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Program Evaluation of an Induction Program in a Rural U.S. Middle School

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MA, Lesley University, 2009

BS, Charleston Southern University, 1999

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

This project study addressed the problem of induction teacher attrition at a rural middle school in the Southeastern United States. The study consisted of a program evaluation of a new induction program to ascertain the program's effectiveness in reducing induction teacher attrition. The theoretical framework for this study was Social constructivism. The goals of the evaluation were to (a) examine evidence supporting the effectiveness of the program, (b) identify whether the program helped the school to meet its new-teacher retention goals, and (c) evaluate induction program processes for their possible revision and improvement at other rural middle schools. A qualitative summative program evaluation using an anonymous online survey was used to gather qualitative data from 19 induction contract teachers at the school. Text analysis was used to search and categorize responses and identify frequently used words and phrases. The results showed that the revised induction program did not influence attrition positively or negatively. However, participation in the induction program provided a positive social outlet for new teachers at the school. The evaluation report included recommendations for program improvement, including the hiring of additional staff to improve induction teacher attrition rates. Implementation of these recommendations may affect positive social change by improving rural induction programs and induction teacher retention.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children:

To the late Dorinda Na'cole Graddick, my daughter, whose words, "You can do it, Mommy!" still inspire me and echo daily in my heart;

To my oldest son, Joseph, who would often say, "Wow, Mommy, you take a hit and keep going! I am so proud of you!"

To my middle son, Tyrone, whose words of wisdom guide my path and life choices; and

To my youngest son, Leroy, who will often say to me, "You are my mentor."

My children are the reason I did not quit. There were many times, after repeated rejection of my drafts that I thought of quitting. Thank you all for enduring and supporting my pursuit of my doctoral degree.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The local problem that prompted this study was new-teacher attrition in rural middle-level schools in the U.S. state of South Carolina. Classroom instruction is a complex endeavor that requires years of on-the-job experience to become proficient (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Nagle & Taylor, 2017). Novice induction contract teachers (New teacher who receives an induction contract from the district of study) experience multiple work-related events that affect their decision to stay in or leave the profession. Studies have revealed that lack of preparation to manage classrooms, inadequate pedagogical training, and feelings of isolation from a school's culture are major reasons why induction contract teachers leave the profession (Cieslinski & Szum, 2014; Harfitt, 2015; Hong, 2012). In turn, teacher attrition (i.e., a teacher's decision to stop teaching) adversely affects the financial, human, and organizational structures of public-school systems (Anderson, Fry & Hourcade, 2014; Gomba, 2015; Ute, Philip, Joanne, & Barbara, 2016). When a school district must continually hire new teachers, it loses the ability to grow and develop basic organizational processes as well as the expert knowledge of teaching that develops as teachers gain experience from daily practice.

Attrition rates for new teachers have risen nationally since 1988. The rate of attrition is higher in early career and young teachers (Schaefer, 2013) increased from 5% in 1988 to more than 8% nationwide by 2013 (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). According to researchers, 30-50% of induction contract teachers leave by their fifth year (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Cited reasons for increased attrition

rates include a decline in school stability, low staff morale, and a teacher's lack of pedagogical knowledge (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, 2012; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2012). Researchers have linked high attrition rates to unsatisfactory school climates (Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, 2012). According to Ingersoll (2001, 2011, 2012) well-organized induction programs can lower attrition rates.

New-teacher attrition can be involuntary or voluntary, avoidable, or inevitable, and may have far-reaching effects on K-12 school districts and schools (Gomba, 2015; Ute et al., 2016). New teacher attrition can affect teacher expertise and a school district' s organizational and financial stability. Another far-reaching effect of attrition can be a school's inability to staff schools with qualified teachers resulting in low student achievement due. Hence rather involuntary or voluntary, avoidable, or inevitable new teacher attrition can affect k-12 school districts and schools.

The Local Problem

A rural southeastern middle school in South Carolina experienced an ongoing exodus of new faculty members, who were difficult to replace. Data gathered from research studies on staffing schools indicate that it is at least 4% harder to staff a rural school than an urban or suburban one (Barley, 2009). Justice Middle School (a pseudonym, hereafter referred to as JMS), a rural southeastern school in South Carolina, has sustained new faculty turnover rates of approximately 40% to 70% from 2011 through 2013. For example, in 2011–2012, the school's principal reported hiring three induction contract teachers; in 2012–2013, the principal reported hiring seven more. Of the 10 induction contract teachers employed during this 2-year period, only three

remained on staff as of December 2013, which represents a 70% attrition rate, according to the school's assistant principal. According to the administrators at JMS, reducing new-teacher attrition is vital to the school's sustainability.

Before the 2013–2014 school term, administrators at JMS provided a one-day new employee orientation for induction contract teachers. In the morning, the new teachers met with the office staff and administration and received supplies, including paper and pens, as well as their classroom assignments and keys. During the second half of the day, they could work in their classrooms. The school's principal attributed JMS's high turnover rate to inconsistency in providing new-teacher support. However, school administrators did not gather data for program improvement. At the end of the 2014–2015 school year, JMS administrators filled 10 of the 16 vacant teaching positions with induction contract teachers.

During the 2013-2015 school term administrators were responsible for providing support to the staff at JMS, to include planning, implementing, and monitoring an induction program. Due to the consistent increases in new teacher attrition rates at JMS, the school's administrative team expanded the induction program from a one-day to a three-day orientation in July of 2014. The changes allowed induction contract teachers more time to orient themselves. On Day 1 Teachers met building staff and participated in team-building activities. During the second half of Day-2 Teachers began work in their classrooms. Day 3 was set aside to provide additional pedagogy training. The administrative introduced a new curriculum and instruction support component; monthly

sessions included presentations by experienced teachers and social outings meant to decrease attrition at the school (see Appendix B).

Researchers have studied the effects of induction programs on new-teacher attrition. Findings show first-year teacher burnout, classroom challenges, and curriculum knowledge deficiencies influence induction contract teachers' decisions to remain in or leave the profession (Fontaine, Kane, Duquette, & Savoie-Zajc, 2012; Ingersoll, 2012). However, studies indicate that if correctly implemented, an induction program could support induction contract teachers in overcoming their first-year challenges (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Black, 2004; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012). Additionally, Fry (2009) reported that pairing student-teachers with experienced teachers could support induction contract teachers. Also, active mentorship (Collins, Arenson, Jerpbak, Kane, Dressel, & Antony, 2011), collegial support at the schools, and supervisor support all improved retention (Fry & Anderson, 2011). When new teacher first-year isolation decreased, attrition rates dropped accordingly. Based on the previous study findings providing collegial support reduces new teacher isolation which could affect new teacher retention.

Most U.S. school districts have induction support program mandates for individual schools, yet, those programs are neither consistent nor applicable to any nationwide mandates (Curtis, 2012; Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2012; Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2016). Martin, Buelow, and Hoffman (2016) reported that induction programs if systematically delivered in response to induction contract teachers' individual needs, decreases new-teacher exodus from the profession.

Additionally, Watkins (2005) reported in his findings that consistent support from the principal, an experienced teacher, and the school community was key to new-teacher retention. Building on previous research that has provided evidence of the importance of induction programs, I evaluated JMS's induction program in this study in order to determine whether the program influences new-teacher retention at JMS.

Research results show how first-year teacher burnout, classroom challenges, curriculum knowledge deficiencies, new-teacher isolation, and first-year stressors influence new-teacher attrition. These problems exist both geographically and at specific grade levels, but much of the research does not address both together. For example, Barley (2009), Eppley (2009), and Fry and Anderson (2011) all studied the effects of rural communities' isolated environments on new-teacher retention; they did not consider how induction supports could help middle-level induction contract teachers in rural communities overcome those challenges. The limited literature on rural middle-level program evaluations was the gap I have attempted to close in this study. More specifically, I examined the efficiency of the rural study school's induction program in providing the support necessary to influence a new teacher's decision to remain in the profession.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

South Carolina school districts reported occupied or vacant teacher positions using the full-time equivalent (FTE) system. School districts calculated total teacher numbers based on the following scale: 1.0 for full-time positions and 0.5, 0.75, and so

forth for part-time ones. For instance, “if one full-time and three half-time Spanish teachers are hired, the district would report a total of 2.5 FTEs filled rather than four teachers hired” (Garrett, 2013, p. 3). The state school districts reported 4,583.3 FTEs held by teachers who did not return to their classrooms for the 2012–2013 school year, 5,003.5 FTEs held by teachers who did not return for the 2013–2014 school year, and 5,277.7 FTEs held by new teachers who did not return for the 2014–2015 school year (Garrett, 2012, 2013, 2014). Thus, a high percentage of all FTEs filled (36% for the 2012–2013 school year, 38% for the 2013–2014 school year, and 31.3% for the 2014–2015 school year) were new graduates from teacher education programs in the state (Garrett, 2012, 2013, 2014). The school districts reported that new teacher attrition rates for first-year teachers over that time span ranged from 11% to 13%, with an average attrition rate of 13.9% for all teachers over a three-year period (Garrett, 2012, 2013, 2014; see Table 1).

Table 1

S. C. Teachers’ Attrition Rates, 2013–2015 School Terms

School term	Primary/Elementary			Middle			High school			Total
	Total years of teaching experience			Total years of teaching experience			Total years of teaching experience			
	≤ 1	2-5	>5	≤ 1	2-5	>5	≤ 1	2-5	>5	
2012–2013	206.5	444.8	1313.2	147.6	293.5	635	173.8	342.5	1026.4	4583.3
2013–2014	222	423.5	1572	145	279.5	778.5	183	306.5	1093.5	5003.5
2014–2015	294.8	520.8	1535.7	175.2	284.5	811.8	197.7	323.5	1133.7	5277.7

Note. The source of data for this S. C. table was Garrett (2012, 2013, 2014).

These findings indicate that South Carolina school districts were suffering from frequent attrition, especially of first-year teachers. However, an increase in attrition of second-to-fifth-year teachers was reported, which was possibly the result of the stress

teachers experienced in their first years. The new teacher attrition data from the district of study exhibits similar attrition rate for it teachers. This study specifically looks at attrition in one of it rural middle-level schools.

JMS hired three induction contract teachers during the 2011–2012 school year; none remained on staff by the end of the spring term. During the 2012–2013 school term, JMS hired seven induction contract teachers; three remained by the end of the school year. During the 2013–2014 school term, JMS hired 10 induction contract teachers; none remained by the close of the school year. During the 2014–2015 school term, JMS hired 16 new staff members, including 10 beginning teachers, if the trend remains the same as in previous years 50% to 100% of its new teachers would have exited JMS by the end of the school term. JMS could not sustain ongoing losses of induction contract teachers at such a high rate without financial strain, staggered student achievement, and decreased professional learning, according to the school's administrative team.

Evidence of the Problem from Professional Literature

As of 2014, new teacher turnover costs the United States more than $2.2 billion yearly (Haynes & Maddock, 2014). In one Indiana school district, the costs attributable to teacher loss were $20–$45 million in 2014 (Morello, 2014). However, costs increased upward of $7 billion a year when calculated for individual school districts (Headden, 2012). For example, Jemez Valley, New Mexico, recorded costs of up to $4,366 per departing teacher, and Chicago's Department of Education reported teacher losses of more than 25,000, at the cost of $17,872 per teacher annually (Headden, 2012). High new teacher turnover rates will cost U.S. school districts billions of dollars if not addressed.

Novice teachers, regardless of the preparation they received in their teacher programs, entered classrooms with little to no teaching experience and were simultaneously required to maintain classroom discipline, instruct students with a broad range of ability levels in one class, learn pedagogy, and deliver content efficiently and knowledgeably (Goldrick et al., 2012; Ingersoll, 2012; Zimpher & Howey, 2013). Their confrontation with so many challenges often caused them to leave the profession, especially if they had to deal with these problems in isolation (Curtis, 2012; Fry, 2009). However, researchers have found evidence that induction contract teachers can overcome these difficulties by obtaining timely administrative support, engaging in consistent dialogue with experienced teachers, and receiving mentoring assistance. Goldrick et al. (2012), for instance, found that systematic, organized induction programs accelerated new-teacher professional growth and decreased new-teacher attrition by addressing an induction contract teacher's social, physical, pedagogical, and professional needs directly (see, also, Barley, 2009; Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Davis, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001, 2012). However, according to my review of the literature, limited studies existed on such a program's actual effectiveness in rural schools.

To address this lack of research, I proposed a program evaluation project. My goal was to determine the effectiveness of support programs for induction contract teachers at JMS by surveying previous and current program participants. From July 2016 to October 2016, I conducted a qualitative project study to evaluate the effectiveness of JMS's induction program. My aim in carrying out the evaluation was to identify the internal programmatic strengths of the induction program (S), the internal programmatic

weaknesses of the induction program (W), and the external opportunities (O) to strengthen any weakness and while removing any threats (T) of the rural school's induction program. The evaluation was designed to evaluate the program components designed to reduce first-year stressors on induction contract teachers, to identify best induction program practices for rural middle schools, and to compile an evaluation report with recommended improvements to present to school policymakers and stakeholders.

Originally developed to analyze business cases at Harvard Business School (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007), SWOT has been extended by researchers to other contexts, including human resource development (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007), marketing analysis (Fazeli & Taherikia, 2016), ecology and conservation (White et al., 2015), and tourism (Niavand, Salarzehi, & Tash, 2014). SWOT's versatility made it suitable for this study. Using SWOT analysis, I was able to gather information on what the teachers considered effective components of an induction program. The gathered evidence would help me recommend improvements to the rural school's current program. These results were necessary to inform the school's administrators of a course of action for reducing the entry-level stressors associated with early exits of induction contract teachers. To that end, the study identified components of an effective rural area induction program designed to reduce stressors on new teacher experience during their first year. Based on that, I recommended program improvements.

Definition of Terms

I used the following operational definitions for this study:

Attrition: The loss of teachers, either novice or experienced, who leave teaching employment (Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008).

Experienced teacher: Any teacher with (a) at least 10 years' experience in teaching and holds a continuing teaching certification through any state's teacher licensing or certification department (Si, Ye, & Zhou, 2011); or (b) any teacher with an established reputation throughout the school district for excellent teaching.

Induction contract teacher: A teacher who recently graduated from an accredited university education program, within the first year of a teaching assignment in a public-school system, with no previous teaching experience (Ingersoll, 2012; Iordanides & Vryoni, 2013). Such a teacher held a valid South Carolina pre-professional teaching certificate awarded by the State Board of Education and was employed under a nonrenewable induction contract for up to three years (South Carolina Department of Education, 2012).

Induction program: A program designed to nurture the development of beginning teachers and support their tenure at the school and their success as teachers there (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 47). JMS's southeastern district offered induction contract teachers a series of professional development workshops. For this study, induction contract teachers worked with an assistance team that included a mentor and a veteran teacher for educational, social, and professional support (District Personnel Communication, January 2014; Fenwick & Weir, 2010).

Internal evaluation: An organized educational program assessment system for evaluating a program's needs, goals, and expected outcomes and gaining the information

necessary to recommend program improvements to policymakers (Volkov & Baron, 2011, p. 102).

Middle school: A public or private school for students in Grades 6–8 (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Novice teacher: See *Induction contract teacher*.

Pedagogy: A teacher's internal knowledge about teaching in general and specific strategies for teaching concepts (Ingersoll et al., 2012).

Program: An established set of activities using quantifiable goals and objectives to fulfill an intended purpose (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Program evaluation: An organized assessment system used by staff in educational programs to evaluate their needs, goals, and expected outcomes. An external or internal evaluator can conduct this assessment. Information gained from the assessment can be used to recommend program improvements to policymakers (Volkov & Baron, 2011, p. 102).

Rural: A small-scale, low-density settlement pattern, usually identified by its lack of urban and suburban characteristics (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2014).

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT): An analysis technique assisting faculty in changing a program meaningfully and using the data gathered from the analysis for program improvement (Orr, 2013). For this study, the "SW" of SWOT was the internal strengths and weaknesses affecting JMS's induction teacher population, and the "OT" was the external opportunities and threats (outside of

the induction program, not necessarily the school itself) affecting JMS's induction teacher population.

The Significance of the Study

This study is significant, considering increased teacher attrition trends that have adversely affected the quality of education in many schools nationwide forcing school principals to re-introduce building initiatives each year (Othman & Muijs, 2013). Continual new teacher turnover destabilized a school's climate, culture, and classroom practices (Ingersoll, 2011, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Zhang & Campbell, 2015), thus disrupting the organization's capacity to sustain school-wide processes and meet school goals. Additionally, new-teacher turnover complicates the teacher shortages currently faced by our state-by diminishing teaching quality. The shortages often force administrators in high-poverty districts to hire a substitute or uncertified teachers (JMS Administrator, 2014), and rural and high-poverty schools with high attrition rates are forced to increase teacher-student ratios, resulting in expanded class size (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Further, teacher attrition is greater in rural schools than in urban or suburban schools (Fry, 2009; Othman & Muijs, 2013), and the risk of new-teacher attrition is greater in the middle grades due to poor preparation to teach young adolescents (Martin et al., 2016). This new teacher turnover carried substantial financial costs associated with recruiting, hiring, inducting, and professionally training induction contract teachers (Haynes & Maddock, 2014; Headden, 2012; Morello, 2014). JMS benefited from a comprehensive analysis of how effective its induction program influenced induction contract teachers' decision to remain in teaching past their first year

Research Questions

I developed this study's research questions based on the premise that collecting data about participants' reactions to program components, the learning that has occurred, and visible behavioral changes in induction contract teachers would provide information about the program's effectiveness. To identify ideal induction program components, I sought to answer a central research question and four specific research questions. The central research question was: what induction program processes are ideal to affect retention for induction contract teachers at a rural middle school? The four specific research questions were the following:

RQ1: To what extent does the teacher induction program meet the stated goals for change or impact? This question's main objective was to survey current and previous induction contract teachers to determine whether program participation influenced their decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

RQ2: Which program components are most effective? This question's first objective was to survey induction contract teachers to determine which elements of the induction program provided opportunities for professional development.

