best utilize the mentor that was assigned to them.  After analyzing that information, I was able to look at the information that was color coded and grouped and found that those topics were either absent from the PLC agendas or infrequently covered.

The agendas also help to explain why certain participants were more satisfied with their perceptions of other topics.  For example, the interviewees perceived that the PLC positively addressed how to group students in the classroom, build healthy relationships with colleagues and the student body, as well as how to use different tools to motivate students.  The color coding of the agendas helped show that those subjects were popular topics covered frequently over the years in the PLC.  When the themes and commonalties were developed for this study, analyzing the agendas was a method of establishing credibility and trustworthiness.

**Summary**

This research study was developed to address the high attrition rate of new teachers at the focus school that was presented in Section 1. To gather information on how participants in a new teacher mentoring program PLC perceived the assimilation strategies directed by their mentors the PLC agendas were analyzed.  In addition to

analyzing the agendas, two research questions were developed along with corresponding

interview questions. In this section, the responses from 5 new teachers who stayed

employed at the focus school and 5 new teachers who had resigned were documented, as

well as the themes that linked their similarities and differences. In the following section,

any occurrences of discrepant cases will be discussed.

## Dealing with Discrepant Cases

In this study, I examined my findings so that I would be prepared for any

discrepant cases. A discrepant case involves looking for and considering elements of the

data that do not back or seem to refute patterns or meanings that are arise from data

analysis (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2001). In this study, I did not have any discrepant cases.

During this research, I worked to ensure trustworthiness by using triangulation, member

checking, rich, thick description, and I spent a prolonged length of time in the field

collecting research data from the participants as suggested by Creswell (2009).

During and after this study, I used all of the strategies mentioned by Creswell

(2009) and after reviewing the data to ensure that each step was done properly, I

concluded that I did not have any discrepant cases in this study but that interviewees'

comments could all be included in generalized themes.

In the event that any corrections to this study had been requested, the participants

and I would have discussed any discrepant information. If I would have found that any of

the data needed correcting, they would have been corrected (Creswell, 2012). I also asked

myself questions outlined in Yin's (2015) material that suggested that researchers pose

the question, "whether events and actions are as they appear to be; whether participants

are giving their most candid responses when talking to you, and finally whether your own original assumptions about a topic and its features were indeed correct" (p. 80). After I concluded this research study, I was confident that I accurately reported all the information that I obtained and was able to use that information to report findings that were trustworthy and that I did not have any discrepant cases.

## Evidence of Quality

Researchers who use a single method of collecting data can be susceptible to making errors (Creswell, 2012; Patton & Patton, 1990). In this study, triangulation involved comparing the perspectives of 10 new teachers who had various view points on the mentor program, analyzed the agendas from new teacher mentor PLCs, and electronic data that detailed the teacher retention and attrition that are logged on the state website. According to Morrow (2005) many researchers misunderstand the term triangulation. In his research, he presented information that explained what it meant to use triangulation in research. He clarified that most research should have on 45 - 90 minute interview, that even after saturation, has its limits. Morrow (2005) goes further to suggest that a researcher use multiple data sources to collect information. The multiple data sources are often described as triangulation. Morrow (2005) further clarified that triangulation does not mean three and the "tri", often meaning three, is irrelevant to triangulation. The research concluded that for a researcher to have breadth, depth, and richness in a study, it is best to have a variety of sources, as I did with this study.

Through the process of triangulation, I was able to compare and contrast the commonalities, themes, and data retrieved from the participant interviews, new teacher mentor PLC agendas, and electronic data that detailed the teacher retention and attrition that is logged on the state website during this study. Themes emerging from the ten interviews were organized into the four previously mentioned categories. During this study, I was the only researcher collecting the data, so accumulating the information was done in a concise and organized fashion that increased the quality of the findings in the themes that have been reported.

Interviewing the 10 participants as sources of data minimized any potential biases that I may have had (Merriam, 2009). By using a tape recorder, I was able to make sure that I had recorded the data correctly, along with taking thorough notes in various colors with different instruments so that I could distinguish between my personal notes and the authentic participant responses (Creswell, 2008). Triangulation of this data kept this study uniform and trustworthy (Lodico et al., 2010). By following all of the approved steps in my data collection section, I was able to keep all records organized, which aided in the accurate interpretation of data.

## Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

The findings from this study demonstrated that the new teacher mentoring program PLC was a vital component of the new teacher induction program in the local setting. The PLC is used to help new teachers get all of the benefits of mentoring so that they feel confident in the profession. Mentors are provided to the new teachers so that there will be a veteran teacher available to give advice and guidance during times of

uncertainty when it comes to lesson plans professional development, or other classroom managerial tasks. This research study was conducted to investigate how new teachers perceived the new teacher mentoring program PLC at the focus school and to understand what changes, if any, could be made to make the program more influential to increase the retention rate of new teachers. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) also found that new teachers seemed to have greater success in the classroom and the profession when they had a mentor during the first year of teaching. Kurtts (2011) found that the first year of teaching can be stressful for new teachers and that is why good induction programs are important. Kurtts added that well-structured induction programs helped the individuals in the school who monitored new teachers, as well as the administrators who appraised them. Additionally, Lazar and Reich (2016) studied five new teachers who taught in underprivileged areas who reported they had to learn to adapt to their students as well as the environment. The authors found that the veteran teachers in the school helped the new teachers understand how to relate to the students and deliver relatable lessons. With this information in mind, the new teacher mentoring PLC at the focus setting is designed to provide support to new teachers by providing information that is formatted to address specific issues that novice teachers often encounter, such as classroom management, work / life balance, and navigating professional duties and obligations. The research questions that were developed for this study were designed to find out how Hord's (2004) cycle of inquiry could be best utilized in the PLC to reduce the anxiety and feelings of isolation associating with the first 5 years of teaching.

According to the (NCLB, 2002), participation in the new teacher mentoring program PLC with the accompanying participation fee is mandatory, and because of that mandate, the program was viewed positively and negatively by the participants.

Participants reported both positive and negative aspects of the mentoring program. The positive perceptions of the mentoring program included that the mentees felt that it provided them with a spokesperson when new teachers felt ignored. The mentor was seen as an extra person who could serve as a listening ear, and a positive remodel. These were some of the aspects were reported to be the ones that influenced new teachers to stay employed at the focus school. Mentees declared some negative perceptions of the program, such as providing forced pairings of mentors and mentees that were counterproductive, requiring a time commitment for after school new teacher mentoring program meetings that were difficult to manage, and requiring a $500 fee for services that some mentees perceived were not rendered. The participants expressed that these were some of the reasons that influenced their decision to resign from the focus school.

The $500 fee was charged to each mentee to be given to mentors as payment for providing extra assistance to mentees during the first year of teaching. Mentees mentioned that they felt that the fee was unjustified when the expected services were not rendered, and the charge had an influence on whether they chose to remain employed at the focus school or resign. Since the fee was mandatory for the mentees, it was mentioned that there should be a way to monitor the mentor during the PLC. According to Ingersoll and Strong (2011), the fee is commonly assessed due to the amount of time

that is required to assist new teachers and as an incentive to get veteran teachers to begin and continue to serve as mentors. Although the fee was important to incentivize teacher involvement as mentors, this fee was only justified if the new teacher mentee was retained in the school long enough to become a mentor and pass on relatable experiences to other new teachers, and earn the $500 themselves.

Based on data collected from the perspectives of the mentees, the structure of the new teacher mentoring program at the local setting could be adjusted to increase the number of new teachers who were retained at the local setting. Based on the observations from the PLC agendas, new teachers who have gone through the program could offer insight on what topics need to be given the most attention, the order that the topics should be discussed, and provide examples to justify why certain topics are important for new teachers to understand based on the school culture. New, as well as old teachers would also be able to examine topics that were listed on the agendas and offer sight into how each topic did or did not contribute to each mentee's retention or desired resignation from the focus school.

If new teachers were allowed to have more input on who was assigned to be their mentor, the mentor / mentee interpersonal relationship may be perceived to be more enjoyable. New teachers may not have had much knowledge about the teachers who are currently on staff, so providing each new teacher with access to the web pages of teachers who serve as mentors could be helpful. This change could be easily implemented by having mentors and mentees post biographies about themselves on the PLC webpage at the local setting and then allowing mentees to send a mentoring request to a desired

mentor. Once the mentor and mentee agree to the pairing, the mentorship would begin. The new teacher mentees also expressed a desire to have a rotating mentoring system so that new teachers would have several mentors throughout the school year instead of just one. The goal of mentoring is to link new teachers with veteran teachers so that they are able to learn the best practices from an experienced classroom teacher (Horvath et al, 2008; Lazar & Reich, 2016). It may be beneficial to link new teachers with numerous examples throughout the school year instead of just pairing a new teacher with one other veteran teacher.

Participants also perceived that if the new teacher mentoring program PLC allowed the participants to have more influence regarding the structure of the program, in regards to the topics that are covered at meetings, and in what order they are covered, the PLC meeting would be more beneficial. DuFour et al. (2006) noted that well formatted PLCs had a fluid structure so that attention was paid to issues that were deemed important to the group and encouraged collaboration to achieve an agreed upon goal. There are various formats used to structure new teacher mentor programs (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Lazar & Reich, 2016) so it may be beneficial to look at other models that are being used to see what could be adapted in the local setting that would improve the structure of the new teacher mentoring PLC from the perception of new teachers. Examining the best practices used in other programs with the new teachers who have gone through the program may help the new teachers that are currently enrolled feel invested in the program and tailor it specifically to the needs of the new teachers in the local setting.

Lastly, participants expressed a desire to give anonymous feedback about what was perceived to be positive and negative aspects of the program. The mentor element was added to the new teacher induction program so that the mentor can reduce the possibility of the new teacher feeling like they were teaching in isolation, which is often expressed by new teachers (Fosnot, 2005), but this method only works if the new teacher sees the mentor as beneficial. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) have done extensive research on how mentoring can increase the number of retained new teachers from year to year. The study found that new teachers who participate in mentoring programs have positive teacher classroom instructional practices, student achievement, and teacher retention and commitment, which are positive social change because the graduation rates and test score may improve and produce positive members in society. To create a format where new teachers get the most assistance from the mentoring program, allowing them to have an anonymous way to offer feedback about the PLC could be beneficial. All of these changes from the perceptions of the interviewees could have a positive influence on how new teachers perceive the program and the teaching experience at the local setting, as well as provide continual suggestions for ongoing improvements, therefore positively influencing society and the quality of education provided to students in the classroom.

The issues concerning the new teacher induction program, the new teacher mentoring program PLC, and new teachers in the classroom at the local setting could be addressed with small structural changes based on the perceptions of the teachers who are currently enrolled in the program or have exited. Many of interviewees in this study perceived issues could be remedied by listening and inputting the changes suggested by

the participants who were interviewed for this study. By revamping the new teacher

mentoring program PLC and asking past and current participants to review suggested

changes, the program may ensure that the changes seem beneficial to the learning

community at the focus school and will increase the positive satisfaction perceived by the

program participants, thus possibly increasing the retention rate of new teachers.

## Describe Project

After reviewing the findings for this study and asking for feedback from my

committee, I have concluded that presenting a policy paper to the school board at the

local setting may be a feasible action to take to suggest structural changes to the new

teacher mentoring program PLC. Mentoring can be a vital instrument used to increase the

retention of new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), however this study revealed needed

challenges in such a program. The training for the administrators who supervise mentor

programs and the mentors who assist mentees in their assimilation into the work place

can be influential, if they, the individuals are trained to perform the necessary functions

properly. Based on this investigation into how to make the mentorship element of the

new teacher mentoring program PLC activities aid in the assimilation of new teachers, it

was clear that the district's program was ineffective.

The data from this study revealed that both the retained teachers and the teachers

who resigned suggested that the program consider the following changes: (a) mentors

should be rotated so that the mentee has more than one mentor a year, (b) the mentor /

mentee pairing should be compatible, (c) the personalities of both the mentor and mentee

should be considered before the pairing are made permanent (d) the mentee should be

able to complain about the mentoring process anonymously, and (e) the mentor should not be able to sign the mentee up for training without the written and verbal consent of the mentee so unscheduled training will be seen as optional and not mandatory. After reviewing the data, the policy paper for this project will take the five suggestions and develop ways to implement the changes to decrease teacher attrition in the local setting.

