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INCREASING TEACHER RETENTION: AN APPLIED RESEARCH STUDY ON THE  
EFFECTS OF TEACHER MENTORING AND CULTURE IN THE ABC COUNTY SCHOOL  
DISTRICT

A Dissertation  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Education  
in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education  
The University of Mississippi

JIMMY H. WEEKS

May 2019

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## ABSTRACT

This applied research study sought to improve the retention rate of beginning teachers through a teacher mentoring program. The need for the teacher retention rate to improve became evident as student achievement fell, new teacher training costs increased, and fewer new teachers entered the teaching profession. Using four elements in this study, mentoring, job-embedded coaching, individual growth plan, and culture development, the program sought to better support new teachers during the first few years of their careers. Surveys, evaluations, collaboration logs, and professional growth plans were used in the study. The findings revealed improvement in the teacher retention rate in the district and can provide educators with information, including an action plan, to implement a beginning teacher mentoring program.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family.

To my wife and children – who have waited patiently.

To my parents – who provided the example and set the expectation.

Thank you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my professors for walking me through the dissertation process and pushing me to do my best work. Thanks to my colleagues at work who pitched in to help whenever it was needed. Lastly, thanks to LeighAnne, Steven, Lindsey, and Jason: for the many miles to and from class, for the many laughs, and for not letting me quit.

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## **Chapter One**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Take a walk down the hallway of any school in America and tell me what you see. To the untrained eye, one would see teachers teaching students and those students learning. What more than likely would not be easy to detect, would be the number of years any teacher has been teaching at that point in time. Nor would it be easy to tell how long a teacher has been teaching by considering the class or material taught. However, the environment in many schools rewards those with more years of teaching experience and discourages those with no experience at all, ultimately ending with the loss of many beginning teachers.

So why does this environment exist? Oftentimes, veteran teachers are given what some might consider an easier workload of higher academic classes with those students who are more focused on schoolwork and achievement. This results in teachers with less experience being forced into more general education classes with students considered more challenging to teach. The consequence of this practice is beginning teachers who quickly become disenchanted with the teaching profession and decide to pursue other careers. Building level and district level administrators certainly know there is a distinct and ever growing dilemma of unstaffed classrooms in schools. According to Cochran-Smith (2004), the problem is not a shortage of numbers enrolling in teacher preparatory programs, but a large number of teachers leaving the field early in their teaching careers. Nearly one-third of practicing teachers leave teaching to

pursue other careers each year (Callahan, 2016; Kersant, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007). As a result, the costs school districts incur for new teacher recruitment and training is extremely high.

### **Description of the Problem**

During the 2015-2016 school year, ABC County School District Central Office administration began to notice a large number of teacher job openings each school year. As the administration looked deeper into the issue and considered ways to reduce the teacher turnover rate, it became evident the district was lacking in the way of training, mentoring, and supporting teachers who were new to the district and/or new to the teaching profession. Further scrutiny revealed there was no uniform teacher induction program across the district. Each school had its own loosely structured process, with no school developing and supporting new teachers well.

### **Justification of the Problem.**

The central issue of concern in this applied research study was decreasing the teacher turnover rate in ABC County Schools. District administration decided to focus efforts on a teacher induction program for all first year teachers and teachers new to the district, to reduce the number of teachers leaving schools in the district. The induction program was implemented at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year at the district level with a primary focus on mentoring. The intent was to further develop the program into a true induction model, including training for principals to facilitate the program at the school level and to develop a culture to attract and retain teachers at each school.

Based on informal conversations and end of the year interviews with teachers, teacher retention in the schools across the district was a problem due to the number of students who were not ready to begin school and the lack of parental involvement in the educational process. Brill and McCartney (2008) state 33% of teachers leave their schools within the first three years of

teaching and 46% leave within the first five. Based upon this fact, it makes sense, without the appropriate culture in these hard-to-teach areas, teacher retention would be even lower.

Research (Pedota, 2015) suggests students' academic growth is directly proportional to the experience and instructional abilities of veteran teachers. Through conversations with teaching and administrative staff, the underlying feeling was teachers are leaving these schools because the students in the classrooms were extremely hard to teach.

The ABC County School District is a rural school system located in the northeast corner of Mississippi, currently serving 7,087 students, with a free and reduced lunch rate of 60%. It is comprised of 14 schools: three high schools, four middle schools, three elementary schools, three primary schools, and one alternative school. ABC County Schools employs 985 staff members, with 507 of those employees holding a teaching certificate. The school district is divided into three attendance zones: north, south, and east, with each having its own distinctive community, values, and expectations of the schools.

The southern attendance zone has the highest teacher turnover rate in the district. In the eastern and northern zones, although teacher retention rates are significantly lower, teacher turnover still exists. Reasons discovered for teachers leaving the schools in the southern zone were dissatisfaction with the teaching occupation altogether, spouse relocated for work or taking a better job, and taking a teaching job closer to where they live.

The north zone is home to a thriving business community with more affluent white families and a small portion of blue-collar, mid-level and low income families. The median household income is \$52,748.00, with 19.8% of the population earning at least a high school diploma, and 34% of the population attained a level of education higher than a high school diploma (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2010). The housing market continues to grow

in the north zone because of families leaving the limits of a neighboring city for the smaller community lifestyle and the quality of the schools. Parental and community support is strong in the north, and there are very high expectations for the schools. With the majority of the students coming from affluent backgrounds where basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing are not a major concern in the home, parents demand more advanced academic classes and extra-curricular choices because children are expected to attend college. The students in the mid-level income range come from homes where basic needs are met. The parents are hard workers and also value education and extra-curricular opportunities, although not at as high a level as their affluent counterparts. Mid-level parents expect their children to graduate from high school and support the decision to attend college, but are equally satisfied for the graduate to enter the workforce. The students from the low-income group exhibit many of the same characteristics as low-income students from anywhere in the United States. Food, clothing, and shelter are often a concern, so these students may not always focus on academics when they are at school. Their parents often are not supportive and are rarely involved at the school unless the child is in trouble. Frequently, the staff sees a lack of concern from these parents regarding their child getting a high school diploma. Some parents are not bothered by the student receiving a GED certificate or dropping out of school. These parents want the child to begin earning money as soon as possible to relieve financial burdens in the home.

The east zone is predominantly blue-collar white families with almost no business community. The median household income is \$42,775.00, with 21% of the population earning at least a high school diploma and, and 31% of the population attaining a level of education higher than a high school diploma (USCB, 2010). The housing market is growing as families leave the neighboring city, but at a slower rate than the north. Parental and community support is also

strong here. There is a small affluent white group in the east with the almost identical expectations for the school and the student as the same group in the north. The mid-level income and low-income families are similar across the district.

The south zone is predominantly low-income African-American families with a small business community, almost no housing market growth, and little parental and community support. The median household income is \$33, 239.50, with 26.35% of the population earning at least a high school diploma, and 16.8% of the population attaining a level of education higher than a high school diploma. A vast majority of the available housing in this area is low-income rental property, often rented by the week. This leads to a very high rate of transiency in the south zone. The students in this area often come to school with many basic needs not met. The schools function as more than just providers of educational services. Students and parents often look to the schools for help in meeting clothing, nutritional, medical, and sometimes financial needs.

**Audience.**

The implementation of a quality teacher induction program will result in continuous cycles of organizational learning that build capacity in individual schools, and across the entire district. As the organization continually works to improve, a culture emerges which is extremely beneficial for all stakeholders. New and veteran teachers, parents, and administration will enjoy the benefits of a quality teacher induction program through higher rates of student achievement, higher morale among the staff, more and better satisfied parents, stronger community support, and less money being spent in a cycle of hiring and training new teachers. Through a well implemented teacher mentoring program, an atmosphere of professional collegiality, professional and personal relationships with the building level principal, and professional

development opportunities designed to hone novice teachers' teaching skills, schools will see the end result of a much higher teacher retention rate.

### **Purpose Statement**

The intent of this mixed methods applied research study was to address the high teacher turnover rate in the ABC County School District. The research process began with a description of the problem across the school district and a justification for the need to conduct the research. Through a collaborative process with administrators, teachers, students, and parents, the central phenomenon was examined through a review of research on teacher retention combined with the rate of teacher turnover, rate of teacher attendance, surveys, and interviews to develop an action plan to address the issue. The goals of the action plan were used to develop a set of quantitative and qualitative questions designed to support a formative evaluation of the action plan. Initial implementation of the action plan took place from March, 2018 to March, 2019. The evaluation supported organizational learning through a cycle of continuous improvement.

The central phenomenon of this action research study was the teacher retention rate in the ABC County School District. Several types of quantitative data including teacher retention rates and job satisfaction surveys were collected and analyzed for the evaluation to determine if the culture of the school changed and if organizational learning leads to cycles of continuous improvement across the district. In addition, qualitative surveys and interviews were used to gather suggestions for improvement and to determine parent and community satisfaction. In conclusion, the purpose of this applied research study on teacher retention in the ABC County School District was to improve the teacher retention rate and to foster organizational learning and continuous improvement.

## **Research Questions**

This applied research study was guided by two sets of questions used at different points in the process. An initial set of preliminary questions was used to develop the action plan. The purpose of these questions was to gather information for the collaborative development of an action plan to address the problem of teacher retention. The first question examined the reasons why the teacher turnover rate was increasing and the impact on student achievement, school accountability, and the recurring cost of training new teachers. The second question sought to identify and summarize existing and relevant research on teacher retention and organizational processes used to successfully increase teacher retention. The intent of the last preliminary question was to establish common values within the district to develop a desired set of outcomes to be achieved through the research process.

Collaborative analyses of the data collected in response to these questions was used to develop the action plan presented in Chapter 3. The goals of the action plan sought to improve the teacher retention rate through establishing and maintaining a supportive and inclusive culture and improving the instructional effectiveness of beginning teachers in the school. As a result, it was important for this research project to assess the implementation process to identify areas of needed improvement. Based on these needs the following set of research questions were used to evaluate the results of the collaborative plan:

1. Did the collaborative process to establish and implement a teacher mentor program result in a teacher retention rate of 80% of beginning teachers?
2. To what extent did mentor teachers implement the mentoring program with fidelity?
3. What were areas of success in the implementation process?



4. What factors had a negative impact on the implementation of the teacher mentor program?
5. To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?
6. To what extent did principals implement the mentoring program with fidelity?

### **Overview of the Study**

High teacher retention rates yielding increased teacher capacity is integral to the success of any school district. Chapter One discussed the issue of low teacher retention and its effects in ABC County School District, presented the purpose of the research, and provided the research questions. Chapter Two was a review of relevant research examining specific characteristics of teacher retention to include the reasons teachers stay, reasons teachers leave, and the impact of a supportive culture on teacher retention. Chapter Three presented the methods of the study through a description of the collaborative development of the action plan, a description of the action plan implementation, and the evaluation of the plan. Chapter Four presented the results of the program evaluation and presents the findings gathered through the data collection process. It was divided in to two sections, elements and research questions, with the goal attainment for each element discussed and each research question answered. Chapter Five provided a discussion of the findings with limitations and implications, along with conclusions, and recommendations from this study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

Anyone working in the education field today knows that there is a shortage of teachers in the United States. It does not take recent articles in popular educational journals or studies by the top educational researchers to tell educators this. Building level and district level administrators certainly know there is a distinct and ever growing dilemma of unstaffed classrooms in schools, especially in higher level academic classes such as chemistry, physics, calculus, and trigonometry. According to Cochran-Smith (2004), the problem is not a shortage of numbers enrolling in teacher preparatory programs, but a large number of teachers leaving the field early in their teaching careers. Nearly one-third of practicing teachers leave teaching to pursue other careers each year (Callahan, 2016; Kersant, Lewis, Potter & Meisels, 2007). As a result, the costs school districts incur for new teacher recruitment and training is extremely high.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the ABC County School District became aware of the issue of teacher turnover in its southern attendance zone. This realization was the catalyst for a more in-depth analysis and a more focused effort to improve teacher retention in ABC County Schools. This study of literature highlights the reasons teachers choose to stay, the reasons teachers choose to leave, and the importance of the appropriate culture in the workplace. The literature review was also used in the development of the action plan and in the analysis of the mentoring program results.

## **Reasons Teachers Leave**

Low salaries and inadequate critical support in areas including professional development, quality teacher induction programs, and strong mentoring programs were cited as factors influencing teachers to leave the profession (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Hancock and Scherff (2010) found little or no support from building level and district level administrators and student behavior also influenced teachers' decisions to leave. Billingsley (2004) discovered teachers who had little or no input in school-decision making were far more likely to leave the profession than those teachers in similar situations who were afforded input. In addressing four major areas: teacher qualifications, work environments, personal factors and teacher characteristics, and teacher's affective reactions to work, Billingsley suggests that improvement efforts must be driven by an understanding of the factors contributing to attrition.