RQ3: Which elements of the program need improvement? This question's main objective was to survey induction contract teachers to determine which components of the induction program threatened a new teacher's decision to remain at the school.

RQ4: What are the organizational and program results? This question's main objective was to survey study participants to gauge increases in induction contract

teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skill development levels, and attitudinal changes because of the program.

Furthermore, my research questions relate to my broader efforts to identify the induction program's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external threats and opportunities that influenced new-teacher attrition and retention at JMS.

Review of Literature

Overview

Sources for the literature review came from Walden University's library. Peer-reviewed journal articles were obtained through the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the EBSCO Publishing, Education Research Complete, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest databases. EBSCO Ebooks was the resource for books on the research topic. The organization of the content was based on the literature pertinent to this study. Within the literature review, significant research on new-teacher attrition and induction programs was revealed.

The review begins by expounding on the phenomenon that grounded the study, the conceptual framework, and its connections to the research questions. The following section describes the program evaluation, new-teacher attrition, school-level causes for attrition, technology and attrition, pedagogy and attrition, special educations and attrition, and science and mathematics content areas and attrition. The review expounds on the induction contract teachers' experiences during their first year in teaching and the psychological effects of new-teacher attrition, connecting the emotional stages induction contract teachers experience during their first year. Finally, the purposes of an induction

program, including the state law requirements to identify effective and ineffective elements extracted from the review of current literature, are presented. The review concludes with the study's implications and summary.

Keywords: educational program evaluation, program evaluation, beginning teacher attrition, beginning teacher retention, new-teacher retention, new-teacher attrition, induction program, teacher professional development, beginning teacher, school cultures, rural schools.

The Phenomenon

The phenomenon that grounded this study was new-teacher attrition, which has continued to rise nationally, especially in K–12 institutions, in which one-half of induction contract teachers leave within their first years. Nationwide teacher attrition forced rural schools to hire teachers with less than five years of teaching experience, and who often entered the education profession through alternate routes (Goldrick et al., 2012). According to a New Teacher Center report, attrition adversely affected the years of experience teachers had in present-day classrooms: "By 2020 approximately 50% of all teachers will have less than ten years' experience" (Goldrick et al., 2012, p. 12). Teacher attrition also hampered school stability, climate, staff morale, and teachers' pedagogical knowledge (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012).

Conceptual Framework

Social constructivism, within which social interactions construct what we believed about our world (Elder-Vass, 2012; Gergen, 2009), was the conceptual framework for this study. Through social interactions during their first-year experiences,

teachers developed opinions about teaching that informed their values and determined their behavior, understanding learning primarily in terms of how social and cultural factors mediated it. Students also learned by being a part of a community and engaging with it (Peck, Gallucci, Sloan, & Lippincott, 2009; van Huizen, Van Oers, & Wubbels, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Language is key here, as language within contexts constructs human understanding and influences human action. That is, social and cultural conditions affected how individuals learned, what they believed, and how they behaved, and the effects of these phenomena strengthened the more those individuals interact with their community (Vygotsky, 1978).

Applied to beginning teachers, the process of both developing one's professional skills and adjusting to a new working environment involved a never-ending interaction of social context, the teachers' relations with others, and their interpretations of those experiences (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Korstjens, & Volman, 2014; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014). Teachers made sense of their work and their identities as education professionals through a socio-culturally influenced process (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Therefore, strategies and practices included in effective induction programs are embedded in the social elements of the teachers' experiences and the school's cultural system. Strategies and practices included in effective induction programs produced an increase in teachers' pedagogical skills and professional attitude, resulting in positive outcomes for both teachers and students.

If all members of a teachers' group were to have similar experiences, this commonality would substantiate their views on teaching. As induction contract teachers

interacted with students in the classroom, parents in the community, and faculty and administration in their schools, these teachers record, internalize and label their experiences. If most are negative, the teachers begin to view the teaching profession as bad, hence form hypotheses based on those experiences and decide whether to leave or remain in the field (Bruner, 2014).

Induction contract teachers built social relationships that fostered reflective communication, formulation of concepts, and hypothesis development, and made career decisions based on those conversations, on the premise that "as we communicate with each other, we construct the world in which we live" (Gergen, 2009, p. 4). Implementing an induction program that incorporated best practices and thoughtful dialogue on practice with experienced teachers or school administration members could thus counteract negative perceptions about teaching and supporting induction contract teachers through their teaching challenges could improve retention (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Black, 2004; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Kane et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2016).

Framework Relationship to Research Questions

The belief that teachers construct their learning and knowledge through their social interactions and experiences and that those experiences add to their current knowledge influences their perceptions of teaching is social constructivism. To develop my research questions, I utilized the framework of social constructivism; I considered how new teachers might interact socially within the school environment (professional communities), how those interactions intersect with their current knowledge source (beliefs and values) about teaching, thus constructing new learning. I considered how

their perceptions about teaching, their perceptions of needed support, their daily practice, and how it builds their knowledge (learning) when constructing my questions. The questions were designed to systematically gather information about the perceived SWOT of the rural middle school's induction program by the program participants.

With Question 1, I explored how social interaction within induction teacher programs influenced a new teacher's beliefs and value system. Studying induction teacher participation within the social groups at the school and how that membership added to new teacher learning was the intent of question one. With Question 2, I explored how the perceived strengths of the program components and its influence on induction teachers' existing belief systems resulted in new learning. Exploring induction teachers' views about the effective components of the program and how that influenced their assimilation or rejection of that components was the intent of Question 2. Question 3 was developed to evaluate what components of the programs were perceived by the induction teachers as weak. Evaluation of ineffective program components was critical for identification of needed program adjustments. Finally, through Question 4, I sought to investigate the effectiveness of the overall program and its effect in induction contract teacher reduces attrition.

This study sought to identify SWOT elements of a rural area induction program to reduce first-year stressors on induction contract teachers, to analyze SWOT findings, to ascertain best practices for rural middle schools, and to compile an evaluation report of recommended improvements to present to policymakers and stakeholders. The study explored how induction programs supported induction contract teachers in their daily

encounters and how the program influenced a new teacher's career decisions (Merriam, 2009).

Gaps between (1) the perceived effectiveness of an induction program and its actual effectiveness and (2) the planned support induction contract teachers received, compared to the actual support they received were explored. The study included data collection and an in-depth analysis of an induction program (Lodico et al., 2010) to determine which induction practices resulted in positive experiences for a new teacher and which combinations of strategies in an induction program were most useful. Based on the conclusions I drew from the data, I identified a strategy of active support of induction contract teachers to ensure their proper integration into the school's professional staff, with the goal of reducing new-teacher attrition.

Program Evaluation

By the time of this study, program evaluation had become commonplace in many educational institutions, and the use of program evaluations in schools was explicitly applicable to action research (Barrett, 2013: Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Mathison (2011) identified three significant development phases of evaluation:

Expansion of evaluation practice. In the 1960s, as the U.S. government began to acquire more power over state-funded programs, questions of their effectiveness arose. Questioning whether the programs were accomplishing their intended functions, governmental agencies and officials began to mandate programs' evaluations.

Expansion of the use and function of program evaluations. Educational program evaluation shifted in the 1980s from evaluation for efficiency and cost-

effectiveness to evaluation for decision-making. Still considered important, cost efficiency became one component of good decision-making for educational programs.

Performance Measurement. Evaluations began in the 1990s and, as of 2011, has continued in educational settings (Mathison, 2011). Use of the information gained through this program evaluation may affect new-teacher attrition at rural middle schools.

Attrition

Nationally, teacher attrition in public schools, particularly among induction contract teachers, has increased consistently over the past 20 years. Data showed a significant number of teachers leaving before reaching their three-year mark. Multiple studies indicated that about 50% of novice teachers resigned within three years (Fenwick & Weir, 2010; Fontaine et al., 2012; Kane & Francis, 2013). South Carolina recorded a loss of more than 28,000 teachers over a five-year period (Garrett, 2014). New-teacher attrition is disrupting a teacher's professional growth and efficacy. Headden (2012), Ingersoll (2012), and Stanulis et al. (2007) have all contended that gaining experience through actual classroom practice was crucial to teacher efficacy. Consequently, teachers who left the profession within their first year lost the opportunity to dialogue with more experienced teachers.

When beginning teachers missed focused discussions about teaching and learning, they lost the chance to improve their ability to evaluate student needs, complete school mandates, and implement school initiatives. The amount of time a teacher spent in actual classroom practice was crucial to new teacher efficacy and reducing new-teacher attrition. Therefore, as a means of confronting new-teacher attrition, public school

systems had to implement induction programs that supported teachers new to the profession. Evidence suggested that negative school and classroom experiences influenced a new teacher's decision to leave the job (Black, 2004; Correa & Wagner, 2011; Curtis, 2012; Fontaine et al., 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014). Because induction contract teachers were the "largest groups within one of the largest occupations in the nation, and [that] these beginners have steadily become more prone to leave teaching within five years" (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 49), addressing attrition became necessary to give induction contract teachers the opportunity to increase their instructional efficiency.

Induction contract teachers tended to have more positive experiences in schools in which the faculty worked collaboratively and shared common goals. However, when collaboration was not the norm, these teachers often struggled with decisions about what to teach, where to go for resources, and how to engage their students (Lambeth, 2012). Feelings of isolation frequently resulted, which contributed to attrition (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). So, administrators needed to visit induction contract teachers often to provide necessary classroom intervention and orient them to the school's culture, especially in rural middle schools, where adaptation to bucolic culture and mores can be more challenging (Lambeth, 2012). However, rural-school teachers viewed administrative support as insufficient, considering them "weaker leaders" and less efficient (Hallinger & Liu, 2016). Since induction contract teachers based their beliefs, values, perceptions, and resulting behaviors on their experiences, an understanding of the

factors that influenced their choice to leave or remain in the teaching profession, especially in rural schools, has become essential.

School Level Causes for Attrition

One significant influence on attrition was the school's grade level. Stressors that induction contract teachers experienced at the middle-grade level contributed to high attrition rates (Keogh, 2010). The state of South Carolina reported, "Vacancies in middle schools made up the smallest portion (26%) of all unfilled positions yet represented the largest spike in the overall number of [new teacher] vacancies" (Garrett, 2014, pp. 3–4).

Rural schools were especially susceptible to high new-teacher attrition. For example, a rural school housing grades 6, 7 and 8 for students aged 11–14 had 15 vacant positions during the 2013–2014 school term (JMS administrator, 2014). Furthermore, rural teachers tended to be younger and lower in educational attainment than urban teachers and were "likely to be less engaged in learning on-the-job" (Hallinger & Liu, 2016, p. 170). Rural school administrators experienced almost 4% more difficulty in staffing their schools than did leaders in urban, suburban, or town schools (Barley, 2009). Induction contract teachers in rural communities encountered unique challenges, such as interacting and adjusting simultaneously to the school's culture and the mores of a rural community (Eppley, 2009). Confronting these simultaneous challenges results in feelings of isolation (Fry & Anderson, 2011). A new teacher's lack of pedagogical knowledge also contributed to adjustment difficulty.

Technology

Students' use of technology increased the availability and variety of learning resources, student learning, and teacher content choices. However, the lack of technology in rural areas decreases these opportunities, which makes classroom instruction more challenging for induction contract teachers. Even those with advanced pedagogy skills found the lack of technology a hindrance in rural schools, perceiving they had less access to quality learning as a result (Hallinger & Liu, 2016). Studies conducted in rural schools about technology opportunities showed that rural schools, particularly high-poverty ones, lacked the resources larger urban and suburban school districts had to purchase advanced technology and equipment and train teachers to use it in the classroom.

Blanchard, LePrevost, Tolin, and Gutierrez (2016), termed the lack of technology, equipment, and teacher training as the "opportunity gap," which continues to widen in high-poverty rural schools. Further decreasing the availability of technology in rural schools yet increasing in teachers who are unskilled in the integration of technology into classroom practice, which further increases induction-teacher attrition. Thus, high-poverty rural schools found it difficult to change "the pedagogical practices of teachers from transmission to transformative, and from low/no use of technology to full integration" (Tarling & Ng'ambi, 2016, p. 558). Technology increased the availability of presenting content in a variety of ways, but the technology opportunity gap in rural schools decreased this availability, affecting attrition. Addressing this opportunity gap will influence teacher ability to perform at advanced levels in their classrooms regardless of their pedagogy skill level.

Pedagogy and Attrition

Pedagogy mattered in new-teacher attrition reduction. Novice teachers needed authentic, meaningful pedagogical support promoting the development of their teaching methods and activities (Lambeth, 2012). Induction contract teachers' struggles to adapt to new curricula and learning environments often left them with little time to teach their subjects in rigorous, relevant ways (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010). Whenever teachers presented this type of mentality, they exhibited behaviors that countered instructional and supervisory regulations. Pedagogy deficiencies tended to control teachers' classroom practice decisions throughout their careers (Lambeth, 2012; Lemons, Brashears, Burris, Meyers, & Price, 2015).

Studies on the effects of preparation and pedagogy on teacher attrition revealed that induction contract teachers who took instructional method/strategy and child psychology courses were less likely to leave their profession (Ingersoll et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2016). Additional findings indicated that teacher preparation programs had to include multiple content areas, rigorous academic content, and clinical application to reduce new-teacher attrition (Ingersoll et al., 2012; Zimpher & Howey, 2013). Rural school attrition was also associated with the specialization of the curriculum that teachers were required to follow, such as special education, science, and mathematics.

Special Education and Attrition

Special education teacher shortages reached numbers above 13% in 2003 (Prater, Harris, & Fisher, 2007). Statistical data showed fewer students entering special education programs and many teachers leaving special education in their first year from lack of

understanding of and support in their respective subjects (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Special education teachers cited large class loads and inadequate preparation for the workloads as reasons for leaving their profession (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Prater et al., 2007). Limited or no support from the administration and mentor teachers increased first-year special education attrition rates as well (Correa & Wagner, 2011; Lemons et al., 2015). Rural special education teachers in this study said that the level of administrative support they received influenced their plans to remain in special education (Prater et al., 2007).

The Science and Mathematics Content Areas and Attrition

New science and mathematics teachers reported that the number of laboratories required for classroom science experiments, coupled with the need to maintain student safety during those experiments, produced stressful classroom management issues. In rural middle schools, new science and mathematics teachers reported boredom and isolation in the academic community and expressed a need for their colleagues to value them in their new positions (Pirkle, 2011). To improve retention of new science and mathematics teachers at rural schools, Bianchini and Brenner (2010), Kutsyuruba, Godden, and Leigha (2014), and Pirkle (2011) all recommended utilizing mentor teachers and a supportive induction program designed to reduce isolation and foster meaningful dialogue with colleagues.

Staffing, supporting, and retaining a science, mathematics or special education teacher was a challenge for rural schools. Accordingly, preparing induction contract teachers to work with students equitably was a challenge for induction contract teachers

(Bianchini & Brenner, 2010). The difficulties new mathematics, science, and special education teachers faced negatively affected their perceptions of their ability to teach. Concerns centered on surviving their first year by adequately fulfilling their responsibilities, and influencing students positively with their teaching (Pirkle, 2011).

Psychological and Learning Stages of the First Year

The psychological stages induction contract teachers passed through during the first year affected their teaching methods and strategies by determining what cognitive constructs they would develop. Researchers listed five psychological stages that induction contract teachers experienced during their beginning years, each affecting how a new teacher received training, communication, and learning: (1) anticipation, (2) survival, (3) disillusionment, (4) rejuvenation, and (5) reflection.

Anticipation. Newly graduated college students entered teaching with excitement and anticipation, which heightened as they received their classroom assignments and student rosters. However, an overload of challenges without adequate support can disappoint induction contract teachers, which turns anticipation into survival.

Survival. At this stage, induction contract teachers' encounters of daily classroom responsibilities often did not correlate with their initial expectations of classroom experiences. The gap between the perceived support schools provided induction contract teachers and the actual support those teachers received leads to their disillusionment.

Disillusionment. This results from failed lesson presentations after hours of planning, interactions with difficult parents, and physical fatigue. Nationally, K–12 school districts often closed for the last two weeks of December and the first week of

January for winter break, giving new teachers time to recuperate, which began the rejuvenation stage.

Rejuvenation. This stage took the new teacher through the remaining months of the school year and allowed for the teacher's reflection and development.

Reflection. During this stage, induction contract teachers often contemplate whether to return to teaching the following year (Headden, 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Lambeth, 2012).

Successful progression through the first year's psychological stages depended on the support a new teacher received. Induction contract teachers would go through several learning stages, from beginner/novice learner to deep acquaintance/proficient learner to expert learner (Iordanides & Vryoni, 2013). Understanding the effects of those stages on individual teacher needs could benefit the development of strong induction programs, thus reducing new-teacher attrition (Fry & Anderson, 2011). If teachers remained in the field and received adequate support, they moved through those stages proficiently.

Induction Program: South Carolina Law

Induction contract teachers often faced the challenges one confronts while progressing through the aforementioned learning stages. A proven method of support for induction contract teachers transitioning from inexperienced to experienced would thus constitute a systematic induction program (Fenwick & Weir, 2010). Kane and Francis (2013) noted schools "are becoming more complex, and expectations for teachers are increasing, [so] induction programs including orientation, mentoring and opportunities

for professional development have become preferred policy initiatives for many educational systems" (p. 364).

However, inconsistencies in the implementation of such programs were evident (Fenwick & Weir, 2010; Kane & Andrews, 2013). Because induction programs were not consistently using best practices nationally, new-teacher attrition rates remained constant, bringing those programs under review. That review revealed that no uniform policy was provided nationally to ensure adequate induction support for each new teacher (Goldrick et al., 2012).

The New Teacher Center (NTC) thus began a systematic review of state and local induction policies. Comprehensive statewide policies for induction programs were few, and induction contract teachers were receiving no more support than experienced ones did (Goldrick et al., 2012; Kane & Francis, 2013). While reviewing state programs using a 10-criterion model, the NTC found that most states did not implement the teacher induction support program components uniformly, many states lacked adequate policy criteria, and those that had them enforced them inconsistently. Therefore, states with structured systems provided more induction teacher support.