To increase the retention rate of new teachers so that highly qualified teachers can continue to contribute to student academic success, I propose to work with the district to present a policy paper that is aimed at improving the elements of the program that do not support new teacher retention. The findings from this study showed that new teacher mentees desire more from participating in a new teacher mentoring program PLC with a mandatory, paid mentor. The policy paper project will be explained further in section three of this study.

<div align="center">**Conclusion**</div>

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers at an urban high school in Texas concerning the assimilation strategies lead by their mentor while in the new teacher induction program. The problem at the school was that it had a low retention rate of new teachers who have fewer than 5 years of teaching experience. Through a qualitative case study I investigated what 10 teachers felt lead to their decisions to stay or resign from the local setting. The data were collected for the purpose of investigating the implementation of assimilation strategies from the perspectives of the participants.

This study explored how a PLC was used to aid in efforts to retain new teachers by utilizing the cycle of inquiry to best prepare lessons and assessments to influence student learning (Hord, 1997). The results of the research were used to develop a policy paper that seeks to positively influence the academic achievement of students and professional lives of new teachers by increasing the retention rate of new teachers that had fewer than 5 years of experience in the local setting. By improving the mentoring program, the goal is to improve retention of teachers; this continuity of staff may then contribute to greater student achievement.

Section 3: The Project

**Introduction**

For this study, the project I chose was a policy recommendation for the focus school to rework the existing structure of the new teacher mentoring program PLC based on the perceptions of new teachers who were retained or resigned after participating as mentees. This policy recommendation evolved from the artifacts and interviews with the 10 new teacher mentees in the local setting who voiced that a change in the existing policy could be a good change for all involved. The recommendations for a new structure may address the problem of high teacher attrition for new teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience in the classroom in the local setting. This policy change will allow more teachers to be retained in the classroom to provide quality instruction for students. In this section, I will explain in detail the components and rationale behind this policy recommendation and review the literature that support and justify the changes that this policy suggests.

**Description and Goals**

I developed the project based on the data collected through review of PLC agendas, electronic data that detailed the teacher retention and attrition, attrition logged on the state website, and the interviews was a policy recommendation for the focus school's teacher mentoring program PLC for new teachers. The goal of the recommendation is to address the problem from Section 1 of increasing attrition of new teachers in the local setting. This recommended policy change is designed to increase the

retention rate of new teachers and improve the quality of classroom instruction for the students in the local setting.

The first goal of the project is to increase the mentees' satisfaction with the mentor program's structure so that more new teachers will be retained in the local setting and add to the level of expertise on the campus. The second goal is to use the new teacher mentoring program PLC cycle of inquiry to improve the quality of classroom instruction for the students by making the assimilation aspect of the mentoring program more influential. Restructuring the new teacher mentoring program PLC is designed to create an open flow of communication between the coordinators and the participants as opposed to the current system that only disseminated information without the input of the participants.

## Rationale

The project of a policy recommendation was selected, following discussion with my committee, because proposing the goals of the project to the school board in the local setting can have an effect on needed changes to the process of new teacher mentoring. After reviewing the data and the project options, a policy recommendation to restructure the existing new teacher mentoring PLC would aid the participants the most. The rationale for making the changes is based on the fact that the restructuring evolves from interviewing the participants about their perceptions of what would increase new teacher retention and improve the quality of classroom instruction in the local setting. The majority of the participants emphasized that the restructuring of the program needed to be made with input from participants who have gone through it and were retained as well as

those who participated but left the school. Data from the interviews conducted in this study informed recommendations for restructuring of the PLC process..

Interviewees questioned the process of the mentoring program. One area where new teachers expressed concern was over the monetary fee and forced obligation to participate in the program. Many felt that they were not given enough support to warrant paying a fee. Others felt that the requirement to go through the program to receive the standard teaching certification was manipulative because they felt complaining may jeopardize the issuing of the certificate. By changing the process for mentor selection, supporting the new teachers may be improved. These ideas were considered in developing the suggestions in the policy paper.

This project is directly associated with the findings from the data analysis in Section 2. The results from the individual interviews support the development and proposed implementation of this project because it was revealed that the mentor program participants desired to have more input into the program's structure. One perception that was noted in the data analysis was that at times the mentee desired to self-select their mentor and have a reduction in the amount of mandatory professional development sessions assigned to new teachers. The mentees also perceived that the PLC could be restructured so that it could be more satisfying for the participants by getting suggestions from the participants who are presently in the program and who have completed it, instead of the being changed by district officials with will to no input from past or present participants. Another perception was that the participants were intimidated into keeping their level of dissatisfaction unreported out of fear of not receiving their teaching

certificate. Results of the data analysis indicated that the program needed restructuring.

The new program would allow the establishment of checks and balances to ensure that

the program improves its ability to increase new teacher retention and improve the

quality of classroom instruction in the local setting.

A policy recommendation project was chosen as the genre for this project because

it directly combats the problem of high teacher attrition, a plan to improve new teacher

assimilation, and the diminished quality of classroom instruction stemming from the

teacher attrition that was indicated in Section 1. Providing a way for the mentors to aid in

the retention of new teachers that can contribute to the level of teaching expertise at the

school will be a positive step in the right direction. Another added benefit of increasing

the level of expertise will be the possibility for more new teachers to become mentors to

the next generation of teachers entering the workforce.

## Project Genre

The problem that was studied in this project concerned the high teacher attrition

for new teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience in the classroom in the local

setting. In this study, my goal was to gather detailed understanding of whether or not new

teachers who participated in the school's new teacher mentoring PLC with an assigned

mentor were retained, and what aspects about the program led to the retention or did not

prevent the resignation of new teachers. As the researcher for this study, my results of

this project will be shared with the principal and school board in making crucial decisions

regarding the structure of the new teacher mentoring PLC. Scotten (2011) claimed that

policy recommendations are created in an attempt to persuade policymakers that there is

evidence to support the changes in present policies and practices are needed to enhance students' performance. This policy recommendation will increase the chances of new teachers being retained in the local setting long enough to reach the five year mark and be considered an expert in the field of education.

Additionally, Creswell (2012) reported that when a researcher presents research findings to the educational community, the researcher should include an executive summary of the components of the study along with the research findings and conclusions. To effectively present the findings of this study, a policy recommendation was chosen for this study instead of an evaluation report, a curriculum plan, or professional development because it will suggest improvements to be made to the current program. An explanation as to why each of the alternative choices were not selected will be explained in this section. The purpose of my study was to understand how to decrease the attrition rate of new teachers in the local setting, so I decided that a policy recommendation was the best genre for this project. Scotten (2011) found that a policy recommendation contains certain components such an introduction, background information, current policy analysis, an overview of alternative policies, and suggestions for resolving the problem.

Another genre option is a curriculum plan; although, it was found inappropriate for this study. Developing a curriculum plan for a school program may not ameliorate the issues that exist (Kerr, 2016). Ciecierski and Bintz (2015) explained that curriculum plans can be haphazard because the improvements can cause the participants involved to develop anxiety about changes that may require more work. Due to the fact that this study

is dealing with new mentee teachers and veteran mentor teachers, the appearance of additional work would have been resisted by all parties because teaching is such a demanding field. Since this project is aimed to increase the retention rate of new teachers, a curriculum plan was not chosen due to the potential for teachers to see it as a burden and it would not address the need for change in the mentoring program.

The last genre that was available was a professional development, and while it can be used to increase students' performance in the classroom, it does not support the purpose of increasing the retention of new teachers. Shumack and Forde (2011) found that professional development is used to aid teachers in improving their behaviors, knowledge, and skill sets. This project was focused on enhancing a PLC in the local setting, so a professional development was not needed since the changes would be in the program and not the participants. So that this project can stay aligned to resolve the problem presented in Section 1, a policy recommendation was chosen to maintain the alignment and address the problem.

For the genre of this study's project, a policy recommendation was chosen to seek a resolution to the studied problem of high attrition of new teachers in the local level. This policy recommendation will be in alignment with the research questions, literature review, and data analysis that support this study. After reviewing all of the other viable choices such as a curriculum plan, and professional development, I feel that a policy recommendation will be the most valuable tool in enabling me to address the policy makers who will make decisions concerning the implementation of the change in the mentoring and assimilation program.

**Review of the Literature**

This literature review was created to offer research based support for the proposed

changes recommended in a policy change to the new teacher mentoring program PLC in

the local setting. This review was used to compile and examine research that addresses

the guidelines that are found in policy recommendation papers. The topics that will be

addressed within this literature review include the components of policy recommendation

papers, implementing change in the workplace, the advantages of proper workplace

assimilation for new teachers, and the value of mentorship for new teachers. All sources

are recent and new to this paper.

The databases used to retrieve information were Education Resource Complete,

Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, and SAGE through the Walden University library.

To research the literature that has been published between the years 2011 and 2016,

searches were made via Boolean logic using the following terms: *policy*

*recommendations*, *teacher assimilation, teacher assimilation strategies, new teacher*

*mentees, new teacher mentors, professional learning communities, teacher attrition,*

*teacher retention, novice teacher, and student academic performance with new teachers.*

This literature research process was used to create an exhaustive search for information to

inform development of a policy recommendation that can be written with accuracy.

**Policy Recommendation Components**

I will be writing the policy recommendation for this paper to suggest research

based changes to the new teacher mentoring program PLC in the local setting and present

this project to the school board. "A policy recommendation is simply written policy

advice prepared for some group that has the authority to make a decision" (Doyle, 2013).

Using research to back up my assertions, it is the hoped that the policy recommendation

will improve and aid in resolving the problem presented in Section 1.

The Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI, 2012)

guidelines will be followed for this project. The CARDI outlines 10 steps to guide a

policy recommendation (CARDI, 2012). In this section, the components of the (CARDI,

2012) research will be examined as they pertain to this policy recommendation project.

Well-structured policy recommendation will have sections that do the following:

- define the objective;

- target a specific audience;

- set out the issue clearly;

-  give options to resolve the issue;

- recognize the current economic climate;

- fit in with existing policies;

- use examples;

- remember the audience;

- impact the real world;

- emphasize the importance of taking the proposed action; and

- show how other similar revamped policies served to the benefit of other

    entities that are experiencing the same issues (CARDI, 2012, pp. 1 – 3).

CARDI (2012) is a study done in Ireland; however, the information is pertinent to this

study regardless of the country of origin. The goal for this policy recommendation is to

use data to address areas where the new teacher mentor PLC can be improved to increase

the number of new teachers that are retained in the local setting.

**Define the objective.** The first step in a policy recommendation project is to

decide on the objective of the project (CARDI, 2012). This is the first step, because when

a policy recommendation is in the development stages, it is best not to waste valuable

time and resources working on activities that do not support the overarching goal. Getting

straight to the point will keep the audience engaged and prevent other potential issues

from distracting from the mission of getting the policy changed. Once the objective is

clear, the proposed plan will be easier for the audience to follow (Duarte, 2014; Pedder &

Opfer, 2011). The next step is to determine who makes up the target audience.

**Decide on a target audience.** The presenter needs to know who the key

stakeholders are and how the presentation will engage those people when addressing an

audience for a policy recommendation (CARDI 2012; Deschamps, 2012). Relles and

Tierney (2013) found that the target audience is the individual or group of individuals

that will be interested in your research. In the educational arena, the target audiences are

usually administrators, teachers, parents, and community members because they can

influence where or not a new policy may be adopted and how it can best be implemented.

Once the audience has been selected, the issue needs to be clearly defined.

**Set out the issue clearly.** The issue that is driving the policy has to be explained

as thoroughly as possible and based on the best available research to keep the changes

free of deception (CARDI, 2012; Georgiades, 2015; O'Connell, 2013; Wagner et al.,

2010). In this project, the issue is that the new teacher attrition rate at the local setting

was twice the rate of attrition at the state level. In Adamson and Darling-Hammond's (2012) study examining how and why teacher quality is inequitably distributed, the research found that high attrition rate left classrooms filled with new teachers who have fewer than 5 years of teaching, which has a negative influence on student learning. After the issue has been identified and explained, all possible options need to be presented to the audience.

**Give options where possible.** To present a plan with the greatest possibility of being accepted, it is important to look at all of the options that are viable and the advantages and disadvantages of each option (CARDI, 2012). By laying out all of the advantages and disadvantages that accompany a policy recommendation, it makes it easier for administrators to make a decision. Scott's (2011) study on market-driven education reform pointed out that looking at all options is important so that a problematic program can be revamped instead of schools spending money creating new programs that run into the same issues as the one before it. By showing your audience that you are thinking about your recommendation from many different viewpoints, it shows that as a researcher you have studied your policy recommendation and can suggest the best changes for the stakeholders (Stanley, 2011). The changes also have to be financially feasible, so before presenting the policy change, the economy has to be strong enough to support the changes.