In a review of literature and various case studies, Brill and McCartney (2008) concluded the pressure associated with high-stakes testing was extremely influential in decisions to leave teaching among novice teachers with five or less years of teaching experience. The study also indicated that better working conditions and quality professional development programs were far more influential than moderate salary increases in convincing teachers to remain in the classroom.

In studying attrition rates of English Language Arts teachers, Hancock and Scherff (2010) discovered through examining the data from the 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, that the three most significant indicators of teachers leaving the field were years of teaching experience, being a minority teacher, and teacher apathy.

In a 2007 study, Kersaint, Lewis, Potter and Meisels, interviewed every teacher leaving two school districts in Florida in a two-year period. The authors found 39% of teachers left for family and personal reasons, 28% were school staffing actions, and 25% left for another job. Yet only 26% of those leaving teaching cited the reason as job dissatisfaction. The authors proposed the joy of teaching to be of little or no importance when it comes to teachers leaving the field. However, the joy of teaching was important to those teachers choosing to remain in the profession. The authors determined an appropriate supportive culture, which included a mentoring program, opportunities to work in professional learning communities, and opportunities for professional development were contributing factors to the joy of teaching. One conclusion of this study was to enhance teacher retention, one must first identify those most likely to resign while they are still teaching and intervene before resignation (Kersaint et al., 2007).

In a 2015 review of six studies examining teacher turnover as a result of the school instead of student demographics, Simon and Johnson discuss why teachers leave, why teacher turnover matters, and the cyclical toll teacher turnover exacts on the school. The results of their review imply teachers leaving the profession are not doing so because of the students, but because of poor working conditions, which include, little or no school leadership, no opportunity to establish collegial relationships, and no supportive school culture.

Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver-Thomas (2016), in a research brief published by the Learning Policy Institute, analyze the shortage of teachers in the United States and the reasons for the shortage. The authors found especially severe shortages in the areas of special education, mathematics, sciences, bilingual education, locations with poor working conditions, and lower wages. The authors also determined while retirement accounts for one-third of

teachers leaving the profession, most of the teachers leaving before retirement do so as a result of poor working conditions. Of the teachers leaving the profession, 55% reported poor working conditions includes class size, salary, lack of administrative support, classroom autonomy, high-stakes testing, and accountability.

Craig (2014) conducted a narrative inquiry chronicling a beginning teacher's career over a six year period in a Texas school district. The inquiry begins with accounting for all the reasons this teacher chose to teach and shifts to the reasons she chose to leave. Some of the more prolific reasons to leave include not feeling valued in the workplace, no support from administration, professional development opportunities, job security, and salary

While data focusing on teachers leaving the profession is important to prescribing a solution to the problem of teacher turnover, it is equally important to look at the data concerning the reasons teachers choose to remain in the profession.

### **Reasons Teachers Stay**

It stands to reason, after considering why people choose to leave the teaching profession, opposite reasons would greatly increase the desire to stay. At the forefront of this theme is research centering on novice teachers. Black (2004) conducted a qualitative study of beginning teachers in eight states on the reasons novice teachers leave teaching within the first five years and what would have caused them to remain as a lifelong career. The study determined solid teacher induction programs, ample resources, and strong instructional leadership at the building level greatly increase the numbers of novice teachers remaining in the teaching profession.

Kaufman and Al-Bataineh (2011) conducted another study focusing on novice teachers. The research surveyed 97 teachers in a school district in Central Illinois to determine factors believed to influence teacher retention among teachers in their first five years of teaching. The

study revealed key factors to be salary, undergraduate program effectiveness, continual support from the district level, periodic feedback and guidance from building level administration, and encouragement and support from colleagues. Personal and professional relationships were also found to be vital in influencing new teachers to remain in the profession.

In addition to this information concerning novice teachers, it has been proposed (Olsen & Anderson, 2007) that there is a need to rethink teacher retention and the efforts used to influence teachers to remain in the profession. Through qualitative investigation, such as interviews and observations, this study determined many teachers in the urban area reach a point where they feel teaching no longer meets their career goals. The authors recommend opportunities to further professional knowledge, sabbaticals, mentoring new teachers in the school where they work, and allowing them to serve as administrators who teach part-time as ways to rethink efforts of keeping teachers connected and in the classroom

Pedota (2015) also addresses challenges faced by new or novice teachers. He offers the idea that teacher self-efficacy greatly improves student outcomes, which in turn, greatly improves the chances early career teachers will remain in the teaching profession. Through a discussion of strategies, Pedota strives to help new teachers understand the relationship of student success to teacher success.

Research (Hope, 1999) shows the importance of strong teacher induction and orientation programs. Hope discusses this as it relates to retaining new teachers to the profession versus the cost of hiring and training new teachers year after year and the effects of stability created by an experienced staff in the school. Hope's review of literature concluded induction programs should include regular contact with new teachers to foster professional growth and conversations

centered on teaching, training on dealing with the fears of a new teacher, mentoring, professional development opportunities, and understanding the evaluation process.

Understanding the challenges new teachers face and implementing strategies to combat these issues is not the only problem plaguing schools when it comes to retaining good teachers. In a quantitative study of teacher perspective, through questionnaires received from 815 public high school teachers, Bradley and Loadman (2005) identified the qualities of teachers believed to be the best in the subject area or school in which they taught, characteristics associated with career satisfaction, and successful recruitment techniques as vital to retaining teachers who are no longer considered beginning teachers. This study also revealed that motivation for teachers remaining in the profession is more intrinsic than extrinsic.

In considering why teachers continue to work in the educational field, Hughes (2012) surveyed 782 teachers in both high and low socioeconomic status schools to determine the effects of organizational characteristics, school and teacher characteristics, and teacher efficacy on teacher retention. The author found that salary, workload, technology, parent and student involvement, teacher socioeconomic status, and number of years teaching all contributed significantly to the decision of continuing to teach. Findings also indicated schools focusing on teacher retention should consider salary increases, improving parent and student participation rates, and decreasing teacher workload.

A quantitative study conducted by Boyd et al. (2011) focused on how working conditions in schools can drive a high turnover rate. While staff relations, student behavior, facilities, and teacher influence over policy all played a part, a strong administration was far more influential than these other factors. In hard-to-staff schools, characterized as schools within correctional facilities or behavioral institutions, research yielded much the same results. Instructional,

environmental, and emotional support from the principal was found to be key in teacher retention (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015).

Prather-Jones (2011) conducted a qualitative study to examine the reasons why teachers of students with social/emotional behavior problems choose to remain in this field. Findings show that high levels of early and continued administrative support are key to these teachers' career choices. Prather-Jones also found three distinct characteristics of administrative support which encourage teachers to continue teaching in such challenging areas are: principals enforcing reasonable consequences for student misbehavior and including teachers in deciding the consequences, feeling respected and appreciated by the principal, and the principal fostering supportive relationships between teachers.

In a mixed methods approach study, Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, and Labat (2015) employed both closed-ended and open-ended surveys in gathering data to examine the effects of principal leadership behaviors and high-stakes testing demands on teacher retention. This study also determined factors of teacher job satisfaction. Both sets of data supported the importance of principal leadership as it relates to job satisfaction. However, qualitative data also indicated the three biggest influences on job satisfaction were subject matter taught, the art of teaching, and student success. Sass, Seal, and Martin (2011) used a sample of 479 teachers and three conflicting theories in a quantitative study to test job dissatisfaction and predict those teachers who would eventually leave teaching all together. All three theoretical models included variables of teacher stress and administrative/colleague support. Findings showed there was little or no relational evidence between teacher efficacy, student engagement, and job dissatisfaction. Social support and student stressors were found to be the best predictors of job dissatisfaction.



All of the reasons why teachers choose to continue teaching until retirement can be summed up in a 2015 study conducted by De Stercke, Goyette, and Robertson. The researchers considered the fields of positive psychology and teacher retention to offer three themes and ten approaches to improving teacher retention rates in schools. De Stercke et al., propose happiness is the key to keeping new teachers teaching (2015).

In considering happiness as the key to keeping teachers in the classroom, it is necessary to examine how an appropriate culture in schools influences a teacher's happiness.

### **Culture in Schools**

In a 2017 un-published essay on successful recruitment, hiring, and induction of instructional personnel, Davis surmises teacher mentoring has a large impact on teacher retention and teacher performance. He also writes that teacher mentoring helps to build a strong, collegial culture in the school, all of which positively impact school districts in the areas of finance and human capital.

In a 2007 study of two school districts in Florida, Kersaint, Potter, and Meisels determined an appropriate, supportive culture in schools is highly influential for teachers choosing to remain in the teaching profession. Contributing factors in an appropriate culture are opportunities for professional development and collaborative learning opportunities.

Gray (2015) conducted a longitudinal study for the National Center of Education Statistics to provide data on a national level, focusing on attrition and mobility of beginning teachers in public schools. The study provides data on age, gender, and attitudes of teachers both staying in and leaving the teaching profession. One finding of the study substantiates the need for a mentoring program for beginning teachers. The study found teachers who were mentored were more likely to continue teaching than teachers who were not mentored.

In a 2013 comparison study, Jones, Youngs, and Frank examine collegial relationships and their impact on experiences of beginning teachers. The researchers found collegial relationships to be a strong predictor of teacher retention among special education teachers, citing special education teachers are two and one-half times more likely to leave teaching than their regular education counterparts. The research suggests beginning teachers who feel part of the professional community are more likely to utilize their colleagues as a resource, motivating the beginning teachers to remain in the profession.

Resta, Huling, and Yeargain (2013) conducted a long-range study over a ten year period for the Education Policy Implementation Center at Texas State University, focusing on the long-term effects of a teacher induction program to include mentoring and a supportive culture as major components. The researchers found beginning teachers who receive high quality mentoring not only remain in the profession but become proficient in teaching quicker than teachers who received no mentoring. The teachers in the study indicated the emotional and instructional support to be the most help in the first year of teaching. The study also revealed many teachers reporting administrative support to be as invaluable as mentoring.

### **Teacher Induction**

In a 2017 study, Ronfeldt and McQueen reviewed results of the three most current administrations of the *Schools and Staffing and Teacher Follow-Up Surveys* along with the *Beginning Teacher Longitudinal Study*. The purpose of this research was to determine if differing types of teacher induction support can predict turnover of beginning teachers across the nation. The researchers found that induction supports can predict less teacher attrition and migration, and also suggests a reduction in new teacher turnover. Ronfeldt and McQueen also determined induction supports to be relatively the same for different types of teachers and

different types of schools, except for Black teachers and teachers working in schools with higher numbers of students speaking English as a second language.

Wood (2005) explored the roles of principals in eight high schools, four middle schools, and 42 elementary schools concerning teacher induction. Findings showed five leadership roles of the principal in teacher induction: novice teacher recruiter, novice teacher advocate and retainer, coordinator/facilitator of mentors, instructional leader, and culture builder. These principals exhibited high levels of leadership in teacher induction and offer insight into strong administrative support of beginning teachers.

With the growing interest in better support, or induction, for beginning teachers, Ingersoll and Smith (2004), examined if efforts such as support, guidance, and orientation programs had a positive effect on retaining beginning teachers. The study focused on several types of induction methods such as mentoring, collective group activities, reduces workloads, and extra resources. The study revealed beginning teachers who received multiple supports were less likely to transition to other schools or leave teaching completely after the first year.

This 2011 study by Ingersoll and Strong reviewed 15 empirical studies on the effects of teacher induction methods for beginning teachers. Most of the studies supported the claim that assistance and support for beginning teachers had a positive effect on student achievement, classroom instructional practices, and teacher retention and commitment. Most of the studies on retention and commitment showed beginning teachers who took part in induction programs showed positive results. Most of the studies on classroom instructional practices showed beginning teachers who were involved in induction programs performed better at several aspects of teaching, such as effective questioning techniques, keeping students on task, maintaining a positive atmosphere in the classroom, adjusting instruction and activities to hold students'

interest, and effective classroom management techniques. Almost all of the studies on student achievement showed beginning teachers who engaged in induction programs had higher scores on academic achievement tests.

## **Conclusion**

In the last 15 years, the educational field has changed at break-neck speed. Gone are the days of the teacher lecturing from the front of the room while students appear to listen attentively. Gone are the days of principals as building managers. According to Brill & McCartney (2008) there is no shortage of teachers coming into the system. However, it is no secret there is a shortage of classroom teachers in America. Low salaries, student behaviors, unseen pressures of high-stakes testing, weak orientation and induction programs for beginning teachers, little or no support from building level and district level administration, and principals who are weak instructional leaders are causing new and not-so-new-teachers to leave the education profession by the masses. In order to staunch the hemorrhaging, school districts and school leaders will have to strengthen efforts to improve teacher retention. By providing beginning and experienced teachers with better emotional, environmental and financial support, coupled with stronger administrative guidance, classrooms will begin to no longer be teacher-less. Through a well conducted teacher mentoring program, a culture of support, and an atmosphere of professional collegiality with the building level principal and mentor teachers, schools will see the end result of a much higher teacher retention rate. School districts will serve themselves well to remember research says happiness is the key in keeping teachers teaching.