For induction programs, the NTC recommended: clear communication of program vision; strong state program infrastructures; lucrative program tools; effective program designs; training initiatives for mentors, program leaders, and school administration; support of program improvement through technical assistance; incorporation of induction program data into state accountability systems and oversight processes; and evaluation of the efficacy of local program models and overall statewide induction policies (Goldrick et

al., 2012; Gujarati, 2012). All South Carolina school districts had to implement induction and mentoring programs based on Section 59-26-30 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, which mandated the State Department of Education's (SDE) dissemination of local school district regulations to provide new teacher induction programs as follows:

> Induction programs developed or adopted by school districts must provide teachers with comprehensive guidance and assistance throughout the school year, as well as provide teachers with formal written feedback on their strengths and weaknesses relative to state standards for teaching effectiveness (South Carolina Legislature, 2004).

To comply with legislative mandates, the South Carolina Department of Education and the Center for Education Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA) joined forces to address teacher support. A study surveyed 500 mentors and induction contract teachers from nine schools statewide on induction processes, mentoring, and support effectiveness (Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 2013). The data showed that most districts and their schools had a system for mentoring (Richter, Kunter, Lüdtke, Klusmann, Anders, & Baumert, 2013) and induction teacher support but lacked a systematic delivery system. Individual districts, therefore, had to establish committees to develop induction programs for all school districts.

The district in which the present study was conducted established a system for onboarding new teachers. The onboarding included a three-day orientation at a district-sponsored location, meeting the district leadership, and receiving their district email and password, and scheduled for professional development sessions and induction guidebook.

School-level administration in this district received mandates for induction teacher attendance at district meetings, yet there were no building-level program development or implementation requirements; schools implemented programs based solely on the instructional leader's initiative or available resources in the building. The lack of implementation requirements resulted in inadequate support to induction contract teachers particularly JMS.

Implications

Many induction contract teachers entered classrooms fresh from teacher preparation programs, excited about their careers, only to discover that the daily performances of their assigned tasks did not mirror their student practicum, student teaching experiences, or general expectations. Further, the challenge of classroom management can be an enormous task. So, they often exited in 3–5 years (Fontaine et al., 2012). With that in mind, I used surveys with participants to identify the extent to which the SWOT of the induction program was affecting new-teacher attrition and retention. Through this study, I hoped to identify entry-level school stressors for induction contract teachers in rural middle schools. Through this evaluation I sought to (a) show that the existence of the new-teacher induction program was having a positive effect; (b) identify how the program helped the school to meet its new-teacher retention goals and justify the budget allocated for the program, and (c) evaluate induction program processes for their possible revision and improvement at rural middle schools. Based on the findings of the study, the anticipated evaluation report will list the discovered SWOT and provide

recommendations for professional development training for school administrators and mentor teachers who supported induction contract teachers in rural middle schools.

Induction contract teachers at JMS received both constructive and detrimental stimuli and had multiple challenges to overcome as novices. Their early challenges often resulted in their development of alternative practices they could not easily discard. Challenges cited as reasons for attrition increases included the decline of school stability, teacher burnout, difficulties with classroom management, unreasonable workloads, and lack of support from the administration (Bastian, 2017; Black, 2004; Correa & Wagner, 2011; Ingersoll et al., 2012; Kearney, 2014).

State-, district-, and school-level administrators need to reverse those conditions, as new-teacher retention is vital to the health of public and private schools. Analysis of new teacher experiences was, therefore, a prerequisite to recruitment and retention (Carter & Keiler, 2009). Setbacks that occurred early in a new teacher's career could cause that teacher to invest minimal effort in preparing daily lessons and to resist implementing new ideas for fear of their failure (Shernoff, Marinez-Lora, Frazier, Jakobsons, & Atkins, 2011). A supportive environment designed to undergird induction contract teachers as they progressed through their daily activities may decrease their attrition (Curtis, 2012; Pogodzinski, 2014). Stable, knowledgeable mentor support, continual observations, and feedback were essential for new-teacher retention (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012), and this study intended to discover the useful combinations of these and other induction elements. JMS had been using a district-approved induction program delivered by the school administration, yet teacher attrition

continued. By analyzing the current program, this study identified the possible strengths and weaknesses of a rural middle school's induction program. By conducting a comprehensive internal program evaluation to (a) support the existence of the new-teacher induction program, (b) identify how the program helped the school to meet its new-teacher retention goals, and (c) evaluate induction program processes for their possible revision and improvement at rural middle schools.

Summary

In section 1, I presented the problem, rationale, definition of terms, literature review, the significance of the study, and limitations of the project study. Section 2 presents the methodology chosen for this study—a qualitative design intended to help me conduct a comprehensive analysis of the program components—and explains how a SWOT analysis uncovers the perceptions of the school's administrative staff and induction contract teachers. This section also identifies the study's participants, data collection processes, and data analysis, and, finally, clarifies how the qualitative design enables the use of a narrative to provide an in-depth discussion of the research findings.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to evaluate a revised induction program aimed at supporting induction contract teachers. The evaluation sought to (a) support the existence of the new-teacher induction program; (b) identify how the program helped the school to meet its new-teacher retention goals, and (c) evaluate induction program processes for their possible revision and improvement at rural middle schools. The rural middle school in this study suffered from consistent induction teacher attrition. Administrators at the school sought to implement a support program that would influence an induction teacher's decision to either exit or remain in teaching. Section 2 includes the study's research questions, methodology, justification of design choice, the definition of SWOT analyses, data collection and analysis procedures, outcomes, limitations, and a conclusion.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The methodology for this study was a program evaluation. An "evaluation is a systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of a program to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and inform decisions about future programming" (Patton, 2015). The finding is reported to the stakeholders in a concise narrative making it a qualitative design. Data will be gathered through an online anonymous survey making it a qualitative design.

The research design choice was influenced by Denzin and Lincoln (2003), who noted that qualitative researchers seek to understand the how and why of participants'

behavior in their normal settings and explain the result of specific behaviors. Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, and Caruthers (2011) defined program evaluations as systematic investigations of a program for the purposes of decision making, and, according to Yarbrough et al. (2011), a program evaluation responds to the needs of identified stakeholders and can lead to the improvement and productivity of a program. Thus, I concluded that the systematic collection of data through an anonymous online survey to gather data to evaluate the results of the induction program for decision making by the onsite administrators and school district was appropriate for this study.

A qualitative program evaluation was also appropriate for this study because I sought to examine the effectiveness of the induction program through a systematic, empirical, and careful collection of data. According to Merriam (2009), such an approach qualifies as evaluation research. Thus, the summative evaluation of the current program is a logical method based on the problem, framework, and research questions generated. Thus, the information gained from the summative program evaluation will provide significant information to JMS's administration and school district policymakers on how to improve the current programs and better support induction contract teachers.

Central Research Question

Are induction program processes ideal to affect retention for induction contract teachers at a rural middle school?

Specific Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent does the teacher induction program meet the stated goals for change or impact? This question's main objective was to survey current and previous

induction contract teachers to determine whether program participation influenced their decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

RQ2: Which program components are most effective? This question's main objective was to survey induction contract teachers to determine which elements of the induction program provided opportunities for professional development.

RQ3: Which elements of the program need improvement? This question's main objective was to survey induction contract teachers to determine which components of the induction program threatened a new teacher's decision to remain at the school.

RQ4: What are the organizational and program results? This question's main objective was to survey study participants to gauge increases in induction contract teachers' pedagogical knowledge, skill development levels, and attitudinal changes because of the program.

Justification of the Design Choice

I applied a qualitative research study design to address the research questions, analyze the compiled data from the surveys, and assemble a report that answered the following questions:

1. What are the internal strengths of the induction program?
2. What are the internal weaknesses of the induction program?
3. What are the external opportunities of the induction program?
4. What are the external threats of the induction program?

Although both a quantitative and qualitative research design can use a survey to gather information about the problem, the objective of gathering data that was sensitive to the

underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data (Merriam, 2009) made a qualitative design more appropriate. A qualitative design was used to provide information about the problem from a participant perspective while allowing me "subjective reflexivity and bias" (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). A qualitative program evaluation was appropriate because I collected participant data about how the induction teachers interpreted their daily experiences within the school. I analyzed the collected data to ascertain how induction teachers construct their world, and, finally, I interpreted from the results how participants construct meaning from those experiences.

The use of the qualitative design allowed me to analyze and report participants' beliefs on the SWOT of the induction program. Creswell (2003) advocated the use of a qualitative study to accept individual or group problems by constructing a comprehensive portrait out of the observations of participants. Use of the qualitative survey design to gather and analyze induction contract teachers' perceptions and beliefs about the program provided me the opportunity to draw inferences on how efficient current and previous induction contract teachers from JMS believed the program was. Thus, the qualitative design will allow me as the researcher to compose a narrative reporting the perceived SWOT by program participants. The design also allowed me to select a specific participant sample (induction contract teachers), gather information about the effectiveness of the induction program, and provide information on its efficacy as induction contract teachers perceived it.

In my view quantitative methods such as a correlational design were not appropriate for this study. Correlational research seeks to establish statistical relational

connections among two or more variables (Creswell, 2012). I sought to evaluate how participation within an induction program affect new teacher attrition, I sought to evaluate how participation and interaction within a community construct meaning and teacher new learnings resulting in new teacher perceptions of the induction program effectiveness. Within my study I did not seek to identify the correlational strength or weakness of an induction program to new teacher attrition, but to identify how experiences and interactions within the program located at a rural middle level school affect a new teacher's decision to either stay in or exit teaching. The purpose of the study was to obtain meaningful data that could help to evaluate the program effectiveness.

Use of a survey design enabled me to examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices of the rural middle school's induction contract teachers so I could ascertain their perceptions of the program (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). A grounded theory design was also inappropriate because this study aimed to gain an understanding of the new teacher attrition in a rural middle level school, not to build a substantive theory about rural middle level new teacher attrition (Merriam, 2009). The ability to gather descriptive data from the participants in a short span of time, to evaluate the program's effectiveness in retaining induction contract teachers from their perspective, and to provide that information to pertinent policymakers, thus, validated the survey design choice for this project study.

I sought through qualitative research to gather information about the experiences of new teachers at a rural middle school regarding the school's induction program. I also wanted to ascertain the perceptions of the teachers about the program itself. In an

ethnography, the researcher seeks to identify and analyze participants who have spent extended time together and have developed shared values (Creswell, 2012). The participants of this study are educators who are unknown to one other and share no developed group values. That fact made an ethnographic design inappropriate for this study. Further, inserting myself into the culture group would not have served my purpose of gathering data for this evaluation. Additionally, the summative nature of the evaluation and the need to provide immediate results from the survey made an ethnographer's requirement for long-term access to participants (Creswell, 2012) not useful for this current study. In the survey I fielded, I used the SWOT matrix as the data-gathering tool.

Structure of SWOT Analyses

Application of SWOT in the educational context is a growing endeavor (Thomas, Chie, Abraham, Jalarajan Raj, & Beh, 2014; Zhu & Mugenyi, 2015). One of the principal forms of analysis is a matrix. There are several different forms of matrix that are appropriate for different types of scenario.

Matrix. A recommended SWOT analysis method is a matrix, through which examining both internal and external capabilities in pairs may identify additional strategies (von Kodolitsch et al., 2015). The matrix comprises four different strategies:

The SO ("maxi-maxi") strategy. Matching internal strengths with external opportunities to maximize both, this strategy is best used when strengths are high, and opportunities conduce to success (Weihrich, 1982).

The WT ("mini-mini") strategy. Aiming to minimize internal weaknesses and external threats, this strategy is best used when weaknesses outweigh strengths and threats are abundant (Weihrich, 1982).

The WO ("mini-maxi") strategy. Aiming to minimize present weaknesses but maximize potential opportunities, this strategy is best used in the presence of major weaknesses but promising opportunities (Weihrich, 1982).

The ST ("maxi-mini") strategy. Aiming to maximize strengths and minimize threats, this strategy is best used when the only way to overcome potential threats is to focus on and develop current strengths (Weihrich, 1982).

SWOT's liabilities. Some academics have claimed that SWOT analysis has a weak theoretical basis, perpetuates the illusion that everything can be neatly classified, and bars planners from deeply analyzing tradeoffs among internal and external factors (Panagiotou & van Wijnen, 2005; Valentin, 2005). Others view SWOT as immensely helpful. One expert who had acknowledged SWOT's weaknesses maintained that the problem might not be in SWOT's analytic nature, but in lack of thorough instruction in its use (Everett, 2014). SWOT's elements must therefore be defined and distinguished from one another, and proper training in this analytic method must be given to avoid making errors (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007).

Participants

I elicited a sample of induction contract teachers who were presently and previously employed within a large Southern school district (Creswell, 2009; 2012). Merriam (2009) argued that this kind of purposeful sampling directly reflect "the purpose

of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases" (p. 78). Merriam advocated using participants who were intricately involved with the phenomenon of study. Thus, my sample's participants were induction contract teachers within the school terms of August 2014–August 2016 who received induction program support at JMS.

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted permission to conduct the study and contact participants with one stipulation that I contact the participants anonymously (# 05-31-16-0131826). I gained additional approval from the Research and Accountability Office (RAO) of the southeastern school district on June 16, 2016. The southeastern school district provided a participant pool of 34 induction contract teachers with permission to use their district email addresses no more than twice. I began the study. To ensure that each respondent who voluntarily responded to the survey participated in the onsite induction program I included a question on participation with the induction program at JMS. 19 teachers responded to the invitation to participate, all participants responded yes.

The RAO did not require further permission from the building-level principal. Nevertheless, I gave her all pertinent information on the study's plan, direction, and data collection procedures, which helped me to forge a researcher-participant relationship within the school.

Conducting this project study at JMS was an ethical concern for me and the IRB office at Walden University, prompting a change in the proposed methodology. The originally-proposed data-gathering instruments were interviews, focus groups, and observations, but IRB concerns for participant safety and confidentiality allowed only an

anonymous online survey. I conducted no one-on-one meetings, classroom observations, or focus-group interviews with teacher participants to comply with IRB permissions.

My site induction coordinator role was not supervisory. I had previously facilitated the program for induction contract teachers at JMS in the August 2013–May 2016 school terms. When I applied for permission to conduct the study through the Walden University's IRB, a concern was that new teachers would be fearful and would either not respond or respond untruthfully to survey questions due to my assistant principal position at the school. At that point someone proposed an anonymous method to gather responses, as that would ensure that the teachers' identities would not be revealed to me, thus eliminating an opportunity for my retribution. Additionally, the email invitations detailed the study's specifics.

The IRB also requested assurance that new teachers participating in the study would have a safe forum for questions and answers without fear of reprisal. At the IRB's request, I created a link to a national induction program's Facebook page (m.facebook.com/Ruralinductionteachers), as an online social media site would allow for continuous peer conversations and feedback as well as questions for me without fear of reprisal.

Assurances to the school district and building-level administrators of participants' privacy protection and responsible collection and storage of data established a trusting researcher-participant working relationship. To protect the anonymity of all participants, I used an online software tool, SurveyMonkey.com, enabling it for gathering anonymous responses and disabling its ability to track IP addresses. Furthermore, I assured all

participants that the information would be for study purposes only and all collected data and the summary of the findings would result from original work reported accurately according to their survey responses (Bechar & Mero-Jaffe, 2014).

Data Collection

Description and Justification

In compliance with federal law, data collection did not start until the study was approved by the Walden University IRB, and the school district's RAO. Following the IRB's approval, the RAO was contacted, and it granted approval in writing on June 23, 2016. Data collection was conducted from July through October 2016.

My SWOT teacher survey (Appendix C) focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the rural middle school's induction program. For this study, the "SW" of SWOT were the internal strengths and weaknesses affecting JMS's induction teacher population, and the "OT" were the external opportunities and threats (outside of the induction program, not necessarily the school itself) affecting JMS's induction teacher population.

Instruments and Sources

Lodico et al. (2010) endorsed surveys as suitable gathering tools for descriptive data to assess or evaluate program efficacy. Creswell and Plano (2011) documented that a well-written survey enabled participants to share information about their experiences without restriction. The survey (Appendix C) included open-ended questions which were created to collect data on the how induction teachers interpreted their daily experiences, attributed meaning to those experiences, and constructed their worlds (Creswell, 2007, 2003; Creswell & Plano, 2011).

Data Generation Processes

Induction contract teachers whose first year of teaching took place during the school years of August 2014–August 2016 received an invitational email. Invitations contained a statement of purpose, a consent form, a concise explanation of the data-gathering tools, the measures taken to safeguard participants' identities, and a link to the anonymous online survey, which recipients selected if they wished to participate. Multiple survey questions solicited the teachers' opinions about which components of the program they perceived to be strengths and weaknesses and which they believed to be opportunities and/or threats. The purpose and permission statements and the concise details of the study's components defined my role and the study's purpose. Compliance with IRB and RAO recommendations ensured that the research participants were neither exploited nor deceived through unethical research practices or interventions (Merriam, 2009). I communicated with my doctoral study committee chair, the committee members, and the Walden University IRB about conflict-of-interest and confidentiality issues as needed. Records were secured by a password-protected online file space. Participants' responses were recorded and secured on a separate external hard drive and on my password-guarded personal computer. After five years, all records, data, and additional information will be destroyed.

Role of Researcher

Two years prior to commencing with my research, I was the assistant principal of curriculum and instruction at JMS; I had previously been a consultant in the district's Office of Professional Development. In those roles I had worked with induction contract

teachers to improve their induction-year experience. I planned, implemented, and monitored an induction program for the 2013–2014 school year. The induction program prior to my study was expanded from a one-day to a three-day orientation. That allowed induction contract teachers to meet building staff and participate in team-building activities on day one, work in their classrooms during the second half of day two and receive additional pedagogy training on day three. I introduced a curriculum and instruction support component; monthly sessions included presentations by experienced teachers and social outings to decrease attrition at the school (Appendix B). Although my work experiences enabled me to conduct a clear analysis of how induction programs influenced new-teacher development, my personal bias toward the school as a staff member may have influenced my choice of methods to support induction contract teachers.