**Recognize the current economic climate.** Most importantly, policy recommendations must be presented as cost effective, because changes that can resolve problems and are seen as feasible are accepted by policy makers (CARDI, 2012). Philips

(2015) reported that new teacher turnover costs school districts around 2.2 billion dollars annually. The attrition rate of new teachers has become a financial problem for school districts. In this current economic climate, the money for training could be reduced and put toward new educational programs that enhance student learning. Also, using virtual tools, such as Google Classroom is proven to be cost effective and engaging. Lee (2013) found that using the tools in Google Classroom is a way to keep the participants in the new teacher mentoring program PLC engaged and assess their understanding of the processes involved in the first year of teaching. Since the creation of Google Classroom, there has been an abundance of research that finds that using online learning is the best way to reach a number of people quickly and easily because of the virtual figures that the program offers (Mcpeake et al., 2014; Shaharnee et al., 2016; Stiglitz, 2016). These proposed changes can be easily implemented because they fit in with the current new teacher mentoring program PLC processes.

**Fit in with existing strategies or legislation.** In a study conducted by CARDI (2012) the researcher found that policy changes are easily accepted when they blend harmoniously with state and federal statutes. Also, Jones et al (2015) and O'Connell (2013) also found that researchers who show that policy changes will be in line with current legislation have a higher possibility of being adopted. The proposed policy changes will make changes in a mentor program for new teachers, which ties into the NCLB (2002) that requires that all new teachers must have a mentor during their first year of teaching, whether the teacher has entered the field of education through traditional means or through alternative certification programs. Bullough (2012) noted in

research on new teacher mentoring that the assigned mentor is responsible for helping the new teacher with activities such as lesson plans, classroom management, and understanding state and district standards. Since the mentoring is required, it seems as though the involvement should be rewarding for the participants. For the audience to understand how the changes can be made, examples will be presented.

**Use examples.** In policy recommendations, examples should be shown to the committee so that they can see how the proposed structural changes can be a benefit to the local setting by adding examples of what programs have proven most successful throughout the district, state, and across the country (CARDI, 2012). This policy recommendation will seek changes to a new teacher mentoring PLC, so examples of how other schools have successfully made similar changes will be offered to the decision makers. For example, Sheehan, Gonzalvo, Ramsey, and Sprunger (2016) conducted research on participant perceptions of mentor - mentee relationships and found that using examples to make changes to new teacher mentoring programs was the best way to iron out details and compare and contrast what would or would not work in different settings. Saddler and Asaro-Saddler (2013) added that when presenting to decision-makers, the examples help form visuals so that changes seem achievable. By using examples, it gives the audience a visual representation that highlights various elements of the project. When examples are presented, charts and graphs are used to keep the information suited to the audience.

**Remember the audience.** When writing a policy recommendation, it is important to remember the audience so that the presentation of information can be suited to their liking in language that is plain and simple to understand (CARDI, 2012; Ubbink et al., 2013). Kent, Green, and Feldman (2012) found that the recommendations are received better if the researcher is able to relate to the target audience in numerous ways. Regardless of the complexity, the issue must be comprehendible, readable, and clear to all decision makers (Wagner et al., 2010). Once the audience can relate to the information, they can see how the changes could positively influence the world.

**Show an influence on the real world.** So that time will be used in the most efficient way, showing how this project will influence the world will help the target audience implement the suggested changes (Watts, 2015). Hardy's (2012) research on the politics of changing professional development in schools found that changes in education are often political and the stakeholders may be resistant because often change is thought of as extra work. Additionally, Wagner et al. (2010) found that a policy change can influence the outside world, since others may be influenced by the changes, so using evidence based research to justify possible improvements or adjustments to current policies is best for a seamless transition from the old to the new policy. When changes are linked to specific stakeholders, they will see the importance of acting to implement the changes.

**Emphasize the importance of action.** For the stakeholders to positively adopt the changes, the policy recommendation must be presented as imperative and as a catalyst that will promote other positive changes in other areas (CARDI, 2012; Musandu, 2015).

When policies are created, it is important that they are implemented so that the time that was used to create it is seen as an investment in the future. Over the years, there have been several policies and governmental changes to education, but little is ever done (Hennissen, 2011; Li, 2015). So that the policy recommendation is not presented and then stalled, the decision makers have to understand how important it is that action is taken in a timely fashion. To show how an adopted policy change can improve an existing policy, the audience will be presented with the results of a revamped policy change that was implemented in a comparable environment with a similar problem.

This section explained the components of the policy recommendation that will be used as the genre for this study. Policy recommendations are created and presented to offer insight into how a current issue can be resolved with policy changes that are economical, feasible, and easy to understand (CARDI, 2012). To get the policy changes adopted by decision makers, the recommendations have to be supported by evidence in an organized fashion. By providing research based evidence that relate to current policies, educational leaders are able to make adjustments that promote positive growth for all those involved and influenced by the issue. In addition to delivering the components, other revised policies will be used to inspire action from the decision makers.

**Evaluate a Revamped Policy**

So that the audience can see that suggested changes can improve an existing policy, it is recommended that research be presented on how similar changes helped another school overcome similar problems. Shernoff et al. (2011) found that at a similar school in Illinois, the attrition level was high among the new teachers. This study was

related to the local setting because it had similar demographics, the formatting of the

original program used the same elements adapted from the NCLB Act (2002), and

explored solutions to many of the same types of problems presented at the local setting.

Shernoff et al (2011) found that for a policy recommendation to work, first the

researcher has to have the cooperation of the faculty. The next thing the research has to

do is show the stakeholders that are directly affected by the changes need to see

additional time invested to implement the new policy as beneficial. The last task is to

present the new policy as efficient and pertinent so that problematic issues can be

resolved. In Shernoff et al's (2011) study, the changes that the researchers uncovered to

be the most effective when changing the new teacher mentor program were linking

novices to effective and influential veteran teachers, connecting novice teachers to a large

network of veteran educators, and adapting the relevance, authenticity, grade level, and

kinds of support for the PLCs to the target school. Similar changes have been highlighted

for this study and are believed to have a positive influence in the local setting, if

implemented.

**Implementing Change**

Convincing an audience that change is needed can be difficult in an educational

setting. For this study, the changes to the mentor program will influence the level of

satisfaction as it relates to using mentoring to assimilate new teachers into the local

setting. Ven and Sun (2011) found in their research on implementing models of

organizational change that navigating around tensions and opposition is a necessary part

of implementing new organizational changes. In the research, it was found that

organizational leaders have to deal with many different factors before changes can be made, for instance dealing with the opinions of the stakeholders, finding the necessary funds to pay for new materials, and finding qualified trainers who can assist with teaching new concepts to targeted program participants (Ven & Sun, 2011). Once the tasks have been accomplished, there still are other factors that may pose problems, such as the current members of the new teacher mentoring program PLC being resistant to change and the methods used to hearing and evaluating all of the concerns from the stakeholders that pertain to the program's restructuring in a timely fashion.

Research indicates the difficulties of making change in a school setting. Rainer, Cropley, Jarvis, and Griffiths (2013) also covered the problematic factors that school leaders encounter when trying to implement change. One of the main factors that can pose problems is the policy itself (Rainer et al., 2013). When faced with these dilemmas, finding solutions is of the utmost importance. Shao, Feng, and Liu (2012) found that the anxiety behind change can be reduced by using senior leadership to help smooth over the transition with subordinates. Also, giving individuals who have concerns related to the change an opportunity to voice their opinions and offer suggestions so that they can understand the reasoning behind the change in policy is the best way to implement a policy change (Chen, Lee, Lin, &Zhang, 2016). Changing policies in education is a well-orchestrated ballet, and the processes have to be executed with all possible contentions in mind so that a positive transformation can occur.

**Assimilation**

Another area of concern in introducing new teachers to the school setting pertains to ways to provide for assimilation strategies that reduce workplace anxiety. According to Ledoux, Gorman, and Woehr (2012) proper workplace assimilation is paramount when employers are trying to establish employee cohesiveness. In the Ledoux, et al. study, the researchers used the social relations model (SRM) to explore how assimilation, consensus, and unique relationships aided in building employee teams, similar to PLCs for teachers. The research found that once the new members were comfortable in the teams (assimilated), were able to offer valued input and understand team plans (consensus), and develop beneficial relationships with team members (unique relationships) there was a decrease in conflicts and negativity in the group. This was important because once the assimilation, consensus, and relations were developed the group was able to maximize team processes and outcomes (Adams, Green & Kim, 2012; Quintanilla & Wahl, 2016). As it relates to this study, the team process would be the PLC group's development of lessons and analysis of students' assessments; the outcomes would be increased student learning.

Further research done by Hart (2012) on where new employees should get information from for effective assimilation can help this project. Hart suggested that new employees, in this case teachers, receive their information from many different sources while they are assimilating. Hart (2012) also found that employees who are new to the work place should be comfortable seeking out appointed and self-selected guidance for the proper socialization into the workplace. According to Hart (2012) the proper

assimilation methods that lead to socialization can reduce the possibility that new teachers will feel as though they are working in isolation if they have several different mentors and not just one. The policy recommendation will include this change.

**Mentoring**

This policy recommendation is an attempt to make changes to an existing new teacher mentoring PLC established at the local setting. Mentoring is a large part of a first year teacher's assimilation into a new school and the field of education because it is deemed mandatory by the NCLB Act (Achinstein & Davis, 2014; Carter 2014; Cornwell, 2012; Ulvik & Langorgen, 2012). Mentoring is often implemented during the new teacher induction program for new teachers, but it is often misunderstood (Eliahoo, 2016; Kuter 2016; Leong, 2012). According to Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, and Edward-Groves (2014), mentoring is one-on-one assistance given to a novice teacher (mentee) by a veteran teacher (mentor) to aid in the career development in academia. Ambrosetti (2014) added that mentoring is often described as an opportunity for relationship development between the mentor and mentee as a way to reduce workplace anxieties. These two research studies help develop the understanding that mentoring is a common practice used to help new teachers get acclimated to a new school and education as a profession (Ambrosetti, 2014; Kemmis et al, 2014). This research shows that mentoring serves the purpose of facilitating a new teacher's transition into a role that generations of students depend on for quality instruction.

Through mentoring, new teachers are able to fill their toolboxes with instruments that will allow them to build strong bonds with their students and colleagues (Hudson,

2016; Lopez, 2013; Pogrund & Cowan, 2013). In an earlier study, Hudson (2013) found

that, "mentoring necessitates clear articulation of expectations and practices, as well as

providing the mentee with various viewpoints about teaching" (p. 774). Once these

relationships and bonds have been developed, the mentee will become an active

participant in Hord's (2004) cycle of inquiry during the professional learning committee

meetings.

**Professional Learning Communities**

The PLC that the new teacher mentees are required to participate in was

investigated for this study, and it was found that improvements were needed for the

program to be utilized effectively as a tool to retain new teachers in the local setting.

Zuber-Skerrit, Fletcher, and Kearney (2015) found that PLCs can be most influential

when action research, critical thinking, and professional learning is integrated to

maximize optimal lesson development for students, as well as for students, when all three

components are exhibited in the PLC, the group will be properly utilized. Two of the

leading researchers DuFour and Reeves (2015) expounded on previous research and

found that the PLCs work best when it is not seen as just another meeting, but instead as

a catalyst for growth and exploration. To get ideas on how to restructure the program in

the local setting, other new teacher mentoring PLCs programs will be examined so that

the current program in the local setting can use those effective best practices as examples

to promote new teacher retention.

## Project Description

This project has two goals; the first is to increase the mentees' desired satisfaction with the current mentor program. The second goal is to use the assimilation process directed by the mentors to enhance the cycle of inquiry within the new teacher mentoring PLC to improve the classroom instruction for students. To achieve both of these goals, a policy paper will be presented to the principal in the local setting and encourage adoption so that more new teachers can be retained in the local setting.

### Existing Support

To achieve the two project goals the current new teacher mentoring policy will be an existing support and resource since the new policy will be a restructuring of that policy. This restructuring will not be an extreme change to the way that the program currently operates but will incorporate changes that interviewees in the study indicated needed to be made. Other existing supports will be the technological programs such as Google Classroom and Schoology which the district partners. These programs will make it possible for mentees and mentors to interact with each other throughout the school day, as well as year round so that the feedback can be known by teachers organizing the PLCs and administrators as well as allow participants to remain anonymous. Using the programs will allow the new teacher mentees to have more input into how the program is structured and give feedback as to which topics need the most attention through the use of online surveys and development options.

