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An Investigation of the Experiences of New Teachers and Their Reasons to Stay in the Classroom

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EXPERIENCES OF NEW TEACHERS AND THEIR
REASONS TO STAY IN THE CLASSROOM

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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ABSTRACT

New teacher attrition rates have increased over the years. Twenty percent of new teachers will leave the profession after three years. That number increases to forty-four percent after five years of teaching. For those just entering the profession, these numbers can be daunting. The purpose of this study was to determine the reasons for this departure and what actions schools employ to help lessen this attrition rate. After screening four teachers to gain a general insight into their experiences, eight teachers with a similar educational background were selected for additional interviews. This study was intended to determine how much of an induction program their school gave them as well as other factors they or the school may have done to help them adjust to full-time teaching. After interviewing the teachers, nine categories stood out. Four of these related to induction programs, four related to relationships and community, and the last was determining whether they were staying at their school. From the results, it can be determined that while a successful induction program is important, more important is the teacher's integration into the school and community.

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 Background

When I think about my transition from being a student and pre-service teacher to a full-time teacher, I have high hopes for my transition to be as seamless as possible. However, day in and day out I hear of so many teachers leaving the profession for a myriad of reasons, and I cannot help but wonder why, and if I may end up being one of these teachers. Could I one day be the teacher who leaves within three years because it became too much? Twenty percent of new hires do (Research Spotlight). Or could I immediately be done when I finish my five-year Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program (METP) commitment? Forty-four percent of new teachers will leave the profession during this time (Will, 2018). I have often heard lack of support is one reason so many teachers leave early in their careers. Both are possibilities my future could hold.   I want to believe I will have the support I need to become the successful teacher I know I can be, but trends are showing a lack of support tends to be the main reason teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017), even those with the potential to be very successful, are leaving the classroom. Yet we wonder why our students are struggling, why our classrooms do not have certified teachers leading our students, why some of our schools, in places like California and Nevada, have thirty-plus students in a classroom (Schools and Staffing Survey, 2011-2012). This has happened because it is more cost effective, even though studies have shown smaller class sizes are more beneficial for the students (Chingos & Whitehurst, 2017), with a class size on average of eighteen being considered ideal (Kieschnick, 2018). When I start looking at schools to teach at, I want to know what they do to help their new teachers' transition, so they are more likely to stay in the classroom and at that school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). I want to know the school I teach at will take care of my students and myself. To know this, I need to know what it takes to make a new teacher feel comfortable and confident in a new place and a new job. What does a school need to

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be doing for their teachers to make sure they grow? When I find this out, I will know what I need to look for when I start looking at potential jobs and schools soon. However, it is not only the school's job to prepare their teachers. The first step of preparation starts with the school of education at the university where they get their license.

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Chapter 1: The Teacher Shortage

    A. Retention/Attrition rates of teaching

        In order to understand what will help a new teacher transition to her new role, we must first understand the reasons teachers tend to leave early in their career, and in general. High teacher turnover rates are one of the biggest issues schools in the United States are facing, with an increasing number of teachers leaving the profession or moving schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). (see Table 1)

Rate of Leaving Teaching Has Increased
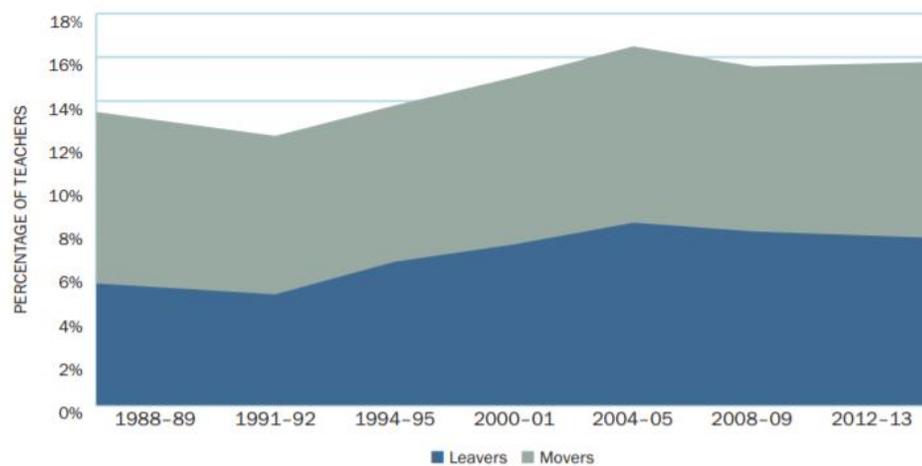
Source: National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey; Goldring, R., Taie, S., & Riddles, M. (2014). *Teacher Attrition and mobility: Results from the 2012–13 Teacher Follow-Up Survey*. National Center for Education Statistics.

LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE | TEACHER TURNOVER: WHY IT MATTERS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT   3

The Learning Policy Institute also surveyed the reasons teachers left the profession, with the highest general answer being dissatisfaction and the lowest shown being financial reasons, as seen in Table 2. This goes to show that finances, although almost everyone would accept a raise of some sort, are not the biggest reason people have for leaving teaching. It goes deeper than the money. Most people decide to be teachers for one of

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the following five reasons: work with young people/make a difference, the variety of the

job, the joy of teaching, inspiring others, and the love of their subject (Marsh, 2015).

Factors Teachers Report as Being Very Important for Leaving Teaching
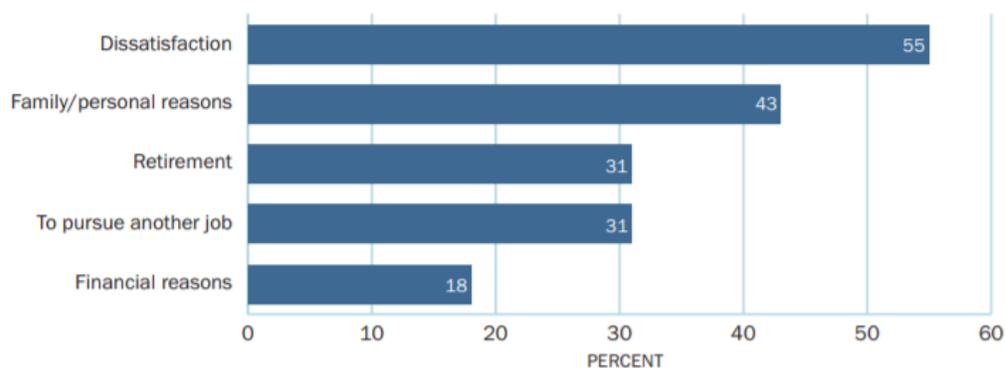
Note: Percentages do not add to 100 as teachers may select more than one reason for leaving.
Source: Learning Policy Institute analysis of National Center for Education Statistics Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2012–13.

When it comes to the reason teachers are dissatisfied, in this case the Learning Institute

is specifically looking at two main categories- dissatisfaction with Assessment and

Accountability Issues as well as dissatisfaction with Administrative Issues. The two

highest reasons for their dissatisfaction with Assessment and Accountability were

because of the measures used for these assessments as well as the lack of support

given in preparing students for these assessments. The top two issues with

Administration were general dissatisfaction with them and too many intrusions on

teaching time, as seen Table 3.

Teacher Reasons for Leaving

Reasons Given for Leaving	Overall	Mathematics & Science Teachers	Special Education Teachers	ELD Teachers*	Teachers of Color	Teachers in High-Poverty Schools	Teachers in High-Minority Schools
Areas of Dissatisfaction							
Dissatisfaction With Assessment and Accountability Issues							
Dissatisfied because of assessments and accountability measures	25%	26	24	26	26	30	35
Dissatisfied because not enough support to prepare students for assessments	17%	18	14	4	18	24	25
Dissatisfied with compensation tied to student performance	8%	5	6	6	11	8	8
Dissatisfaction With Administrative Issues							
Dissatisfied with the administration	21%	13	14	6	22	18	15
Too many intrusions on teaching time	18%	11	13	25	15	16	14
Discipline issues were an issue at school	17%	10	10	26	19	18	17
Not enough autonomy in the classroom	14%	7	6	12	15	12	10
Dissatisfied with lack of influence over school policies and practices	13%	10	8	4	14	12	9

Regarding the top two reasons for teachers leaving in each category, three of the four can be related back to people and a lack of community. If teachers are not being given enough support to prepare students for assessments, then someone, be it administration, parents, other teachers, or the students themselves, is not giving them the support they need. A plurality of those surveyed were dissatisfied with their administration while others felt there were too many intrusions on their instruction time.