## **Chapter Three**

### **METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the applied research design and the methods used in this research to address the problem of teacher turnover in the ABC School District. Applied research has a dual purpose of addressing a problem of practice and improving organizational effectiveness by developing the capacity for organizational learning. Chapter Three is divided into three sections. The first section is an explanation of the collaborative development of the action plan to address the problem of teacher turnover. This section includes an overview of collaboration among stakeholders, a review and timeline of the process, existing research which informed the work, and internal data examined to create the action plan.

The second section describes the action plan used to answer the research questions presented in Chapter One. Each research question was designed to guide the evaluation of one element of the action plan. The different elements of the action plan represented a specific collaborative effort to address the problem, with each element containing at least one measurable goal. This section also provided the details of exactly what will take place for each element: what systems will be in place, what participants will be expected to do and accomplish, what timelines will be followed, what resources of time and material will be required, and who will be responsible for each activity or effort required of participants.

The last section of Chapter Three presents the program evaluation of the action plan conducted following one year of implementation. A formative assessment was used for each

element of the action plan. To guide the formative assessment, each element was evaluated using multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data. The focus of the evaluation was to determine the level of goal attainment and to assess the organizational development occurring through the applied research process. All of the research questions were answered with data collected and analyzed through the program evaluation process.

### **Development of the Action Plan**

The development of the action plan was a collaborative effort involving district level administration, building principals, and teachers. District level administrators: the superintendent, assistant superintendent, curriculum coordinators, special education director, federal programs director, district testing coordinator, and the director of student services, were selected based on the job position held and prior experience at the building level. Because the retention effort was a district-wide initiative, all principals were expected to participate. However, this expectation did not mitigate the fact that principal buy-in and collaboration was critical to the success of the initiative. Mentor teachers were selected based on years of experience and successes in the classroom. All teachers, like principals, were expected to participate as part of the district-wide initiative, with program success depending on buy-in and collaboration of all parties.

In May of 2016, a noticeable increase in teacher openings in the district was observed and thus began a review of pre-existing data. The review included: teacher retention rates, teacher attendance rates for each school in the district, and reviewing annual exit interviews. At this point, the district administrative team began the initial design of a teacher mentoring program and designing strategies to improve the culture in the schools. In reviewing current literature on teacher retention, one study (Black, 2004) determined solid teacher induction programs and

strong instructional leadership greatly increased the number of beginning teachers choosing to remain in the profession. Pedota (2015) found teacher self-efficacy increases student outcomes, which in turn, increases the chances early career teachers will continue to teach. Hope (1999) concluded schools should maintain regular contact with beginning teachers to foster professional growth. Based on this research and data from the district, the district began a minimal teacher induction program in August of 2016 implemented concurrently with the planning of a more robust induction program for the following school years.

Prior to the beginning of the development of the mentor plan, building level administrators were involved with the distribution and collection of surveys and exit interviews. In September of 2016, the district administration broadened its collaboration efforts with building level principals in developing ways to improve the culture in the schools. Just as principal involvement began prior to the design of the mentoring plan, classroom teachers were also involved through informal conversations with teachers. Teachers became involved in the planning as mentors.

The district leadership team used the information gleaned from relevant research in the literature review to guide the development of the action plan. Relevant research supports strong systems of support for beginning teachers. Black (2004) determined strong teacher induction programs to be one of the contributing factors in teachers remaining in the profession. In a 2007 study, Boyd et al., found that improved working conditions were more influential on teacher retention than staff relationships, student behaviors, and quality of facilities. Therefore, the research was used to guide the development of the action plan in order to improve the culture of the school.

Upon completion of the data review, the district leadership team collaborated to establish an action plan resulting in a teacher mentoring program to increase teacher capacity, student achievement, teacher retention, and to develop a more supportive culture in the schools.

**Action Plan**

The action plan developed by the leadership team includes four elements: a new teacher mentoring program, a job-embedded coaching program, individual growth plans for new teachers, and culture development in all schools. See Table One for details of the elements.

Table 1

*Action Plan Logic Model*

<b>Element</b>	<b>Goals Long and Short Term</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Mentoring	L: Build instructional capacity in beginning teachers S: Professional relationship between mentor and mentee	February 2018 - Spring 2019	Consultant, principals, mentors, mentees, district level staff	\$26,318.30
Job-Embedded Coaching	L: Improve the quality of instruction in beginning teachers S: Increase student achievement	April 2018 – Spring 2019	Consultant, principals, mentors, mentees, district level staff	\$17,692.50
Individual Growth Plan	L: Beginning teacher will take ownership of professional development S: Beginning teacher to reflect on teacher practices	February 2018 - Spring 2019	Mentees, mentors, principals	\$1250.00
Culture Development	L: Create and sustain a supportive culture in the school S: Increase job satisfaction	February 2018 - Spring 2019	Consultant, principals, mentors, mentees, district level staff	\$1250.00



Through the use of mentoring, job-embedded training, coaching sessions, and culture building activities, the plan addressed the issues of building a collaborative school-wide culture of support and dialogue for supportive teaching and learning and increased teacher retention.

### **Mentoring.**

The action plan began in August 2017, with mentor teachers selected by the building principal and paired up with a beginning teacher. The principal selected teachers who were the best, most successful, and most qualified teachers in the school to be mentors. Mentees were identified as teachers completely new to the profession and veteran teachers new to the district. Mentors and mentees were assigned to align on subject and/or grade taught. Mentors and mentees met at least once per week to write lesson plans, discuss best instructional practices and techniques in teaching a specific skill, determine the best way to assist struggling students, discuss how best to handle student behaviors, sharing of instructional resources, reviewing curriculum and pacing guides, reviewing previous year test data, reviewing previous nine-week common assessment data, planning for future nine-week common assessments, and discussing ways to manage the complexities and stresses of teaching.

The mentoring session took place during a planning period. Mentor observations of the mentee and mentee observations of the mentor took place periodically, with the principal facilitating schedule arrangements and securing a substitute teacher if needed. The implementation period for the mentoring program was one calendar year.

Once mentor teachers were assigned a mentee teacher, training began with a consultant. The consultant guided principals, mentors, and mentees in creating a vision for the mentoring program resulting in high quality teaching and learning and to guide how new and veteran teachers would work together to bridge gaps in skills, knowledge, and expertise by working in a

continually evolving community of learners. In a one-day workshop setting, in February of 2018, the consultant provided instruction on mentoring roles and responsibilities, mentor protocol, mentor and new teacher interactions, effective communication and questioning techniques, and using an active mentor rubric.

The next step of the action plan was to support the new teacher in the transition from university student to the professional practitioner. In a second one-day workshop setting in February of 2018, the consultant trained mentor teachers and mentees in the use of needs assessments, questionnaires, and checklists to assist beginning teachers in assessing strengths and areas of growth. The consultant guided participants through the phases of first year teachers and guidelines for scaffolding new teachers.

Finally, the plan addressed training and support for beginning teachers, mentors, and principals in identifying and prioritizing high leverage learning growth targets for strengthening teacher practice. In a third one-day workshop setting in February 2018, the consultant provided training on how to specifically strengthen teacher practice, the Mississippi Educator and Principal Professional Growth System, teacher growth rubric standards, and the Mississippi Department of Education Guidebook for Teachers.

The long-term goal for the mentoring component of the action plan was to build instructional capacity in beginning teachers. The short-term goal was to establish a professional relationship of trust between the mentor and mentee.

### **Job-embedded Coaching.**

Following the training, the consultant, along with district level staff, began job-embedded professional development in March of 2018, to provide monthly coaching opportunities for principals, mentors, and mentees. This training covered giving and receiving feedback on

teacher practices to effect change, building leadership capacity in mentor teachers to serve as a critical friend, and a guide for new teachers as they reflect on their practice. The coaching sessions began with the administrator and mentor teacher observing and participating in coaching sessions between the consultant and mentee teacher. The intent was for mentor teachers and administrators to learn the mentoring process, what a mentoring session looks like, and to conduct future mentoring sessions without the help of the consultant.

The next step in the coaching element focused on building capacity in new teachers. Through periodic evaluations and monthly coaching sessions, principals, mentors, and the outside consultant assisted the beginning teachers in consistently using highly effective, research-based instructional practices to increase student achievement. Job-embedded coaching sessions continued throughout the year-long implementation process.

The long-term goal for job-embedded coaching was to improve the quality of instruction in the beginning teacher's classroom. The short-term goal was to improve student academic success.

### **Individual Growth Plan.**

The next step in the action plan was the development of an individual growth plan. At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, the beginning teacher considered feedback from observations, discussions with the mentor teacher, and the reflective journal entries to establish a plan for professional growth. The growth plan required the teacher to determine a minimum of two self-identified areas for growth and the rationale used to determine these areas. The growth plan culminated with the beginning teacher requesting professional development, such as trainings conducted by the North Mississippi Education Consortium, trainings conducted by the Mississippi Department of Education, or training the district is able to offer in-house, to address

the areas for growth. The long-term goal of this step was for the beginning teacher to take ownership of his or her professional growth. The short-term goal was to help beginning teachers improve their teaching practice sooner, by engaging in a reflective process supported by the mentor and the growth plan, so that students received a higher quality of instruction sooner.

### **Culture Development.**

Another goal of the action plan was to develop an intentional culture in the schools. While all the steps of mentoring, job-embedded coaching, and individual professional growth lay the ground work for a professional culture in schools, additional steps built upon this emerging culture to make the school a place where teachers want to be. Teachers are inclined to remain in the teaching profession due more to job satisfaction than salary amount (Hughes, Matt, & O'Reilly, 2015). Job satisfaction is directly proportional to the amount of support a teacher receives as well as relationships with fellow teachers and administration. This has to begin at the top with the principal setting the tone for the culture and must be supported by the teachers. At the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, principals developed a plan to improve the culture in the schools. The plan included receptions to introduce new teachers to the staff and community, staff meals to provide an opportunity of fellowship not centered on work, informal conversations between the beginning teacher and administration, mentoring relationships, and scheduling decisions that reflect the administration's awareness of the challenges novice teachers face. The long-term goal for the action of building culture was to increase the number of teachers choosing to remain in the ABC County School District. The short-term goal was to increase job satisfaction quicker in beginning teachers.

Upon completion of the school year, feedback from program participants, data gathered from observations, school accountability grades, and student test scores were analyzed to

determine if the teacher mentoring program should continue and to make needed changes to the action plan. Areas of success in the plan continued at current levels of support, while areas where little or no growth occurred received additional support.

### **Timeline.**

In an effort to support beginning teachers as much as possible, district administration began a teacher induction and mentoring program in August 2017. The formal action plan began in February of 2018 with three one-day workshops to create the shared vision and mission. Another one-day workshop took place in February to begin the transition from a university student to a professional teacher. Training in March of 2018 consisted of a one-day workshop for strengthening best practices in teaching. April and May of 2018 began the job-embedded professional development, which included periodic evaluations and monthly coaching sessions. Monthly coaching sessions and periodic evaluations resumed in August of 2018 and continued through February of 2019. Individual growth plans were written in February of 2019. March of 2019 was used to review the individual growth plans of the beginning teachers. Evaluation of the action plan took place in March of 2019.

### **Resources.**

The resources needed for this action plan included funding for the outside consultant and human capital. Development, implementation, and monitoring of the action plan required vast amounts of time throughout this year long process.

The total cost of the teacher mentor program for one year was \$46,510.00. The first step of the action plan included training provided by a professional development consultant and the salaried time for mentors, principals, and district level staff attending the training at a cost of \$26,318.00.

The second step of the plan was to conduct monthly coaching and observation sessions for the purpose of monitoring and adjusting the action plan. This step included the consultant, principals, and district level staff over a period of seven months. Consultant fees and salaried time for staff members cost \$17,692.00.

The third step of the plan was reviewing the growth plan for professional development for mentees. Salaried time for district level staff was \$1250.00.

The fourth and final step of the plan was to determine if an appropriate culture was developed in the schools. Salaried time for district level staff cost \$1250.00

### **Stakeholder Responsibility.**

A large majority of the responsibility of the action plan fell on district level administration and building level principals. District level staff coordinated with the outside consultant to plan and facilitate the training sessions. Although the consultant led the training sessions, district level staff assisted in order to better support the efforts of the principals, mentors, and mentees between training sessions. As the program progressed, implementation of the action plan to fidelity was my responsibility. The consultant initially conducted the monthly mentee coaching sessions with the intended desired outcome for principals and mentors to conduct coaching sessions independently. In between coaching sessions, district level staff supported principals, mentors and mentees by communication through email, classroom visits, and informal conversations, either by phone or in person. Building level administration conducted the periodic teacher observation.