Additional support that is available in the school included retained technology specialists, skills specialist, department chairs, mentor coordinator, mentors, and mentees

who are familiar with the current mentoring program and can offer input and assistance

during the restructuring process. Also available are the time slots for the staff meetings,

PLCs and bi-weekly staff developments that are used to train all employees on changes to

current initiatives and introduce new ones so that all employees in the building are on the

same page. When the restructuring takes place, this would be the best time to inform the

staff of the policy changes. Technological resources already exist that include the

employee webpages used to disseminate information to staff, students, and parents and

established district training that is scheduled throughout the year to keep all employees

well trained on various topics. These are the existing resources that are available in the

local setting, and in the next section the resources that are needed will be discussed.

**Needed Resources**

For this policy change to take place without difficulties, there are some resources

that must be acquired and technological improvements that need to be made. The first

technological change that is needed is for the school district to activate new teachers in

the system so that they will be able to get involved in the mentoring program sooner than

they are at the present. The second technological change is that the district needs to create

open access to the employee portal where staff webpages can be viewed and training is

offered so that new teachers can see mentor biographies and request to attend trainings

before they start their employment. This is a critical resource because new teachers are

often unable to fully assimilate into a new school because they do not have access to

essential information due to the lack of email addresses, usernames, and passwords. The

third technological change is that all employees' webpages in the local setting need to

have a mentor corner for those who qualify to be a mentor and a new employee "buddy"

corner for all of the mentees who are trained from one year to another until they qualify

to become a mentor. This change would allow the new teachers to see which veteran

teachers are available to them to be mentors and which retained teachers in their

departments and the schools are available to assist in different areas of new teacher

assimilation. With this knowledge, new teacher mentees will have an idea as to who to

turn to when they have questions.

Additional resources that are needed would include various kinds of incentives

that would encourage active participation from the mentees and the mentors, such as gift

cards and other prizes. These resources are needed so that the mentors and mentees can

know that they are doing a good job and are appreciated in the local setting. Another

resource that is needed is an article of the day or week that would accompany the

assigned book that is used as a mentor text for the new teacher mentoring PLC. This

would allow the information to have relevance to the new teacher mentees while they are

in the program and lead to interaction among the members of the program through

discussion and demonstrations of best practices that are tied to the topics. In addition to

these two resources, a video camera that is assigned to the new teacher mentoring PLC

could be used to video tape the best practices used by mentors, mentees, and any other

teachers or employees in the local setting. The videos can be used so that teachable

moments can be highlighted, and, even if certain people are not available to see every

mentee, the video can be shown to demonstrate best practices during the PLC meetings.

In the existing and needed resources sections, I discussed the existing and needed

resources for the implementation of this recommended policy change. In the next two sections, the potential barriers and possible solutions to those barriers will be discussed.

**Potential Barriers and Possible Solutions**

So that the policy paper will be accepted and implemented in the local setting, all of the potential barriers need to be presented so that they can be addressed properly. The restructuring of mentoring will require changes in technology, for instance, how quickly new teachers have access to programs. The slow activation of new teachers is a barrier that causes unnecessary stress for new teachers. A solution to this would be creating "dummy accounts" or generic accounts for new teachers to use until their permanent accounts are activated by the district. This would allow for the new teachers to actively participate in all of the new teacher mentoring program PLC activities sooner than they can at the present.

Another barrier that needs to be addressed is that the new teacher mentoring program PLC will use technology such as Google Classroom and Schoology to get timely feedback from mentees and coordinate the assignment of mentors and buddies. This is a barrier because many veteran teachers, as well as new, are hesitant to use new technology. This barrier can be resolved by adding an introduction to technology to the bi-weekly staff developments for all employees, new teacher induction academy and have installments during the mentoring program PLC meetings. This change would also resolve the problem of mentors being assigned mentees unexpectedly, because all staff members would be training on all of the technology geared towards new teachers so that

everyone on staff is always ready to become a mentor at any time. Providing training as often as possible will ease the fear of using new technology.

The last potential barrier is that some mentors may have multiple mentees throughout the school year due to a shortage of available mentors for new teachers. This policy recommendation suggests that the solution to that problem would be to have all staff members who have three years of teaching experience or more to have mandatory mentor training; this would include all administrative staff, counselors, and librarians. With the availability of multiple mentors, no mentee would be without a mentor or adequate support while in the mentoring program PLC.

**Implementation Timeline**

The implementation of this project could occur during the second semester of the 2016 - 2017 school year and be completed the following 2017 - 2018 school year. For complete adoption of this project, the following actions must take place:

1. The completed policy recommendation paper will be submitted to the principal in the local setting after approval is granted by Walden University (January 2017).
2. I will meet with the campus principal to align the new policy with the school's improvement plan (February 2017).
3. I will meet with the principal, the administrative team, and mentor coordinator to examine the how to effectively implement the new policy (February 2017).
4. With the principal permission, I will present this policy recommendation to the school board at the spring cabinet meeting (March 2017).

5. After the board approves the policy recommendation, I will present the new policy recommendation at the public school board meeting (March 2017).

6. All of the qualified employees in the local setting will begin mentoring training (April 2017).

7. All educators and staff will revise their websites to tailor toward the new teacher mentoring program PLC (April 2017).

8. "Dummy accounts" will be created by technology specialists for new teachers to use until their permanent ones are established by the district (April 2017).

9. Technology support such as Google Classroom and Schoology training will be developed for the new teacher mentoring program PLC (May 2017).

10. The district new teacher induction academy and new teacher mentoring program PLC restructuring will be developed and implemented (June 2017 - throughout the 2017 - 2018 school year).

Once the above mentioned initiatives have taken place, the new teacher mentoring program PLC in the local setting may be better used as a tool to retain new teachers and improve their assimilation into the classroom to enhance the education for the students.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others Involved**

It is my responsibility to develop, present, and spearhead the implementation of this program, but there are other people in the district and in the local setting who will be needed to assist the adoption of the new policy. In this section, I will indicate who the people are and explain what their responsibility will be throughout this project. The first person needed will be the district mentor coordinator. This person is responsible for

keeping all mentor training accessible and up-to-date on the district website. The next person needed is the mentor coordinator at the local level. The school's mentor coordinator is responsible for maintaining the functionality of the new teacher mentoring program PLC's Google Classroom, Schoology site, assigning all mentors and buddies to mentees, collecting all employee mentor training certificates, and keeping track of all positive and negative feedback from the mentors and mentees about the mentoring program. The building principal is responsible for making sure that all qualified employees are certified to be mentors and showing recognition to retained new teachers, buddies, and mentors.

Other people who are vital to implementing this project are mentors, mentees, and buddies. The mentors are responsible for making sure that all of their qualifications are up-to-date on their teacher websites, maintaining positive relationships with mentees, providing positive and negative feedback about the mentoring program to the mentor coordinator, and responding to all mentor requests from mentees within three days. The mentees are responsible for completing mentor requests forms and other documents while in the mentoring program in a timely fashion, selecting potential mentors and submitting the request to the mentor program coordinator, and monitoring available department, school, and district trainings and attending as time allows. The buddies are retained new teachers, and their role is to help the new teachers in their department and throughout the school to aid in the assimilation process. They will offer support and encouragement whenever a mentor is unavailable.

The teachers in the local setting are very important to this project as well. It is the responsibility of all qualified teachers to be trained to be a mentor, to properly give constructive feedback to other teachers, and use the cycle of inquiry during the new teacher mentoring program PLCs to enhance lesson for students. The students also play a part in this project. It is their responsibility to put forth effort to learn the lessons that are presented in the classroom and provide feedback to the teachers on the strengths and weaknesses of the lessons. Once all these people are informed of their responsibilities and the respond accordingly, this project should be successfully implemented.

## Project Evaluation

The new teacher mentoring program PLC in the local setting was created for the purpose of helping new teachers assimilate into teaching with the goal of retaining them for the benefit of present and future students, parents, teachers, and other staff members. The finding of this study indicated that the program has not met the needs of new teacher mentees and needs to be restructured so that more new teachers may be retained. The goal of this project entitled *Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New Teachers* is to create a policy paper that presents recommendations on how to restructure the new teacher mentoring program so that it will be more beneficial for new teachers. The new teacher mentoring program PLC is important to keep in the local setting because it presents an opportunity for new teachers to gain knowledge, guidance, and additional support that makes the school year less daunting. The PLC will be successfully reform if the policy paper is adopted.

Evaluating the project is vital because the findings can aid the developers of the new teacher mentoring program PLC in identifying and addressing the PLC's strengths and weakness as they pertain to the retention of new teachers. The findings from the evaluation could lead to redesigning assimilation tools that will improve the ability for new teachers to effectively teacher the students in the classroom. In this section, I will describe different formative evaluations and goal-based evaluation survey that will be used to assist in the restructuring of this PLC.

For this project, formative evaluations will be used to allow the mentor coordinator to have constant feedback with the mentors and mentees who are enrolled in the new teacher mentoring program PLC. The formative evaluations will occur during the implementation of the project; the formative assessments combine cultural, social, and cognitive theories that encourage interactive learning (Clark, 2012). The methods of formative evaluation will be gathered through Google Forms and Google Surveys, and various forms of written responses, such as exit tickets and discussion posts or informal feedback gathered through team building activities and verbal individual debriefing throughout the year. Making the formative evaluations fun and interactive will help the participants complete the assigned tasks. The goal-based evaluation in the form of a short survey will be used to determine the value of the program and evaluate if restructuring the mentor program achieve the desired goals.

To gather feedback about the program, goal-based evaluation in the form of a survey will be given to all of the participants in the new teacher mentoring program PLC at the beginning and end of each nine weeks throughout the duration of the restructuring.

A goal-based evaluation will be used because it can be set up in the Google classroom for the PLC using Google Forms so that more participants can be reached than just using traditional printable versions. Once this information is gathered it can be used to modify each mentor's method of mentoring. The goal based evaluation is important because this type of evaluation verifies the benefit of the assimilation strategies used to increase the retention of new teachers.

The survey questions used to evaluate this policy recommendation are as follows:

1. Do you think this policy recommendation will be useful to the new teacher mentoring program PLC participants in the local setting?

2. Do you think this policy recommendation will have the ability to increase the number of new teachers who are retained in the local setting?

3. Do you think this policy recommendation will lead to an increased rate of satisfaction in the assimilation strategies used by mentors in the mentoring program?

4. Do you think this policy recommendation will decrease the number of new teachers who resign from the local setting before working for 5 years?

5. What other recommendations do you have for this policy change?

A post survey will be issued to determine if the restructured program was able to achieve the goal of improving the participants' perceptions of the new teacher mentoring program in the local setting. The survey questions are below:

1. Did the new policy improve your perceptions of the new teacher mentoring program?

2. Did the new policy increase the number of new teachers who were retained in the local setting?

3. Did the new policy decrease the number of new teachers who resigned from the local setting?

4. Was the new policy beneficial for the students in the local setting? Why or why not?

5. Are there any other comments that you would like to add?

The evaluation goals of this project is to improve how new teacher mentees perceive the assimilation strategies used during the new teacher mentoring program PLC to increase the retention rate of new teacher at the focus school. The justification behind the project evaluation tools is to test whether or not restructuring this PLC will achieve precisely what is was designed to accomplish. The outcome measures are used to monitor the perceptions of the new teachers while they are in the PLC and the retention rate of those teachers. The survey results will be reviewed by the mentor coordinator and myself, but only analyzed by me so that I can make sure the restructuring meets the goals of this project. The stakeholders who will be interested in the evaluations done for this study include administrators, teachers, parents, and community members because restructuring the PLC can improve the classroom instruction for students. The results of this study can be used to further the conversation on what can be done to keep new teachers in the classroom, develop ways to make mentoring more beneficial in an educational setting, and how to bring about social change in regards to providing students with the best instruction possible.

**Project Implications for Social Change**

The research done on the topic of new teacher mentoring led to the decision to write a policy paper entitled *Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New Teachers.* As a student enrolled in Walden University's Administrator Leadership for Teaching and Learning doctoral program, I not only want this policy recommendation adopted and implemented, I want the results to bring about social change in the educational arena in areas concerning new teacher retention and mentoring. In this section, I will explain how this study will benefit the local community, as well as have far reaching possibilities.