On average, as of February 2019, the Southern portion of the United States had the highest turnover rates, with an annual turnover rate of seventeen percent. However, the state with the highest turnover rate was Arizona at twenty-four percent, and the state with the lowest turnover rate was Utah with a turnover rate of eight percent(Pircon, 2019). Mississippi ranks eighth highest in the nation in turnover rates, with a turnover
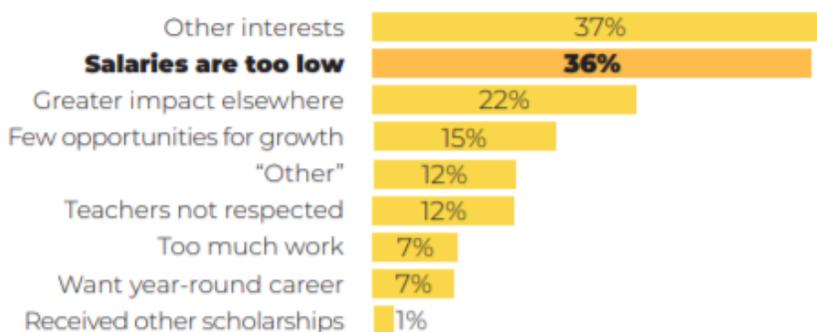
rate of seventeen percent, three percentage points higher than the overall United States average which is fourteen percent (Understanding Teacher Shortages, 2016). When looking at these data points, it makes one wonder what the state of Utah is doing to keep their teachers in their schools, how this compares to what Mississippi is doing, and how their overall turnover rate looks compared to their new teacher turnover rate.

In 2018, after researching the teacher shortage for five years, the state of Utah as well as Envision Utah, a nonprofit organization working with Utah residents to establish a community-supported vision for the state and its growth in multiple categories (How We Grow Matters), including education, realized in order to fix the teacher shortage, they needed to focus on the issue the state has with teacher retention. In 2017, they found one-third of new teachers were recommended by university programs when ten years prior they made up fifty-eight percent of the teacher workforce. This decrease in teachers coming from universities means a decrease in both certified teachers and teachers who take the traditional route to certification. They also found that new teachers recommended for certification by a university had a lower attrition rate than their peers, with a nine percent attrition rate compared to more than twenty-three percent for the teachers with a temporary or no license. Envision Utah decided to see what can be done to improve teacher retention within their state. One of their early solutions is improving teacher compensation (Dodson, 2018). The state with the best teacher retention rate in the country is continuing to look for ways to improve so its students can be better prepared for the future. Although they have a low turnover rate overall, Utah has a forty-two percent turnover rate for new teachers. Another Utah group, the Utah Foundation, reported that, on average, Utah teachers make twenty-seven percent less than their college educated peers (Apples to Apples, 2019). A study of 4,100 Utah students found in the last five years, forty-four percent have considered
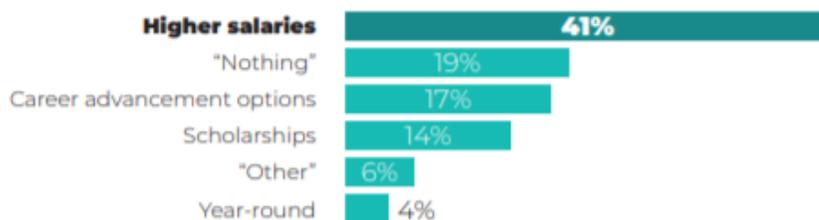
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teaching and Table 3 shows low pay to be a primary reason as to why they chose not to

pursue the career.

WHY DIDN'T YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

Other interests	37%
Salaries are too low	**36%**
Greater impact elsewhere	22%
Few opportunities for growth	15%
"Other"	12%
Teachers not respected	12%
Too much work	7%
Want year-round career	7%
Received other scholarships	1%

AND WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?

Higher salaries	**41%**
"Nothing"	19%
Career advancement options	17%
Scholarships	14%
"Other"	6%
Year-round	4%

Envision Utah's 2018 Survey of 4,000 Utah college students
found that many students considered teaching before choosing
a different career path. Teacher salaries were a primary deterrent
but could also be used to entice them into the profession.

While improved teacher compensation is not the only solution to the teacher shortage in

Utah, it is a possible solution resulting in attracting and keeping new teachers while

telling students their education is important (A Vision for Teacher Excellence).

However, the data on why teachers are leaving shows teachers want more than an

increase in pay to stay in the professions. So, what else is the state of Utah doing to

keep teachers in the profession?

Beyond income adjustments, Envision Utah has a few more recommendations to

help lessen the teacher shortage and improve teacher retention rates in the state. They

want to improve teacher induction programs to help new teachers become more

effective and thus, more satisfied. To do this, districts will provide mentor teachers,

giving them adequate time and compensation to observe the new teacher as well as time to prepare and train for the role. The pay raise should be substantial enough to make mentoring a career goal for teachers. Mentor teachers should still be able to teach part time. Additionally, they recommend providing contract extensions so, if desired, teachers can work additional days through activities like planning, professional development (PD), mentor training, summer teaching, and other opportunities, while getting paid for taking these opportunities. Finally, they recommend providing more scholarships for up and coming teachers to reach students from all walks of life, improving graduation rates and student performance (A Vision for Teacher Excellence).

At the end of the day, pay raises and financial opportunities are one piece of the teacher retention crisis happening across the country. On a more local level in Utah, the Salt Lake City School District recognized this and created the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program, a program designed to "promote effective instruction by providing intensive support to teachers (Peer Assistance and Review)," in order to focus on career pathways and strengthening teacher induction. They recognized many Utah teachers were "thrown into their first year of teaching without adequate mentorship or support. (Christopherson, 2019)" The Salt Lake City School District created five full-time teacher-coaching positions, such that each of the five coaches worked one-on-one with around ten to twelve of the district's new teachers, allowing for the coach to spend about a half day a week with each new teacher. The job description of these "consulting teachers" includes observing the new teachers and offering suggestions, giving support with lesson planning and classroom setup, go with the new teachers as they observe other teachers (this allows the consulting teacher to point out strong teaching practices), and assist with guiding difficult or troubled students (Christopherson, 2019). In addition to these obligations, the consulting teachers serve on a PAR Board with principals and members of the Salt Lake Education Association, where they make "recommendations

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about how best to support new and struggling teachers and whether first-year teachers'

employment contracts should be renewed" (Christopherson, 2019). These efforts have

led to a seventy-seven percent retention rate in Salt Lake City for teachers after five

years in the profession compared to a fifty-eight percent average for the state

(Christopherson, 2019). These numbers alone speak for themselves- teachers need

intentional support systems in place in order to help them stay in the profession as long

as possible.

In comparison, Mississippi has a mentoring/induction combination where each

school district is required to assign new teachers with a mentor. The state has a

minimum set of requirements for each induction program (programs set up to help new

teachers transition to the profession). These requirements include:

1. having a clear vision for mentoring, induction, and support from
    administration,

2. a mentor selection committee, mentor training, professional development,
    and preparation,

3. allocation of time for mentor/mentee collaboration,

4. a mentee professional growth plan, and

5. an evaluation of the program's success (Mississippi Department of
    Education).

In addition to the minimum requirements, some schools in the state offer either one- or

two-year professional development and some may require the new teacher to get a

certain number of hours observing other teachers. As seen later, not all induction

programs are created equal. However, Mississippi is a step ahead in attracting new

teachers through METP. This is a privately funded program at the University of

Mississippi and Mississippi State University in which students from across the country

who want to be teachers can gain unique opportunities through early exposure to the

classroom and professional development. In return for these opportunities and their

education being fully paid for, these students teach in Mississippi public schools for five

years following graduation (Top Performing Students). The first members of the

program started college in 2013 and are now finishing their third year of teaching.