Another concern was my assigned role as administrator of instruction, in which I observed and gave feedback to teachers, possibly including induction contract teachers. My evaluative status risked causing "an extreme, disproportional anxiety that can appear at various stages of the evaluation process" (Bechar & Metro-Jaffe, 2014, p. 364), which in turn risked causing the participants to answer questions falsely and withdraw from the study.

Data Analysis

The surveys were distributed via Survey Monkey. Respondents were grouped by the year of their induction contract and program participation. I used the text analysis feature of the software to search and categorize responses and see frequently-used words

and phrases. I compared and contrasted teacher responses across specific school terms as well as across the entire participant group, grouping those terms that were common. I continued to collect and read the responses, identifying frequently-used words and phrases. Preliminary categories developed as I continued to read and identify frequently used words and phrases. I continued to collect and review all accessible information submitted online. I systematically analyzed the teacher responses and their interpretations of the program based on the framework of the study, which is social constructivism, and teacher perceptions of the induction program to discover induction teacher perceptions about program experiences (SWOT) and how those experiences constructed induction teacher learning and knowledge (Merriam, 2009).

The categories were then analyzed and linked based on the framework and literature, research questions, and participant responses. According to Merriam (2009), identifying interrelationships among the categories provides models or theories that answer the research questions. Several questions on the survey included teachers' opinions about what components of the program they perceive as strengths and weaknesses. Some questions on the survey requested participants to share information about areas they believe needed improvements. Once I completed the analysis, I wrote up a summary of my finding, reflection of my constructed knowledge, and a program evaluation report to inform policymakers of recommended improvements to the support program for induction contract teachers at JMS.

Data Analysis Results

Participants in the program evaluation were selected based on their receiving an induction contract from the district of study and participating in the onsite induction program at the rural middle school. Nineteen induction contract teachers out of the 34 emails sent responded to the email and made up the participants of the study. Table 2 depicts the year in which each teacher participant completed the orientation program.

Table 2

Teacher Participation in Induction Teacher Programs

Teacher participant	Year of orientation completion
1	2016
2	2015
3	2016
4	2015
5	2014
6	2016
7	2015
8	2014
9	2014
10	2014
11	2014
12	2014
13	2015
14	2015
15	2015
16	2014
17	2016
18	2015
19	2016

Six of the teachers underwent induction contract teacher orientation in 2014. Eight of them experienced the new teacher orientation in 2015. The remaining five teachers completed the orientation in 2016.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

The "SW" of SWOT were the internal strengths and weaknesses affecting JMS's induction teacher population. The strengths identified through the SWOT analysis were the existence of a structured program, the collaborative training sessions, the professional learning community, and the comradery that resulted in the increase of proficiency in technology and classroom management, and the assignment of a mentor to induction contract teachers. An identified weakness of the program was the lack of administrative support and time spent with the induction contract teachers. Another identified weakness was the program planning. Although induction programs can increase teachers' skills and job satisfaction levels, they can have negative effects if poorly planned and executed. The SWOT analysis revealed that participants felt that inconsistent program implementation was a weakness and a crucial element in their inability to benefit from the program. The data gathered from the SWOT analysis also revealed that the lack of professional development goals as a program weakness. Teachers further identified content relevancy as an area needing improvement (i.e., as a weakness): participants stated that a great majority of the program content was not relevant to the required curriculum.

The "OT" were the external opportunities and threats (outside of the induction program, not necessarily the school itself) affecting JMS's induction teacher population. The first opportunity identified was the potential to implement mentoring for induction

contract teachers. Many participants called for a coach at each school, not just at the district level. They believed that each teacher should receive observations and ideas on how to become a better educator. The second opportunity was to allow for insight and reflection exchange among induction contract teachers because their opinion of the profession should be considered in any future program changes.

Another opportunity for a major program improvement was structured classroom observations, in which induction contract teachers would sit and watch more experienced teachers conduct lessons. Assessment of novice teachers' performance provided a further opportunity for professional growth and skill development. The final opportunity identified was school-university partnerships, in which induction contract teachers would benefit from collaborations with university faculty.

In pursuing the opportunities just described, it will be necessary to account for potential threats. Adequately preparing and knowing how much time is needed for individual teachers is a threat, as any induction program of limited duration may not be able to fill any extreme knowledge gaps teachers have when entering the profession. Inadequate funding of the program and the required faculty is also a significant threat to the program's improvement. A great deal of the funds to provide the social outing, snacks at the session and gifts were at the administrative team's expense.

Findings from Research Questions

The research questions served as an organizational framework for this presentation of findings.

Research Question 1: To what extent does the teacher induction program meet the stated goals for change or impact? Teachers who completed the survey participated in the induction program in 2014, 2015, or 2016. Findings related to the first research question are organized by the year in which the participants completed the program.

Influence of the program on teachers' decisions to remain in or leave the profession according to teachers. In accordance with research question one, the researcher surveyed current and previous induction contract teachers to determine whether program participation met the stated goal of influencing their decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession. Six respondents completed new teacher orientation at JMS in 2014. Two (Participants 5 and 8) made positive comments, but only Participant 8 indicated that the program had met the stated goal of influencing a decision to remain in the teaching profession. Participant 8 attributed the program's positive impact to the information it provided, saying: "they sort of gave you a glimpse of things to be prepared for." Participant 5 said of whether the program had been a positive or negative influence, "Not really. The program helped me cope with my first year in the school but did not determine my [decision] to continue teaching." Participant 12 indicated that the program had exerted no influence and made no comment. Participants 9, 10, and 11 all made negative comments but indicated that the program had exerted no influence on their decisions. Two of the negative comments from these participants related to the time commitment required by the program. Participant 11 cited specific aspects of the program as overly time-consuming: "A lot of work to do with extra meetings." Participant 9 felt

that the program could be streamlined by eliminating redundant content: “They are all repetitive and not always beneficial.” For Participant 10, the salient design flaw was the perceived arbitrariness of mentor assignments: “Assigning a mentor to a new teacher just because the teacher has taught at the school for many years.”

Eight of the respondents participated in the orientation program in 2015. Only one participant indicated that the program had been an influence in the direction of leaving the profession; Participant 7 said, “Participating caused me to think about leaving the classroom.” One participant indicated that the program had failed to meet its stated goal by exerting no influence on retention decisions but added a negative comment: “The induction program felt like a waste of time as it is currently designed” (Participant 4). Four participants did not indicate if the orientation met the stated goal of influencing their decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession but made negative comments about the program. Common in this set of responses was the perception of a lack of support for induction contract teachers and a feeling of low motivation. Participant 13 mentioned lack of support as a reason why the program may have failed to meet its stated goals for impact and change and described a possible cause of low motivation in describing the program’s perceived design flaws as, “Lack of support and negative attitudes.”

Other participants also suggested reasons why the program may have failed to meet its stated goals for change and impact. Participant 18 also referred to a lack of support and attributed the motivational deficit to a different cause: “Negative trends during the induction program was lack of support and motivation. During stressful events such as testing, we lost our motivation as a group.” Participant 14 felt that allowing one

of the teachers' bosses to run the orientation had caused the induction contract teachers anxiety: "I think that being run by an administrator puts a lot of pressure on induction teachers." Participant 15, on the other hand, saw the school's orientation as incompatible with the district-level, two-day program: "Not going along with district level induction." Participant 16 did not comment. Participant 2 was the only one from the 2015 cohort who spoke positively of the program, saying that it had been a positive influence "because I received a lot of support."

The remaining five participants were in the 2016 cohort. One of these participants indicated that the program had met its stated goal of being an influence toward retention: "The program influenced me to remain in. The presentations are well organized and informative. I truly learned a lot in the program" (Participant 3). Participant 19 indicated that the program had exerted no influence but made the following positive comment: "I don't feel as though there are negative trends. School building inductions help induction contract teachers know and realize that they are not alone." Participant 6 responded negatively to orientation, saying, "When my cohorts left, I wanted to leave with them." Participants 1 and 17 indicated no program effects and made no comments.

Table 3 exhibits participant responses from the online anonymous survey. Table 3 displays the induction program's success in meeting the stated goal of influencing teachers to remain in the profession. For this study, a total of 19 teachers across three cohorts studied (2014, 2015, 2016) responded to the survey. Of that number, three teachers reported that the program influenced them toward retention while only two participants reported the induction program influenced them towards attrition. Although

participants responded to survey questions with both negative and positive comments about the program, it did not in most cases influence retention or attrition. The categories developed from the participant responses highlight participants' responses regarding the program's influence on attrition and retention and comments made about the program's processes.

Table 3

Frequencies of Positive or Negative Comments by Cohort

Cohort Year	Influence on retention	Influence on attrition	No influence/ positive comment	No influence/ negative comment	No influence/ no comment	Total
2014	1	0	1	3	1	6
2015	1	1	0	5	1	8
2016	1	1	1	0	2	5
Total	3	2	2	8	4	19

It is important to note that 14 induction teachers reported that the program did not influence them to leave or to stay in teaching with two teachers making positive comments and eight making negative comments about the program. Note the number of participants (eight) who indicated that the program was a negative influence for them during the school year yet did not influence their choice to leave the classroom. It is important to note that the teachers who reported that the program had had no influence but also left a negative comment greatly decreased between 2015 and 2016. This may indicate that the 2016 cohort had a more positive experience with the program, but it should also be noted that in 2016's cohort one teacher out of a total of five reported being

influenced toward attrition, giving this cohort the highest percentage (20%) reporting this worst-case outcome.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1. Most participating teachers (*n* = 14) indicated that the induction program had not affected their decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession. Of the minority (*n* = 5) who felt that the induction program had influenced them, three felt that it had influenced them toward remaining in the profession, and two felt that they had been influenced toward leaving the profession. This indicated that for most participants the induction program was not meeting the stated goals for impact and change. Of the 14 participants who felt that the program had exerted no influence on their decision, eight made negative comments about the program, and only two made positive comments; the remaining four made no comments. These results indicated that, in most of cases, the induction program did not meet the goal of increasing new-teacher retention.

Research Question 2: Which program components are most effective? To answer research question two teacher participants were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of program components according to the opportunities those components provided for professional development and learning.

Program components that provided opportunities for professional development according to teachers. Five participants indicated which induction program components at JMS had been most effective in contributing to their professional learning or development; the program components related to computer resources and implementing technology, classroom management, the readings, and creating classroom rules and

procedures provided opportunities for professional learning during the program. Opportunities for professional development were effectively provided by program components related to classroom management and learning styles (three responses) and sharing experiences with induction contract teachers and experienced teachers (two responses).

Summary of findings for Research Question 2. Teacher responses cited the social aspect of the induction program as an effective component. Two of the five teachers who responded to the relevant item indicated that being able to meet and share experiences with experienced teachers and other induction contract teachers had provided them with opportunities for professional development. These results confirmed the findings of Lovett and Cameron (2011), which indicated that school cultures that provided induction contract teachers with opportunities to engage in conversations about learning and teaching tended to promote the professional learning of induction contract teachers. Many of the teachers who responded to the relevant item in the present study (*n* = 3) indicated, however, that instruction in classroom management was the most effective program component for promoting professional development.

Research Question 3: Which elements of the program need improvement? To answer research question three, the researcher surveyed induction contract teachers to determine which components of the induction program needed improvement because they threatened a new teacher's decision to remain at JMS. As discussed above, the two participants who felt that the induction program had influenced them toward leaving JMS did not indicate which program components had needed improvement, saying only,

"when my cohorts left, I wanted to leave with them," (Participant 6; 2016 cohort) and "participating caused me to think about leaving the classroom" (Participant 7; 2015 cohort). In addition to the more specific negative responses of other participants, presented in the discussion of research question one, participants indicated that the only program component that needed improvement because it had a negative impact on development was the irrelevance of some of the content to the incoming teachers' duties. When teachers were asked which components of the program could be improved, six indicated that more support for induction contract teachers was needed, particularly principal and mentor support; two participants mentioned content relevancy as an area needing improvement. It should be noted, however, that when teachers were asked explicitly how enthusiastic they were about the support the induction program had given them, eight teachers (42%) responded that they felt very enthusiastic, and another seven participants (37%) were at least slightly enthusiastic. Only four participants (21%) indicated that they were not at all enthusiastic about the support they had received. Similarly, when teachers were asked explicitly whether the induction program had been useful to them, 11 out of 19 teachers (59%) indicated that it had been either very or extremely useful, and only two participants (10%) indicated that the program had not been at all useful.

Summary of findings for Research Question 3. Negative comments from teachers about the induction program suggested that improvements should be made to the time commitment required by the program, the lack of administrative support, and the irrelevance or repetitiveness of the content. The findings of previous researchers have

indicated that support from administrators and colleagues is crucial to the retention of induction contract teachers. Lambeth (2012) found that it was key for administrators to visit induction contract teachers often to provide classroom intervention if needed and to orient them to the school's culture, especially in rural middle schools, where adaptation to bucolic culture and mores can be especially difficult. Lambeth (2012) further indicated that, when collaboration among teachers was not the norm in a school, induction contract teachers often struggled with decisions about what to teach, where to go for resources, and how to engage their students. Feelings of isolation have been found to contribute to new-teacher attrition (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). The frequency with which the issue of support was mentioned by teachers in the present study indicated that participants were cognizant of the importance of support for induction contract teachers. Survey results indicated that the majority of teacher participants were enthusiastic about the level of support the induction program had given them.

Research Question 4: What are the organizational and program results? The answer to research question four was determined by completing each of the research objectives for research question four.

The program had the result of changing induction contract teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skill development level. Teachers stated that the induction program had had the result of improving their pedagogical knowledge in the areas of student-centered learning, accommodations, teachers' administrative responsibilities, and classroom management, with one response for each of these items. Skill development in the area of teaching strategies was improved with respect to videos (Santagata, &

Guarino, 2011) and interactive activities (one response), peer-to-peer or indirect teaching (two responses), questioning or inquiry-based teaching (one response), and doing what is right for the teacher (one response). Teachers felt that these improvements in their own knowledge and skills resulted in greater student engagement (two responses), better planning and assessments (one response), and student growth (one response). In the surveys, teachers indicated that the classroom management strategies and technology tips they had received through the induction program had been useful to them and that these acquirements showed continuing gains in the form of improved student learning.

Summary of findings for Research Question 4. Teacher responses indicated that the induction program had the result of positively influencing their pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills, particularly in teaching and classroom management strategies. The improvements teachers had experienced in their knowledge and skills because of the program was perceived to affect student achievement positively by increasing student engagement and growth, and by improving planning and assessments. Previous researchers have found that novice teachers needed authentic, meaningful pedagogical support that promoted the development of their teaching methods and activities (Lambeth, 2012), and that struggling with a new curriculum reduced the efficacy of induction contract teachers (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010). Studies on the effects of preparation and pedagogy on teacher attrition indicated that induction contract teachers who took instructional method and strategy courses were less likely to leave their profession (Ingersoll et al., 2012). Teacher responses in the present study indicated that the induction program had the result of successfully acquainting incoming teachers

with instructional methods and strategies. This finding, considered in conjunction with the findings of previous researchers, suggests that the JMS induction program will be successful in reducing new-teacher attrition.

Evidence of Quality

Data were gathered from previous and current induction contract teachers. Ensuring that an adequate number of participants were included in the sample, all induction contract teachers hired within 2014, 2015, and 2016 school years were contacted. Assurance of the protection of the identities of all participants and the school district, and assurance that the researcher's role in this study was not connected to her assigned role as assistant principal at JMS established a trusting researcher-participant working relationship to ensure that the data were as reliable and accurate as possible. There were no discrepant cases.

Summarized Outcomes

Teaching is a complex endeavor that requires individuals to think, reflect, and adjust their teaching practice through social interactions with peers and supervisors. Those daily interactions construct what they believe about their daily world (Elder-Vass, 2012; Gergen, 2009). A finding of this study is that new teachers were unaware of the true nature of the job they had agreed to take on, however they work to assimilate into the culture of the building they are assigned, with or without support. Based on Wood and Stanulis, (2009), new teachers quickly become aware of the circumstances surrounding them and how their behaviors are affected specifically by their environment. They become a new teacher community who exchange daily experiences and new learning in

support of one another. Another finding of the study is that neither positive or negative experiences affect new teachers enough to change the values that influenced their decision to enter teaching, and it is those beliefs that affect their decisions towards attrition or retention. Another finding of the study indicates that induction teachers are influenced by the school-based programs they are a part of and that their learning is an active and constructive process where meaning is constructed (Peck et al., 2009; van Huizen et al., 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Meaning for everyone is unique although they interact daily one with another. The individualized effect of the induction program can be the results of diverse content assignments, students' assignment, and the assigned mentor and principal support. For example, when questioned about the induction program, some participants responded positively to school building induction programs: "It helps [induction teachers] realize that they are not alone," while other participants responded negatively and reported feelings of isolation when member of the induction group did not return to JMS.

Although there were opposing perceptions, the results show that each year JMS lost and retained some of it induction contract teachers (see Table 3) even with participation in the induction program. Social constructivism positions that interaction influences the learning construct and meaning-making. Social Constructivism affect on new teacher learning is confirmed by the induction teachers at JMS. For example, Participant 8 attributed the program's positive impact to the information it provided, saying: "they sort of gave you a glimpse of things to be prepared for." Participant 16 responded about the support received to increase technology skills as a strength of the

program yet spoke of the need to balance the types of support provided, implying that more support was needed to help induction teachers by ensuring they received "encouragement and [support for] dealing with difficult days."

Additional findings exhibit that, although teacher experiences at JMS, negative or positive, may not influence their career choice to leave or stay at the rural middle school, their daily social interactions influenced their perceptions about new teacher support. Participant 5 said of whether the program had been a positive or negative influence, "Not really. The program helped me cope with my first year in the school but did not determine my [decision] to continue teaching." The finding indicates that although the program in its current form did not substantially influence attrition or retention, its ability to build community among induction contract teachers is vital. For example, participant 19 indicated that the program had exerted no influence but made the following positive comment: "I don't feel as though there are negative trends. School building inductions help induction contract teachers know and realize that they are not alone."