**Local Community**

This project investigated how new teacher mentees perceived the assimilation strategies directed by their mentors while in a new teacher mentoring program PLC. This policy recommendation as designed to be a proactive approach to restructuring the PLC so that it would be more beneficial for the new teachers. This project is important to the members of the community because retaining new teachers in the local setting will increase the level of expertise at the local school and provide a stable education structure at the school with whom the community members can bond. The literature review in this study shows that not retaining teachers cost the school district money that could be allocated for other resources, negatively influences students in the classroom, and causes unnecessary burdens on veteran teachers at the school. Furthermore, by adopting this policy, the community will see that the school is doing whatever possible to provide a positive learning environment for students in the classroom, because a retained teacher

will be able to demonstrate a professional level of expertise for the students, parents, teachers, and administration. This project will be beneficial in a community where teacher expertise can be used to raise the low SAT scores, noted in Section one, that can provide a pathway to college for students who need that opportunity to be a vital force in their community after graduation.

**Far Reaching**

The inability for a school to retain new teachers in the classroom is detrimental to the school culture because it presents a situation where students will be forced to learn in a classroom with inexperienced instructors. I believe with the success of this policy recommendation: the number of new teacher retained in the local setting will rise and with it, the student scores on the SAT and other academic exams will also increase. With the success of this policy at the focus school, other schools in the district will be able to restructure their new teacher mentoring program PLCs to increase new teacher retention, if needed. The district will be able to implement the policy recommendation at all schools and be able to show a stellar success rate at the schools who piloted the improved PLC and be able to offer advice to other districts across the country that may be having a new teacher retention problem. This project was not designed for it to only be implemented once, but to inspire social change wherever it is needed.

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**Conclusion**

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This project was chosen based on the needs expressed by the mentees enrolled in the new teacher mentoring program PLC. A policy recommendation paper entitled *Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New Teachers* was

created as a catalyst for social change. This section contained the rationale for choosing a

policy recommendation paper as my project as the best instrument to improve the

retention of new teachers in the local setting. To justify why a policy recommendation

paper was chosen, the literature review was compiled of new sources to adequately

present the explanation of the design, organization, and implementation of this project.

Also included in this section was the schedule for the implementation of this policy

recommendation and the necessary resources available and still need, as well as the

potential barriers and solutions to overcoming them so that the restructuring can

successfully be adopted.

The *Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New*

*Teachers* policy recommendation paper was created to address the concerns of the new

teachers in the mentoring program. Adopting this policy recommendation will not only

be beneficial to new teachers, but also vital to improving classroom instruction for

students. By interviewing the new teachers in the new teacher mentoring program PLC, I

was able to uncover teachers' perceptions of what resources were provided to new

teachers with the PLC and other resources and processes that were desired. After

examining the mentees' interview responses, I was able to create a policy

recommendation paper that addressed all of their concerns.

In Section 4, I will document my reflections on this project, the project's strength

and weaknesses, as well as the limitations, if any. At the conclusion of the last section, I

will address what I learned about myself during this project as a scholar, project

developer, and a practitioner.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

**Introduction**

In this section, I will reflect on a wide variety of topics, such as the strengths and weaknesses of this project, strategies to address the project's limitations, and scholarship. I also reflect on the planning and designing of this study; alternative ways to approach this project; and what I learned about myself, the process of pursuing a doctoral degree, creating a dissertation, handling working with a research committee, and the project as a whole. Last, I will conclude the study with my reflection on the implications, applications, and direction for the future of this research.

**Project Strengths and Limitations**

As a veteran teacher in the school system where the focus school is located, the retention rate of new teachers is a problem that I believed needed attention due to the number of students who sit in classrooms with substitutes that do not provide quality instruction. I have also experienced being overwhelmed owing to having to educate students in my classroom while there are classroom management problems in the classrooms around me because it is filled with novice teachers year after year. I understand that school districts make decisions based on data from research, so I am confident that the research procedures and findings are a definite strength of this project study. One of the best factors is that I used CARDI (2012) and Doyle (2013) to help understand and structure the policy paper that derived from that data so that I will have a research based way to address the issue presented in Section 1 to the school board.

Another strength of this study is that I found ways to restructure the current new teacher mentoring program PLC based on the perceptions of new teachers who went through the program and had either been retained in the local setting or had decided to resign. By seeking out new teachers who had been retained, I was able to understand, from their perspectives, what worked in the program to support their choice to stay at the focus school. When I interviewed the new teachers who had resigned, I was able to understand from, their perspectives, what could be done to retain other new teachers and whether the mentoring program had any influence on their choice to leave the focus school. I believe that the time taken to get information from both types of the new teachers was beneficial so that the research will not seem one sided. I believe this project study was professionally done and addresses the issue of teacher retention from the teachers who seem to have a hard time expressing what they perceive could be done to curtail the problem based on their thoughts.

## Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

As stated previously, the goal of this project study was to write a policy recommendation paper that would make suggestions on how the new teacher mentoring program PLC currently functioning at the focus school could be restructured to possibly increase the retention rate of new teachers at the school. I created a policy recommendation paper; however, there are alternative approaches to this project. For this project, I examined only the mentoring component of the new teacher induction program. An alternative approach could be to examine the other elements such as the New Teacher Induction Academy and various new teacher in-services that could have been studied, but

due to the difficulty in getting access to the necessary archival documents, this was not done.

To gather the perceptions about what could be changed about the program to make it more beneficial, only the mentees were interviewed and not the mentors. In the development stage of this process, it was considered that the mentors and the mentees would be interviewed, but for the sake of time, the research was focused on the mentees because they were comprised of the group of teachers that were the hardest to retain. I believe this was the best option because replacing new teachers costs nearly $2 billion a year, and reminding the school board of this would show why adopting the policy recommendation would be vital. An alternative to this would be interviewing the mentors as well, if time allows.

Last, I could have examined all of the reasons why new teachers were leaving the focus school, such as distance, new administration, or promotions, as an alternate approach to this research project. It could be possible that those other factors played a part in why new teachers were not retained, but time did not permit that alternative investigation. This research study was designed in a way that it would be feasible and with obtainable goals. The restructuring of the new teacher mentoring program PLC would be easily done because it is already in line with the law based on the NCBL (2002) and the new teacher mentoring program PLC that already exists in the local setting.

## Scholarship

I started my doctoral journey in the summer of June 2009, and it has not been a smooth journey, and as a matter of fact, I have never taken as many detours in my life.

This doctoral journey completely made me embrace what I now call "the human factor" when I pursue anything. "The Human Factor" is the fact that other people can throw a monkey-wrench in your plans and the most important "human" in the factor is you. I believe that I could have completed this program a year earlier if I would have stuck to all of the writing goals that I made for myself along the way. Instead of following the plans, there were far too many days where I went home and had to decompress after working two jobs. I also had to deal with the "Walden 14 day turn around" when it came to me submitting my assignments and getting feedback from my first chair that was assigned to me and dealing with how to work with my other committee members. Once I understood that I had to adjust to other humans during this process, the waiting game became less frustrating.

With the second chair that was assigned to me, I evolved as a scholar in my academic writing and research development. My feedback came very quickly and I was shown examples that helped me to understand my work so that I could make corrections and move forward quickly. By working with my second chair, I was able to complete this dissertation and enjoy the research process without quitting and giving up. This was the hardest academic undertaking I have ever attempted, mainly because this entire degree is done on line, but I am glad that I challenged myself to enroll and complete this program.

Finally, I have been transformed into an independent scholar because since this program is 100% online, I had to read things for understanding on my own and make a point to network during my week long residency. I was told that the doctoral journey was going to be a lonely process, but I did not know how right that notion was. This degree

was extremely difficult, but it will be over soon, and receiving my doctoral degree from Walden University will make it all worth it.

## Project Development and Evaluation

When I started this dissertation program, I thought that the work was thought provoking, but I did not know the complexity of designing my own research study. One of my main problems when creating this project was staying in my comfort zone and only focusing on creating a professional development session, because that was the popular choice for Walden University students. I actually fought to not deviate from my original plan, but after much research and reasonable persuasion from my chair, I decided to create a policy recommendation paper, much to my satisfaction. My strengths, which are research analysis, writing, and the ability to be flexible when comforted with constructive criticism, really helped me to keep my thoughts straight, and at times, completely change my views on many things while in the development phase.

Once my policy recommendation was created, I had to think about how to evaluate it so that the feedback could allow me to see if the policy changes would set out to resolve the problem that was presented in Section 1. For the evaluation, I chose to use a brief survey for the participants that they would take at the beginning and end of each nine week grading period. The aim of the evaluations is to make sure that if the program had some flaws that they can be adjusted for the well-being of the participants, and if it has positive feedback, those activities would be continued for the betterment of the new teacher mentoring program PLC. I believe continuous evaluation of this program is important so that it does not just turn into something that the participants are instructed to

do without the results being used to increase the students' test scores, which may stem from keeping new teachers in the classroom to establish good classroom management strategies, lessons, and academic support. I want the participants to understand that as a researcher, I am not afraid to fail, but I am terrified of sitting and watching students fall to the wayside because I did not attempt to try to be an element of social change.

## Leadership and Change

I started this doctoral journey because, as an educator, one of the best ways to be a leader is to immerse yourself in research so that you can justify changes. This program involved combing through a tremendous amount of research and synthesizing it to develop rich source of information related to PLC and teacher retention/attrition. I did not just want to be a researcher; I want to be a transformer, so I now use the skills that I have acquire to back up suggested changes in my community. To solve the main problem of there being a high level of new teacher attrition, I knew that I would need a research-based plan that could transform the educational quality at my school.

One of the first things that come with leadership is the fear of responsibility. I must admit that I purposely kept my pursuit to receive a doctoral degree a secret from many people because I did not want to embrace their fears and shortcomings on top my anxiety and apprehension. None the less, I kept moving forward and opening up little by little about my academic endeavors only to find support in some of the most unexpected places. I did not realize how important the new teacher mentoring program PLC, new teacher retention, and the quality of education for students was to so many of my co-workers. This project transformed me into a more introspective leader when it came to

my motivation to restructure the PLC at my school because I had to stay in self-reflection about how the *Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New Teachers* policy recommendation paper could inspire positive social change. I truly do believe that if my policy recommendation is adopted, it will be the change that I wish to see in the world.

## Analysis of Self as Scholar

As I reflect on this doctoral journey and the analysis of my project study, I have truly understood the meaning of "if it was easy, everyone would be doing it." There were so many times when I had no one to talk to about how to do this project or what to do at certain phases because no one I know has ever gone through a doctoral program or written a dissertation before. My lack of experience in doing research of this caliber could have overwhelmed me and caused me to quit, but I pledged to become a master of this weakness, so that I can be considered an expert in this field of study.

In the beginning, I researched how the attrition rate of new teachers was affecting schools on a local, state, national, and world-wide level. By examining the issue from many different angels, it allowed me to use current literature to see what best practices could resolve the issue locally. During this research project, I have become accustomed to using APA style for writing papers, using YouTube for tutorials for visual examples of proper paper formatting, learning how to conduct qualitative research, making my writing clear and concise, and developing my thoughts so that they can express my research desires in a scholarly manner.

As a scholar, I have grown to endure this obstacle, and I now believe that nothing will hold me back from any of my dreams of being a life-long, action oriented, social conscience person.

## Analysis of Self as Practitioner

At this point in my research project, it is an honor to reflect on myself as a practitioner, because that is someone who goes to great lengths to master a skill that takes a great degree of skills and refinement. For me to compile research for, create, and propose to present a policy recommendation paper took more skills and refinement than I ever thought I could do. That undertaking required me to analyze the current policy that is in place at the focus school to use my research findings to suggest ways to restructure the program to make it more beneficial based on the perceptions of new teachers. I am thankful that this research project taught me how to separate myself from my research so that I could see clearly.

When I first thought about what my project would be, I was set on creating a professional development session to address the needs based on the perceptions of new teachers, but my awesome chair suggested that a policy paper would be more fitting. After doing research on what a policy paper was, how to create one, and how it could possibly resolve the issue that was presented in Section One, I agreed with my chair. I had to realize that Walden University is focused on social change, so I had to choose a project that would allow me to be the most influential agent of change, which is a policy recommendation.