B. Why we should care

It has been shown that forty-four percent of new teachers will leave the

profession within their first five years (Will 2019). If this is happening, then schools are

constantly searching for new teachers to fill their places, which means they are putting

money toward finding more teachers when they could be putting it toward their students

or supporting their teachers still at the school. Instead there are classrooms left without

a teacher, which is either filled with an uncertified teacher or the schools pile all the

students into the classrooms with teachers, leaving those teachers with too many

students to handle. If a teacher cannot walk between the desks without tripping or

stumbling because there are so many students, how is she supposed to properly

manage a classroom? This leads to students causing more distractions than normal

which leads to less learning and less time the teacher is able to spend teaching because

she is spending all her time trying to figure out the best approach to manage the thirty

students packed into her classroom.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

    A.   What is happening to the teachers?

        As a result of the Great Recession of 2008, schools had to let go of many teachers. As the country came out of the recession, schools started looking to fill those spots, however, they struggled to find replacements, especially for positions in math, science, special education, and bilingual education/English language development departments (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). In fact, from 2009 to 2014, enrollment in teacher education across the country dropped from 691,000 to 451,000, a thirty five percent decrease, which meant there were approximately 240,000 fewer teachers looking to enter the workforce each year (Strauss, 2017). So, there are less people entering the teaching profession each year and trends are showing that fifty percent of new teachers will leave the profession within their first five years in the profession. Low income areas tend to have a higher rate of new teacher departures than high income areas (Wong, 2004). This is likely because not only are the teachers getting paid less as a result of lower property taxes, but the school also has less funds to support the teachers in their endeavors, less opportunities for professional development, and they have to deal with teachers leaving so they have less money to put toward their teachers. They keep needing to put their money toward recruiting more teachers, allowing less money to further their current teachers.

        Attrition rates for teachers in 2014 in Connecticut were at thirty percent, compared with twenty-eight percent for police officers and forty-five percent for correctional officers, as seen in Table 4 (Kan, 2014).

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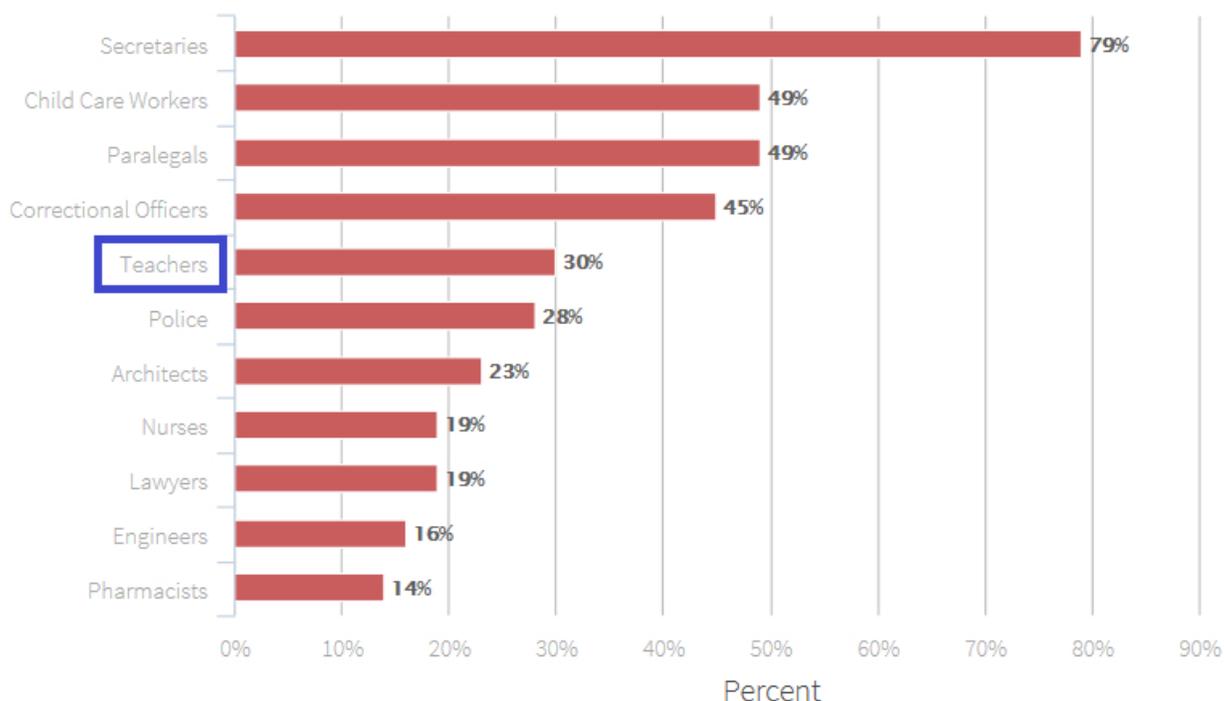
This means thirty percent of all Connecticut teachers left the profession or changed

schools in 2014. Attrition rates in this context are the percentage of people per year

leaving a profession whereas retention rates would be the percentage of people per year

staying. The problem that arises when attrition rates for teachers are this high is there

comes a time when the amount of teachers entering the profession is less than those

leaving the profession, thus resulting in a teacher shortage like we had after the Great

Recession. Since the end of the Recession in the United States in 2012, with newly

found funds, there has been a teacher workforce increase of 400,000 as a result of

schools trying to fill the empty rooms. However, even with this increase and avid

recruitment on the schools' parts, in 2017, there were still 100,000 classrooms being

filled with underqualified teachers (Strauss, 2017). The question is how to get the

attrition rates down to less than ten percent, leaving a small attrition rate not equaling

zero, not too low but not too high. Now, why would schools want there to be an attrition

rate? Why would they not want to keep all their teachers instead of having some leave?

If the schools never have any teachers leaving, then the teachers who are not going to

succeed in the profession or be beneficial to their students will still be in the profession, thus leading to a lack of student success due to a consistently unsuccessful teacher. However, schools still have successful teachers leaving the profession before retirement, and the question still stands, what can be done to help prevent potentially successful teachers from leaving the profession early?

B.   Induction Programs

Induction programs have been around since before 1998 when the national program, the New Teacher Center, was founded in order to strengthen practices of beginning teachers throughout the United States and some foreign countries (Goldrick, 2016). Different variations of induction programs have gradually been adopted by many of the states and other countries. When looking at other countries whose school systems run successful induction programs such as Japan, France, and Australia, there are three consistent components used throughout each program to make them successful- the programs are comprehensive and done over multiple years, they include some type of professional learning, and they involve collaboration between the teachers in their discipline at their school (Wong, n.d.). Each country has different requirements and specifications for their programs based on their specific needs, but these three components hold true. In the United States, the states and school districts differ based on the needs of each state or district. However, in many places the main component of induction programs used is a mentor (a veteran teacher assigned to a new teacher to help them transition into their new role), but the mentor usually does not always have the proper training or guidance to successfully help the new teacher.

An induction program is defined as a "post-hire in-service program to socialize beginning teachers into the profession and provide support during the first few years of teaching" (California County Superintendents Educational Services Association).

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According to the New Teacher Center, there are nine components of an induction

program that help make it successful. These nine require:

1. All beginning schoolteachers and administrators have at least two years of

    induction,

2. Certain qualifications to be a mentor,

3. Having a dedicated time for mentors and new teachers to meet,

4. Enhancing program quality with observations and a reduced new teacher

    workload,

5. State adopted formal program standards,

6. Appropriate funding for the programs,

7. Completion of an induction program for permanent certification,

8. Program accountability, and

9. Having formal standards and a regular assessment of teaching and learning

    conditions (Goldrick, 2016).

There is not a single state meeting all nine of these criteria.

Participation in induction programs has increased nationwide from half of the new

teachers receiving some type of induction from 1990-1991 to about ninety percent of

new teachers receiving some type of induction from 2007-2008. This is a forty percent

increase in seventeen years. As of 2010, twenty-seven states required some form of

induction or mentorship. Fifteen of these had formal induction program standards,

eleven require induction and mentorship for all first- and second-year teachers, and

three[1] require multiple years of induction (Goldrick, 2016). As a result of induction

programs, positive results have been seen in three areas: teacher retention, classroom

instructional practices, and student achievement. However, the strength of these results

[1] These three include Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa.

is correlated with the strength of the induction program. This strength can be measured in the number of induction components, having a mentor who works at the same school (preferably in the same subject area with common planning), and by measuring student engagement (California County Superintendents Educational Services Association).