The literature review points to a need for content, mentor, and administrative support. A great many of the participant responses concur with that notion of proper induction support for induction teacher success. Studies have indicated that when appropriate support is provided attrition is reduced, no matter social-economic level or predominance of minority groups that exist (Burke, 2014; Hudson, 2012; Martin et al., 2016). The administrator support, to include the principal, was either lacking or provided in a way that was intimidating (facilitator of the program) for new teachers. Several noted that one of the program strengths was assigned mentors. Yet not having a mentor in the

same content area was considered a weakness. Another threat to the program was its irrelevant design, concurring with literature that inconsistent design often leaves new teachers feeling isolated (Hudson, 2012). For example, one participant spoke of how the design of the program was irrelevant: "The induction program felt like a waste of time as it is currently designed" (Participant 4). Finally, the results of this study exhibit that new teachers seek to be a part of the creation and implementation conversations concerning the induction program. Retention and attrition based on the analysis of the responses have remained consistent throughout the years of the conducted study, indicating that the induction program did not influence JMS's teachers to exit or remain in teaching in substantial numbers. It did however foster community among the induction teachers.

Finally, the findings concur that a gap exists between (1) the perceived effectiveness of an induction program and its actual effectiveness and (2) the recognized support induction contract teachers received, compared to the real support they received. Further research on how to provide proper training to those supporting teachers. The finding of the study concurs with literature that induction programs can provide the necessary support new teacher need if implemented correctly. Below is a breakdown of how SWOT is exhibited in the findings.

JMS's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths. These include the establishment of the Professional Learning Community for its new teachers. Teachers surveyed felt the program's greatest strength was the provided professional development that enhanced teacher classroom skills.

Weaknesses. These primarily constituted the method in which the course content was chosen and presented. It is evident that new teachers' input was not a part of the process used to develop the monthly training schedule, time, or content covered.

Opportunities. Opportunities exist to increase support for an experienced mentor, to provide relevant mentor assignments, and to increase the time for supporting teachers. These actions will sustain current strengths and offer improved opportunities and selections for program components and new teacher retention.

Threats. These include an administrator as a facilitator, lack of funding, teacher perceptions of the program, and time. Removal of perceived threats is crucial.

Recommendations

The results of this study add to the existing literature with the following suggestions found in the evaluation report: (1) mentors be assigned based on the content area of the new teachers, (2) that administrators not be assigned as the facilitator of induction programs, (3) add instructional coaches to the support teams provided to new teachers for professional development, and (4) construct programs that serve a larger purpose for new teacher in rural areas-socialization.

Limitations

The limited time frame of the study, the data collection procedures, and the broad demographics prevented the findings from applying to all middle schools in South Carolina as well as nationally. The study associated new-teacher attrition to a lack of support in a well-established systematic induction program but did not cover other possible influences on attrition rates—job dissatisfaction, teacher migration or relocation,

increased family responsibilities, and career changes—due to the study's limited time frame and topic. Another limitation was the study's geographic location, which I restricted to a rural middle school in South Carolina, thus limiting it from being extrapolated to a larger population beyond this demographic.

Conclusion

The findings of this research project lead to the evaluation report. It is important that the district of study understand that improvements are needed in onsite induction programs to support the daily experiences of induction teachers and that its support system is vital to induction teacher development and growth. The results of the data analysis exhibited insufficient evidence that induction program influence induction teacher decisions toward attrition or retention. However, it did significantly exhibit that social influences within induction programs are important to the professional growth and efficacy of the induction teacher within a five-year period (see Table 3). Most participants spoke of the need to have administrative support in a non-threating manner, mentor support that was within their content area, and their appreciation that they had a social group to lean on. These finding will be included in the final project.

The report's content will provide a summary of these findings to the district of study; it will include the recommended improvements for increased administrative support to include the principal, training for all support faculty and the need for the district of study to invest more in onsite induction programs.

Summary

The methodology section contains detailed descriptions of the research design, sample selection, participant access procedures, data collection, data analysis, and filing systems. I used the "SW" of SWOT to analyze the internal strengths and weaknesses affecting JMS's induction teacher population, using questions that centered on learning environment, professional learning, professional experiences, capabilities, and career choice. I used the "OT" of SWOT to analyze the external opportunities and threats (outside of the induction program, not necessarily the school itself) affecting JMS's induction teacher population, using questions that centered around the school environment, professional growth opportunities, threats to teacher professional learning, professional development scheduling, program experiences, and career choice.

Section 3 will report and describe the project deliverable, its goals, and recommendations for program improvement. Section 4 will give a summary of the research study and will provide an interpretation of the findings and describe any implications for social change. The findings will be compiled into an evaluation report that will be presented to the school district of study.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This section describes the results of a program evaluation performed on the new teacher induction and training program at a rural middle school in South Carolina, along with the goals and rationale for the program evaluation and a literature review. This project deliverable (an evaluation report) was based on a qualitative program evaluation I conducted from July 2016 to October 2016 (see Appendix A: The Project). The study relied on an electronic, anonymous survey to elicit feedback from 19 teachers from JMS, a middle school in the Southeast United States. All participants were employed by JMS as induction teachers. An analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to the current induction program led to recommendations for improving new teacher induction and training, which are included in the evaluation report. The evaluation report includes perspectives from administrators, new teachers, and mentors and recommendations that highlight the unique roles played by each group (see Appendix A). Additionally, the report contains recommendations to add components to the training programs for potential administrators at the K–12 level.

Description and Goals

In this subsection, I provide the evaluation's purpose, criteria, and major outcomes. Originally, JMS held a 1-day new-teacher training during the last week of July each summer for its new teachers. The new teachers were introduced to the school's leadership team and given contact information, instructional supplies, a two-hour classroom management training session, content delivery training, and some time to work

in their classroom. JMS leaders recognized the need for additional new-teacher support to decrease attrition and during the 2014-2015 school term implemented an enhanced three-day induction program that was the subject of this study. Participants in my study rated the program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They also were asked what components of the program most effectively assisted their professional development and learning.

Data analysis informed the program evaluation results and suggestions for improvement. The Evaluation Report (see Appendix A: The Project) was based on findings derived from participant responses and relevant research on the SWOT of induction programs. The evaluation report contains the results of the analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the new teacher induction program. I used the feedback from induction teachers and relevant literature about the development of new teachers to guide the recommendations within the Evaluation Report. The report includes a recommendation for components that may improve the induction program for new teacher retention.

Project Goals

The strengths of the current teacher support program are that it provides essential onsite contact information, basic classroom management strategies, and limited instructional support. However, results from an anonymous online survey revealed several programmatic weaknesses and threats. These included perceived arbitrariness of mentor assignments and a lack support principal support.

The aim of the evaluation report is to minimize the present weaknesses but maximize the opportunities in subsequent induction programs by providing feedback on the internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats of a rural induction program to reduce attrition at rural K–12 schools. I anticipate that the report will assist administration at the K–12 and university levels in assessing administrative competencies and being more knowledgeable about new teacher support for improved new teacher retention. Finally, the suggestions and findings in the report may help administrators and faculty develop, implement, and assess induction program components to minimize present weaknesses in induction programs while maximizing potential opportunities. They will also be able to use evaluation data to identify program opportunities that will contribute to the program's strengths while minimizing its identified weaknesses. Most of all, the evaluation report addresses the need to increase and sustain professional relationships by building collegial relationships and structures that support continued learning; providing new-teacher support outside of the administrative team by training mentors in that support; increasing a new teacher's capacity to notice, analyze, and respond to students' thinking through classroom observations, pre- and post-planning sessions, feedback provision, and intentional coaching by trained administrators and mentors; and giving new teachers varied instructional strategies training for pedagogical development.

Rationale

Scholarly Rationale for Project Genre

This subsection includes a rationale for the project genre and an evaluation report. My report shows on the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, and threats (SWOT) revealed during a program evaluation of a rural middle school's induction teacher program. Further, the report includes recommendations based on the gathered data and literature review. The program evaluation of a rural middle school's induction teacher program used the SWOT matrix to examine the program's strategies for reaching its goals comprehensively. Because the goal of the SWOT Evaluation Report is to report the findings of a SWOT program evaluation to stakeholders and administration, a SWOT evaluation report was justified as the project genre.

When a SWOT analysis is used to evaluate a program, two kinds of strategy elements are examined:

(1) Internal Strengths and Weaknesses: the factors in the strategy that the team or individual puts, directly or indirectly, into the plan to make it work. These are classified as "strengths," if they potentially facilitate the accomplishment of the goal or "weaknesses," if they potentially hinder it (von Kodolitsch et al., 2015).

(2) External Opportunities and Threats: the factors in the strategy that may affect the plan put in place by the team or individual. These are classified as "opportunities," if they potentially facilitate the accomplishment of the goal, or "threats," if they potentially hinder it (von Kodolitsch et al., 2015). Additionally, SWOT was useful in identifying the positive and negative aspects of various strategies and in predicting future factors leading

to setbacks or sustainability. Originally developed to analyze business cases at Harvard Business School (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007), SWOT has been extended to other contexts, including human resource development (Chermack & Kasshanna, 2007), marketing analysis (Fazeli & Taherikia, 2016), ecology and conservation (White et al., 2015), and tourism (Niavand et al., 2014). Thus, an evaluation report that includes identification of internal and external factors can benefit K–12 institutions because it allows for the analysis of components that need revamping and eliminating and components that should be continued or expanded. Therefore, I concluded that use of the project genre of an evaluation report was appropriate.

For the Evaluation Report, I used data gathered from induction contract teachers, through an anonymous online survey, who previously participated in the new teacher support program. Feedback from participants suggested that guided induction into the school community is beneficial for their careers. Eleven of the 19 teachers who responded to the survey indicated that the current program was either very or extremely useful to them. Additionally, 79% of the new teachers (n=15) surveyed reported that they were enthusiastic at various levels about receiving some support. However, the induction program in its current form has programmatic weaknesses and threats, such as not enough time for the administrators to support new teachers, burdensome time expectations for attendance, and no new teacher input on the development of the program which detracts from the overall effectiveness. Because the evaluation report includes the weaknesses and threats to the induction program as well as strengths and opportunities, it will be a valuable tool in new teacher retention and is a logical project genre choice. Therefore, the

findings of the study support a new and enhanced induction program that has consistent support from administrators and mentors for new teachers, reduced presentation of irrelevant or repetitive content to the new teachers during professional training sessions, and increased collaboration between higher education principal training programs and K–12 institutions.

Rationale Based on the Study Problem

The rationale for why the project genre was chosen is detailed in the following sections. The problem addressed in this study was new teacher attrition—i.e., a teacher's decision to stop teaching—adversely affects the financial, human, and organizational structures of public school systems. JMS, a rural middle school in a Southeastern South Carolina school district, is consistently challenged by new teacher attritions, so the leadership of JMS decided to re-evaluate the usefulness of its current induction program. A qualitative program evaluation of JMS's induction program was conducted. The data collected during the study validates program strengths and opportunity as well as weaknesses and threats in the program's present form. For example, in response to research question one, a participant attributed the program's strength to the information it provided, saying, "They gave you a glimpse of things to be prepared for." However, weakness and threats were identified, which included the lack of training for administrators and mentors. The responses to research question 3 where participants stated, "the lack of administrative support and the irrelevance or repetitiveness of the content" indicated that this is an area of needed improvement. Program opportunities

voiced by new teachers consistently was the need for more support. Substantiating the need to provide policy makers recommendations for program improvements.

Review of the Literature

Relevant literature cited new-teacher attrition as a growing problem (Goldring et al., 2014), with 30–50% of K–12 teachers leaving by the end of their fifth year (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Luekens, Lyster, & Fox, 2005). Researchers identified the following reasons for high attrition rates among new teachers: unsatisfactory school climates, low staff morale, challenges in the classroom, and new teachers' lack of pedagogical knowledge (Curtis, 2012; Fontaine et al., 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, & 2012). Evidence suggests, however, that induction programs help to lower attrition rates among beginning teachers through such components as mentorship, supervisor support, and observations (Bianchini & Brenner, 2010; Ingersoll, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Online Databases

Online databases used in the literature review were: Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), JStor: Journal Storage, EBSCOhost Online Research Databases, and Google Scholar. The key search terms used to find relevant references included: evaluation report, induction program evaluation, evaluation types, new teacher induction program strengths, new teach induction program weaknesses, new teacher induction program opportunities, new teach induction program threats, induction program SWOT, SWOT analysis, education SWOT analysis, beginning teachers, induction programs for beginning teachers, professional development programs for novice teachers,

induction programs and teacher retention, teacher mentorship, teacher observations, performance assessment for teachers, and administrative roles in teacher development.

Most literature in this review was published between 2012 and 2016, ensuring that its information was sourced from the most recent findings. This review expands on the study background by focusing on strategies useful for improving JMS's current induction program, the usefulness of an evaluation report, and the SWOT matrix analysis.

Project Genre: Evaluation Report

The project genre selection necessitated consideration of who would receive its information and how it would be used. Torres et al. (2004) cited three reasons for communicating and reporting evaluation results: (1) to build awareness of and/or support for the evaluated program and provide a basis for asking questions about it; (2) to ease that program's growth and improvement; and (3) to demonstrate the program's results and accountability (p. 13). An evaluation report was thus the selected project genre. The selected data-gathering tool was a SWOT matrix analysis, which provided a simple yet comprehensive method of collecting accurate information for strategic planning and program improvement (Orr, 2013).

The program evaluation report, an appropriate method for presenting SWOT analysis findings, was designed to contain information on the induction program's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (Fazeli & Taherikia, 2016; Niavand et al., 2014; von Kodolitsch et al., 2015), thus enabling it to: provide (a) necessary information to district and building-level administration and induction contract teachers as tangible; (b) measurable evidence for program

improvement (Norgbey, 2016); (c) revisiting of the purpose of the program evaluation; (d) the definition of the evaluation's target audience (Mirambeau, Elmi, Jan Losby, Derrick, 2013); (e) engagement of the stakeholders in evaluating the program; and (f) recommendations for program improvements.

Induction Program Strengths

Induction programs support new teachers' professional development and integrate them into the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Effective induction programs often inspire teachers' dedication for honing their teaching, classroom management and continuing education skills. The strengths identified through the SWOT analysis included the existence of a structured program, collaborative training sessions, a professional learning community, camaraderie that increased proficiency in technology and classroom management, and the assignment of a mentor to induction contract teachers.

A study of an induction program for new teachers in an urban district found that teachers who participated in the program and evaluated its effectiveness reported increased levels of job satisfaction, more involvement in the school development process, and more dedication to improving their teaching skills and collaborating with colleagues (Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Zijlstra, & Volman, 2015). Furthermore, Voss, Wagner, Trautwein, Klusmann, & Kunter (2017), asserted that induction contract teachers were more successful after three years when they perceived the school environment to be supportive of their teaching goals. Wood & Stanulis (2009) insisted that new teacher transition from pre-service to in-service teaching and that induction programs guide them

through this process by enabling them to develop their teaching skills right in the classroom. This study's SWOT analysis findings concurred with the above results, thus calling for a comprehensive support system to encourage collegial dialogue, administrative support, formative assessments, and mentors.

Induction Program Weaknesses

Administration involvement. An identified weakness of the program was lack of administrative support and time spent with new teachers. Studies of new teachers' career decisions showed teacher turnover to be associated less with student-teacher relationships than with teachers' working conditions and educational environments (Boyd et al., 2011; Ladd, 2011). Though facilitated by school administrators, these studies did not connect attrition to adequate administrative support. One participant in the current study wrote, "At JMS, I felt that my sixth-grade team [teachers and assistant principal] were awesome. My only obstacle was no support from my principal." School administrators must, therefore, create a wider culture supporting new teacher professional growth and learning.

Induction program planning. Induction programs can adversely affect new teacher performance and satisfaction if poorly planned and executed. The SWOT matrix helped program planners identify areas in which they lacked expertise and gave induction contract teachers a voice in future program components (Scheyvens, Griffin, Joko, Liu, & Bradford, 2008). The SWOT analysis revealed that inconsistent program implementation hindered participants' ability to benefit from the program. In a mixed-methods study by LoCascio, Smeaton, and Waters (2014), only one-half of the 53 surveyed teachers had

participated in induction programs that followed state guidelines, and the researchers concluded that inconsistently implemented programs affected new-teacher retention more negatively than the absence of an induction program in a new teacher's career. Because participants in the current study reported repetitive content and lack of buy-in to the program planning process as program weaknesses, the planning process must be considered in the current program's revision.

Lack of professional development goals. A common challenge to teacher induction program formulation was specifying program results (Rotermund, DeRoche, & Otten, 2017). Participants from the current study indicated that the irrelevance of some or all the content to incoming teachers' actual duties stymied their professional development. They also mentioned lack of follow-up to their initial training: "not having enough support to execute the development after training, and not learning something I cannot implement in the classroom." In light of this sentiment, school leaders must provide ongoing evaluations of induction program content and elicit continual new-teacher feedback on its effectiveness.

No link between program and classroom curriculum. Recent research called for alignment of teacher training with specific material taught. Scheyvens, Griffin, Joko, Liu, & Bradford (2008) reviewed professional development programs that aligned the training materials to math teachers' curricula and found the effects positive among teachers who adhered to their curricula's pacing. Penuel, Fishman, Haugan Cheng, and Sabelli (2011) found similar results in a training program that paralleled the teachers' middle-school earth-science curriculum. Participants in the current study said most of the

program content was irrelevant to the required curriculum. One teacher wrote, “The meetings were awesome. I wish that the time spent in the meetings could have been more content area-related.” These studies showed induction programs to be less effective when there was no component to help the teachers transfer the strategies and pedagogical knowledge they learned from training into classroom practices (Garet et al., 2011). An effective induction program could close this gap between theory and practice.

Induction Program Opportunities

Training assigned mentors. Gaikhorst, Beishuizen, Korstjens, & Volman (2014) reported that continued guidance from an experienced teacher as a mentor, coach, or tutor was helpful to a new teacher. Mentors provided social and emotional support to novice teachers as they adjusted to the profession (Hudson, 2013). A study of the supports new teachers needed and valued indicated that new teachers valued mentors who provided listening ears, frequently met with them, helped them socialize into the school community, maintained their confidentiality, and shared ideas and materials with them (Clark & Byrnes, 2012).