**Project Developer**

This research study came to fruition in Lansdowne, Virginia, during my three day residency that is required by the university. In one of the session, we were asked about a problem that was influencing our ability to be positive educators. The first thing that came to mind was the problem my school was having keeping the new teachers that we hire in the classroom and all of the students and veteran teachers who were having a hard time dealing with the substitutes who were in the building providing a lackluster amount of instructional support. I remembered what it was that lead me to teaching, and it was because I had a wonderful mentor that suggested that I try the profession and the mentor that was assigned to me through the school district. I wondered how mentoring influenced the life of a new teacher and if it benefitted new teacher retention. That very moment, I set out to examine whether or not mentoring could solve the problem at my school.

I have been in the field of education for almost 10 years, and one of the hardest parts of being an ethical practitioner is leaving how I feel about an issue out of my research and just let the research methodology guide indicate the research findings. Although frustrated with the numerous revisions, opinions from my committee members, and the changes from Walden University, I did not let these distractions jeopardize the integrity of my research. While in this program I have managed to maintain a positive level of flexibility, determination, and perseverance so that my behavior does not tarnish the respectability of my research. While working at my school, I was able to balance the

responsibilities as an educator with the demands that come with being a doctoral candidate. By choosing a project that is deliverable, it helped me to build up my confidence and develop ways to self-motivate myself to finish this research project that I started 5 years ago.

<div align="center">

**Reflection on Importance of the Work for Social Change**

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This project was a policy recommendation titled *Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New Teachers* that recommended that the new teacher mentoring program PLC currently in use at the focus school be restructured so that the retention rate of new teachers at the school can increase and the students in the classrooms can have a better quality of instruction. This project was important because when new teacher are hired, they go through four phases, which are anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection, but many end up leaving the profession before they reach rejuvenation (Phillips, 2015). When teachers leave the classroom, they leave students to be taught by inexperienced substitutes and cause veteran teachers to work twice as hard to assist in classrooms where a lack of a teacher leads to poor classroom management, ineffective instruction, and frustrated students. Improving the mentoring in the local setting will aid in retaining new teachers in the classroom by using their perceptions to restructure the program so that the new teachers get the proper assimilation into teaching that they desire so that they can be retained and add to the level of expertise that will enhance the instruction in the classroom. If successful, this policy recommendation will not only increase the number of teachers at

the focus school and raise the test scores, but also be implemented throughout the district so that new teachers can contribute to the academic success of other students as well.

## Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project was created with the concept of investigating what could be done to increase the retention rate of new teacher mentees at the focus school. I chose to do a policy recommendation paper for my project because I believe it is a procedure that falls in line with the goals of the school and can be easily adopted and successfully implemented. The policy recommendation paper supported by the research study findings show that the new teacher mentoring program can be made to be more influential for the mentees if it is restructured based on the perceptions of the new teacher mentees who are currently enrolled as well as those who have already gone through it, whether they had been retained or decided to resign from the focus school. In the policy paper, two goals were presented, as well as four changes to the structure of the current program. It is my intention to present the policy paper to the school, in hopes that it will be adopted and quickly implemented.

Future research should be conducted on what veteran teachers perceive about assimilation strategies that are designed to support new teachers in the classroom and veteran teacher's reports of what influences new teachers to stay or leave the focus school before working there for 5 years. I believe looking into this information will give more insight into whether changes need to be made with the new teacher induction program activities, or whether there are other areas that need attention.

Also, the veteran teachers may have other suggestions about what could be done to offer more support to new teachers.

## Conclusion

Reflecting on this research, I can now truly say that I am an agent of change, because this policy recommendation, if adopted, will help improve the educational environment in the local setting and in society as a whole. During this research study, I have seen myself grow as a project developer, scholar, and research practitioner. In Section 4, I went into detail about the strengths and weaknesses of this project, as well as discussing the project evaluation, scholarship, and leadership potential as they pertain to this research study. Through this research process, I have learned more about myself as a learner and agent of change, and I now realize how much I have grown and flourished in a scholarly setting. This policy paper has the potential to make a huge influence or all stakeholders involved and I sincerely hope that the positive change helps further educational opportunities for students and teachers in other areas as well.

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Appendix A: The Policy Paper Project

*Assimilation through Professional Learning Communities to Retain New Teachers*

by

Konstance L. Grimble

**Introduction**

Schools around the country have put forth effort to keep as many new teachers in the classroom as possible to increase the potential that students will have qualified educators (Darling-Hammond, 2012). For most school districts, the answer has been to implement professional learning communities for new teachers who are assigned a mentor as part of the new teacher induction program (Sheehan, Gonzalvo, Ramsey, & Sprunger, 2016). The issue of teacher retention is a top priority because it cost school districts billions to replace teachers who resign before they reach the five year mark (Phillips, 2015). New teachers noted that one of the main reasons that they resign before teaching for five years was due to a lack of support from mentoring programs and the feeling of working in isolation as a new educator (Stoll, 2013). To contribute to the literature on new teacher retention, this policy recommendation was developed.

At the present, the school in the local setting participates in the district's new teacher mentoring program that consisted of current and past mentors and mentees. Before the school year began, each new teacher is provided with a mentor who facilitates the new teacher's assimilation into teaching, the school, and familiarity with available resources. New teacher mentees are instructed to meet with their mentors twice a week to discuss any questions or concerns, attend PLC meeting with their mentors to learn rules and regulations, and be involved with the new teacher mentoring program PLCs that go into depth about the policies and procedures at the school. This process is used to aid the new teachers in becoming comfortable when engaging in Hord's (2004) cycle of inquiry

so that they could seek help with preparing lessons and student assessments. New teachers are required to pay a $500 fee that goes to the mentors in exchange for the mentors' ability to provide the time and establish an environment where new teachers feel comfortable seeking out information that could help them feel capable and secure in providing the best quality education for students.

On the local level, new teachers are assigned a mentor who share common educational levels, subjects taught, or school activities that the two may be affiliated with. Mentoring takes place during PLCs, during staff development when the staff learns new educational strategies, and during personal interactions between mentors and mentees when best practices are shared that pertain to work / life balance, career advancement, or networking with other colleagues.

This policy recommendation will focus on improving the assimilation techniques used in the new teacher mentoring program PLC that the interviewees in the *New Teacher Mentees' Perceptions of Mentorship as an Assimilation Strategy* qualitative study perceived as not providing the desired support to keep new teachers in the classroom. In that qualitative, single-bound explanatory case study, purposeful sampling was used to interview 10 new teachers in grades 10 through12 who had been through the mentorship program in the local setting. Of the 10 interviewees, five were still employed in the local setting and five had resigned at the time of this study. The purpose of the interviews was to determine new high school teachers' perceptions of assimilation techniques used by their mentors in the new teacher mentor program's professional

learning communities, as well as new teachers' reports of what influenced them to remain at or leave the local setting.

Both the retained teachers and the teachers who resigned had similar feelings as to how the mentor program could be adjusted to help future mentors and mentees. The suggestions were: (a) mentors should be rotated so that the mentee has more than one mentor a year, (b) the mentor / mentee pairing should be compatible, (c) the personalities of both the mentor and mentee should be considered before the pairing are made permanent (d) the mentee should be able to complain about the mentoring process anonymously, and (e) the mentor should not be able to sign the mentee up for training with the written and verbal consent of the mentee so unscheduled training will be seen as optional and not mandatory. These were some of the most frequently mentioned changes that the participants wanted to see occur within the program.

After conducting the interviews with the new teachers who participate in the new teacher mentoring program PLC at the local setting, it was clear that the program needed to be restructured based on their perceptions of which assimilation strategies lead to the retention of new teachers. The interview process consisted of a variety of open-ended questions asked to new teachers who were retained in the local setting and those who have resigned. Irby (2012) found that induction programs should not focus on mentor synergy, but instead focus on synergistic mentoring so that mentees can get assistance from more than one information source. Lofthouse (2016) adds support to this study because the study found that the most successful mentor programs use multiple coaches so that the mentee can get information from a variety of sources so that the mentee does

not rely on one mentor for all information. Using information from these studies and the data analysis, two goals were developed.

**Goals**

1. Increase the mentees' satisfaction with the mentor program's structure so that more new teachers will be retained in the local setting and add to the level of expertise on the campus.

2. Use the new teacher mentoring program PLC cycle of inquiry to improve the quality of classroom instruction for the students by making the assimilation aspect of the mentoring program more impactful.

To achieve these two goals with this policy, I propose the implementation of four changes to the existing mentor program. Since there is already a program in place in the local setting, the changes will restructure the guidelines that have previously been established. In the next section, the proposed changes will be listed.

**Changes**

1. Develop a system to rotate mentees through at least four mentors a year, instead of only being assigned one.

2. Develop a way to perform compatibility assessments to ensure that the mentor and the mentee will be a good match.

3. Create a system that allows the mentees to anonymously report their level of satisfaction with the mentoring PLC while in the program.

4. Prevent the mentors from automatically assigning additional training to the mentees without the mentees' written consent, as not to set up a haphazard work / life balance.

By implementing the four suggested changes, it is believed more new teachers will be retained to positively impact student learning. In the next section, the current policy that is used in the local setting will be presented. This is the most up-to-date information found after searching through the new teacher induction information designed by the school district.

**Current Policy**

According to the teacher handbook obtained from the district website, the policy pertaining to new teachers, the induction program, mentoring and mentees reads as follows:

### Mentoring and Induction for New Teachers

In the _____ school district, we are dedicated to promising the best for tomorrow's future. Great teachers are the key! _____ school district is dedicated to offering the atmosphere and learning opportunities for all students so that, as graduates, they will have the abilities that will allow them to live earnestly and respectfully in society and in the workplace. New teachers joining the _____ team will be provided the support they need for student success. We provide mentors for all first year teachers, extensive staff development opportunities, and online curriculum management system, state or art technology, content coaches, and campus based instructional support.

School Induction and Mentoring Policy Criteria

1. **Educators Served.** Each school must ensure that:

   a. All beginning teachers are required to receive induction support during their first two years in the profession; and

   b. All beginning teachers are required to receive a mentor within the first 30 days of employment for induction support during their first two years in the profession.

2. **Mentor Quality.** Each school must ensure that:

   a. All schools are required to have mentor selection process;

   b. All schools are required to provide foundational training and ongoing professional development for mentors;

   c. All schools are required to establish criteria for how and when mentors are assigned to beginning educators; and

   d. All schools are required to establish a manageable caseload of beginning educators and the use of full-time teacher mentors.

3. **Time**. Each school must ensure that:

   a. All schools provide release time for teacher mentors; and

   b. All schools provide dedicated mentor-new teacher contact time.

4. **Program Quality.** Each school must ensure that induction programs:

   a. Require regular observation of new teachers by mentors, the provision of instructional feedback based on those observations, and opportunities for new teachers to observe experienced teachers' classrooms;

      b.   Encourage a reduced teaching load for mentor teachers; and

      c.   Encourage beginning educators' participation in a professional learning community or peer network.

5.  **Program Standards.** Each school must ensure that formal program standards that govern the design and operation of local educator induction programs are followed.

6.  **Funding.** Each school must:

      a.   Authorize and appropriate dedicated funding for local educator induction programs; and/or

      b.   Establish competitive innovation funding to support high-quality, standards-based programs.

7.  **Educator Certification/Licensure.** Each school must require beginning educators to complete an induction program to move from a probational teaching certificate to a standard teaching certificate.

8.  **Program Accountability.** Each school must assess and monitor induction programs through strategies such as program evaluation, program surveys, and peer review.

9.  **Teaching Conditions.** Each school must:

      a.   Adopt formal standards for teaching and learning conditions;

      b.   Conduct a regular assessment of such conditions; and

      c.   Incorporate the improvement of such conditions into school improvement plans.

**Rationale**

After reviewing the data and the project options, a policy recommendation to restructure the existing new teacher mentoring PLC that exists in the local setting would aid the participants the most. The rationale for making the changes is based on the fact that the restructuring was developed after interviewing 10 new teachers, five who were still employed in the local setting and five who had resigned about their perceptions of what would increase new teacher retention and improve the quality of classroom instruction in the local setting. The majority of the participants emphasized that the restructuring of the program needed to be made with input from participants who have gone through it and were retained as well as those who left the school. The new policy attempts to satisfy the restructuring by using data from the interviews conducted in the qualitative study *New Teacher Mentees' Perceptions of Mentorship as an Assimilation Strategy*.

Interviewees in the qualitative study, *New Teacher Mentees' Perceptions of Mentorship as an Assimilation Strategy* questioned the process of the mentoring program. One area where new teachers expressed concern was over the monetary fee and forced obligation to participate in the program. Many felt that they were not given enough support to warrant paying a fee. Others felt that the requirement to go through the program to receive the standard teaching certification was manipulative because they felt complaining may jeopardize the issuing of the certificate. These ideas were considered in developing the suggestions in this policy paper.