C. Induction and Education in Mississippi

One of the things most people tend to think about when they think about the state of Mississippi is the state is typically ranked last or very close to last in terms of education when comparing it with the rest of the states and Washington D.C. However, Mississippi is one of the states requiring its school districts to have a mentor assigned to new teachers and an induction program. In Mississippi, a beginning teacher is defined as a teacher who has taught anywhere between zero and three years. This leads one to assume their induction programs should last for three years although it has not been specifically stated. The stated overall purpose for mentoring and induction programs in Mississippi is to improve the pedagogical skills of new teachers, increase retention of new teachers, and to assist new teachers as they transition from pre-service teachers to professionals. The job of the mentor is to provide assistance to the new teacher through guidance and support, but the specific qualifications to be a mentor is left to the discretion of the school or school district. It is recommended mentors have at least three years of experience or are no longer considered a new teacher themself. The state also offers districts the option to attach stipends to the mentoring position to increase appeal for the job. These stipends include compensating mentors from any funds for time spent on the job outside of school hours and employing and compensating a substitute teacher for the mentor for time she spends during the school day working with the new teacher (Mississippi Department of Education).

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Of course, all the induction programs must line up with the state's requirements, although the districts can add to these as needed. One specific induction program in Mississippi is the Greenville Public School District's Induction Program. In the description of Greenville's program, they specifically list what will occur during their seven days set aside in early August for professional development before the beginning of school. This is a requirement for all teachers in the district. The first two days are for orientation and the other five days are for the New Teacher Academy. During orientation all the teachers in the district are together getting to know each other and learning necessities like introducing a lesson, teaching objectives, and engaging their students as well as practicing planning lessons. Then, during New Teacher Academy everything shifts to learning about specific schools and their respective schedules, and on the last day, the teachers can go to their schools and prepare their classrooms for the school year. This is one phase of induction, and Greenville's program continues over the years with year two continuing the mentoring and observing started in year one, and in years three and four, the teachers in the program receive advanced training in instructional strategies, cooperative learning, higher level thinking, … , as well as a continuation of observations. Something the Greenville program points out that many programs do not, is the responsibilities of the new teacher as a mentee during this time. Other programs seem to assume this is understood. The mentee's responsibilities include attending and being on time to meetings, seeking help, observing other teachers, meeting regularly with mentors and other new teachers, and an evaluation of the program. While it is not required, the Greenville system recommends mentees keep a journal of their school days to practice reflection (Greenville Public School District).

In 2016, the state of Mississippi Board of Education put into place a five year strategic plan for the years 2016-2020 to "create a world-class educational system that

gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce and to flourish as parents and citizens." To do this, they set six goals:

1. all students are proficient and showing growth,

2. every student graduates from high school ready for college and a career,

3. every child has access to a high-quality early childhood program,

4. every school has effective teachers and leaders,

5. every community is effectively using a world-class data system to improve student outcomes, and

6. every school and district is rated at a "C" or higher (Mississippi Board of Education Strategic Plan, 2019).

As of February 2020, for goal one, Mississippi ranked first in growth in both reading and math on the National Assessment of Education Progress for fourth grade for 2017-2019 and third for eight grade math and fourth for eighth grade reading during the same time frame. Additionally, Mississippi from 2009 to 2019 showed growth of ten percent or more in both subject areas for fourth grade and five to ten percent of growth for eight graders. This information is shown in Table 6 and Table 7.
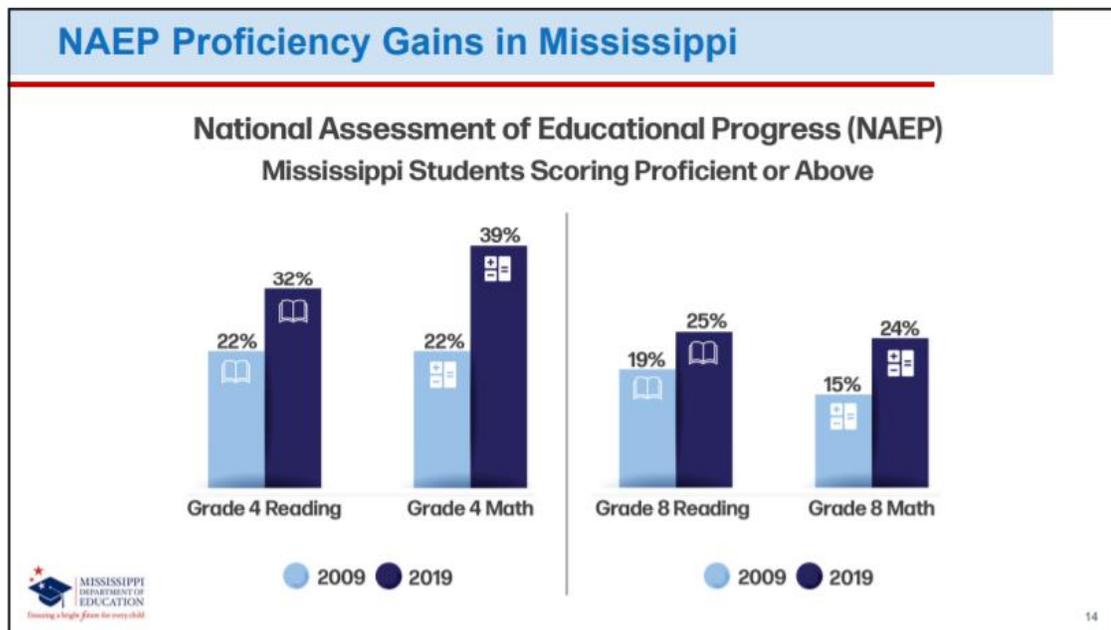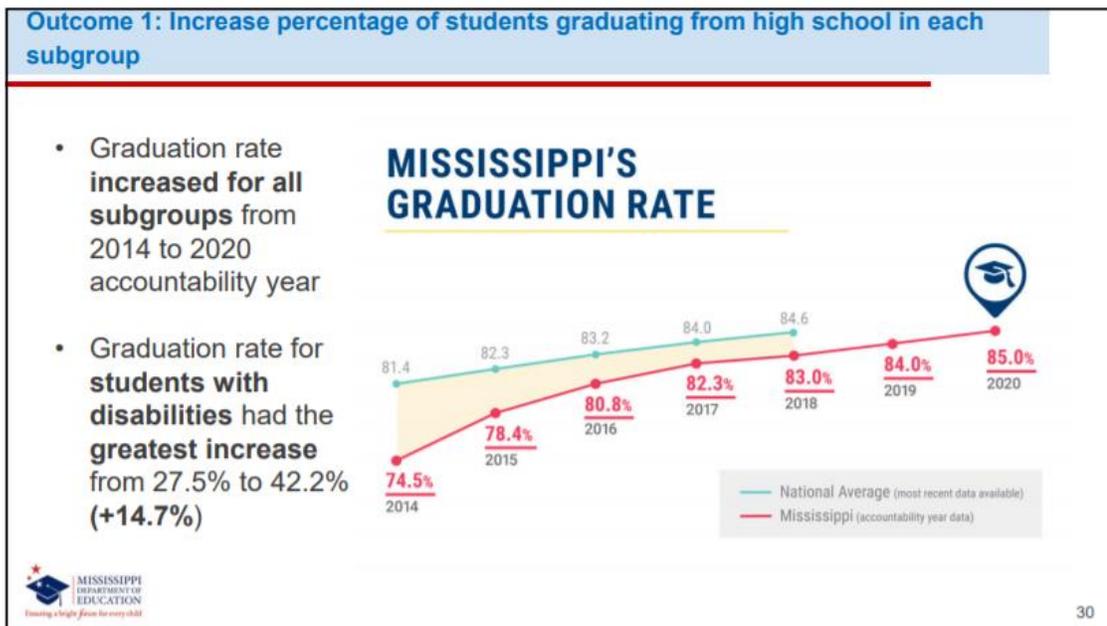
For goal two, the graduation rate for Mississippi increased over ten percentage points,

showing growth towards the desired goal, which is shown in Table 8.