The building level principal was responsible for fidelity of the action plan at the building level. With support of the district office, the principal ensured that mentoring sessions were planned and actually occurring. Formal and informal classroom observations by building level

administration were used to make sure that beginning teachers were following the action plan in the classroom and to monitor and adjust the action plan as needed.

This action plan was the ABC School District's chosen method to accomplish a change and to foster organizational learning that evolves through a continuous cycle of change. Principals and teachers must be diligent in their efforts to continue improving as educators to further opportunities for student learning and growth.

### **Evaluation Plan**

The purpose of the evaluation plan was to assess the goals of the action plan in developing a teacher mentoring program and the creation of a supportive culture in the school to increase the rate of teacher retention in ABC County School District. The evaluation plan addressed each element of the action plan, the goals of each element, the data that was used to evaluate the goal, and the method of analysis.

The research questions to determine the success of process detailed in the action plan are:

1. Did the collaborative process to establish and implement a teacher mentor program result in a teacher retention rate of 80% of beginning teachers?
2. To what extent did mentor teachers implement the mentoring program with fidelity?
3. What were areas of success in the implementation process?
4. What factors had a negative impact on the implementation of the teacher mentor program?
5. To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?
6. To what extent did principals implement the mentoring program with fidelity?

The logic model listed the elements involved in the action plan, which were derived from the research. A long term and short term goal was provided for each element. The evaluation

data used to determine the success of the action plan was provided as well. The chart shows a concise summary of the elements, goals, time it will take, personnel involved, budget and the means of evaluation to answer the research question and to determine the success of the action plan. Table Two provides the elements and details of the evaluation plan.



Table 2

*Evaluation Plan Logic Model*

<b>Element</b>	<b>Goals Long and Short Term</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Personnel</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Mentoring	L: Build instructional capacity in beginning teachers S: Professional relationship between mentor and mentee	February 2018 - Spring 2019	Consultant, principals, mentors, mentees, district level staff	\$26,318.30	Confidence Survey (Appendix A) Mentee Teacher Survey (Appendix B) Collaboration Log (Appendix C)
Job-Embedded Coaching	L: Improve the quality of instruction in beginning teachers S: Increase student achievement	April 2018 – Spring 2019	Consultant, principals, mentors, mentees, district level staff	\$17,692.50	Observation Form A (Appendix D) Mentee Teacher Survey (Appendix B) 9 Weeks Common Assessments
Individual Growth Plan	L: Beginning teacher will take ownership of professional development S: Beginning teacher to reflect on teacher practices	February 2018 - Spring 2019	Mentees, mentors, principals	\$1250.00	Professional Development Plan (Appendix E) Confidence Survey (Appendix A) Observation Form A (Appendix D)
Culture Development	L: Create and sustain a supportive culture in the school S: Increase job satisfaction	February 2018 - Spring 2019	Consultant, principals, mentors, mentees, district level staff	\$1250.00	Mentee Teacher Survey (Appendix B) School Culture Log (Appendix F)

### **Mentoring.**

The first element of the action plan to be evaluated was mentoring. As stated in the action plan, an increase in teacher self-efficacy, leading to an increase in student achievement, is a leading factor in new teacher retention. Therefore, the long-term goal for mentoring was to build capacity in beginning teachers. A focal point checklist (see Appendix A) was administered in March 2018 and March 2019 to determine an increase, if any, in beginning teachers' confidence level in managing all facets of the classroom. The data assessed if the mentoring process helped the beginning teacher to manage time, instruction, student behaviors, and relationships with parents and colleagues. The focal point checklist included eight items in which new teachers self-identified levels of confidence in terms of: Confident (Yes) or Concerned (No). The total number of "Yes" and "No" responses for each teacher was totaled across the district. The district leadership team expected most new teachers to be confident across the eight items at the conclusion of one year of mentorship. A low average confidence level or a low level of change after one year was viewed as evidence the program may not be an effective use of district resources. Variations in items or consistent low scores in individual items was used to target areas of improvement during the next cycle.

The short-term goal for mentoring was to establish a professional relationship of trust between the mentor and mentee. This goal was assessed with a survey (see Appendix B) that was administered to mentees in May 2018 and again in March 2019 to check mentor/mentee fit and to make changes or conduct more training if necessary. This assessment documented strong statements of dissatisfaction to identify needed changes in mentors, expression of concern to be addressed by administrators working with the mentors and mentees, and examples of strong

relationships to use as models of success for further development. Other questions focused on fidelity of implementation, areas of strengths and weaknesses, and additional elements of the action plan. The second instrument used by mentors was a “snapshot” collaboration log (see Appendix C). This data was collected and reviewed monthly and used to quantify activity during mentoring sessions. The qualitative data was analyzed to identify themes related to fidelity of implementation, culture, focus of the meetings, and evidence of growth progress.

### **Job-Embedded Coaching.**

The second element of the action evaluated was job-embedded coaching. The long-term goal was to improve the quality of instruction in the beginning teacher’s classroom. The first method of data collection was the formal observation form approved by the Mississippi Department of Education (see Appendix D). Teachers were observed once in the fall semester of 2018 and once in the spring semester of 2019. The observation form was divided in to four sections or domains addressing the areas of lesson planning, student understanding, culture and learning environment, and professional responsibilities, with a score range of one to four. A score of one indicated the teacher has little or no understanding and needs the most improvement in that domain. A score of two indicated the teacher has some understanding of the domain, but still requires a good bit of improvement. A score of three indicated the teacher has a good understanding of the domain and requires some improvement. A score of four indicated the teacher understands the domain well and requires little or no improvement. Two observations, one each semester, were conducted by building administration during the school year. The first observation was used to target areas for coaching and professional development and the second observation was used to determine if improvement occurred within the targeted areas. The scores from both observations were averaged together for an overall score. District leadership

expected most new teachers to score between a two and a three. This data was used to inform decisions concerning professional development in the individual growth plan discussed in the next section. The second method of data collection, which yielded qualitative data as well, was the mentee teacher survey. The data was used to determine if job-embedded coaching yielded a benefit for the beginning teacher and to decide if job-embedded coaching should continue as part of the mentoring plan.

The short-term goal was to increase student achievement. This goal was evaluated using the document analysis method to gather quantitative data by comparing each nine-weeks common assessment to determine student growth during the nine-week period. Since each child is unique in learning needs, styles, and ease of learning, only student growth in the tested skill area was assessed. Students' lack of growth in the tested skill areas indicated the need for more targeted coaching or professional development for the teacher.

### **Individual Growth Plan.**

The next element of the action plan to be addressed in the evaluation was the individual growth plan. The long-term goal was for beginning teachers to take ownership of their professional development and was evaluated using two forms of data collection. The first instrument was a teacher-prescribed professional development plan (see Appendix E) whereas the mentee teacher, based on data from principal observations and mentoring sessions, prescribed his or her own professional development. The analyses of the growth plan focused on linking requested professional development activities and needs documented in the first observation and pre-survey results. The second form of data collection was the confidence checklist administered in March of 2019. The checklist (see Appendix A) initiated the mentee teacher's self-awareness by causing the mentee to consider and evaluate his or her abilities to address the various needs of

all students in the classroom. The data was used to decide if mentee teachers were becoming self-aware of strengths and weaknesses, to determine if more training was required, and to determine if the individual growth plan should continue as part of the mentoring program.

The short-term goal was for beginning teachers to become aware of assessed strengths and weaknesses and to engage in a reflective process supported by the mentor and the professional growth plan to improve. The goal was assessed in March of 2019 using the confidence survey (see Appendix A) to identify expressions of concern to be addressed by administrators working with mentors and mentees and to initiate beginning teachers' reflection on their teaching practices early in the first year of teaching. The formal observation form (see Appendix D) approved by the Mississippi Department of Education was used by the principals when they observed beginning teachers. It served as an informative guide for beginning teachers in requesting professional development to improve their teaching practice.

### **Culture Development.**

The final element of the action plan is culture development. The long-term goal was to create and sustain a supportive culture in the school and it was evaluated using two forms of data collection. The first assessment was the mentee teacher survey (see Appendix B) which was administered in March of 2019 to collect qualitative data to determine if they felt supported throughout the school year. Data from the survey revealing a low number of areas of success indicated the program may not be an efficient use of district resources. It was also used to target areas of improvement during the next cycle. The second method of data collection was documentation of culture building activities (see Appendix F) taking place at the school during the school year. It generated quantitative data and was used to document the different types of culture building activities that took place at the school, how many, and how often.

The short-term goal was to increase job satisfaction sooner for beginning teachers. The mentee teacher survey was used to gather qualitative data to determine if the culture was supportive throughout the year and if the culture influenced the beginning teacher's decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

## **Conclusion**

The overall goal of this study was to increase teacher retention in the ABC County School District by effectively supporting beginning teachers in the first few years of their careers. The study sought to accomplish this goal through establishing an effective teacher mentor program and by developing and maintaining a supportive culture in each school. To answer the first research question, a simple count of beginning teachers was conducted in August of 2018. To determine if the goal of 80% of beginning teachers returning to the classroom was met, a simple count of beginning teachers signing a contract to return the following year was taken in May of 2019. The percentage was determined at that time. Surveys, observations, documentation logs, and professional development plans used to assess the elements of the action plan were also used to answer the remaining research questions in this study.

With fewer people entering the teaching profession each year, school districts must make teacher retention a priority now. By building a solid foundation of teacher support, it is possible, to once again, make teaching a viable career option for future students entering college. Chapter Four presented the findings of the study.

## **Chapter Four**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presented the findings from the evaluation of the applied research plan discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the elements of the action plan, mentoring, job-embedded coaching, individual growth plan, and culture development along with the long and short term goal for each element. The findings from the data collections instruments are discussed as they pertain to goal attainment under each element. The second section deals with the research questions. Each question was answered using the findings from the data collection instruments discussed under each element.

As stated in Chapter Three, the ABC County School District noticed an increase in teacher vacancies in May 2016. Upon this realization, the district established a team consisting of district level administration, building level administration, and teachers to devise a plan to address the increase in teacher turnover. After a review of current research and literature on teacher turnover and retention, the team decided to conduct a study for the purpose of establishing a beginning teacher mentoring program. Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2007) determined an appropriate supportive culture, which included a mentoring program, was a contributing factor in teachers choosing to remain in the teaching profession. Kaufman and Al-Bataineh (2011) found continual support from the district level, guidance from building level administration, and personal and professional relationships with their peers were vital influencers for novice teachers when deciding to continue teaching or to seek another profession.

The study utilized an applied research design. Applied research has a dual purpose of addressing a problem of practice and improving organizational effectiveness by developing the capacity for organizational learning. Using a plan, do, check, and act cycle, the district sought to decrease teacher turnover while creating a more supportive culture for beginning teachers during the first few years of teaching. The study contained an action plan divided into four elements consisting of mentoring, job-embedded coaching, individual growth plan, and culture development. The plan detailed the activities the district would use to provide more support for beginning teachers and to create a more supportive culture in the schools. An evaluation plan, containing six research questions, details how each data collection instrument was used to assess the goals of each element. The purpose of the evaluation plan was to determine the effectiveness of the mentoring program.

The research questions to determine the success of process detailed in the action plan are:

1. Did the collaborative process to establish and implement a teacher mentor program result in a teacher retention rate of 80% of beginning teachers?
2. To what extent did mentor teachers implement the mentoring program with fidelity?
3. What were areas of success in the implementation process?
4. What factors had a negative impact on the implementation of the teacher mentor program?
5. To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?
6. To what extent did principals implement the mentoring program with fidelity?

Data collection instruments were created for the purpose of gathering information to be used in the evaluation of the action plan. The data collection instruments were grouped together by



element in the Evaluation Plan Logic Model (See Table Two, page 31) of this dissertation. All data collection instruments are included in the Appendices.

## **Elements**

### **Mentoring.**

The long-term goal for the mentoring element was to improve instructional capacity in beginning teachers. Evidence suggests the district is on track to meet this goal. The first step in addressing this goal was to assign each mentee teacher a mentor teacher with whom to work. In order to identify initial mentoring activities, the mentee teacher was given the confidence survey (see Appendix A). Although there were 30 beginning teachers in the first implementation cycle, only 18 responded to the survey. Almost all beginning teachers responding to the survey rated themselves confident in their instructional capabilities. However, at the end of the mentoring program, 13 out of 18, or 72% of beginning teachers reported the mentee teacher as being helpful in improving instructional capabilities. During the program cycle, mentors and mentees used the collaboration log (see Appendix C) weekly to track mentoring activities and mentee progress throughout the program. Three activities listed on the collaboration log were marked more frequently than the others. Communicating with parents was an activity worked on during 91% of the mentoring sessions, while discussing individual student instructional needs was worked on during 97% of the mentoring sessions. The activity with the highest percentage was the discussion of student assessment during 100% of the mentoring sessions.