Also, teachers valued mentors who cared about their success and fostered trust within the mentor-teacher relationship (LoCascio et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016). In turn, encouraging healthy interaction among teachers benefited mentors and increased their capacity for coaching new teachers. Furthermore, collaboration and idea exchanges among teachers and mentors spurred innovation and organizational change within the educational system (Donna & Roehrig, 2015; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014). Many of the current study’s participants asserted that a coach had to be at each school, not just at the

district level, and that those coaches needed to give each teacher observations and ideas on how to become a better educator. While a reported strength of the induction program was the availability of a mentor, there is still room for improvement in terms of mentoring quality. Specifically, the participants remarked that it appeared that mentors were recruited not for their skills and competencies, but only because they have been teaching at the school for a long time.

Mentor-teacher compatibility. A study found a strong correlation between similarity in the teaching subject area and perceived helpfulness of the mentor. The similarity in academic backgrounds and fields of expertise forged an easier teacher-mentor connection (DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013), as well as a strong correlation between perceived mentor helpfulness and mentoring frequency (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2016). Study participants in the current study said they enjoyed the camaraderie with their mentors, yet most said these relationships would have been more efficient had their assigned mentors taught the same content areas, received mentor training, and invested quality time in helping them. These studies showed that regularity and consistency of opportunities for mentors and teachers to interact with one another influenced new-teacher retention.

Reflective inquiry and teaching process. How an induction program facilitator provided training on effective classroom instruction and management strategies determined how well new teachers benefited from the program (Wood & Stanulis, 2009). Interaction and experience exchange were similarly effective among induction contract teachers; these opportunities to grow into the profession together and reflect on each

other's experiences were effective ways to analyze teacher actions (Gaikhorst et al., 2014). Study participants replied that daily dialogue among induction contract teachers gave them much-needed support as they reflected on their classroom activities and individual professional growth. A recognized activity that drove teachers' professional growth and job motivation was a conversation about teaching within a network of teachers (Gaikhorst et al., 2014). These opportunities for insight exchanges positively affected novice teacher growth and opinion of the profession hence should be included in any future program changes.

Systematic and structured observations. Wood and Stanulis (2009) cited structured observations as opportunities for new-teacher induction program improvement. A participant wrote, "One obstacle that this program faces is its inability to evaluate each other. Some meetings were intense and did not provide opportunities for collaboration." A quantitative analysis of mentoring support found that allowing time to plan teaching strategies with one's mentor is key to increasing teacher effectiveness, as induction contract teachers' satisfaction and competence were higher when given both planning and observation time than when given only observation time (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). The need for specific mentor support and observation time and feedback was evident among the participants, who believed that they needed to experience sitting in at a class and observing a more experienced and competent teacher do their job because this would give them invaluable insight as to how to become a better educator. When asked how the program could be improved, some participants called for "more examples of teaching and more observations" while a great majority of them simply said, "Time."

A study by Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, Buchanan, and Prescott (2015) on early-career teacher support showed that classroom observation by mentors or more experienced teachers is one of the most helpful types of support induction contract teachers receive from mentors. Mentors and experienced teachers willing to demonstrate and discuss teaching were even more valuable, as new teachers intending to continue teaching reported. Another beneficial practice for induction contract teachers was to observe mentors teaching and then analyze their observations, including mentors' goals and the motivations for different decisions the teacher made in the classroom. The mentor thus took on a dual role here, as both a teacher's model and a facilitator of understanding (Burke et al., 2015).

In such a situation, induction contract teachers used classroom observations primarily for analysis of teacher behavior and subsequent engagement in dialogue about their observations, which contributed much to teachers' professional learning (Kane & Francis, 2013). Teachers who were interviewed on their experiences with induction programs reported that the opportunity to be observed in class allowed them to evaluate their performances. Comments from mentors and principals encouraged them to examine their decisions and actions and consider the reasons for them. The teachers also mentioned that the personal advice from their mentors helped them to improve their future performance and increase their belief they could improve (Kane & Francis, 2013). This is an opportunity to integrate planning for classroom observation, the actual observation, and subsequent constructive dialogue into a new-teacher induction program.

Formative teacher assessment. Assessment of new teachers' performance can also enrich their professional development. A study on the effects of assessments on new teachers found that learning still occurs during the assessment period (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2013), as induction contract teachers apply the practices they have learned during the assessment process (McFadden, Ellis, Anwar, & Roehrig, 2014;). Moreover, assessments make these teachers aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Assessors (mentors and administrators) also benefit from this, as the scoring process brought added insight into which practices to incorporate into their teachings in order to learn the desired skills (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013).

Performance measures took various forms: performance rubrics, teaching portfolios, subject-specific tests, culminating teacher events, and so on (Darling-Hammond et al., 2013; Goe et al., 2014). However, the formation of an evaluation system calls for multiple assessment methods rather than just one; multiple measures provided a complete picture of information on teachers' performance and allowed for more comprehensive analysis on their strengths and weaknesses (Goe & Holdheide, 2011). During the practicum period, teacher education students are assessed by a rubric specific to higher education guidelines. Implementing that same checklist in the K–12 classrooms may also help a new teacher improve. Exposing practicum students to their school-level teaching requirements during their practicum years increases their ability to learn while being assessed. The participants even stated that improvements in the assessment of the induction teachers helped improve teaching knowledge and skills as well because it informed them of their strengths and weaknesses.

University-school partnerships. Early school-reform studies highlighted university roles in new-teacher development and assessment. A study of school "co-construction"—engagement of university faculty and induction-contract teachers in a collaborative process involving all school faculty, rather than university representatives taking on sole coaching roles—determined that successful university-school partnerships had four programmatic elements: educator preparation, professional development, curriculum development, and research (Carroll, LaPoint, & Tyler, 2001; Reynolds, Ferguson-Patrick, & McCormack, 2013).

Regarding professional development, researchers determined that induction contract teachers benefit from collaborations with university faculty in co-construction (Carroll et al., 2001; Parker, Templin, & Setiawan, 2012). In a 2016 study of school-university partnerships, researchers found them beneficial for induction contract teachers within their first three years of school placement, because teachers benefited from many evaluations and assessment approaches, including peer review and collaborative reflections with other teachers (Abodeeb-Gentile, Pedro, & Tapper, 2016).

For new teachers' during the second year of a study, an expanded collaboration between universities and schools increased new-teacher induction program quality. Teachers benefited from collaborating with each other and sharing their experiences implementing the classroom management techniques the university faculty had demonstrated to them (Abodeeb-Gentile et al., 2016). Though the structures of successful new-teacher evaluation and professional development programs varied, researchers identified key elements that influence both programmatic and individual teacher success

(Ingersoll, 2012). These included professional learning opportunities, performance assessments, and support structures. These three elements, also discussed in Abodeeb-Gentile et al.'s (2016) study, can be brought to public schools through school-university partnerships. These research findings were also evident in the current study. Analysis of the responses from teacher participants revealed that they believed the opportunity to collaborate and share experiences and insights with other teachers as one of the most effective components of the induction program.

Induction Program Threats

Program preparation. When asked how the induction program influenced teachers' decisions to remain or leave the profession, a teacher participant who thought that the program influenced them to leave the profession expressed that there were parts of the program that lacked preparation and adequate planning. One mentioned that it had excessive meetings that were not even necessary to the end goal, while another pointed out redundancies in the curriculum that could have just been integrated if thought out more carefully. Even assignment preparation was viewed as a flaw, as a participant said that the assignments assigned by the mentors were too arbitrary, and probably signified a lack of preparation as well.

Inadequate preparation and time allotment for new-teacher development is a threat; an induction program of limited duration may not be able to fill extreme knowledge gaps new teachers may have. Lack of knowledge and ability to handle stressful situations are two key reasons why so many new teachers become overwhelmed and leave the profession (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, 2012).

Requirement vs. option. It is also a threat if the induction program appears to be forced rather than voluntary. When the participants were asked about threats to their new-teacher induction program or career choice, one wrote about feeling forced into the program "the induction session appears to be a requirement and not support." Moreover, as in the case of this study, if there are significant parts of the program that teachers view as irrelevant or redundant, they are less likely to be interested in learning from the program and are more likely to continue to view it as a requirement instead of an opportunity.

Lack of support. Another wrote that problems occur "when there is a lack of or no support from the Induction Team or the Administration, to include the Principal." This is a crucial weakness because school leaders are most expected to coach the induction contract teachers in all aspects of teaching. Another identified weakness was a mentor-teacher disconnection. If induction contract teachers do not feel supported or connected socially, attempts to match them with mentors may not succeed. If they believe they cannot build relationships with their assigned mentors, then a major program component—mentor assignment—becomes a threat to program success, hence teacher retention. A participant wrote, "Assigning a mentor to a new teacher just because the teacher has taught at the school for many years" can be a threat, especially if the teacher and mentor do not teach similar subjects.

Lack of morale. Morale is influenced by far more than induction contract teachers and mentors. Veteran teachers who could not participate in the new program also affect the culture and morale because they are less able to help new teachers adjust to

their classrooms and the school culture in general. Identified threats can deny new teachers the support they need for success (Eboka, 2016). If induction contract teachers believe they are unprepared to embark on their careers when they enter the school building and then perceive the support program to be laden with threats, they often leave that building, and maybe even the profession. In the current study, the participants noted that the lack of support that they were given contributed to their lack of motivation during stressful times. Because of this deficit in morale, some participants felt that the program failed to meet its stated goals for change and impact.

Program funding. Low funding of induction programs threatens program improvement. Many of the funds provided for the social outings, session snacks, and gifts were at the administrative team's expense. Lack of funding threatens not only the current program at JMS but also any future improvement of it.

Summary of the Literature

Without appropriate guidance in understanding and navigating the early stages of their profession, induction contract teachers can find themselves in circumstances they are not prepared to handle, thus increasing the likelihood of attrition early in their careers. Induction programs give them the education and support necessary to navigate new challenges, thus increasing their chances of success. Induction programs present fundamental structures and learning opportunities for them as they advance in their careers. Recent literature indicates that forging dynamic partnerships between induction contract teachers and experienced mentors is key to induction program success. Furthermore, adequate, and timely program evaluation strengthens new-teacher support

and retention. School administrators must help reshape program mechanics and produce substantial learning experiences for induction contract teachers, so that teachers, mentors, and administrators all influence school dynamics and foster a collaborative school culture.

Project Description

The project deliverable is an evaluation report of the SWOT analysis of the induction program a rural middle school now uses. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were analyzed to determine effective elements of the current program. Results of the evaluation will be used to recommend improvements to the current program. Below, I discuss the needed resources, existing supports, potential barriers, and potential solutions to barriers specified in the evaluation report.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports (Implementation Strengths)

The school district voiced interest in the study results and requested a copy of the evaluation report. The district of study is a potential resource for the presentation of the finding of the study. Working within an institution that supports a study is an invaluable resource (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2002) and the school environment in which I conducted the study was no exception. Since new teacher attrition was troublesome for the school and district, the policymakers of the school district welcomed the opportunity for a program evaluation and the culminating evaluation report. District personnel has asked for the report based on the research and will allow for project presentation at the culmination of the research.

Potential Barriers and Solutions (Implementation Threats/Opportunities)

Communicating the results in a report that was neither translated into practical applications nor distributed systematically through audience-specific strategies may be a barrier to the report (Mirambeau et al., 2013). My report had to consider all stakeholders and be written clearly and concisely. Lack of funding for the suggested improvements was another potential barrier, indicating that further research for grants for rural areas would be necessary. Finally, the report had to be shared with the Office of Research and Accountability, district-level personnel, and building principals. If recommendations were practicable to the school district, then a planning committee would be needed for implementation, which would require funding and upper-level permission. Continual communication with the district of study provides a solvable solution to presentation permission upon study completion.

Project Implementation and Timetable Proposal

Contacting the participants of the study began in July 2016 and concluded in October 2016. I have encountered several barriers to university approval and final acceptance. I had hoped that the report would be made available to the school district of study policymakers for the 2017–2018 school year. However, I am determined not to abandon this project because it is key to rural teacher retention in not only the school district of study but also, potentially, nationwide. With that in mind, the following is a new implementation schedule:

1. **April 2018:** Completion of project study, URR approval, and oral defense.

2. **The first week of May 2018:** Request for appointment to present the evaluation report to the Chief Officers of Accountability and Research, Curriculum and Instruction, Human Resources, and Finance.
3. **The second week of May 2018:** Request to meet with the curriculum and instruction department. If permission is gained at this level, I will then request permission to contact and meet with the building principal, mentor teachers, and any faculty assigned to work with the onsite induction program.
4. **The third week of May 2018:** Discussion of funding with the Chief Officer of Finance; identification of induction mentors within each building.
5. **The fourth week of May 2018:** Training for administrators and induction mentors, through the second week of November.
6. **The first week of June 2018** Training to include all identified faculty and induction contract teachers, through the second week of December.
7. **Full implementation is scheduled to occur between June 2018 and September 2018:** Mentors will begin to work with new teachers to assess their needs and create the support program for the remainder of the year.

Roles and Responsibilities in the Project Implementation

The stakeholders involved in the evaluation included district-level and building-level administrators, the evaluator, and the induction contract teachers. This tripartite relationship must continue for the evaluation report. Because the district-level administrators are the decision-makers, their approval is needed to present the report, hire, or reassign personnel, and provide funds; otherwise, the report will never reach the

building-level administrator or teachers. The building-level administrators—who allow faculty and staff within their building, and who support or decline curriculum changes for their teachers—allow the induction mentors access to the induction contract teachers and provide funding in their budget if the program is approved at the district level. Without their consent, the program will not exist in their building, access to induction contract teachers or time for them to participate in the support program will not be possible, and funding from their budget can be withheld.

Therefore, the responsibility of building-level administration is to accept, support, and allocate faculty, and to fund the program improvements recommended in the evaluation report.

Project Evaluation Plan

I evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) inherent in a rural middle school's new-teacher support program. SWOT, a tool for analyzing an organization's internal and external factors, is suggested on an ongoing basis (Pilar, Pokorna, & Polakova, 2015, p. 453). To evaluate the project, I will consider the results in relation to literature related to new teacher induction programs. I will probe deeper into the participant's understanding of events. First, an anonymous online survey will be created, and administered on the first day of participation within the newly created induction program, at the midpoint of the program, and at the culmination of the program. Secondly, mentors and teacher coaches (if funded) will complete an online survey after receiving professional development when providing professional training to induction teachers, and after facilitating social events. Finally, administrators will be

asked to respond to anonymous online surveys on the effectiveness of their training and its ease of application when working with new teachers.

All gathered data will be analyzed on an ongoing basis with findings presented to district policymakers at the culmination of the school year. Participant responses that yield insights which are different or contradictory to the recent literature on new teacher induction programs and commonalities between participant responses and recent literature may be used to suggest project validity. Participant responses that suggest a divergence of opinion on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats about the new teacher induction program will warrant further consideration and evaluation. Due to the confidential nature of participant responses, it is unlikely that participants will feel pressure to provide responses which do not accurately reflect their views of the new teacher induction program

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders for this project are induction contract teachers, district and school administrators, students, parents, induction teacher program facilitators, and the evaluator. Because the study addressed new-teacher attrition, induction contract teachers are the primary stakeholders, as it benefits them to review the report and inform further discussion on program improvements. The district, school, and building-level administrators are managerially responsible for faculty within the district and for maintaining the monetary feasibility necessary for the training program's success, which ultimately affects both students and parents. When teachers are prepared to handle the demands of their jobs, they are better able to teach students in the classroom, provide

quality education to students, and handle behavioral problems that can have a lifelong impact on both students and parents.

My role as evaluator was to create the survey, gain necessary permissions to begin the study, email participants, gather and analyze data, construct an evaluation report, and share findings with the school district of study policymakers upon final approval.

Project Implications

Local Community

JMS faces serious attrition problems, with an average three-year turnover rate of 25% (District Office data). Teachers, administrators, parents, and students are all affected when teachers feel unprepared or dissatisfied and leave their positions at high rates because educational quality suffers when teachers are underprepared and dissatisfied.

The project, an evaluation report, was developed in response to a program evaluation conducted to identify a new-teacher induction program's internal strengths and opportunities (SO), to maximize those assets, and to identify the program's external weaknesses and threats (WT), to minimize those liabilities. The results of the project will assist in furthering understanding of new teacher induction programs and elements which provide positive benefits to induction teachers. If school systems better understand how to develop successful induction programs, then there could be positive implications for teachers, faculty, parents, and students. The social change implications of this initiative will allow school systems to stabilize their faculty, thereby increasing faculty collaboration and student achievement. The evaluation report will give the local school district concrete information that will allow programmatic changes to stem attrition and

provide context for informed conversations about teacher attrition and retention in rural public schools.

Far-Reaching Implications

Improving future induction programs can enrich induction contract teachers' experiences for the entirety of their first year and beyond. Lower teacher attrition rates will improve outcomes for other school districts as well. If building and district administrators spend less time replacing teachers or dealing with teacher dissatisfaction, they will have more time to help schools plan induction programs that increase teacher retention and their perception of personal efficacy. Additionally, school districts will be able to utilize funds previously allocated for recruiting and training induction contract teachers to implement better support systems for those teachers. Though the original program design was intended for rural middle schools, it could similarly affect other districts and geographic areas as well. Finally, another possible implication is that higher retention will increase continuity for students, parents, and the school, and foster a school culture of consistent long-term teacher efficacy.

Summary

The section addressed the project's description and rationale, as well as the objective of providing a program evaluation report for the improvement of new-teacher induction programs. The literature review presented studies related to the project genre, the SWOT matrix tool, and the way the gathered data fueled the evaluation report and implications for social change.