In order to evaluate goal three, they evaluated each form of pre-kindergarten to determine readiness for kindergarten, with 530 being the minimum score of readiness on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. Public and private pre-kindergarten had the highest scores respectively. Additionally, Mississippi now has eighteen Early Learning Collaboratives with 177 classrooms statewide. These gains are seen in Table 9 and Table 10.
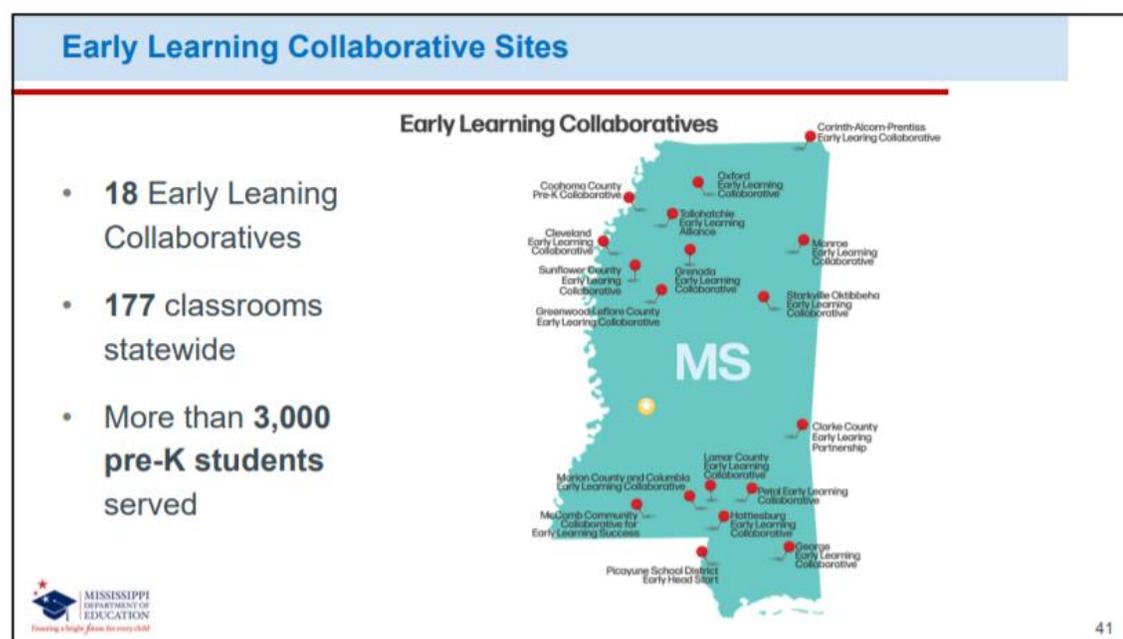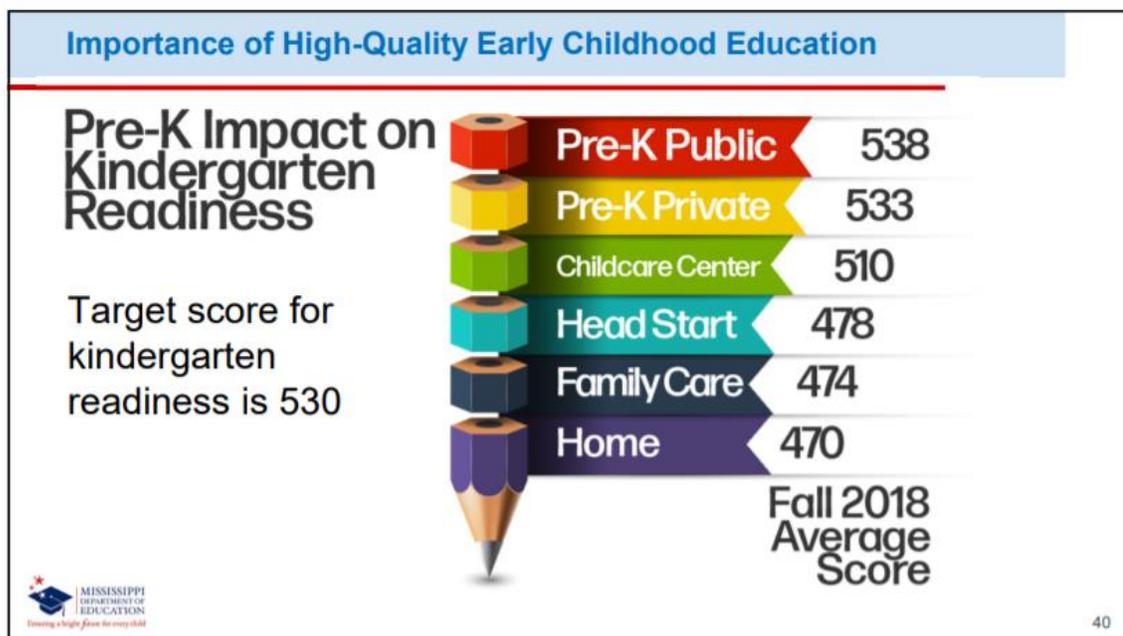
Goal four, however, did not have as many of the positive outcomes as goals the others.

Goal four was focused on having effective teachers and leaders in the classroom, but

the only two categories that experienced major changes from one year to the next is the

number of schools reporting Professional Growth System ratings and the number of

teachers who passed all three certification tests on the first try, which did not have a data

set for comparison. This data is seen in Table 11.

Goal 4 Outcomes (Baseline Year is 2017-18)

		2017-18	2018-19
Outcome 1	Increase the percentage of districts reporting Professional Growth System (PGS) ratings for teachers and leaders	41.7%	71.3%
Outcome 2	Increase the percentage of teacher candidates passing all three components of licensure exam on the first attempt		9.0%*
Outcome 3	Increase the number of licensed, diverse teachers and leaders	29.2%	29.2%
Outcome 4	Reduce the proportion of inexperienced teachers in schools that are both High Poverty and High Minority	23.2%	23.5%
Outcome 5	Reduce the proportion of non-certified teachers in schools that are both High Poverty and High Minority	3.1%	2.1%

*Baseline year

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The purpose of goal five was to create data systems and interfaces reachable to the public. They were successful and able to create multiple systems currently having thousands and millions of views, as seen in Table 12 and Table 13.

Goal six has a final vision of having all school districts in the state of Mississippi have a

C rating or higher. From 2018 to 2019, Mississippi had one less F rated school and five

less D rated schools which means they had six schools move up into A, B, and C rated

categories (Wright, 2020). This information is seen in Table 14.
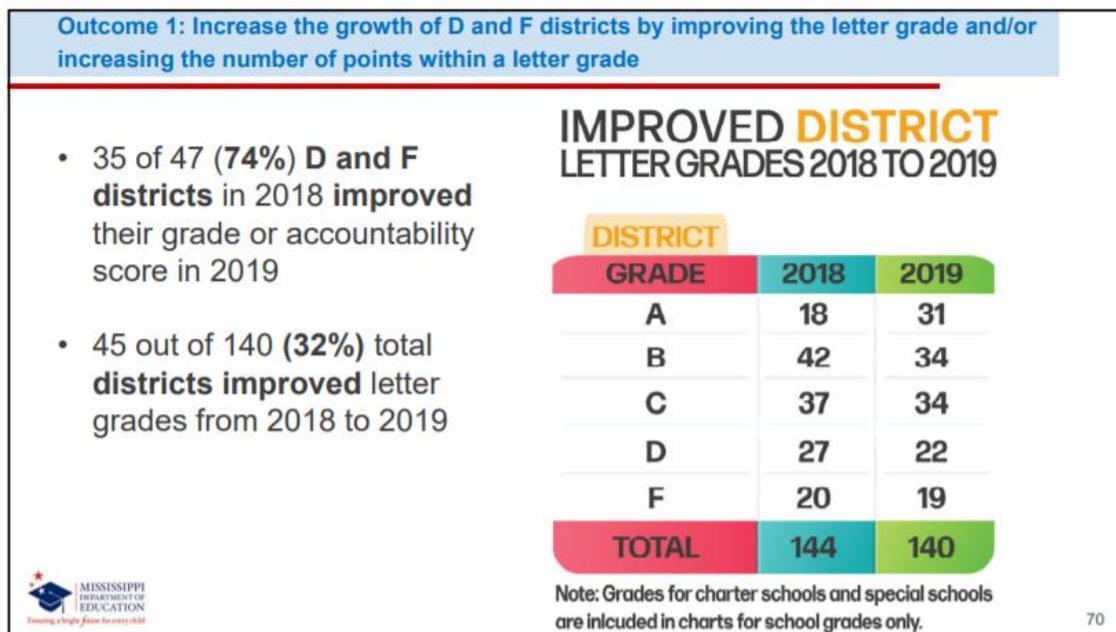
There are still other organizations in the state of Mississippi trying to improve its standing in terms of education.   In 2013, the Robert M. Hearin Support Foundation based in Jackson, Mississippi, partnered with two of the main public universities in Mississippi- Mississippi State University (MSU) and the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) to privately fund the Mississippi Excellence in Teaching Program (Top Performing Students). Although each University's program differs slightly from the other, the idea remains the same. METP is a fully funded four-year scholarship program intended to attract highly qualified students to the teacher education programs at the two universities. Members receive a scholarship as well as professional development opportunities not offered to other education majors. There are other benefits as well, such as a fully funded study abroad and a technology stipend. The program accepts students looking to study elementary, special, or secondary education. Each year, both universities will accept up to thirty members, with each member committing to teach in Mississippi's publicly funded schools for at least five years following graduation (Top

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Performing Students). The first, second, and third cohorts are currently in their third,

second, and first years of teaching respectively, working toward the goals set in the

strategic plan formed by the Mississippi Board of Education.