The short-term goal was to establish a professional relationship between the mentor and mentee. To assess this goal, the mentee teachers were given a series of open-ended questions on the mentee survey (see Appendix B). Most, 16 out of 18, or 89% of the respondents, gave positive remarks. A teacher responded, “My mentor was readily available to answer questions

and help solve any problems that occurred.” One teacher’s response was, “My mentor gave me great constructive criticism.” Another teacher wrote, “Her openness, consistency, constructive criticism, and willingness to accommodate made the relationship supportive and helpful.” A few others provided ideas to improve. Two teachers made very similar remarks by responding, “The program would have been much better if it had started at the beginning of the school year.” Considering 89% of the responding teachers made positive comments, this indicated the goal was partially met.

In considering the qualitative data presented for each goal of the mentoring element, the activities that took place combined with the efforts of the mentor teachers were successful in providing a better level of support for beginning teachers.

#### **Job-embedded Coaching.**

The long-term goal for job-embedded coaching was to improve the quality of instruction in beginning teachers. The mentee survey (see Appendix B) was one of the instruments used to assess this goal. One response was, “The opportunity to observe in the mentor teacher’s classroom was huge. I have observed many classrooms, but had no idea what to look for. After teaching in a classroom, I realized there were still tons of things I did not know. Having the chance to observe at this point was crucial in my transition.” Another response was, “Classroom management was an area I had to grow in significantly and quickly. Because I came in January, I had to learn procedures while creating my own. I had to create boundaries while trying to learn the ropes of what I was expected to teach.” The remarks of the mentee teachers indicated job-embedded coaching helped them begin to understand instructional issues, classroom procedures, and classroom management techniques sooner than without job-embedded coaching. The other instrument used to assess this goal was the teacher evaluation form (see Appendix D) approved

by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). In the design of the evaluation plan, the leadership team determined an acceptable summative evaluation score to be between a two and a three. All the beginning teachers returning to ABC County Schools had a summative score of between a two and a three on their evaluations. In considering mentee teacher comments concerning job-embedded coaching, it did have a positive effect in summative evaluation scores for mentee teachers.

The short-term goal was to increase student achievement. To assess this goal, common assessment tests created by the district were administered to students in beginning teachers' classes in state tested areas. Mid-year common assessments from 2017-2018 school year and 2018-2019 school year were compared to measure student growth using the same method used to calculate growth on the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program (MAAP) assessment administered each year. However, in trying to make this comparison, I realized there was no available method to determine if growth was a result of mentoring. Although student scores did increase from one test administration to another, it cannot be stated the increase was due to the mentoring program. This evaluation method did not adequately assess the short-term goal for job-embedded coaching.

### **Individual Growth Plan.**

The long-term goal for individual growth plan was for the beginning teacher to take ownership of his or her professional development. Teacher responses to the confidence survey (see Appendix A) addressed this goal. Teachers were asked to respond to questions about their teaching abilities. Teacher responses varied, with three out of 18, or 17% having no confidence in their teaching abilities to 15 out of 18, or 83% of responding teachers feeling quite confident in their teaching abilities. By asking teachers to rate their confidence levels in their teaching

abilities, the process of becoming self-aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses was initiated. This must occur before a teacher reaches the level of awareness needed to request his or her own professional development. The other instrument used to gather information for this goal was the professional development plan (see Appendix E). Each beginning teacher completed this instrument, in collaboration with the building level principal, using the results from his or her teacher evaluations to determine areas of improvement and to prescribe the necessary professional development. This is further evidence that beginning teachers were becoming aware of their weaknesses and taking measures to improve their instructional abilities.

The short-term goal was for the beginning teacher to reflect on his or her practice of teaching. The intended data collection method used to assess this goal was the mentee survey (see Appendix B). However, once the surveys were completed and reviewed, I found there was not enough information to adequately inform this goal short term. The survey was administered at the beginning and end of the implementation cycle. Had I asked teachers to complete these questions multiple times during the implementation cycle, I would have been able to determine if mentee teachers were beginning to reflect on their practice of teaching.

### **Culture Development.**

The long-term goal for culture development was to create and sustain a supportive culture in the school. The mentee survey (see Appendix B) was used to collect data for this goal. One response was, "I had support not only from my mentor teacher, but other colleagues as well. We worked well together on our hall." A few more responses were, "PLC's regarding data and lesson planning helped me understand my students' needs and target my lessons." and "A supportive culture has been a great asset in helping me grow professionally." The other data collection instrument was the school culture log (see Appendix F). In designing the evaluation

of the long-term goal, the intent was to tally and compare the culture building activities from each school to determine if a relationship existed between the activities and teacher retention. However, once the inquiry in to a possible relationship began, it was evident this type of evaluation was not feasible. Considering that the number of beginning teachers at each school varied, along with the number of activities at each school varying as well, there was no way to quantitatively determine if a relationship existed. Although a quantitative determination was not possible, there was enough qualitative evidence in the positive remarks from the mentee survey to suggest culture building activities did positively impact teacher retention.

The short-term goal was to increase job satisfaction. In reviewing responses to questions from the mentee survey (see Appendix B), almost all of the teachers responded the culture of the school had a positive effect on their decision to remain in the teaching profession. However, an interesting finding was only half of the teachers responding felt the mentoring program helped them to make the decision to return to teaching another year. The remaining teachers responded the mentoring program had little or no effect on their decision to remain.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Question One.**

Research question one asked, “Did the collaborative process to establish and implement a teacher mentor program result in a teacher retention rate of 80% of beginning teachers?” In the 2017-2018 school year, ABC County Schools had 30 new teachers, 24, or 80% of them, returned for the 2018-2019 school year. Although it was not clear what the relative impact of the mentoring program was, the following qualitative data provided evidence the mentoring program was successful in helping the district to retain 80% of beginning teachers from the 2017-2018 school year.

In reviewing responses to the question on the confidence survey (see Appendix A) that addressed this, 12 out of 18, or 67% of responding beginning teachers remarked that the mentoring program did not influence them to return to the classroom, while the remaining six, or 33%, responded that it did influence their decision to return. It is possible teachers who responded that the program had no influence on their decision were better prepared at the university level or were in better teaching situations than their counterparts who responded that it did influence the decision to return. However, 100% of the teachers responding indicated the mentor/mentee relationship was a good fit. This finding was viewed as being integral to successful collaboration between the mentor and mentee.

In reviewing collaboration logs (see Appendix C) the number of logs for each mentoring session was evidence that mentors were meeting with mentees regularly and consistently. Collaboration logs for some mentee teachers were quite often similarly marked, while logs for other mentees were almost never the same. I viewed logs for mentees marked similarly as an indication that the mentor saw weaknesses in the mentee which required consistent work for improvement. I viewed logs for mentees that were almost never the same as an indication that the mentor viewed the mentee as making progress and focusing on other areas of teaching needed to take place. Nonetheless, collaboration among mentors and mentees was taking place on a regular basis. Therefore, collaboration had a strong positive effect on the retention rate of beginning teachers.

The mentee survey (see Appendix B) revealed a theme of support found in almost every response. A teacher wrote, "The veteran teacher supported me and helped me build confidence in my teaching abilities." One teacher responded, "My mentor helped me when I was stressed by relating to me and letting me know she had been in my place before. She helped me get through

it.” Another teacher wrote, “I was able to talk with my mentor about the challenges of teaching and it helped me to be calm and have more confidence.” I viewed strong support from the mentor teacher as evidence the implementation process of the mentoring program had a positive effect on the teacher retention rate.

In summary, the research project began in the middle of the 2017-2018 school year, the implementation cycle began in January of 2018 and ended in December of 2018. There were 30 teachers in the first implementation cycle. The second group of 27 mentee teachers entering the mentoring program was from the 2018-2019 school year with the implementation cycle which began in August of 2018 and ended in May of 2019. To determine if the goal of 80% retention was met, a count of beginning teachers in the first implementation cycle was taken in January of 2018. At the beginning of the new school year, a count of teachers from the first implementation cycle was taken in August of 2018. Twenty-four out of thirty teachers, or 80%, from the first cycle returned to the ABC County School District. This was evidence the mentoring program was successful in helping the district to retain 80% of beginning teachers from the 2017-2018 school year.

### **Research Question Two.**

Research question two asked, “To what extent did mentor teachers implement the mentoring program to fidelity?” The following qualitative data is evidence that the mentor teachers implemented the mentoring program to fidelity.

To adequately assess if the mentor implemented the program to fidelity, I first reviewed the collaboration logs (see Appendix C) to see not only the number of times the mentor met with the mentee, but to also determine themes in the data. Mentors and mentees were asked to complete a collaboration log each time they met to document not only how often and how many

times they met during the implementation cycle, but to also document activities engaged in during the mentoring session. A review of the logs was evidence that mentoring sessions almost always occurred weekly. In a few instances, a two week time period elapsed between mentoring sessions. One theme that stood out in the logs was the type of support given by mentor teachers. One mentor wrote, “My mentee is doing an excellent job in communicating with parents. I gave her a contact log to keep as documentation of her teacher/parent communication.” Another mentor responded, “She is using the resources she has in her room, but she needs more math resources for addition and subtraction practice. I will share what I have until she can get some more.” Finally, another mentor wrote, “We discussed distractions in the classroom, both internally and externally, and how they take the focus off of learning. We discussed ways to minimize distractions and how to mitigate them when they do occur.”

The same theme of support was also evident from the mentee survey (see Appendix B). A mentee responded, “My mentor was always calm and kind. She gave me her personal cell number so I could contact her anytime I needed to.” One mentee wrote, “My mentor was readily available to answer questions and help me solve problems when they popped up.” Lastly, another mentee responded, “She respected me and my ideas and never treated me like a new teacher. She was honest and very open. She let me know when I did things she liked and when there were things I needed to do differently.”

The last instrument relevant to the research question was the confidence survey (see Appendix A). When asked if the mentee felt as if the mentor teacher was a good fit for him or her, 100% of the mentee teachers responded the mentor/mentee relationship was a good fit. I viewed this piece of evidence, coupled with the frequency and number of mentoring sessions and



the themes of strong support from the mentor teacher, as evidence the mentor teachers did, indeed, implement the mentoring program to fidelity.

### **Research Question Three.**

Research question three asked, “What were areas of success in the implementation process?” The following qualitative data was evidence the individual growth plans, the matching of mentors and mentees, and creating and sustaining a supportive culture in the schools were all areas of success.

The first area of success involved the individual growth plan (see Appendix E). The intent behind using this plan was to cause the mentee teacher to start reflecting on his or her practice of teaching, to recognize areas where improvement is needed, and to take ownership of the improvement by requesting professional development in weak areas. An integral component to this process was the teacher evaluation instrument approved by MDE (see Appendix D). Before the individual growth plans were completed by the mentee teachers, I expected to see growth plans closely aligned to the evaluation instruments completed by building level administration. Upon review of the growth plans, I found 93% of the plans were aligned with the evaluation instruments. While this finding was not a surprise, the next piece of data was very interesting. As stated earlier, six of the 30 mentee teachers from the first implementation cycle were not retained for the 2018-2019 school year. Five of the six teachers, or 83%, not returning, did not meet the expectation of closely aligning the growth plan to the evaluations.

In reviewing the confidence survey (see Appendix A), another success was in matching mentors with mentees. When asked if the mentor and mentee were a good match, 100% of the mentees responded they were a good match. One hundred percent of mentees also responded they were able to effectively plan lessons from scratch, to anticipate behaviors and intercede

appropriately, to align lessons with state standards, and to interact with parents professionally. One area beginning teachers struggled with was behavior management. When asked about controlling disruptive behaviors in the classroom, 17 out of 18, or 94% of mentee teachers responded they were able to do quite a bit to a great deal to manage behaviors. Another weak area for beginning teachers was student motivation. Fifteen out of 18, or 83% of the beginning teachers reported they were able to do quite a bit to a great deal to motivate students in the classroom.

Evidence from the mentee survey (see Appendix B) suggested the culture at the schools became more supportive. One response was, “I realized teaching is not an isolated career. It is one where you have to depend on your teaching community.” Another teacher wrote, “I learned working as a team is much better than working alone. Before, I believed you had to be independent to be a teacher.”

The qualitative data presented in regards to individual growth plans, the matching of mentors and mentees, and the schools developed a more supportive culture is evidence of the areas of success in the implementation of the mentoring program.