One perception that was noted in the data analysis was that at times the mentee desired to self-select their mentor and have a reduction in the amount of mandatory professional development assigned to new teachers. Also, to make the mentor rotation beneficial, the mentors would fill out a form that would indicate their level of expertise in various areas so that the mentee will know the rationale behind each rotation. This recommendation took that into account by adding the elements of a mentor rotation and development of an anonymous system that would allow the participant to report their level of program satisfaction without the fear of repercussions. The new policy also suggests that an interest match be done before mentors are paired with mentees to make the more ideal matches. Another perception was that the participants were intimidated into keeping their level of dissatisfaction unreported out of fear of not receiving their teaching certificate. The new program would allow for the establishment of checks and balances to ensure that the program improves its ability to increase new teacher retention and improve the quality of classroom instruction in the local setting.

With the restructuring of the program, changes will be made not only so that the participants will have a higher level of satisfaction, but also a system to let coordinators know if the proposed changes improve the quality of the program. These changes would establish mutually beneficial communication between the participants and mentor program coordinators.

**Review of the Literature**

**Policy Recommendation Components**

The purpose of this project is to restructure the mentoring program PLC at the local level so to achieve two goals, the first is to increase the mentee's satisfaction with the mentor program so that more new teachers can be retained. The second goal is to use the cycle of inquiry (Hord, 2002) from the PLC to make the assimilation aspect of the program more impactful so that the quality of classroom instruction for students will improve. Doyle (2013) noted that "a policy recommendation is simply written policy advice prepared for some group that has authority to make a decision" (p. 2). Doyle added that policy recommendations are used to show decision makers that there is a problem and that the problem can be resolved if they make a recommended informed decision. Policy recommendations are written using various formats, but the suggested 10 step organizational pattern from CARDI (2012) will be followed to structure this recommendation and will have the following sections:

- define the objective;

- target a specific audience;

- set out the issue clearly;

-  give options to resolve the issue;

- recognize the current economic climate;

- fit in with existing policies;

- use examples;

- remember the audience;

- impact the real world;

- emphasize the importance of taking the proposed action; and

- show how other similar revamped policies served to the benefit of other

  entities that are experiencing the same issues (CARDI, 2012, pp. 1 – 3).

CARDI (2012) is a study done in Ireland; however, the information is pertinent to

this study regardless of the country of origin. The goal for this policy recommendation is

to use data to address areas where the new teacher mentor PLC can be improved to

increase the number of new teachers who are retained in the local setting.

**Define the objective.** Research conducted by Doyle (2013) highlighted that "all

policy recommendation begin with an issue with a policy where a decision on how to

correct the issue has to be made by authority figures". Before bringing the issue to the

decision-making parties, it is important that the issue is properly defined (Doyle, 2013).

Once the issue has been easily defined, the plan that is presented will be easier to follow

(Duarte, 2014; Peddler & Opfer, 2011). For this project, the objective is to restructure the

new teacher mentoring program PLC so that the mandatory experience will be more

enjoyable and beneficial for the participants and positively impact student learning in the

classroom. Once the mandatory experience is deemed more rewarding, the participants

may choose to be retained in the local setting, which is in line with goal number one. The

next step is to determine who makes up the target audience.

**Decide on a target audience.** Based on research conducted by Relles and Tierney (2013), they explained that the target audience is the decision-making party that will decide if the policy recommendation is acceptable. It is also important that the issue be well identified and clarified so that everyone is in agreement when the policy recommendation is presented (CARDI, 2012; Deschamps, 2012; Doyle, 2013). The target audience for this project will be the members of the school board, the administrators at the local level, past and present participants of the new teacher mentoring PLC, veteran teachers, parents and students. This target audience has been identified because it will be impacted by the teacher attrition or retention in the local setting. Improving the quality of instruction in the classrooms by retaining teachers helps achieve goal number two. Once the audience has been selected, the issue needs to be clearly defined.

**Set out the issue clearly.** In a policy recommendation, one of the main objectives is to make sure that the issue is explained as thoroughly as possible so that the suggested changes are seen as creditable (CARDI, 2012; Georgiades, 2015; O'Connell, 2013; Wagner et al., 2010). In this project, the issue is that new teacher attrition rate at the local setting was twice the rate of attrition at the state level. Explaining the issue clearly helps achieve goal number two, which aims to improve classroom instruction for students. The high attrition rate has created a faculty with the majority of the staff at the local setting having less experience handling classroom management issues and crafting educational lessons for students. Adamson and Darling-Hammond's (2012) study demonstrated that the best teachers are inequitably distributed due to the demographics where students are found. The study explained that a high rate of attrition in schools negatively affected the

learning potential of students in the classroom. The test scores at the focus school are lower than the other schools in the district, so keeping well trained teachers could make the students more prepared for exams.

**Give options where possible.** Stanley's (2011) research suggested that every effort be made to look at a policy recommendation from every angle so that all the positives and negatives of the plan can be presented to the decision-making committee. For this project, there was a way to make the pairings of mentors and mentees more satisfying by having mentors and mentees complete an interest matching forms. In addition to that change, mentors can indicate in their biographies what their areas of expertise are so that mentees understand the rationale behind mentor rotations, which is in line with changes number one and two. The advantages of this would be that the information presented to the participants would be based on the local setting, which is helpful when formatting PLCs (DuFour et al., 2006; Lassande et al., 2014). Advantages to this change would be increasing the likelihood that the mentee will seek out the mentor for help and have a better idea which mentors specialize in resolving different types of issues. This change would also ensure that a quality interpersonal relationship could develop that will help retain the new teacher. The disadvantages would be that the information may not be applicable to the entire occupation of education, so that new participants may not be able to function successfully outside of the local setting. The disadvantages could be that it may be time consuming to make sure that all pairing is 100% satisfying, so that process may frustrate some who are involved.

Another option would be to restructure the new teacher mentoring program PLC so that it is formatted based on the views of the participants that have gone through the program instead of a popular teaching book and this would help achieve change number three. The advantages of this would be that the information presented to the participants would be based on the local setting, which is helpful when formatting PLCs (DuFour et al., 2006; Lassande et al., 2014). The disadvantages would be that the information may not be applicable to the entire occupation of education, so that new participants may not be able to function successfully outside of the local setting. To help explain that the suggested changes may cost money, the need to purchase incentives for the program participants and possibly a video camera that could be used to film exemplary examples of teaching that can be added to the Google classroom for discussion could help make new teachers more impactful in the classroom, and therefore justify the expenses. Fraser (2016) found that using Google Classroom is a quick and effective way to use surveys to poll whether or not participants are satisfied with a program or project. To further explain why the expenses are needed to make all changes occur smoothly, the research has to make the decision-makers aware of the current economic climate.

**Recognize the current economic climate.** Doyle (2013) explained that all expenses must be justified so that the policy can be adopted without the decision-makers worrying about financial obligations. This policy recommendation will remain in line with the school's current budget and achieve goal number one, because the only needed resources would be incentives and technology for the participants in the new teacher mentoring program PLC, such as gift cards, party supplies, and possibly a video camera

to video tape sample lessons from teachers to be placed in the Google Classroom for the

PLC. Lee (2013) found that using the tools in Google Classroom is a way to keep the

participants in the new teacher mentoring program PLC engaged and assess their

understanding of the processes involved in the first year of teaching. Since the creation of

Google Classroom, there has been an abundance of research that finds that using online

learning is the best way to reach a number of people quickly and easily because of the

virtual figures that the program offers (Mcpeake et al., 2014; Shaharnee et al., 2016;

Stiglitz, 2016) Restructuring the new teacher mentoring program to add these tools and

incentives could actually save money at the local level because if more teachers stay

employed there, less money will have to be spent to retrain incoming teachers on

concepts that the veteran teachers already know (Graham & Harris, 2014; Phillips, 2015).

It is proposed that this program be restructured but the changes will fit in the existing

school schedule, strategies used to support new teachers, and legislation that pertains to

new teachers.

**Fit in with existing strategies or legislation.** When policy recommendations

blend in with the existing policies that are already in place, it makes it easier for the

decision-makers to adopt the new policy (CARDI, 2012; Doyle, 2013; Jones et al., 2015).

O'Connell's (2013) research explained that new policy recommendations are easier to

adopt when they do not violate important policies, and in his case, this policy

recommendation blends perfectly with the NCLB (2002). Bullough's (2012) research

highlights how important it is that new teachers have a support system during the first

year of teaching so that they do not feel like they are teaching in isolation. The focus

school has a new teacher mentoring program PLC in place and this project will not change any of those activities, instead; this policy recommendation is suggesting that certain structural changes, such as a mentor rotation, be made to the mentoring program so that new teachers can get aided in these activities more effectively based on their perceived needs and helps carry out change number one.

As far as establishing methods for increasing the retention of new teachers, research studies show that providing new teachers with mentors is the best way to keep a new teacher from feeling like they are working in isolation (Bullough 2012; Huizing 2012). Also, Irby (2012) found that the best mentor programs do not focus on mentoring synergy, and instead focus on synergistic mentoring so that many mentors contribute to the training of a mentee so that all of the knowledge is compounded instead of just one mentor being the sole information source. Lofthouse (2016) supports this notion because the study found that the best mentorships involve coaching from numerous individuals who teach different skills that are valuable to the mentee. All these studies indicate why a mentor rotation is one of the suggested changes in this policy recommendation. There are several examples that can be used to show how easily the policy recommendation can be adopted.

**Use examples.** Doyle (2013) explained that when recommending a policy change, it is important that examples are shown to the decision-makers so that he results a policy adoption that is similar to the one that is being proposed can be compared and contrasted. Saddler and Asaro-Saddler (2013) added that when presenting to decision-makers, the examples help form visuals so that changes seem achievable. In this presentation to the

school board, I will use Sheehan, Gonzalvo, Ramsey, and Sprunger's (2016) study in which they presented a policy change in a school that has a similar make-up and issue as the local setting. In the Sheehan et al. study, it was found that using examples when the new changes were presented to the teachers who were involved in the new teacher mentoring program, made the changes easier to accept, which is the desired results at the focus school. For this project, the target audience will be presented with the structures of other mentor program PLCS from across the state and nation so that they can see why certain elements were selected as changes to the current program so that both goals can be accomplished. By being able to choose the appropriate examples, it shows that you have not forgotten your audience.

By the end of the 2016 - 2017 school year, all qualified teachers and staff in the local setting will be trained to be mentors or buddies for new teacher mentees that will be hired for the next school year. In addition to this, all employees in the local setting will create webpages on the school websites that explains their qualifications and areas of expertise when serving as a mentor or buddy. Also, by the end of the school year, "dummy" accounts will be set up so that new hires have a way to access the webpages and all district employee portals, Google Classroom and Schoology websites while they are being activated by human resources.

Within 30 days of being hired, the new teacher mentees will be instructed to read through the employee webpages and email five potential mentors and three potential buddies that they would like for the upcoming school year through the employees' webpages. The potential matches will email the mentor coordinator so that the

coordinator will let the new teacher mentee know who their four mentors and two buddies will be through an email. Five mentors and three buddies are chosen so that the mentee can select more options than they need, instead of choosing four potential mentors and two buddies, and having to go back and choose additional people due to one being unavailable. During the school year, the mentee will rotate through four mentors, one each nine weeks and two buddies, one each semester. Once the mentors and buddies have reached their limit of mentees for the year, they will post a notice on their employee webpage, so that the mentees know to choose other people.

Once the mentee has been assigned their mentors and buddies, they will be instructed to complete a personal interest survey and share it with their mentors and buddies through the *New Teacher Mentoring Program PLC* Google Classroom site. This process is done so that the mentors and buddies can get to know that new mentees and possibly set up meetings before school starts that can help acclimate them into the new school. By introducing this method of pairing mentors and mentees, the pairing may be more compatible so that the mentee is able to receive valuable information and guidance from a number of different sources (Pennanen et al., 2015; Smith, 2015; Zembytska, 2016). The goal will be to reduce the level of anxiety that the new teacher mentees have about their first year of teaching.