Chapter 3- Methodology

To begin my research, without much knowledge on what to expect as a first-year teacher, I talked with four of my friends who came from a similar program about their experiences as a new teacher. This served as an informal pilot study, allowing me to gain a more general understanding of what to expect when I reach this stage. While I was continuing these discussions, I began researching what should happen, in theory, for a new teacher to survive past two years, then past five. This research clarified why we want to retain teachers in the profession, as well as what makes them stay. At this point, much of the research points to participation in extensive induction programs to be the greatest factor as to whether a new teacher will stay in the profession. With this knowledge, I decided to continue my discussions with eight teachers with the same qualifications. Two of the teachers carried over. It would have been easy to give a specific survey to determine which portions of an induction program were the most beneficial, but I wanted to keep the questions more open-ended to determine if there was anything else they experienced as a new teacher that impacted their experience.

As I began collecting the data, I kept it organized by teacher, as well as by the school where they are teaching. There are teachers in the study who are teaching at the same school as each other and some who or not. Since they all came from similar programs, I was able to see how their experiences compare. From here, I made a list of experiences each teacher discussed. I found many mentioned mentors or new teacher meetings, as these are typical in an induction program. However, there are other ways for a teacher to get involved at their new school, and it was interesting to see the ways each teacher got involved. The order in which I listed these teachers is not the order in

which I discussed their experiences. Thus, they are labeled Teacher A through Teacher H, but they are not discussed alphabetically.

To analyze the data, I took the information on each teacher and put it into a table for a side-by-side analysis of each teacher's experiences. This allowed me to compare multiple teachers' experiences and look for any patterns in the data. These patterns, combined with whether each teacher is planning to stay at their school after one or two years, allowed me to determine what was most important overall in their decisions to stay.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

    A. The Pilot Study

       With the data from the pilot study, I gained an understanding of the general experiences each teacher went through after being a part of the same program I am currently in. Each color represents the different schools where these teachers are working as of Spring 2019. The categories are divided into number of years teaching, having a positive experience while working others, experiencing new teacher PD, having a mentor, as well as their biggest challenge during their first year of teaching.

Pilot Study

Spring 2019 School At	Years Teaching	Preferred Working with Others	New Teacher PD	Mentor	Biggest Challenge
Teacher 1	2	✳	✳	✳	Time management
Teacher 2	2	✳	✳	✳	Time management
Teacher 3	1	✳	✳	✳	Parents
Teacher 4	1	✳	✳	✳	Parents

Key	
	Teaches at School A
	Teaches at School B

As seen in table 15, all these teachers experienced New Teacher PD and a mentor as components of a mentor program. However, they all stated working with others was one of the biggest positives. It is interesting that the teachers in their second year found time

management to be their biggest challenge while those in their first year found dealing

with parents to be their biggest challenge.

    B.   The Teacher's Stories

        In Spring 2020, I interviewed eight first- and second-year teachers to gain more

specific insight into their experiences as new teachers. Each teacher interviewed is a

graduate of the University of Mississippi and teaches in the state of Mississippi in order

to keep variables to a minimum. Throughout my telling of their stories, each teacher will

be identified as Teacher A, B, C, etc. and I will use the pronouns she/her, regardless of

gender, to keep the name and personal information of each participant private. Initially, I

asked each teacher:

        1.   Can you describe your experience as a first-year teacher?

        2. What did your school do to prepare you?

        3. What did your school do to help you become part of the community?

        4. Compare your first year of teaching to your student teaching experience.

Depending on each response, I asked extension questions for clarification or more

information. These extensions typically involved reasons they decided to stay or leave

after one or two years or how they were involved with students outside of teaching.

Teacher A

        Teacher A claimed her "first year of teaching was AMAZING." She came into the

year with a lot of excitement and energy, forming relationships with administrators,

coworkers, and students. One Assistant Principal (AP), knowing of her interest in

volleyball, introduced her to the head and assistant volleyball coach, who welcomed her

into the volleyball community. This allowed her to become part of a community before

the school year even started. She gives this AP a lot of credit for supporting her and the

other teachers. He backed them up with disciplinary issues as well as their various approaches to academics.

All new teachers attended an orientation for two or three days before the rest of the teachers returned for the year. During the orientation, they were given laptops and information on websites to be used during the year. At the start of the year, Teacher A was assigned a mentor teacher, but claims she was not sure of the point of it since their teaching styles were very different. The mentor teacher occasionally gave a hug, but this was the extent of the help she received from her mentor teacher.

She was able to work with a second-year teacher who also graduated from the University of Mississippi, but they did not have a common planning period during Teacher A's first year. This lack of common planning took away the amount they were able to work together, at least during the school day.

Teacher B

Teacher B went to teach at the same school as Teacher A and had a similar experience in that she came into her first year of teaching confident in her ability to prepare and present a lesson, credited to her student teaching experience. Similarly, she attended the new teacher orientation and monthly meetings for new teachers. She was not a fan of the meetings because they turned into a vent session, and she did not appreciate missing valuable instruction time with her students. She much preferred the weekly observations and critiques she received while student teaching.

She found the administration was very supportive, in particular, the same AP Teacher A found to be supportive. However, as opposed to Teacher A, Teacher B found her mentor to be helpful regarding emotional support throughout her first year. She specifically talked about how her school really made an effort to make new teachers feel a part of the community and how at sporting events one could find almost any teacher

there supporting their students. During her second year she began coaching cross country.

Teacher G

Teacher G went throughout college and student taught with Teacher A and Teacher B. She ended up teaching at a different school than the other two, though. Teacher G had a difficult first year of teaching, to the point where she feels she blocked out the first semester! Something she particularly struggled with was classroom management, which she claimed was most likely because she did not have to deal with it as much while student teaching. As a student teacher, her Clinical Instructor (CI) tended to take care of this aspect of teaching for her. During her first year, she experienced some behaviors she claims would be challenging for any teacher, one of these resulting in all the administration, counselors, and many teachers coming to comfort her. These experiences with student behavior made her question whether teaching was really for her or not but having the community of the school rally around her in moments like the one previously mentioned helped her feel supported during those times.

Teacher G's mentor, although supportive, was in the midst of working on her PhD dissertation, which she ended up doing on Teacher G. As a result, some issues Teacher G was having could have been rectified had her mentor not been playing both roles. Teacher G also co-sponsored the American Sign Language club at her school.

Teacher H

Teacher H went to teach at the same school as Teacher G and had a difficult first year, but for reasons different than Teacher G. Although the math department had a very collaborative environment, including having a shared Google Drive with all the

lessons, this format made her feel stifled and veer away from teaching content the way she thought it should be taught. Additionally, she was stressed as a result of dealing with parents, paperwork, IEPs, and other duties she did not have as a student teacher. Although she had a small amount of support from colleagues claiming it would get better and "that's just the way the first year goes," the stress eventually led to a panic attack. This caused her to refocus why she was there and reach out more to teachers she knew were respected by the students when she needed advice. This allowed her to form a community with these teachers. As she began observing other teachers more, she learned different classroom management and instructional strategies.