#### **Research Question Four.**

Research question four asked, “What factors had a negative impact on the implementation of the teacher mentoring program?” The following qualitative data revealed scheduling, a lack of understanding of school site procedures, and a disconnect between identifying weaknesses and timely support had a negative impact on the implementation of the mentoring program.

With the beginning of any new initiative, one should expect problem areas or areas to surface requiring improvement as the program carries on. One of the biggest problems with a

negative impact on the mentoring program was scheduling time for mentors and mentees to meet. At some schools, they were able to have a common planning time, while at other schools, that was very hard to do. Responses from the mentee survey (See Appendix B) include, “My mentor was great, but we struggled to find time to get together.” One teacher responded, “With both of us being classroom teachers, having the time to meet was hard to do.” At one school, finding a mentor in the same grade and content areas was not possible. The mentee wrote, “My mentor was very helpful, but it would have been better if we taught in the same content area.”

Evidence from three questions on the confidence survey (see Appendix A) suggested there was either an issue at one particular school or the mentee did not fully understand what takes place at the school. Two teachers responded that the staff does not work together to develop schedules at the school, the staff does not work together to establish a student behavior code, and that planning time is not used to plan as teams. This first indicated the administration needed to make sure the beginning teacher understands how these things are done at his or her school. Next, if the administration did not allow staff involvement in these areas, steps need to be put in to place to allow for staff input in these decisions.

The last data instrument to address this question was the individual growth plan (see Appendix E). As stated earlier, five of the six beginning teachers not returning to ABC County Schools did not produce growth plans aligned to their evaluations. It is possible the beginning teacher did not receive the appropriate support or that support was not received early enough to make a meaningful difference for that teacher. This implies a disconnect existed with administration being able to see areas of weakness early on and intervening in a timely and appropriate manner.

### **Research Question Five.**

Research question five asked, “To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?”

The following qualitative data revealed how a broad range of support and job-embedded coaching facilitated a more supportive culture.

I began the data analysis for this research question by reviewing collaboration logs (see Appendix C). The collaboration log included 16 areas in which mentor teachers could provide support to mentee teachers. Areas ranged from analyzing student work and communicating with parents to individualized education plan (IEP) development and the use of technology in the classroom. There was also a choice of “Other” to give opportunity to document an area of support not listed on the log. In the review, I tabulated the number of times each area was marked as having been worked on during that specific mentoring session. This evidence indicated a wide array of beginning teacher support was taking place on a consistently regular basis across the school district.

The mentee survey (see Appendix B) was the next instrument used in data collection for this research question. When asked how job-embedded coaching helped to create a supportive culture in the schools, one emerging theme was that of a sense of security. A teacher responded, “It was very helpful to be surrounded by effective teachers. They were always willing to guide me and help me make the best decision for my students.” One teacher wrote, “I always knew someone was there to back me up.” The last respondent wrote, “Not only do we have an academic coach teaching us, we also have classroom teachers stepping in to guide new teachers.” When asked how a supportive culture helped the beginning teacher to grow professionally, one response was, “It helped me to make connections and to grow as a new teacher.” Another

teacher wrote, “It helped me to better understand not all children are the same. Sometimes the teacher has to be the one person who takes the time to care and make a difference for that child.”

The last instrument, the confidence checklist, (see Appendix A) revealed information that relates back directly to the negative impacts on the mentoring program discussed under the previous research question and constitutes a recommendation to be discussed in Chapter Five. 12 out of 16, or 67% of the teachers responding felt staff had little or no input into scheduling decisions, student behavior code, and that there was no sense of community in the school. Once again, this indicated the principal must first make sure beginning teachers are aware of how teachers are involved, if any, in the decision making processes at the school. If they are not involved, then administration needs to put steps in to place that allows for teacher input in to these areas.

In considering the data to answer this research question, I did not discount the information collected from the confidence checklist. However, information from the mentee survey and collaboration log was evidence the culture at the school became more supportive during the implementation of the mentoring process.

#### **Research Question Six.**

Research question six asked, “To what extent did principals implement the mentoring program to fidelity?” The following qualitative data regarding culture building activities in schools, beginning teacher perceptions of principal fidelity, and principal/mentee collaboration to complete individual growth plans revealed the extent of fidelity of implementation.

I first reviewed the culture building activity log (see Appendix F). Each principal was asked to use this log to document the culture building activities taking place on their respective campuses. There are 14 school campuses in the ABC County School District. Two schools had

no new teachers during the first implementation cycle. Therefore, those principals did not complete logs. Two principals simply did not submit a culture log. Culture logs were received from the remaining 10 principals. Some of the activities that took place at schools were back to school luncheons, partnerships with local businesses for cultural support, staff luncheons throughout the year where administration supervised students to allow teachers to enjoy a potluck style lunch together in the library, initializing a process to solicit staff input in school decisions, a new teacher breakfast on the first professional development day to introduce new staff members, and a day of ice cream sundaes during Teacher Appreciation Week.

The mentee survey (See Appendix B) contained a question asking to what extent the principal implemented the mentoring program. One hundred percent of the mentee teachers responded the principal implemented it to the fullest. The first response listed was, “He set aside time for me and my mentor to meet. He was very open to any needs I had or modeling I felt I needed to see.” One teacher wrote, “It was implemented fully. We met every week with our mentors and recorded the topics of discussions. We observed on multiple occasions and administration helped tremendously with covering classes.” Another mentee responded, “She kept us informed and up to date on what was going on in the mentoring program and made sure we were doing what we needed to do.”

The last piece of documentation was the individual growth plan (see Appendix E). The principals were asked to make sure the mentee teachers completed the growth plan, based on feedback from their evaluations and in collaboration with the building level principal. This was done with a 100% rate of completion.

As I considered all of the information collected to address this research question, it was imperative to acknowledge that two principals simply did not submit documentation of culture

building activities at their respective schools. In light of this fact, the prevailing information clearly indicated the principals implemented the teacher mentoring program to fidelity.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this research study have been presented and the positive results indicate the mentoring program for beginning teachers was a success. The data also revealed areas needing improvement such as the starting time for implementation cycle and insufficient data collection instruments, which will be the focus in the future. Each element of the action plan: mentoring, job-embedded coaching, individual growth plan, and building a more supportive culture, all contributed to the success of the mentoring program. In my role as the superintendent, the positive effects of the program were evident. The goal of retaining 80% of the beginning teachers was met. In meeting this goal, the district will benefit from reduced costs in training new teacher every year. Students will benefit by having a more experienced teacher in the classroom providing a better quality of instruction.

In light of the data presented in this chapter which had a negative impact on the implementation of the mentoring program, the remaining data provides evidence of the success in implementing a beginning teacher mentoring program in the ABC County School District. Chapter Five will present limitations, implications, conclusions and recommendations for further study and program improvements.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

This dissertation began with Chapter One stating a problem addressed in this mixed-methods action research study, along with six research questions that were answered utilizing a data collection process. The problem was the decrease in teacher retention in the ABC County School District. Chapter Two was a review of current literature and research pertaining to teacher retention. This information was used to increase the researcher's base of knowledge, to guide the development of a plan to address increasing teacher retention, and to discuss the meaning and implications of the results in the discussion in this chapter. Chapter Three described the development of the action plan and evaluation plan used to increase teacher retention. The action plan was divided in to four elements of mentoring, job-embedded coaching, individual growth plan, and culture development. Each element was assigned a short and long-term goal to be accomplished. The evaluation plan detailed how each element and their respective goals were measured and the data collection instruments used to measure each. Chapter Four presented the results of the program evaluation and presented the findings gathered through the data collection process. It was divided in to two sections, elements and research questions, with the goal attainment for each element discussed and each research question answered. Chapter Five provides a discussion of the findings with limitations and implications, along with conclusions, and recommendations from this study.



## **Analysis**

The goal in this study was to better understand the problems of school leadership practice and to identify potential solutions. The narrative in Chapter Three detailed the plan to initiate change in ABC County Schools. The plan included research questions to be answered, goals to be addressed during implementation, and an evaluation plan to determine the impact of the study's ability to affect organizational learning within the school district.

### **Mentoring.**

The mentoring element was the most beneficial element of the action plan. The short-term goal was for the mentor and mentee to establish a professional relationship. The long-term goal was to improve instructional capacity in beginning teachers. Both goals were achieved.

In the beginning, the principal at each campus selected the mentors and matched them with beginning teachers. Next, the consultant provided professional development just for the mentors and mentees, to walk them through the basic expectations of each party, how to set the tone for beginning the school year, and how to have productive mentoring sessions. This type of training and a formal district-wide mentoring program had never been conducted before.

Mentoring sessions took place almost weekly and collaboration logs were completed for each session to document what work took place during the session. There were a few times mentoring sessions were not able to occur due to time constraints or schedule changes. Nonetheless, weekly mentoring sessions were able to resume the next week. Mentors provided support in instructional techniques and methodology, classroom management, time management, conferencing with parents, data analysis, and lesson planning according to the data. Every mentee teacher felt his or her mentor teacher was a good fit.

The mentoring element created the opportunity for the beginning teacher to establish a relationship and to have a friend in a new, and sometimes intimidating, environment. The relationship between the mentor and mentee gave the mentee someone to confide in, trust in, and rely on without fear of embarrassment or repercussions. The relationship did as much, or more, to build a supportive culture in the schools as any other part of the mentoring plan. Based on feedback from the mentees, I will adjust the implementation start time to the beginning of the school year, particularly a day or two before students arrive, so mentees are fully supported the entire school year. The mentoring element will remain as part of the mentoring program.

### **Job-Embedded Coaching.**

The job-embedded coaching element ranks second in importance in the mentoring plan. The short-term goal was to increase student achievement. The long-term goal was to improve the quality of instruction in beginning teachers. Both goals were met.

Job-embedded coaching began with the consultant teaching a modeling lesson in the mentee teacher's classroom for the mentee and mentor to observe. The purpose for the consultant modeling was to exemplify what good teaching looks like for the mentee and what the mentor should be looking for and doing while coaching. Next, the mentee taught a lesson while the consultant and the mentor coached and offered suggestions for improvements. At that time, coaching sessions continued without the consultant. During the sessions, mentors observed and coached in the mentees' classrooms. In return, mentees observed model lessons for best practices in the mentors' classrooms.

I view job-embedded coaching as on-the-job training. The opportunity to have someone model what is expected in job-performance and then critique performance until it meets the expectation is invaluable. I know of no other way to better learn and understand the subtleties

and nuances of a profession than job-embedded coaching. The intent of including job-embedded coaching in the mentoring program was to gauge improvement in student performance periodically throughout the year and determine the relationship between job-embedded coaching and student growth. My data collection method did not accomplish this due to small sample size, lack of a control group, and multiple co-variables. Job-embedded coaching will continue to be a part of the mentoring program with a change of how the relationship between student growth and job-embedded coaching is measured. For the next implementation cycle, students will be given a pre-test on specific skills before job-embedded coaching occurs and a post-test afterwards. This will yield better information to determine if there is a relationship between the two.

#### **Individual Growth Plan.**

I rank the individual growth plan as having the least importance to the mentoring program. However, I still view it as invaluable to the retention program and necessary for it to remain in an attempt to initiate the process of teachers taking ownership of their professional growth. The short-term goal was to initiate the process of the beginning teacher reflecting on his or her practice of teaching. The long-term goal was for the beginning teacher to take ownership of his or her professional development. The long-term goal was achieved, while the short-term goal lacked enough evidence to make a determination.

In working to gather information to meet the short-term goal, teachers responded to a survey at the beginning and the end of the implementation cycle. This did not generate formative data throughout the process as needed. I could not determine when the beginning teacher began to reflect on the practice of teaching with this method. I should have administered the survey multiple times throughout the implementation cycle to accurately determine when each beginning teacher began the reflection process. After all, thinking back on the teaching

practice, becoming aware of weak areas and what is needed to improve is the first step in taking ownership of professional growth. With that said, the long-term goal of taking ownership of professional development was evidenced in the professional growth plan each beginning teacher completed in collaboration with the principal. Principals and beginning teachers found it relatively easy to complete the growth plan. Similar activities had occurred in the past, with the exception of a formal process culminating in a plan on paper. Using the information from formal evaluations completed by the principal, coupled with the reflection process in the short-term goal, all the beginning teachers who returned to the district the following year completed the professional growth plan. Those teachers who did not return, did not complete the growth plan as required.

As stated earlier in Chapter Four, all of the teachers who returned to the ABC County School District for the year following the implementation cycle completed the individual growth plan in collaboration with the building level principal. For a person to realize his or her strengths and weaknesses and to take the initiative to improve those deficiencies is monumental. When this begins to occur, true professional growth takes place.