In Section 4, I will reflect on the study findings and present conclusions about the teacher induction program at the rural middle school. Section 4 will include a discussion on the project strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, I will reflect on the overall process of conducting the performance evaluation, in addition to the value of the project and the implications for social change.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

Increasing new teacher attrition rates have become problematic for k-12 institutions within the United States. With 30–50% of new teachers in the U. S. leaving their positions within the first five years, high turnover rates present a problem for teachers, administrators, and students (Fry & Anderson, 2011; Goldring et al., 2014; Luckens et al., 2005). Ultimately, induction programs aim to lower attrition in middle schools by offering new teachers the training and support they need for success (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The project I developed was based on this study's findings. One strength of this project was its focus on uncovering new teacher perceptions of the SWOT of an induction program support, which, according to researchers, is a primary motivator for teachers leaving the profession (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, 2012).

As discussed in Section 2's literature review, effective mentors are a core component of successful induction programs (Gaikhorst et al., 2014). Another strength of the project is it's bringing together new teachers and more experienced mentors. By introducing new teachers to mentors even before the school year begins, the project will enable new teachers to quickly build those bonds and gain some familiarity with colleagues to whom they can turn for support. Currently, mentorship of teachers cannot begin before their employment, so some new teachers may not make the social connections required to achieve a mentor/mentee relationship if the mentor assignment process is not formalized.

Other Strengths

- The methodology **e**nabled me to create an evaluation report the results of a study of a rural induction program planned to stem induction contract teacher attrition.
- The design enabled me to provide the major policymakers with information gained from a review of relevant literature and a SWOT analysis of data gained through an anonymous online survey of induction contract teachers.
- The perspectives of participants clarified the SWOT of the induction program from the new teachers' viewpoint.
- The survey's results exposed weaknesses in the design of new-teacher training program and will provide school districts and policymakers recommendations that can improve the program components to effect new teacher retention.

Limitations

Researchers have noted unsatisfactory school climates and low staff morale as major contributors to teacher attrition rates (Fontaine et al., 2012). Though induction programs have the potential to improve morale by giving teachers strategies for handling difficult classroom situations, there is no guarantee that a three-day induction program can fundamentally change the climate at a school. If new teachers do not feel supported or connected socially, attempting to match them with mentors may not be successful. Furthermore, morale is influenced by far more than new teachers and mentors. Veteran teachers who did not have the opportunity to participate in the new program also affect the culture and morale (Eboka, 2016).

Additionally, an induction program of limited duration may not be able to fill any extreme knowledge gaps teachers have when entering the profession. Lack of knowledge and ability to handle stressful situations are two key reasons why teachers leave the profession (Curtis, 2012; Ingersoll, 2001, 2011, 2012). If most new teachers believe they are unprepared to embark on their careers, the problem might be rooted in teacher education programs and training programs, which an induction program may not adequately resolve.

Other Limitations

- Inapplicability of project findings to larger geographic areas. The qualitative study's small sample group could not be generalized enough to apply to larger populations, affecting funding decisions at their respective local levels.
- Untargeted funding. Most districts have financed their teacher development programs in general but have not earmarked funding specifically for new teachers.
- Data restriction. The current study was restricted to a sample group of adult teachers in the induction program, which means data on students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness are unavailable. I am also not able to provide student achievement data for students taught by induction contract teachers. Thus, the project cannot yield data to show whether new teacher participation in the program yielded increases in student achievement.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

A finding of my study was that social isolation and lack of support are the primary reasons why new teachers leave the profession, for example, Participant 6

responded saying, “When my cohorts left, I wanted to leave with them.” Additionally, other research studies indicate that mentor programs have a positive impact on attrition rates (Gaikhorst et al., 2014; LoCascio et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016). Therefore, an alternative solution to offering new teachers an induction program is to formalize their mentor-mentee relationships and focus on the social interactions therein. Instead of offering a three-day course designed to cover some topics, new teachers could be paired with veteran teachers as mentors for their first year, and possibly longer allowing them consistent observation, feedback, and collegiality.

In a formalized social mentor program, induction contract teachers would be assigned a designated mentor to whom they could turn with questions, concerns, and challenges. The veteran teachers could review the new teachers’ lesson plans and classroom performance to provide constructive feedback and encourage continued learning. While the induction program would immediately bolster new teachers with education and management strategies, a formalized, longer-term mentor program may target the social element that affects new-teacher attrition.

I designed the proposed induction program to reduce new-teacher attrition by providing teachers with management strategies and positive support systems. However, if induction contract teachers are simply not prepared for their careers, then support systems are unlikely to deter their departure from the field (Gaikhorst et al., 2014). Alternative solutions to lack of preparedness could be provided through the certification system in the form of increased training, apprenticeships, and practical in-classroom experiences.

The alternative solutions suggested within this study require long-term financial obligations as well as intense scheduling commitments. The rural school of study may not be able to make such commitments. Further major financial and staffing changes require state and district level administrative approval which is outside the authority of the administrators of JMS. Additionally, unlike a year-long mentorship program, the induction program ensures that all participating teachers receive baseline information and start their careers on similar footings. The quality of a formalized mentorship program could vary among teacher-mentor relationships and would require a significant time commitment on the part of both mentors and mentees.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

If being scholarly is to learn through a recursive exercise of research and reporting of findings and then to share this learning to impact social change, I have become scholarly. Determination, resilience, and connection are what I take away from this process. I gained a substantial amount of experience with using online media to discuss, reflect, and interact with peers around the country. I learned to infer from, interject, and listen to my instructors, but the greatest thing I take away from this process is the ability to conduct research and perform a program evaluation on my own. As I compiled the findings of my research into an evaluation report, I gained an understanding of induction teacher's needs. I utilized the knowledge to create a resource tool box to be used in my own building.

I was required to do three different literature reviews for my project, yet that requirement provided me with valuable information that I currently use at my school. The

professional development review that I conducted provided me with the knowledge of best practice in professional growth, professional learning communities, mentors, and meeting the needs of new teachers. The SWOT process review helped me understand the importance of program evaluation, how to create valid SWOT questionnaires, and how to create a SWOT evaluation report. The research on evaluations and evaluation reports provide knowledge on the history, beginning, and importance of evaluations. Each review provided me with knowledge and understanding that I used as I created my project.

The development of the project required me to break down the SWOT responses of the participants, compile those responses into an organized, concise report, and connect with the school district to report my findings. That gave me experience in working with stakeholders and policy makers, thereby enhancing my leadership abilities. The motivation to conduct the study on induction programs began as an administrative duty that required me to work with and support new teachers at my assigned site. At its conclusion, I have gained an intimate knowledge of the fragility of the process for supporting new teacher. I learned that the development of the project was constructed from my view of what new teachers should and need to know and concluded with how important it is to listen to what they already know and respect their voices. They know what it will take to remain in the profession. The project itself was supposed to be an exercise in program analysis and improvement, yet it yielded the need for professional dialogue on a continual basis. I learned that the most significant outcome of the project is the ability to assess on a continual basis the feelings, perceptions, and actual practices of new teachers. If the results of this program evaluation are to have long-lasting effects, it

must recursively evaluate its progress and tune its ability to hear the heart of all stakeholders in new teacher education such as teacher education programs, school district funding, and support personnel training. As a future new teacher supporter and advocate for induction program reform, I must adhere to the various needs of new teachers in all geographic areas.

Leadership is service, it is encouragement, and it is one's ability to invoke in someone enough passion for wanting to bring about individual change. The analysis of data gathered reached deep into the leadership perceptions that I held. It allowed me to see the perceptions of others about what I perceived as support. It chiseled a change in my thought processes on leadership and teacher support. Now as a leader, I will seek to hear adequately and respond appropriately to the need of my teachers. I will be patient with those who seem confused. Additionally, it changed my view of how to voice concerns to a larger population on a topic.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

This was a challenging process, yet I walk away with research experience that has strengthened my research skills and has prepared me to be a researcher in the field of education. I began my first year in education as a 7th grade Social Studies teacher with multiple resources yet no mentor or involvement in a formally organized induction program. I survived my induction contract year and was determined from that point on that I would help other induction contract teachers. I have learned a lot about the needs of induction teachers from the finding of this study. The finding of the project study addresses the currently held perceptions about what induction programs contribute to

teacher retention and attrition. A great amount of research exists about induction programs, teacher attrition, and university partnerships. This project study analyzed the theory of new teacher support against actual program implementation. The result of the evaluation has potential to affect local school district positively.

I am now even more motivated to continue my research around teacher mentoring, especially on the topic of induction programs in rural middle schools. This study has also confirmed my belief that K–12 institutions and institutions of higher education must connect to prepare teachers for the classroom. The study substantiates my belief that funding for new teacher support is needed the district of study. Using the SWOT tool for analysis provides specific information that can be used to adjust the program in a way that is meaningful and effective. The recommendation to begin university partnerships that go beyond theory is huge for new teacher retention. I am determined to continue this research and to network with instructions at the university level so that I can conduct further studies on the topic of preparing teachers through induction programs. Furthermore, I plan to share my expertise with aspiring teachers and administrators stakeholders, and state policymakers about the needs of induction contract teachers in rural schools at all levels This research process has changed my perceptions of what induction contract teachers' needs are and how to support them This project concurs with years of research that new teachers need support beyond university graduation and that support must be a collaborative effort between K–12 institutions and higher education. This research process has positively affected my thoughts and has thus empowered me to effect social change.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This study evaluated the SWOT of a rural middle school's induction program and determined that it benefited the new teachers. Also, evaluating the program gave the building administrators a glimpse into an induction program's power to retain new teachers. One administrative participant said, "The teachers had a very positive attitude about the school culture and environment and were eager to return the next school year."

Researchers have shown that experienced teachers are more able to navigate the difficulties that occur daily in classrooms than new teachers are. Goldrick et al. (2012) found that systematic, organized induction programs accelerated new-teacher professional growth and decreased new-teacher attrition. Teacher participants attested that having a mentor to work with them on first-year issues was one of the program's strengths, as was group dialogue about daily classroom problems. The recommendations within this evaluation report will give that district of study opportunities to conceive of strategies for strengthening the program and methods for removing threats to it. This research has shown that new teachers must receive non-evaluative, timely support.

The potential for positive social change is significant for rural schools because they have difficulty retaining teachers. So, this report's recommendations must be shared with all stakeholders, as improvements to the new-teacher support program can positively affect cultural stability and student achievement in rural school districts. The project study was conducted at one rural middle school in a large urban and rural district of 50 schools, seven of them rural. However, the effects of high new-teacher attrition rates are experienced district-wide, so this report's recommendations for improvement are

applicable for all new-teacher programs in all rural middle schools. Therefore, comparison of the effects of the new-teacher support program across the district is warranted, and recommendations for further research would be to compare components of induction programs at multiple rural schools throughout South Carolina.

Conclusion

The problem addressed in this study was teacher attrition among induction teachers—that is, a first-year teacher's decision to leave the teaching profession—which adversely affects the financial, human, and organizational structures of public school systems. A qualitative program evaluation utilizing a SWOT analysis was implemented to determine the internal strengths and weakness and the external opportunities and threats of a rural middle school induction teacher program. The data collected during the study validates limited program success in its present form. Data collected using teacher surveys from 19 participants provided information to conduct a SWOT analysis and revealed induction contract teachers' perspectives about at a rural middle school induction program. Recommendations for continual program evaluations and program improvements were documented in an evaluation report, which the researcher will share with district stakeholders.

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Appendix A: The Project

Supplemental Report: The Projects Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

For the

Program Evaluation of an Induction Program in a Rural U.S. Middle School

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June 2018

Introduction

The study was a qualitative program evaluation that used a SWOT analysis. The SWOT Analysis is a forward-thinking process where JMS can sustain real successes and focus on directing continuous improvement techniques to correct current weaknesses or threats. The study's purpose was to evaluate the efficacy of a rural middle school new teacher support program. I used an anonymous online survey to collect data. The SWOT analysis aimed to underline developing concerns from the data gathering process that will guide the recommended improvements and implementation of an improved rural new teacher support program. Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, recommendations for creating an improved new teacher support program are discussed, and the need for school-university facilitated formative teacher assessment tool is explained.

Purpose

The purpose of the JMS SWOT Analysis is to identify both the internal and external factors that may affect JMS's performance with supporting new teachers. The SWOT analysis was necessary to look at the current program and provide relevant information about needed program changes to all stakeholders. The evaluation report will contain commendations and recommendations. First, the evaluation report will give the administration insights on how to better prepare for a new teacher. Second, suggested improvements can provide best practices to improve the new-teacher induction program, thereby affecting new teacher retention. After analyzing the participant feedback gathered, I gained an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the rural middle school new teacher support program (JMSSP).

Executive Summary

I conducted the program evaluation of the rural middle school induction program from July 2016 to October 2016. The program was revamped in the 2014–2015 school year to provide more support for induction contract teachers. Many opportunities for program improvement materialized during the study. The evaluation report will outline specifically the results of the SWOT analysis and recommend improvement for the program. A summary of JMS's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is displayed below

JMS's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths. These include the establishment of the Professional Learning Community for its new teachers. Teachers surveyed felt the program's greatest strength was the provided professional development that enhanced teacher classroom skills.

Weaknesses. These primarily constituted the methods in which the course content was chosen and presented. It is evident that new teachers' input was not a part of the process used to develop the monthly training schedule, time, or content covered.

Opportunities. Opportunities exist to increase support of an experienced mentor, to provide relevant mentor assignments, and to increase the time for supporting teachers. These actions will sustain current strengths and offer improved opportunities and selections for program components and new teacher retention.

Threats. These include administrator as a facilitator, lack of funding, teacher perceptions of the program, and time is a threat**.** Removal of perceived threats is crucial.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this analysis, I recommend developing a new teacher support program which addresses the weaknesses of the current induction program while retaining elements which added to the programmatic strengths. Based on the weaknesses and opportunities found in the current program, I also recommend implementing a new teacher assessment system to evaluate gaps in new teacher's skill sets before they result in teacher attrition.

Data Overview and Implications

Demographics

The study district is the seventh-largest school district in the state and, at the time, served 24,372 students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a large percentage of public school students in the South are enrolled in rural schools and this trend will continue to grow. At the same time, school districts nationwide continue grappling with a teacher shortage caused, in part, by the sharp decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs from 2010 to 2014 (pg. 32). To prepare for the growth of student populations in rural areas and the decreasing number of teacher education students as well as the continued exodus of teachers from rural areas, JMS policymakers and the rural school district administrators must acknowledge the need for sustained teacher support at the school building and provide more resources to building-level administrators. Additionally, school districts and universities should plan programs that provide more awareness to teachers entering rural schools and provide intense support during their first through third years.

Teacher Shortage Data

The State of South Carolina continues to struggle with hiring and retaining highly qualified teachers. This is especially troublesome in rural areas. Schools in rural areas reported the highest vacancies of teachers. Garrett (2016) reported: "(1) that nearly two-thirds of all vacant teaching positions in the state are at rural schools. (2) That 39% of teachers who left did so during the first five years of their careers. Of the number 14% of all departures occur during or at the end of teachers the first year in the classroom" (Garrett 2016). That data analysis points to the need to address new teacher attrition, particularly in rural areas. The study findings have huge implications for new teacher retention in rural and other regions. The table below displays the number of teachers that left the classroom in South Carolina.

Table 4

Number of Certified Teachers Who Did Not Return to Their Classrooms

	Primary/Elementary			Middle			High School			
	Total years of teaching experience			Total years of teaching experience			Total years of teaching experience			Total
	≤ 1	2-5	>5	≤ 1	2-5	>5	≤ 1	2-5	>5	
Changed profession	15.8	27.2	48.5	5.0	23.0	19.0	16.0	27.0	42.0	223.5
Personal choice (includes staying home with children, resignation, no reason given, etc.)	83.2	168.1	318.2	55.5	89.8	152.3	57.0	89.0	194.25	1,207.4

(Garrett, 2016)

Table 4 indicates that a significant number of teachers did not return to the teaching profession for the 2016–2017 school year. It is significant to note that 55.5% of new teachers, with one year or less experience, left the middle school classroom. That number increases by 87% with 242.2 teachers leaving within 2–5 years. The recommendations listed within the evaluation report may help stem those numbers. Also, during years 2–5, 18 teachers changed careers, and more than 34 teachers left the education for personal reasons, indicating that further study is warranted on why teachers leave within 2–5 years.

Strength Assessment

Professional learning communities (PLC). The program designed to be a PLC for new teachers was held each month. Participants responded that the program was useful to their professional growth. The monthly format provided consistency for the new teachers, a strength of the program. A majority of the teachers surveyed felt enthusiastic about the program and noted that it was useful in reducing new teacher stressors and influencing retention and had well-organized and informative presentations. Being able to meet and share experiences with experienced teachers and other new teachers had provided them with opportunities for professional development. Utilizing the administrator in other roles as it relates to the program is an opportunity that is discussed in the Opportunity Assessment section.

Another benefit of the establishment of the PLC was the camaraderie experienced by the participants. Participants reflected on the help received from other experienced teachers in the building. The program was such a positive effect that one participant

stated that school building inductions help new teachers know and realize that they are "not alone." Building upon the need for social conversation and dialogue and the help experienced teacher provide is discussed in the opportunity assessment of this evaluation report. A goal of this evaluation was to identify components of the program that reduced stressors on new teachers. The component strategies for managing their classrooms increased feelings of enthusiasm and usefulness, and perceived increases in professional growth provide reasons for teachers to remain in the profession.

Professional growth. The professional growth experienced by the cohorts of new teachers each year is a program strength. Implementing a component that addressed the professional development needs of a new teacher was evident in the program. When teachers were asked explicitly whether the induction program had been useful to them, 11 out of 19 teachers (59%) indicated that it had been either very or extremely useful. Participants responded that the program increased their skills in handling classroom management issues, technology skills, learning styles and sharing experiences with new teachers and experienced teachers. Participants responded that utilizing videos of themselves also increased their ability to grow professionally. Participants felt that the professional growth led to "greater student engagement, student achievement, and better planning and assessments." The professional development participants experienced increased their pedagogy skills.