Having common planning with the other teachers was a big help for Teacher H feeling connected with colleagues. Her first period was a Team Teach, meaning she and another teacher co-taught the class. This allowed her to experience a lesson fully taught before heading into common planning and the rest of her classes she taught on her own. Additionally, in the first PD days, the administration had the teachers engage in various team building activities which allowed her to meet teachers from all the departments. She claims these PD days were vital for her in getting to meet people she may not have met and really feeling like she was a part of the community. Teacher H has also coached volleyball and basketball over her two years at her school, allowing her to get involved with other students and faculty members.

Teacher C

Teacher C had a completely different experience than the others in that she did not feel as much support from administration or the school community. As a first-year teacher, she was given a mentor and monthly new teacher meetings during the first semester. She was also provided with lessons on strictly direct instruction, how to plan a lesson for it, and various school specific systems. Additionally, she was provided the scaffolding documents for the state of Mississippi and told to "create my own lessons,

assessments, and activities to align with the standards, with no form of reference as to what was going to work or not work." Although she was not given any feedback on her instructional methods until benchmark scores came out, she was "blamed for not asking for help" from the administration. Comparatively, while she was student teaching, she was able to "observe, plan with a teacher, discuss potential issues with my lessons, and practice teaching those lessons with a type of safety net." But, because of differences between districts and demographics, she found much of what was learned through student teaching did not transfer over as much to her first year of teaching.

She was able to get involved in the community and district through a ministry that worked closely with people living in the district. She was also involved as an assistant coach for track both years and volleyball her second year. A slight improvement came during her second year when the school began doing more community events like bingo and painting nights. However, during her second year, she began thinking about leaving. At this time her decision is not made, but if she decides to stay, it will be because of the value she has found in the community of the school and the surrounding town.

Although this student was a part of the same program as most of the other interviewees during college, her experience differs because she was a Secondary English Education major. Everyone else majored in Secondary Mathematics Education. This makes Teacher C a slight variable in the study.

Teacher D

When Teacher D arrived at her new school, the district had all first year teachers participate in a "Novice Teachers Learning Community" which required each of the teachers to complete three observations of a veteran teacher chosen for them and discuss these observations at a meeting with the other first year teachers. She did not

feel these meetings to be very beneficial as she was one of two math teachers with everyone else being English or elementary teachers. The English and elementary teachers' experiences in the classroom were different. This made it difficult to find common ground and form a community with them. She also struggled with attending these meetings because they were during the school day which meant she had to get a substitute for her state-tested subject on those days.

Additionally, Teacher D was assigned a mentor who taught her subject and whose room was adjacent to hers. They met at least once a week, and her mentor helped her when it came to gathering materials for lessons as well as understanding the school and its culture. The school did not have common planning for their teachers. Similar to Teacher H, it was difficult for her to transition from being observed and getting feedback while student teaching to only being observed once every couple of months as a "real" teacher. Without the pressure of constantly being observed, she feels she let some things slide that she might not have while she was student teaching.

The school she was at did not have many activities or events set up to build the community among their teachers, but she did her best to build relationships with her students by going to as many of their sporting and arts events as she could. During her first year, she found much support from the administration, especially the ninth-grade principal who supported her wholeheartedly, especially when it came to classroom management. However, during her second year, the algebra department began to have disagreements over testing and grading. This, combined with the ninth-grade principal's announcing he was going to leave to become the head principal, led to her desire to leave the school. However, due to current circumstances, she has not had the ability to interview as she had planned.

Teacher E

Teacher E ended up going to teach at a school in the same district where she student taught. Additionally, she was one of three new teachers for the same grade, and because of her experience with the technology from the high school, she was made PLC leader for her grade level at the middle school. As a result, she went to many trainings and even a conference over the summer with some veteran teachers, allowing her to get to know more of the teachers and become part of the community this way as well as through coaching dance.

She also found she benefited from the seventh-grade math teachers, who did their best to help the new eighth grade teachers however they needed. This was largely in part of having a specific period for all the math teachers to meet each day for common planning. Even though Teacher E struggled with classroom management, she still felt like she was a part of the community and had people to turn to when she needed advice.

Teacher F

Teacher F student taught with Student E, but they ended up going to different schools for their first year of teaching. At the school Teacher F is working for, the new teachers were given a tour of the school by the principal and had dinner at the principal's house the night before school started. This allowed her and the other new teachers a chance to get to know each other so "the first few days weren't so lonely." Additionally, each month the school held a luncheon for them to discuss the ups and downs and offer various perspectives for their struggles.

As for the math department, each week they have lunch together to discuss the pros and cons for the week as well as any concerns they have at the moment. In addition to this, the math department also has common planning blocks and a shared

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Google Drive allowing them to plan lessons together, with each teacher able to make specific changes to it if the need arises. Teacher F claims this was very helpful for her as a first-year teacher because she did not have to struggle with coming up with ideas on her own.

Teacher F also claims getting involved with the school was "my biggest positive of the year." She was the dance team coach which allowed her another way to connect with students, even though she did not teach anyone on the dance team. Additionally, it allowed a different subset of teachers to help her and reach out to her since they knew she was new to the district.

She found her first year of teaching to be less overwhelming than student teaching considering she was not also trying to keep up with assignments for her own schooling and she did not have to come up with her own lesson plans every day, hoping they would work. Although she did not go to the same school as people she student taught with, she did have some of them in the same district which, along with other peers from student teaching, gave her people to share struggles and frustrations with. She thought at first she would bounce around or eventually move out of Mississippi (after her fifth year), but after her first year of teaching, she "can now say that I am definitely staying." She loves the community formed at her school and is "looking forward to my second year!"

C. Analysis

A nine-category table was created based on the patterns found in the responses from the interviews and discussions. These categories include:

1. School taught at (denoted by color)
2. Observed by administration
3. Observed other teachers/asked for help

4. New teacher meetings

5. Mentor

6. Teacher team building/get together

7. Common planning

8. Involved with school

9. Staying in the school/district

Table 16 denotes which of the nine categories of study correlate with the components of

induction programs put out by the New Teacher Center. Four of the categories relate

back to the components directly and one category relates back indirectly.

A Comparison of Categories to Components

Category from Interview	New Teacher Center Component
School taught at	
Observed by administration	Component 4- enhancing program quality with observations
Observed other teachers/asked for help	Component 4- enhancing program quality with observations
New teacher meetings	Component 8- program accountability Component 9- formal standards and assessment of teaching/learning conditions
Mentor	Component 2- certain qualifications to be a mentor (unknown what qualifications these mentors had to have in this case)
Teacher team building/get together	
Common planning	Component 4 (indirectly)- enhancing program quality with reduced teacher workload
Involved with school	
Staying in school/district	

These nine categories are not all-encompassing. If the interviewees mentioned

the category, a star was put in their box in Table 17 along with if it was not particularly

beneficial for them if stated. If the box is blank, they did not mention the category which

means they either did not experience this category, or it was not super impactful for

them in one way or another. If they stated they did not experience this category, "no" is

written in their box. In the "involved with school" category, one star is placed if they tried to attend events, but two are placed if they mentioned coaching a sport or leading a club during their first or second years.   No star was placed in the boxes of those who are not confidently staying with their school. Common symbols by their names indicate they went through the same program together and graduated the same year.

A Comparison of Experiences

School Taught At	Observed by Admin	Observed other teachers/ Asked for advice	New Teacher Meetings	Mentor	Teacher Team Building/ Get Together	Common Planning	Involved with School	Staying in School/District
Teacher A (2)!	*		*	* (not useful)		no	**	*
Teacher B (2)!	*		* (during school day)	*		no	**	*
Teacher C (2)$			*	*		no	**	
Teacher D (2)!	*	*	* (during school day)	*		no	*	
Teacher E (1)#	*	*				*	**	*
Teacher F (1)#		*	* (lunch)		*	*	**	*
Teacher G (2)!				* (not as useful)	* (not mentioned)	*	**	*
Teacher H (2)!		*		*	*	*	**	*

*It is important to note that Teachers A, B, G, and H all went to teach at a school where they knew teachers there that they had worked with in college

Key	
!	Secondary Math Ed. Grad 2018
#	Secondary Math Ed. Grad 2019
$	Secondary English Ed. Grad 2018
	Teaches at School 1
	Teaches at School 2
	Teaches at School 3
	Teaches at School 4
	Teaches at School 5
	Teaches at School 6

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The first column simply denotes the school each interviewee teaches at by color as well as the year they graduated and content area. This shows who graduated together and who went to teach together. As seen in the data, Teacher A and Teacher B graduated together and went to teach at the same school. Teacher G and Teacher H follow this pattern as well. However, none of the other interviewees follow this pattern. They all went to a school on their own. In fact, most stated they did not know anyone at their school, although some had unique situations. These situations were created by the combination of the portions of induction programs they experienced and anything extra they did with the schools not typically thought to be part of an induction program.