### **Culture Development.**

A supportive and inclusive culture in the school plays a vital role in teacher job satisfaction. If a person feels comfortable and has a sense of belonging in the workplace, he or she is more inclined to remain in the organization. The short-term goal was to increase job satisfaction and the long-term goal was to create and sustain a supportive culture in the school. Both goals were met.

As stated earlier, the mentoring element had the greatest effect on developing the desired culture in the schools. Mentee teachers had a confidant in the classroom on which they could

rely for professional support without fear of judgement or ridicule. This relationship contributed a great deal to job satisfaction for beginning teachers. The culture building activities principals conducted at the schools succeeded in creating a sense of belonging for beginning teachers. However, those activities alone were not enough. It was the informal conversations, the getting to know each other, the support and relationships between mentees and mentors and the relationships between teachers and administration that most affected and built the culture in the school. When I was a principal, I worked hard to create an environment in which teachers and kids wanted to be there. I have tried to create that same environment at the district office as well. I value the culture in an organization and will continue to stress the importance of culture in the schools and to include it in the mentoring plan.

**Other points.**

When I presented the mentoring plan to district and building level administration, everyone was excited and willing to participate. A few questions were asked about how specific things such as scheduling time and the number of off-campus meetings, but there was virtually no resistance. I believe this is because the mentoring program was designed to be administered by district level staff for the purpose of limiting the amount of time it would require of building level administrators, who already have more work than they can manage.

The beginning of the implementation cycle went well with mentors and mentees meeting with the consultant. Finding time for mentors and mentees to meet was sometimes a challenge, but principals were diligent in their efforts and found solutions to solve scheduling conflicts. Principals did an excellent job in helping me keep mentors and mentees apprised of deadlines and expectations. The first implementation cycle went really well due to dedicating ample time for a great deal of planning at the district level, allocating the needed resources for

implementation, and good communication between the district, principals, mentors, and mentees. Surprisingly, during the evaluation of the study, I realized one very important aspect of the mentoring program, principal buy-in, was not taken in to consideration. While I monitored progress throughout the entire study, it was the responsibility of the building level principal to ensure day to day implementation occurred at the school. Lack of buy-in could account for the four principals who did not submit culture logs at the end of the study. The two principals who did not have beginning teachers still should have provided activities to build and maintain a supportive culture in their respective schools. The two principals who simply did not complete a log may have conducted culture building activities, but they did nothing to account for what took place. Therefore, it is possible a lack of buy-in is the reason. Those principals who completely bought-in to the mentoring program implemented it to fidelity.

While I believe there were many areas of success in the program, the greatest success of the program was beginning teachers becoming more comfortable and competent in the classroom, sooner as opposed to later. My biggest concern as superintendent was the lack of buy-in with some of the principals, which will be addressed before the beginning of the next implementation cycle. Through informal conversations with the principals, district administration, and considering the data collected from mentors and mentees during the mentoring cycle, the program was a great success and with a few minor changes, will continue in the district.

### **Evaluation Standards.**

The evaluation of this program was designed utilizing four attributes of quality evaluation as established by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (Gullickson, 2003). The four attributes are: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy.

The first attribute, utility, ensures the product of the evaluation is useful to the program participants and is valuable in meeting their needs. The goal for utility in evaluation is to increase the possibility that evaluation will result in substantial influence and positive consequences. Utility was addressed in this study by giving attention to the stakeholders in the school district, using information relevant to the issue to guide the program, and distributing information and collecting data in an appropriate and timely manner. The results of the study will be utilized to further strengthen the mentoring program.

The mentoring program was important to the ABC County School District because of the recurring problem of teacher retention. There had not been a viable teacher mentoring program in the past; therefore, the study addressed an important need. Some schools faced excessive teacher turnover year after year. Due to this dilemma, teacher quality suffered with the yearly influx of new and often first year teachers. As a result of the program, the schools which normally lost several teachers each year, did not lose a single teacher. Schools that did not have a serious problem with teacher turnover benefitted by having new teachers become better at teaching sooner in their first year, which translates to a higher quality of instruction for students in the classroom. The school district will reap the benefit of reduced costs in training new teachers for years to come.

Feasibility is the second attribute. Feasibility is the extent to which evaluation is conducted in an easy or convenient manner. The evaluation should consider that logistical and administrative requirements do not make the evaluation impractical to conduct. Feasibility was addressed in this study by gathering information from participants throughout the implementation cycle. The elements of the action plan were relatively easy to implement and were integral to the program. Data collection was relatively easy in that there were no imposed

time constraints, data collection instruments were designed to be completed with ease in a minimal amount of time, and nothing was asked of program participants that placed undue stress or strain on them to complete.

As superintendent, I am tasked with overseeing every aspect of the school district. Oftentimes, there is not enough time in the day to oversee and maintain all that I am charged with. District level administration and principals are often in the same situation as I am. With that in mind, I sought to develop a beginning mentoring program that would not require a vast amount of time or resources to implement and maintain. I began the program by training mentor teachers and principals in ways to best support novice teachers. After the initial training, the principals and I shared ownership of the program and ensured implementation. Teachers were informed of the expectations to have regular mentoring sessions, along with forms for documentation, and instructed of when to submit the documentation. I sent reminders to principals, mentors, and mentees as to when certain items were due during the implementation cycle, principals helped me to follow up on due dates, and teachers emailed the documentation to me. Overall, the mentoring program required more than a little effort to start, but minimal effort to maintain. In subsequent years, district administration will conduct the training for new mentors, principals will take full ownership of the mentoring program, and I will monitor to ensure the program is being implemented to fidelity.

The next attribute is propriety, which considers what is fair, legal, ethical, and right in evaluation. Propriety was addressed in how data was collected from program participants. Informed consent was provided at the beginning of every data collection instrument. Every effort was made to guarantee anonymity by including no identifiers to indicate who a participant was. The research project was ethical in that the purpose of the research was to inform and guide



the district in developing and implementing a mentoring program to better support beginning teachers in the classroom for the benefit of student outcomes.

In considering what is ethical and right, this study to provide better support to beginning teachers was the ethical and right thing for the district to do. As superintendent, it is part of my job to make sure that every teacher receives the support he or she needs. The mentoring program allowed new teachers to receive support in the first year of teaching that others before them had not been given. The data collected from the study has convinced me that the mentoring program should be allowed to continue.

The last attribute, accuracy, is the truthfulness of research findings that support judgements about the research program achieved through sound design, theory, methods, and reasoning. In discussing the data, I went to great lengths to report information exactly as it was collected. Quotes were included in the evidence just as they were written by the teacher. Data collection instruments that proved to be weak or did not generate the expected data were discussed in the elements and research questions. Determinations of the success of each element and answers to the research questions were based on analysis of the information collected.

To ensure accuracy during the implementation cycle, I kept in close contact with the principals as they assisted in monitoring the program on their respective campuses. Their input and feedback helped me to make decisions to ensure the program was implemented with fidelity. I engaged in informal conversations with mentors and mentees to gauge participant satisfaction throughout implementation. I also leaned on feedback from district administration as they were in the schools to help me determine participant satisfaction and to spot problem areas.

## **Implications.**

This purpose of this study was to increase teacher retention by better supporting beginning teachers and by creating a more supportive culture in schools. The first implication from this study was supported by the fact that the ABC County School District accomplished its goal of retaining 80% in the first implementation cycle. This finding alone suggests that a supportive culture coupled with the appropriate support for beginning teachers positively effects teacher retention in schools.

The second implication focused on the importance of a beginning teacher taking ownership of his or her professional development and growth. In this study, beginning teachers were asked to collaborate with the principal to develop an individualized plan for professional growth based on teacher evaluation data. Five of the six teachers who were not retained created a plan that was not reflective of their evaluations. The data implied that taking ownership of one's own professional development had a positive impact on teacher retention.

The last implication was the importance of this study for other schools and districts. Teacher retention is a serious problem many districts face. Another district can use this study to address the teacher retention issue it is facing, especially a district of similar size and demographics.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, I recommend the mentoring program continue in the ABC County School District. However, there are some recommendations I believe will strengthen the program. First, the mentee survey (see Appendix B) did not adequately assess if beginning teachers were reflecting on their teaching practice and taking ownership of their professional development due to an inadequate number of times the survey was administered. It

is recommended to administer the survey multiple times during the implementation cycle to better identify the point in time when beginning teachers begin to reflect on the teaching practice.

Another recommendation is to begin the implementation cycle for mentoring when the new school year begins. The mentoring program began mid-year due to university requirements that had to be met before program implementation could begin. Two mentee teachers remarked that it would have been best if the program had begun at the start of the school year. This would be most beneficial to mentee teachers so they are supported from the very beginning and not left to feel lost during the first semester of school.

The next recommendation is to ensure 100% participation of all principals in developing a supportive culture in the schools. This responsibility must fall to district level administration. It should be addressed in principal professional learning communities (PLC's) or addressed directly by the superintendent of education.

The last recommendation is to ensure principal buy-in is addressed and monitored throughout the entire program. Without total buy-in from the administration, fidelity of the program will suffer, resulting in beginning teachers, and ultimately students not receiving the full benefit of the mentoring program.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to increase the beginning teacher rate in the ABC County School District. The district sought to increase the teacher retention rate to at least 80% through implementing a beginning teacher mentoring program and through establishing a culture in the schools to better support novice teachers during the first few years of teaching. Feeble attempts were made in years past to mentor beginning teachers with little or no success. For the first time, ABC County Schools provided beginning teachers with a structured, well-planned, formal

mentoring program supported by district level and building level administration. The goal of the study to improve the teacher retention rate to 80% was met. Although four principals did not submit logs detailing culture building activities, all other data indicates the culture in the schools became more supportive and the mentoring program was implemented to a great extent. The mentoring program was a success in ABC County Schools. With minor program adjustments and attention to fidelity, it is a program worth continuing so the ABC County School and its teachers and students will reap the benefits for years to come.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: CONFIDENCE CHECKLIST PROTOCOL

### Confidence Focal Points Survey

**General Research Topic:** Increasing teacher retention

**Specific Research Question:**

- What were areas of success in the implementation process?

**Conceptual framework:** *beginning teacher confidence, classroom management*

**Statement of Consent:**

*This checklist is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Jimmy Weeks from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of teacher mentoring on teacher retention. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:*

*jimmy.weeks@leecountyschools.us  
jhweeks@go.olemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu; (662)915-1459 (office)*

*The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to beginning teachers and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. Below you can find statements about your confidence levels as a new teacher. Please indicate if you are confident (Yes) or concerned (No) for each challenge. Please mark one choice in each row.*

### Confidence Survey

Please check Confident (Yes) or Concerned (No) for each statement below.

Challenge	Confident (Yes)	Concerned (No)
1. I am able to anticipate behaviors before they occur in my classroom.		
2. I am able to manage a heavy workload with relative ease.		
3. I am able to plan instructional lessons from scratch.		
4. I am able to keep up with changing technology and its use in my classroom.		
5. I am able to align instruction with state standards and benchmarks.		
6. I am able to deal with students considered at-risk. (homeless, ELL, abused,...)		
7. I am able to motivate students to learn in my classroom.		
8. I am able to manage interactions with parents in a professional manner.		

**Fill in the blank.**

9. How many challenges listed above was your mentor helpful to you? \_\_\_\_\_

**For the questions below, please circle only one response to each statement.**

10. How much can you do to control disruptive behaviors in the classroom?

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

11. How much can you do to motivate students who show little interest in school?

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

12. How much can you do to get students to follow classroom rules?

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

13. How well can you establish a classroom management system?

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

14. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

15. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

16. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

17. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

18. The planning and organization time is used to plan as teams rather than individuals.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

19. Our school reflects a true sense of community.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

20. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

21. When something is not working in our school, the staff predicts and prevents, rather than reacts and repairs.

None      Very little      Some      Quite a bit      A great deal

22. Did the mentoring program influence your decision to return as a teacher for the next year?

Yes      No

23. Were you and your mentor a fit? In other words, did you work well together?

Yes      No

## APPENDIX B: MENTEE SURVEY PROTOCOL

### Mentee Survey Questions

**General Research Topic:** Increasing teacher retention

**Specific Research Question:**

- Did the collaborative process to establish and implement a teacher mentor program result in a teacher retention rate of 80% of beginning teachers?
- What factors had a negative impact on the implementation of the teacher mentor program?
- To what extent did the mentor teacher implement the mentoring program with fidelity?
- To what extent did the principal implement the mentoring program with fidelity?
- To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?
- What were areas of success in the implementation process?