During the school year, the mentor coordinator will create assignments on Google Classroom that correspond with the interests of the new mentees and that they perceive as important. This information will be gathered by having the mentees fill out a survey through Google Forms before the each nine weeks of school. To gather feedback about

the program, goal-based evaluation in the form of a survey will be given to all of the

participants in the new teacher mentoring program PLC at the beginning and end of each

nine weeks throughout the duration of the restructuring. This survey will be used because

it can be set up in the Google classroom for the PLC using Google Forms so that more

participants can be reached than just using traditional printable versions. Once this

information is gathered it can be used to modify each mentor's method of mentoring and

the structure of the mentoring program PLC. Zembytska (2016) found that the best

mentorships are often adjusted so that the pairing does not become stagnant. The

intention of this evaluation is to gather information about how the new teacher mentees

perceive the impact of the assimilation strategies used to increase the retention of new

teachers.

A post survey will be issued to determine if the restructured program was able to

achieve the goal of improving the participants' perceptions of the new teacher mentoring

program in the local setting. The survey results for the pre and post surveys will be

reviewed by the mentor coordinator and myself, but only analyzed by me so that I can

make sure the restructuring meets the goals of this project. The results of this study can

be used to further the conversation on what can be done to keep new teachers in the

classroom, develop ways to make mentoring more impactful in an educational setting,

and how to bring about social change in regards to providing students with the best

instruction possible.

**Remember the audience.** Regardless of how complex the issues may seem, they

will be presented in a way that will make them comprehensible to the audience (Ubbink

et al, 2013; Wagner et al., 2010). CARDI (2012) and Doyle (2013) explained that the presentation should be presented in easily understood language. Since this presentation will be presented to the school board, the language and ideas will have to be suited to current and retired teachers, principals, and superintendents. There may also be other stakeholders present in the audience, such as community members, that may impact the adoption of this policy change and achieve goal number two, so it will be important to make the new policies easily understandable to all who may be present (Kent, Green and Feldman, 2013). These changes may impact the world by increasing the number of teachers retained at the focus school.

**Show an impact in the real world.** This policy recommendation is attempting to restructure the new teacher mentoring program PLC that is currently operating at the focus school, but it is understood that there may be push back from the teachers who already participate in the program because changing professional development for teachers can often take the form of political negotiation (Hardy, 2012; Watts, 2015). The impact of the changes that are suggested in this policy recommendation will be linked to the identified stakeholders so that each will understand that in this case, once all four changes are adopted, it could equal a possible solution to the problem presented in Section one. Zhang (2014) noted that making the changes relatable to real world issues that impact the world, it helps the audience understand why the changes are urgent. Since this policy recommendation could resolve the issue from Section One, it is so important that the school board approve it so that students will receive the best classroom instruction possible.

**Emphasize the importance of action.** Each school year, ideas are presented that would allow schools to function more efficiently, but few are ever adopted (Hennissen, 2011; Li, 2015). CARDI (2012), Doyle (2013), and Musandu (2015) conducted research that established a process that research can use to develop and present policy recommendations to a decision-making committee. Walden University requires each student to develop a project that inspires social changes that will positively impact the community. The positive social change for this project would be increasing teacher retention for the benefit of students, teachers, administrators, and the surrounding community of the focus school. So that the two goals that lead to new teacher retention can be accomplished in the local setting, feedback will be accepted after this project is presented to the school board and used to make sure that the changes that are agreed upon are enacted.

## Project Evaluation

I investigate the legitimacy of a research project, a research uses a project evaluation (Creemers et al., 2012; Finsterwald et al., 2016; Lodico et al., 2010). For this project, I have chosen to use a goal-based evaluation. This method was chosen because I am interested in knowing whether or not this policy recommendation achieves the goals of this project. Before the changes have been made to restructure the new teacher mentoring program PLC, it is suggested that the district ask the participants to complete a survey concerning the implementation of the new policy recommendation. The survey questions used to evaluate this policy recommendation are as follows:

Do you think,

1. This policy recommendation will be useful to the new teacher mentoring program PLC participants in the local setting?

2. This policy recommendation will have the ability to increase the number of new teachers who are retained in the local setting?

3. This policy recommendation will lead to an increased rate of satisfaction in the assimilation strategies used by mentors in the mentoring program?

4. This policy recommendation will decrease the number of new teachers who resign from the local setting before working for five years?

5. What other recommendations do you have for this policy change?

A post survey will be issued to determine if the restructured program was able to achieve the goal of improving the participants' perceptions of the new teacher mentoring program in the local setting. The survey questions are below:

1. Did the new policy improve your perceptions of the new teacher mentoring program?

2. Did the new policy increase the number of new teachers who were retained in the local setting?

3. Did the new policy decrease the number of new teachers who resigned from the local setting?

4. Was the new policy beneficial for the students in the local setting? Why or why not?

5. Are there any other comments that you would like to add?

**Conclusion**

By using interviews to investigate the perceptions of new teachers who are enrolled in a new teacher mentoring program PLC, I was able to uncover that the participants wanted the program to be restructure so that it would be more impactful. Based on those perceptions, this policy recommendation was developed so that the retention rate of new teacher in the local setting can be increased, which may lead to increase test scores for the students due to improved classroom instruction. By Implementing this policy recommendation, the new teachers who are employed in the local setting will get the support that they need so that they will be retained, adding to the level of expertise at the school. An increased retention rate of new teachers will be beneficial to the students because that may increase the tests scores so that they will be able to graduate and be successful when they pursue higher education. After the policy changes are successfully implemented, the administration may see how important a quality mentor program is to the school community and make sure that it remains a vital part of the school's infrastructure.

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Appendix B: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer: _____

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: New Teacher

Mentees' Perceptions of Mentorship as an Assimilation Strategy, I will have access to

information which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the

information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential

information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others,
   including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any
   confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the
   conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential
   information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or
   purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after
   termination of the job that I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

*Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.*

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Interview Protocol Form

New Teacher Mentees' Perceptions of Mentorship as an Assimilation Strategy Interview Protocol

Occupation: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

**Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Interviews**

Introductory Protocol

*To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only I will be privy to the tapes which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet my human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.*

*I have planned this interview to last no longer than forty-five minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.*

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about teaching, work place assimilation, and the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community on this campus. My research project as a whole focuses on (a) decreasing the number of new teachers who leave the school, which impacts student success and (b) to increasing the capabilities of the current assimilation strategies directed by mentors in the new teacher mentoring professional learning community, developed to aid in the assimilation process of new teachers for retention purposes.

My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am trying to learn more about teaching and learning, and hopefully learn about faculty practices that help improve student learning on campus.

A. Interviewee Background

How long have you been…

_____ in your present position?

_____ at this institution?

_____ employed at another location?

1.     How has your involvement in the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community helped you as a novice teacher? Please give an example.

2.     How has the accessibility of your mentor for counseling and reformation aided with the duties of teaching?

3.     What staff development or assimilation strategies addressed in the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community have helped you with the job/teacher duties of:

> a. administering curriculum based instruction to your students? Please give an example.
>
> b. communicating with your students' parents? Please give an example.
>
> c. participating in cross-curricular planning with the staff to aide in accomplishing the academic goals of the school? Please give an example.
>
> d. comprehending the customs and norms of the urban environment in which you are employed? Please give an example.

4.      Describe your connection with your mentor, and professionalism with others in the school.

5.     What assistance or workload reductions were offered to help you with the best practices for classroom management?

6.     Explain an incident in your classroom when the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community instructed assimilation strategies have been most beneficial to you as a novice teacher.

7. What assimilation strategies were instructed in the new teacher program that have been the least beneficial to you?
8. What additional approaches or assimilation strategies might be included for future sessions in the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community?

Thank you for your assistance this brings our discussion to a close. I appreciate your time and will be emailing a copy of interview transcript to you for review.

**Appendix D: Initial Interview Questions for Retained Teachers at the Focus High School**

*My procedures:*

A. I will introduce myself to the interviewees.
B. I will explain my research and ask the interviewees if they have any questions.
C. I will explain that the interview is being recorded for accuracy with a digital tape recorder, using speaker phone in my private office, and will be transcribed using speech recognition software.
D. I will explain that after the interview is complete, the interviewee will receive a copy of the transcript so that is can be checked for accuracy and make corrections.
E. I will explain the consent form and obtain a signature from the interviews.

*Introduction*: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this one-on-one interview. The purpose for the interview is to find out about your experience as a new teacher mentee who participated in the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community at the focus school. The data collected is for my doctoral degree from Walden University. Your anonymity is protected. The interview will last approximately forty-five minutes.

*Interview Questions*

1. How long have you been a new teacher in your school?
2. What is the structure of the new teacher mentoring professional learning community at your school? What is the source of the new teacher induction content structure?

3. What is the procedure for having a mentor assigned to you while in the new teacher mentoring professional learning community?

4. What is the structure of the mentor / mentee component of the new teacher mentoring professional learning community? What is the source of the mentor / mentee structure?

5.
Research Question #1
5. How do mentors meet the needs of struggling new teachers in the school?

Research Question #1
6. How would you describe the type of mentoring support that you would need to be successful during your first five years of teaching?

Research Question #2
7. In what areas do you need more support from your mentor?

Research Question #2
8. What professional development, preparation, or training have you had for establishing effective classroom management in order to ensure a beneficial learning environment?

Research Question #2
9.) What kinds of challenges did you face as a new teacher?

A.) What are the factors that influence new teachers to stay or leave the local setting from

the perspective of new teacher mentees?

Research Question #1

10.) What factors influence your decision to stay teaching in your school?

Research Question #1
11.) What factors deterred your decision to leave your school and teach at another school?

Research Question #2
12.) What retention strategies did your mentor used to deter your desire to leave your school?

B.) What are the assimilation (retention) strategies used by mentor teachers that affect

teacher retention from the perspective of new teacher mentees?

Research Question #2

13. What mentor-directed retention strategies would helped you to develop enough confidence to remain in the field of teaching?

Research Question #2

14. What type of professional development through the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community helped you better meet the needs of struggling students?

Research Question #2

15. What do you see as an effective way to bridge the gap between what retention strategies mentors perceive new teachers need and what retention strategies are actually needed to retain new teachers in the classroom?

Research Question #2

16.) What retention strategies were used by your mentor that had a positive impact on your desire to stay employed at your school next year?

17.) What have I not asked you that you would like to share?

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Teachers Who Resigned From the Focus High School

*My procedures:*
    A. I will introduce myself to the interviewees.
    B. I will explain my research and ask the interviewees if they have any questions.
    C. I will explain that the interview is being recorded for accuracy with a digital tape recorder, using speaker phone in my private office, and will be transcribed using speech recognition software.
    D. I will explain that after the interview is complete, the interviewee will receive a copy of the transcript so that is can be checked for accuracy and make corrections.
    E. I will explain the consent form and obtain a signature from the interviews.

*Introduction*: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this one-on-one interview. The purpose for the interview is to find out about your experience as a new teacher mentee who participated in the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community at the focus school. The data collected is for my doctoral degree from Walden University. Your anonymity is protected. The interview will last approximately forty-five minutes.

*Question #1:* Why did you choose to teach at the focus school?

*Question #2:* Why did you leave your teaching position at the focus school?
2.1 What specific factors influenced your career decision?
2.2 In retrospect, are you satisfied with your decision to leave the focus school?

*Question #3:* Why do you think some new teachers at the focus school left the profession, migrated to other schools, or out of the occupation?

*Question #4:* Describe any professional development geared towards aiding you in assimilating into the teaching profession you in while teaching at the focus school.
4.1 Was this professional development useful?
4.2 How much time was needed for the professional development?
4.3 Describe any additional training that you feel would have been useful.

*Question #5:* In what ways did you have the opportunity to work with your mentor during your time teaching at the focus school?
5.1 Describe the collegiality of the mentor and mentee teachers at the focus school.

*Question # 6:* How did the new teacher mentoring program professional learning community at the focus school work with you as a new teacher?

*Question #7:* In what ways did you need support from your mentor during your teaching at the focus school?

7.1 What support did you receive from your mentor?

7.2 What support may not have been provided that would have been beneficial to the assimilation process?

7.3 What suggestions would you make for supporting new teachers at the focus school?

*Question #8:* How does teaching in your current position compare to teaching at the focus school?

*Question # 9:* Where do you see yourself professionally in 5 years?

9.1 Do you believe you will still be teaching? Why?

9.2 Do you believe you will still be teaching in your current location? Why?

*For those who left the field of education*

9.3 Do you believe that you will be employed in your current occupation? Why?

9.4 Do you believe that you will ever return to the field of education? Why?

*Question # 10:* What have I not asked that I should have asked?