Although it is the last category, whether interviewees are planning to stay at their current schools next year will be important while talking about the other categories. Of the eight interviewees, six are planning to stay at their current school. Teacher C and Teacher D are both unsure if they are staying at their current school due to various circumstances.

The first aspect of induction programs interviewees experienced during their first year of teaching is being observed by administration. Four of the eight mentioned experiencing being observed by an administrator. These four are Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher D, and Teacher E. This means the other four either were not observed by an administrator, or it did not impact them in an overly positive or negative way.

Another group of four teachers either observed other teachers or asked other teachers for advice. These four teachers are Teacher D, Teacher E, Teacher F, and Teacher H. Again, the other four may have observed other teachers, but it might not have greatly impacted their experience. For some of these teachers it was required to observe others, however, Teacher H made a point to ask other teachers for advice when she knew she was struggling. Teacher E was required to observe other teachers, but

she also had common planning with the other math teachers where she could ask questions.

Another aspect commonly found in induction programs is new teacher meetings. This category includes new teacher professional development days before the school year starts as well as any time they meet during the year to discuss various issues they are facing. Five of the eight interviewees mentioned having new teacher meetings their first year. These five are Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, and Teacher F. Teacher B and Teacher D both had issues with these meetings during the school year because they were during the school day which meant they had to get a substitute teacher. Teacher F, however, had her meetings with other new teachers during lunch so she did not have to miss any instructional time.

The final major aspect of induction programs mentioned by the interviewees is being assigned a mentor during the first year. Six of the eight teachers mentioned having a mentor. These six are Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, Teacher D, Teacher G, and Teacher H. But Teacher A and Teacher G both did not have completely positive experiences with their mentors, and Teacher B stated hers was mainly there for emotional support. However, these four categories related to induction programs have purposes intended to be primarily focused on teaching support while the next three are centered around involvement and knowing many of the other faculty and staff members, the community the teacher builds.

The first of the community-focused categories listed is having a teacher team building activity or get together. This is something administered by the superintendent or principal. Only three of the interviewees mentioned experiencing one of these activities, but two of these three claim it was crucial for feeling comfortable and getting to know other teachers. These three are Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher H.

The next community-focused category is also something decided by the district or the school, thus not in the teachers' control. Four of the eight interviewees have common planning with other teachers in their content area at their current school. These four are Teacher E, Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher H. This is a big deal for many of these teachers because many of them became accustomed to the collaborative environment while student teaching.

The final community-focused category is the one category the teacher has some element of control over. However, it also depends on the need of the school. This category is school involvement, with the focus being coaching or leading a club. During their time teaching, Teacher D is the only teacher not involved through coaching or leading a club at some point during her time at her school.

After analyzing the data (see Table 17) in regards to who is staying with the school/district after one or two years of teaching, something all teachers that are confidently continuing with their current school have in common is they were all involved with the school either through coaching or leading a club. Additionally, each of these teachers were either at a school with someone they went through student teaching with or they had common planning with their department. Although Teacher C was involved with coaching a sport, she did not have common planning with her department, nor was she at a school with any of her college peers. The only teacher that mentioned experiencing all four components of an induction program studied, Teacher D, is one of the two teachers considering leaving their school after one or two years.

		Not Related to Induction		
School Taught At	Teacher Team Building	Common Planning	Involved with School	Staying
Teacher A *			✳✳	✳
Teacher B *			✳✳	✳
Teacher C			✳✳	
Teacher D			✳	
Teacher E		✳	✳✳	✳
Teacher F	✳	✳	✳✳	✳
Teacher G *	✳	✳	✳✳	✳
Teacher H *	✳	✳	✳✳	✳

* Denotes previously working with a teacher already at the school.

After looking at the four categories not directly involving induction programs in Table 18, each individual teacher's experiences began to stand out. Especially regarding if they were staying at their school. Teacher A went to her school with someone she student taught with and was involved with the school through coaching. Teacher B went to her school with someone she student taught with, and while she was not coaching her first year, she still attended many of the school's sporting events where there were many other teachers in attendance. She began coaching her second year. Teacher E had common planning with all the math teachers, and she was a coach. Teacher F had multiple social events with other new teachers, common planning with the math department, and she was coach of the dance team. Teacher G went to her school with someone she went through college with, had teacher team building, common planning with the math department, and she co-sponsored a club. Teacher H went to her school with someone she went through college with, had teacher team building, common planning with the math department, and she was a coach.

On the other hand, the two who are considering leaving their schools had a completely different dataset. Teacher C went to a school where she did not know anyone, did not have any get-togethers with other teachers, did not have common planning with the English department, but she was involved with the school through

coaching. Similarly, Teacher D went by herself to her school, did not have any get-togethers with other teachers, and did not have common planning with the math department, but she did try to go to events for her students although she was not a coach. Teacher D experienced each of the four categories directly related to induction programs, but she did not experience any of the other categories. As a result, these teachers were not able to build as strong relationships with the other teachers in their school as everyone else involved in the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The data shows what encourages teachers to stay more than anything else is having the opportunities to form relationships with other teachers at their respective schools, the opportunity to be a part of a community. Even though Teacher G and Teacher H had difficult first years which made them question their decisions to be teachers, because they had the opportunity to form relationships with their co-workers, they then allowed themselves to feel comfortable and grow their confidence in what they were doing because they had the support of their co-workers. This data, though taken on a very small scale to reduce variables, shows someone can have the elements of an induction program (observations by administration, observing other teachers, new teacher meetings, mentor), like Teacher D, and yet still end up considering leaving the school. Teacher D is a math teacher and went through the same exact training as Teacher A, Teacher E, Teacher F, Teacher G, and Teacher F. All of these were a part of the METP and thus were in the classrooms starting their freshman year, which Teacher B did not get to experience. Because of this, Teacher D had no reason to feel the need to leave if she was getting the support she needed from colleagues. Teacher C was involved with her school through coaching, like those who are confidently staying. She may be what would be considered an outlier, especially if this study were done on a larger scale. However, he did not have common planning, a former colleague with her, or any get togethers with other teachers which may have helped her cause.

Some important variables not closely studied include how each teacher's personality effected their experience and whether the content studied in college effected their experience. Another interesting factor is all of those studied were involved in an

intensive teaching program. Would the same results be achieved with a random selection of new teachers?

I started this research experience in the middle of my junior year when I was beginning to consider the job search experience and where I may end up teaching. At the beginning of this paper, I expressed my concerns with finding a school I knew would support me and help me build a community. With the end of my senior year approaching, I can now say I have a job, not only at a district I feel will support me, prepare me, and do their best to make sure I succeed, but at a district where four of my fellow math teachers will be going as well! Thus, I will have a small community and support system built within the district. We have all had the opportunity to work together and become really close over the past four years. Additionally, while going through the interview process, the superintendent and administration allowed us to meet teachers at the schools currently and begin building relationships with them and hear their experiences. This allowed us to see the district through eyes not belonging to the people directly trying to hire us and hear about the various ways the schools try to get teachers involved and support them.

After doing this study, regardless of what our new district does for us, the five of us will have each other to lean on for support, especially if there are multiples at the same school. Personally, I have always had a love for sports and been interested in coaching. After this study, this interest has increased because I know coaching is a common way many of the teachers staying at their schools are involved. Additionally, I know my specific school has a common planning for my content area by grade level, so I will be able to get to know these teachers well and have the stress of planning every single lesson on my own taken away. Something all the teachers we talked to while we were interviewing mentioned was the district-wide Christmas party thrown every year. It is not at the beginning of the year, but it allows for teachers to get together outside of

school to socialize without worrying about work. This hits all the categories not directly related back to induction programs, if I am able to get involved with coaching. I feel confident I will be able to become part of the school community. This will help my transition to my first year of teaching be less challenging.

Through this study, I was able to see a variety of ways a school could run an induction program which allowed me to determine what I wanted my future school to ideally do once I got there. Having five of us going down to the same district is an exciting opportunity for me to continue investigating my theory and comparing our experiences, since some of us will be at different schools within the district.

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