Pedagogical growth. An additional strength of the program was the increase in pedagogical knowledge. New teachers experience multiple work-related events that affect their decision to leave the profession. The project study revealed that lack of preparation

to handle classroom management problems, inadequate pedagogical training, and feelings of isolation within the school's culture were major reasons why new teachers left the profession. In turn, teacher attrition—that is, a teacher's decision to stop teaching—adversely affects the financial, human, and organizational structures of public school systems. Surveyed teachers stated that the induction program had improved their pedagogical knowledge in the areas of student-centered learning, accommodations, teachers' administrative responsibilities, and classroom management.

Student achievement. Teacher increases in professional growth and pedagogical skills increased student achievement. Teachers felt that the improvements in their knowledge and expertise resulted in greater student engagement, better planning and assessments, and student growth. These improvements can be credited to the well-organized and informative program process, as noted by teachers. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers' surveyed were either very or at least slightly enthusiastic about the program. The growth voiced by the teachers demonstrates that the program was a positive influence and most teachers felt much support. It is evident after the gathering of the data and the identified strengths of the program is beneficial to retaining new teachers. Further, the strengths uncovered in the program provide a conduit to opportunities to increase the program's effectiveness.

Weakness Assessment

Role of the administrator. Some components of the PLC were identified as weaknesses. Norms, processes, and the established rules for the monthly sessions were not perceived as a weakness. The program was facilitated by an assistant principal. The

meeting was held each third Thursday after school. The program facilitator provided a light snack at each meeting. The teachers received content instruction, pedagogy building activities, and time for questions and answer (Q&A).

Some participants felt someone other than an administrator should facilitate the program. "Allowing one of the teachers' bosses to run the orientation had caused the new teachers anxiety," one participant responded. Another noted, "I think that being led by an administrator puts much pressure on induction contract teachers." Since working with experienced educators is an identified strength of the program, this perceived weakness can be resolved by incorporating an experienced teacher as the facilitator of the monthly sessions. Participants also felt that the attendance requirement for the monthly PLC meeting was overly taxing.

Time, support, and relevant content. The weakness that time and support exhibited in the study was a perceived lack of it and a perception that it was an overly taxing requirement. Participants complained of the amount of time they were required to spend in the monthly sessions. The schedule requires teachers to be present for at least two hours. Participants felt that this was very taxing after a long day of classroom instruction, much work to do with extra meetings. Participants also complained of the time spent on irrelevant content, and they suggested eliminating redundant content. Participants complained that the content delivered was repetitive and not always beneficial. Participants felt that the building-sponsored induction training was not aligned with the district-sponsored training and the on-site program was redundant and was a waste of time. Finally, teachers felt that administrative support was not adequate. The

teachers complained of low support and low motivation. Participants felt that when support was needed the most, such as during testing, support was either limit or not available at all.

Providing new teachers with ample support time to develop into confident practitioners is what administrators are expected to do. Time to spend in the classroom with new teachers is lacking, one participant stated. When asked what could be improved in the program, participants replied more support, particularly principal and mentor support. The following section focuses on mentor support. The lack of a strategic plan to include embedded support for new teachers by the administration and a mentor is critical.

Mentor assignment. Participants indicated that, in the absence of mentor support, new teacher attrition rates at the rural middle schools will continue to rise. Note how teachers with 1–5 years of experience are exiting the profession in large numbers in the district of study (see table 4). Training experienced teachers to be mentors is a recommendation for program improvement.

Participant contribution. The identified strength and weakness of the new teacher program are indicators of the internal condition of the new teacher program at the rural middle school. A lack of participant feedback in the development of the program, training's content selection and scheduling of the training jeopardizes the program's success. To address the weaknesses identified the principal and district officials must include new teachers in the design of the programs. The opportunity to address the external condition of the program is outlined in the following section.

Opportunity Assessment

The problem addressed in this study was teacher attrition—that is a teacher's decision to stop teaching—adversely affects the financial, human, and organizational structures of public school systems. JMS, a rural middle school in a Southeastern school district, is consistently challenged by new teacher attrition. Having experienced a consistent loss of new teachers—a 70%, of the new teachers hired exited in one year—JMS administrators decided they need to re-evaluate its current program.

Expand professional development opportunities. Findings of the study indicate that the program components that were most helpful related to computer resources and implementing technology, classroom management and creating classroom rules and procedures, and the readings and texts provided during the program. Participants also replied that the induction program had improved their pedagogical knowledge. A professional development training that addresses administrators, mentors, and new teachers simultaneously is recommended (Van Veen, Zwart, & Meirink, 2012). Additionally, increasing the amount of support time spent with new teachers aligned with embedded classroom support is recommended. The findings of the study indicate a need for a full-time Instructional Coach (IC) be added to the staff and that experienced teachers that will be assigned to support new teachers receive mentor training. Table 5 includes recommended training opportunities.

Table 5

Suggested Professional Development

Instructional coach training	Administrator training	Experienced teacher/ mentor training
• Cognitive coach training	• Cognitive coach training	• Cognitive coach training

• Understanding quality professional development	• Understanding quality professional development	• Understanding quality professional development
• Data analysis	• Data analysis	• Data analysis
• Providing instructional support for new teacher	• Providing instructional support for new teacher	• Providing instructional support for new teacher
• Working collaboratively with new teachers	• Working collaboratively with new teachers	• Working collaboratively with new teachers
• Training to identify State Power Standards	• School vision and mission	• Training to identify State Power Standards
• Lesson planning and training in district instructional model	• Climate and culture of school and community	• Peer observations activities
• Technology literacy and classroom usage	• School policies, procedures, and practices	• Planning and training in district instructional model
• Exposure to district technology resources	• Writing educational philosophy statement	• Relationship building with colleagues
• Development of peer observation model	• Structure of reflective practitioner journal	• Classroom organization and management
• Classroom organization and management	• Classroom organization and management	

Administrator role. Teacher participants identified administrators as a perceived weakness/threat. They also identified the need to have more administrative support in their classroom and during critical moments, such as during the student standarized testing season. One recommendation is to restructure the role of the administrator to function only in an advisory capacity to the facilitator. Furthermore, the administrator assigned to work with new teachers should attend cognitive coach training to increase his or her ability to conduct classroom observations, provide feedback, and support the development of reflective practice.

Experienced teacher/mentor. A majority of the teacher participants replied that time spent with an experienced teacher was useful to their professional growth. The time spent however was limited and did not include embedded support. Another recommendation is that a schedule is developed that allows experienced teachers to visit new teachers' classrooms to gather data and have a reflective conversation with the teacher about what the experienced teacher observed. The goal is to provide new teachers with embedded support and help them develop into reflective practitioners. The use of observational protocol forms is recommended. Additionally, to provide intense instructional support, the new teachers and the IC should work as a team to identify individual practice challenges. Integrating an IC will minimize first-year stress and allow the new teacher to develop their instructional strategies and pedagogical strength. The cycle should continue throughout the year. The process will also provide data for the instruction coach when working with new teachers.

Role of administrator and instructional coach. The restructuring of the role of the administrator as the facilitator and the addition of the IC is a great opportunity. The IC would work closely with the building administration to identify teachers in need of instructional support. The use of an IC will provide support to new teachers and the building administration. It is essential that the new teacher receive orientation on the roles of the IC and the administrator. The IC's role as non-evaluative must be established early within the during new teacher orientation. The roles of the IC and the administrator should be outlined in the new teacher manual and provided to the new teachers in writing. Providing this information early on will reduce the perceived stress associated with staff

members entering a new teacher's room to perform classroom observations. The conversations will also help relieve new teacher stressor.

It is recommended that the restructured role of the administrator as an advisor to the program be communicated at the onset of the year during new teacher orientation. The role, procedures, and function of the administrator as an evaluator of new teachers should also be included in the manual provided to the new teacher at the orientation. Providing this information early on will reduce the perceived stress associated with having an administrator facilitating the program. Additionally, outlining the function of the administrator will also allow increased quality time with new teachers without them feeling like the administrator has a hidden agenda. The administrator should meet with the IC weekly to inform the support that is provided to new teachers based on observations data gathered. The recommendations suggested will allow the school and district of study to take advantage of the opportunities to improve the New Teacher Support Program thereby decreasing the threats.

Threat Assessment

Perception of the program. Teacher perception of the intention of the facilitators of the program threatens the program. Teachers felt threatened by the presence of a boss as one of the facilitators of the program. Although a majority of the participants responded that the program was useful to them and they experienced professional growth, participants responded that having a boss supervise the program was a perceived threat. The presence of the boss made the program appear to be more evaluative than supportive. I recommend increased transparency to reduce the appearance of that threat. Defining the

roles of the administrator and the IC to new teachers during orientation will result in teachers feeling less threatened. Clear disclosure of the role and function of the administrators and the evaluation process is warranted. Taking advantage of that opportunities afforded the program will help reduce the threat caused by their boss running the support program. Funding was also a threat to the program.

Lack of funding. A lack of funding is a threat to the program. The recommendations for improvements to the program will require an ongoing source of revenue that is not available currently. Providing training to all the support personnel will require funding. Each rural middle school should be provided an additional full-time educator allocation (FTE) for the IC position. In addition, funds should be allocated to each rural school to support the recommended training included in this evaluation report. The input of a funding source will ensure the recommended improvement of the program has a viable chance to increase the probability that the support program will affect retention.

Recommendations

Though this analysis identified weaknesses in the current new teacher induction program, such as lengthy time commitments, poor mentor assignments, and lack of in-classroom assessment, the strengths suggest that a new teacher induction program is an asset to novice teachers at the rural middle school. The current induction program gave teachers an opportunity to socialize and grow their pedagogical skills. Additionally, the program has the potential to increase the quality of education provided by new teachers which results in benefits for students and their parents. If the threats to the new teacher

induction program, such as program perception and a lack of funding, can be managed the rural middle school ought to implement an improved induction program based on the recommendations contained in this report.

Though an improved induction program has the potential to decrease new teacher attrition on its own, the results of this analysis suggest that new teachers would benefit from longer term, more structured, support. In response to feedback about the time commitment required for regular monthly meetings, the recommended new teacher support program was designed as an intensive three-day course which would be completed before the start of the school year. However, new teachers also expressed concerns about a lack of in classroom training and commitment from mentors. To address those concerns, as well as ensure new teachers have the skills necessary to succeed in the classroom, I also recommend implementing new teacher assessment and development tools, possibly implemented through a school-university partnership.

New teachers cited a lack of support and pedagogical knowledge as key reasons for leaving the teaching profession. The proposed induction program aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment by providing opportunities to socialize, ask questions, and connect with mentors (Amrein-Beardsley, & Barnett, 2012). Additionally, the induction program increases teachers' skills and knowledge before entering the classroom setting. However, three days may be insufficient to address individual-specific knowledge gaps which could prevent otherwise strong teachers from being successful in the classroom.

New teachers should be evaluated in a non-punitive way to address a lack of pedagogical knowledge. Once knowledge gaps are identified, school administrators, coaches, or mentors can work with the teachers in a more targeted manner to resolve the concerns. Researchers suggest that teachers who struggle with practical classroom teaching are more likely to leave the profession, so the new teacher assessment tools should be framed as improvement opportunities rather than mechanisms for penalizing new employees. Results from the SWOT analysis suggest that a key challenge in gaining support from teachers for the assessment tool will be teacher perception.

In assessing the current induction program, one participant stated that allowing an authority figure, such as the new teachers' "boss," created anxiety for new teachers in the induction course and detracted from the experience. This experience demonstrates that new teachers may feel judged if authority figures are involved in their training, even if that is not the programmatic intent. Therefore, it will be important to separate the induction course from any subsequent assessment which will be performed on new teachers. During the induction program, the skills of new teachers should not directly be evaluated, and any corrections and evaluative moments should be performed through a seminar-style discussion which includes both administrators and peers. The assessment should be performed later and on an individual level based on classroom performance.

According to Darling-Hammond (2013), new teachers continue learning during the evaluation process as they apply techniques and skills learned through educational opportunities and identify gaps in knowledge which still exist. Therefore, new teacher assessments do not necessarily have to include a punitive Tory element to be of value to

new teachers and the administration. By communicating the intent of the assessment to new teachers, and explaining that the results of the assessment will not negatively impact their employment, the new teacher assessments could provide educational benefits to teachers without resulting in additional stress and suspicion among new teachers.

New teacher assessments take various form in practice and literature, including performance rubrics, teaching portfolios, subject-specific tests, and teacher cumulating events (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Newton, & Wei, 2013; Goe, Hoelheide, & Miller, 2014). Therefore, the school administration has numerous options for assessing new teachers based on the needs, resources, and requirements of the institution. However, participants expressed an interest in additional in classroom instruction. Additionally, participants in the new teacher induction program stated that additional training or evaluation after school hours created a significant burden. Therefore, assessing teachers in classrooms during regular work hours is recommended. Furthermore, discussion of assessment results should be conveniently scheduled and planned for maximum time efficiency without sacrificing opportunities for additional instruction.

Based on the results of Goe & Holdheide's (2011) study, multiple assessment techniques are recommended. To maximize limited school resources, utilizing the newly hired IC for new teacher assessments is recommended. Employing the IC in this manner maximize the utility of the additional faculty member recommended in this study and minimized the burden of experienced mentors who have other responsibilities. However, placing most of the positional burden on the IC does not preclude the use of varied assessment techniques. For example, McFadden et al. (2014) recommended videoing a

new teacher's classroom session and providing an assessment to the new teacher while reviewing the recording.

In developing new teacher assessment programs, the rural middle school should consider implementing peer review processes based on the results of Klopper's (2014) study. In the study, researchers established that structured peer review programs improve teaching quality on both an individual and institutional level, suggesting peer review benefits more than just new teachers. Through the peer review process, more experienced teachers gain insights which can be applied in their classrooms. Additionally, peer review creates a culture of inclusion and personal improvement.

As discussed in the literature review, school-university partnerships can extend the learning opportunities for formative teachers and provide an opportunity for high-quality evaluation, mentorship, and peer review. By pursuing a partnership with a nearby university, the rural middle school may gain access to additional high-quality mentors and increase new teacher success rates (Abodeeb-Dentile et al., 2016). Incorporating multiple assessment approaches, a school-university partnership which emphases co-construction increases stakeholder buy-in and removes the need for direct supervisors to assess new teachers in a punitive way. Recommendations for developing university-school partnerships include simultaneously training administrators to take an active role in the process creating a mechanism for structured peer review (Carroll et al., 2001; Klopper, 2014).

Conclusion

Over 80% of all participants felt JMS's induction program was useful and felt enthusiasm toward the program. A majority of the participants responded that they had gains in their professional and pedagogically development. Most of the participants could not connect their participation in the program to retention or attrition. This evaluation report addresses the paradox above. In this SWOT evaluation report strengths and opportunities were internal factors that affect the program. The weakness and threats were addressed as external factors that affect the program. Finally, I made recommendations to improve the program. To this end, I will provide the evaluation report to the rural school and the district of study.

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Appendix B: Pre-Program Evaluation

Justice Middle School Professional Development Schedule

2013–2014

Theme: Developing and supporting induction contract teachers for Sustainability

Mark your calendar! The following meetings are required of all induction contract-level teachers. All meetings convene in room #222, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Please be prompt.

July 29, 2013,	Creating a customized and highly effective classroom management plans & Curriculum & Instruction Orientation
July 30, 2013,	Mentor Support Overview & Instructional Technology Orientation
September 24, 2035,	Building Classroom Relationships (Social Outing) Classroom visits
October 29, 2013,	Developing Assessment Literacy Classroom Visits
November 19, 2013,	Using Data to Drive Instruction (Social Outing) Classroom Visits
January 28, 2014,	Creating Rigorous and Student Engaging Lessons Classroom Visits
February 18, 2014,	Literacy across the Curriculum Classroom Visits
March 17, 2014	Evaluate & Celebrate

Appendix C: Rural Induction Teacher Survey

1. School term in which you were a new teacher at Southeastern Rural Middle School.

    A. Date

    B. Year

2. Did your school have an onsite Induction Support Program (not district-sponsored)

3. How useful was the Induction Program to you?

    A. Extremely useful

    B. Very useful

    C. Moderately useful

    D. Slightly useful

    E. Not at all useful

4. Please give examples of what was useful about your Induction program or what was not useful.

5. How enthusiastic do you feel about the Induction Program Support you received during your induction contract year?

    A. Extremely enthusiastically

    B. Very enthusiastically

    C. Moderately enthusiastically

    D. Slightly enthusiastically

    E. Not at all enthusiastically

6. How well did the program meet its objectives of supporting you? (Support induction contract teachers)

A. Extremely well

B. Very well

C. Moderately well

D. Slightly well

E. Not at all well

7. Please give an example(s) how the program met its objectives

8. Which elements/components/parts of the induction program strengthened your professional learning and provided opportunities for professional development? Please explain.

9. What increases did you experience with your knowledge of teaching and teaching strategies that impacted student achievement?

A. In what ways did it Impact student achievement

10. What obstacles did the induction program face trying to accomplish its mission?

11. What might cause induction programs problems in the future, thereby reducing its ability to support induction contract teachers?

12. What could be done to improve the Induction program experience at the school?

13. What components/elements/parts of the induction program threaten your professional learning and Professional Development? Please explain.

14. How could future events be improved? Select all that apply.

B. Make the events more interactive

C. Take more breaks during the event

D. Have more knowledgeable speaker(s)

E. More convenient location

F. Better food and drinks

G. Use a more comfortable space to host the event

H. Address a more relevant topic

I. Take fewer breaks during the event

15. Did participation in the Induction program influence your decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession? Please explain.
16. What components/elements/parts of the induction program threaten your professional learning and Professional Development? Please explain.
17. What components/elements/parts of the induction program weaken your professional learning and Professional Development? Please explain.
18. Which elements/components/parts of the induction program strengthened your professional learning and provided opportunities for professional development? Please explain.
19. What components/elements/parts of the induction program provided opportunities for your professional learning and Professional Development? Please explain.
20. What obstacles did the induction program face in trying to accomplish its mission? (Support induction contract teachers)
21. Please give examples of what was useful about your Induction program or what was not useful.
22. What increases did you experience with your knowledge of teaching and teaching strategies that impacted student achievement?