**Conceptual frameworks:** *mentoring, collaboration, gradual change, culture*

**Statement of Consent:**

*This survey is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Jimmy Weeks from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of teacher mentoring on teacher retention. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:*

*jimmy.weeks@leecountyschools.us  
jhweeks@go.olemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu; (662)915-1459 (office)*

*The information you provide today will help us understand the implementation of supports to beginning teachers and the long-term sustainability of the program. Protecting your rights is of utmost importance to us. Any identifiable information will be removed from the responses you give. Below you will find questions about your experiences in the teacher mentoring program. We want you to feel comfortable answering any questions fully and honestly. With that being said, are you willing to proceed with the survey?*

**Below are questions about your experience in the mentoring program. Please write your answers in the space provided.**

1. What are some specific examples of how the beginning teacher mentoring program in your district helped you make the transition into the field of education?
2. What types of additional mentor support, if any, would have better eased your transition into teaching?
3. Describe any characteristics of your relationship with your mentor you find supportive and helpful?
4. Describe any characteristics of your relationship with your mentor that concern you?
5. What are some specific ways you grew professionally during your first year of teaching?
6. Do you feel that the beginning teacher mentor program has influenced your decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession in the future?
7. To what extent did the principal implement the mentoring program?
8. What are some specific examples of how job-embedded coaching helped you to transfer from a university student to a professional classroom teacher?
9. Explain how, if any, job-embedded coaching helps to create a supportive culture in your school?
10. How has a supportive culture helped you grow professionally, if any, during your first year?
11. Do you feel your school's culture influenced your decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession in the future?



## APPENDIX C: COLLABORATION LOG PROTOCOL

### Snapshot Collaboration Log

**General Research Topic:** Increasing teacher retention

**Specific Research Question:**

- Did the collaborative process to establish and implement a teacher mentor program result in a teacher retention rate of 80% of beginning teachers?
- To what extent did mentor teachers implement the mentoring program with fidelity?
- To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?

**Conceptual frameworks:** *collaboration, mentoring, gradual change, culture*

**Statement of Consent:**

*This log is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Jimmy Weeks from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of teacher mentoring on teacher retention. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:*

*jimmy.weeks@leecountyschools.us  
jhweeks@go.olemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu; (662)915-1459 (office)*

*The mentor and mentee teacher will utilize the snapshot collaboration log each time a mentoring session occurs. The log will serve as documentation of the type of collaboration that occurred, positive outcomes, key points, and next steps of action. The researcher will use the collaboration log for data collection.*

## Snapshot Collaboration Log

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mentor** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade/Subject** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Duration** \_\_\_\_\_

Type of collaboration (Check all that apply)

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing Student Work        | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussing individual student needs | <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson planning     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communicating with parents    | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussing student assessment       | <input type="checkbox"/> IEP Development     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creating classroom culture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Observing veteran teacher           | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing professional goals | <input type="checkbox"/> Post-observation conf               | <input type="checkbox"/> Modeling lesson     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discussing curriculum         | <input type="checkbox"/> Observing instruction               |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using technology              | <input type="checkbox"/> Reflecting on practice              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                   |  |  |

Positives: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Key Points: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next Steps: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor Signature

APPENDIX D: OBSERVATION FORM

**Observation Evidence Sorting Form Option A**

**General Research Topic:** Increasing teacher retention

**Statement of Consent:**

*This observation form is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Jimmy Weeks from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of teacher mentoring on teacher retention. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:*

*jimmy.weeks@leecountyschools.us  
jhweeks@go.olemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu; (662)915-1459 (office)*

*This observation form is provided by the Mississippi Department of Education and its use is required in the observation and evaluation of classroom teachers. School administration will conduct the observation and complete the observation form. The researcher will use the completed observation form for data collection.*

# Observation Evidence Sorting Form Option A

## Professional Growth System

### Teacher Growth Rubric

Teacher

School/District

Grade/Subject

Period/Block

Date (Month/Day/Year)

Observer

Informal Observation

1 2 3 4 5

Formal Observation

1 2 3 4 5

## Domain I: Lesson Design

Evidence may include lesson plans, classroom observations, and pre- and post-observation conferences.

### 1. LESSONS ARE ALIGNED TO STANDARDS AND REPRESENT A COHERENT SEQUENCE OF LEARNING

*Lessons:*

**4**

- Include student learning outcomes and instructional activities that
- are fully aligned to current Mississippi College- and Career- Ready Standards or Framework
  - are part of a coherent and focused sequence of learning with meaningful connections made to previous and future learning
  - reflect collaboration with other school staff within and across disciplines to enrich learning

**3**

- Include student learning outcomes and instructional activities that
- are fully aligned to current Mississippi College- and Career- Ready Standards or Framework
  - are part of a coherent and focused sequence of learning with meaningful connections made to previous and future learning

**2**

- Include student learning outcomes and instructional activities that
- are partially aligned to current Mississippi College- and Career-Ready Standards or Framework
  - are part of an ineffective sequence of learning with few connections made to previous and

**1**

- Include student learning outcomes and instructional activities that
- are not aligned to current Mississippi College- and Career-Ready Standards or Framework
  - are not part of a coherent sequence of learning with meaningful connections made to previous and future learning

**Evidence:**

# Domain I: Lesson Design

Evidence may include lesson plans, classroom observations, and pre- and post-observation conferences.

## 2. LESSONS HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

### Lessons:

Provide assignments and activities that contain the following components:

- appropriate scaffolding that effectively builds student understanding
  - ample evidence that the teacher knows each student's level and tracks each student's progress toward mastery
- 4**
- differentiation based on students' abilities and learning styles
  - student-centered learning whenever appropriate
  - relevant connections to students' prior experiences<sup>1</sup> or learning
  - opportunities for students to choose challenging tasks and instructional materials

Provide assignments and activities that contain the following components:

- appropriate scaffolding that effectively builds student understanding
  - ample evidence that the teacher knows each student's level and tracks each student's progress toward mastery
- 3**
- differentiation based on students' abilities and learning styles
  - student-centered learning whenever appropriate
  - relevant connections to students' prior experiences<sup>1</sup> or learning

Provide assignments and activities that contain the following components:

- minimal scaffolding that builds student understanding
  - limited evidence that the teacher knows each student's level and/or tracks each student's progress toward mastery
- 2**
- some differentiation based on students' abilities and learning styles
  - limited student-centered learning
  - adequate connections to students' prior experiences<sup>1</sup> or learning

Provide assignments and activities that contain the following components:

- no scaffolding that builds student understanding
  - little or no evidence that the teacher knows each student's level
- 1**
- little or no differentiation based on students' abilities and learning styles
  - little or no evidence of student-centered learning
  - few connections to students' prior experiences<sup>1</sup> or learning

### Evidence:

## Domain II: Student Understanding

Evidence includes classroom observations.

### 3. ASSISTS STUDENTS IN TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEARNING AND MONITORS STUDENT LEARNING

#### Teacher:

- Communicates the lesson goals and the content in a way that is accessible for every student at his/her level
  - Uses formative assessments to effectively monitor student progress
  - Provides ample and effective opportunities for students to self-assess and correct their own errors
- 4**
- Provides students with clear, specific, actionable, and timely feedback
  - Creates opportunities for students to apply teacher and peer feedback to improve performance and accelerate learning
  - Provides opportunities for students to demonstrate connections between what they are learning and how it advances their personal and professional goals/interests
- Communicates the lesson goals and the content in a way that is accessible for every student at his/her level
- Uses formative assessments to effectively monitor student progress
- 3**
- Provides effective opportunities for students to self-assess and correct their own errors
  - Provides students with clear, specific, actionable, and timely feedback
  - Creates opportunities for students to apply teacher and peer feedback to improve performance and accelerate learning
- Communicates the lesson goals and the content in a way that is accessible for most students
- Uses formative assessments to adequately monitor student progress
- 2**
- Provides adequate opportunities for students to self-assess and correct their own errors
  - Provides students with adequate feedback
- Communicates the lesson goals and the content in a way that is not accessible to most students
- Inadequately monitors student progress
- 1**
- Provides inadequate opportunities for students to self-assess and correct their own errors
  - Provides students with little or no feedback

#### Evidence:

# Domain II: Student Understanding

Evidence includes classroom observations.

## 4. PROVIDES MULTIPLE WAYS FOR STUDENTS TO MAKE MEANING OF CONTENT

*Teacher:*

4

Moves all students to deeper understanding of content through various techniques including

- a variety of explanations and multiple representations of concepts
- extended productive discussion
- effective questioning to support students' attainment of the learning goals
- making connections to other content across disciplines
- independently connecting lesson content to real-world application

3

Moves almost all students to deeper understanding of content through various techniques including

- a variety of explanations and multiple representations of concepts
- extended productive discussion
- effective questioning to support students' attainment of the learning goals
- making connections to other content across disciplines
- independently connecting lesson content to real-world application

2

Moves most students to deeper understanding of content through various techniques including

- a variety of explanations and multiple representations of concepts
- extended productive discussion
- effective questioning to support students' attainment of the learning goals
- making connections to other content across disciplines
- independently connecting lesson content to real-world application

1

Does not move or moves few students to deeper understanding of content through various techniques including

- a variety of explanations and multiple representations of concepts
- extended productive discussion
- effective questioning to support students' attainment of the learning goals
- making connections to other content across disciplines
- independently connecting lesson content to real-world application

**Evidence:**

# Domain III: Culture and Learning Environment

Evidence includes classroom observations.

## 5. MANAGES A LEARNING-FOCUSED CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

### Teacher:

- 4**
  - Creates effective routines and expectations for students to safely voice opinions and ask and answer questions
  - Proactively monitors student behavior and redirects when necessary to maximize instructional time
  - Provides effective collaborative learning opportunities whenever appropriate
  - Ensures students take ownership of their work and are active participants in their learning
  - Provides opportunities for students to take on academic leadership roles that promote learning
- 3**
  - Creates effective routines and expectations for students to safely voice opinions and ask and answer questions
  - Proactively monitors student behavior and redirects when necessary to maximize instructional time
  - Provides effective collaborative learning opportunities whenever appropriate
  - Ensures all or almost all students are active participants in their learning
- 2**
  - Creates adequate routines and expectations for students to safely voice opinions and ask and answer questions
  - Adequately monitors student behavior
  - Provides adequate collaborative learning opportunities for students
  - Ensures most students are active participants in their learning
- 1**
  - Creates inadequate and/or inconsistent routines and expectations for students to voice opinions and ask and answer questions
  - Inadequately monitors student behavior
  - Provides inadequate collaborative learning opportunities for students
  - Ensures some or few students are active participants in their learning

### Evidence:



# Domain III: Culture and Learning Environment

Evidence includes classroom observations.

## 6. MANAGES CLASSROOM SPACE, TIME, AND RESOURCES (INCLUDING TECHNOLOGY WHEN APPROPRIATE) EFFECTIVELY FOR STUDENT LEARNING

*Teacher:*

- 4**
  - Effectively maximizes use of physical space and resources (including technology whenever appropriate) in support of student learning
  - Maximizes time such that students always have something meaningful to do
  - Creates an environment where students execute transitions, routines, and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner with minimal direction or narration from the teacher
  - Provides opportunities for students to share responsibility for leading classroom routines and/or procedures
- 3**
  - Effectively maximizes use of physical space and resources (including technology whenever appropriate) in support of student learning
  - Maximizes time such that students always have something meaningful to do
  - Creates an environment where students execute transitions, routines, and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner most of the time, though they may require some direction from the teacher
- 2**
  - Adequately uses physical space or resources (including technology whenever appropriate) in support of student learning
  - Allows brief periods of time when students do not have something meaningful to do
  - Creates an environment where students execute transitions, routines, and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner only some of the time and require substantial direction from the teacher
- 1**
  - Inadequately uses physical space or resources (including technology whenever appropriate) in support of student learning
  - Allows significant periods of time when students do not have something meaningful to do
  - Creates an environment where students do not execute transitions, routines, and procedures in an orderly and efficient manner

**Evidence:**

# Domain III: Culture and Learning Environment

Evidence includes classroom observations.

## 7. CREATES AND MAINTAINS A CLASSROOM OF RESPECT FOR ALL STUDENTS

*Teacher:*

- 4**
  - Communicates respectfully to all students
  - Effectively fosters respectful relationships among all students
  - Demonstrates a strong positive relationship with all students
  - Fosters a classroom culture where students give unsolicited praise or
- 3**
  - Communicates respectfully to all students
  - Effectively fosters respectful relationships among all students
- 2**
  - Communicates respectfully to students with rare exceptions
  - Fosters respectful relationships among some students but not others
- 1**
  - Often communicates disrespectfully with students
  - Does not foster respectful relationships among students

**Evidence:**

## Domain IV: Professional Responsibilities

Evidence may include lesson plans, classroom observations, and pre- and post-observation conferences.

### 8. ENGAGES IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

#### *Teacher:*

- 4**
  - Proactively seeks out and participates in professional learning activities
  - Fully integrates knowledge gained in professional learning communities, collaboration with peers and leadership, and focused professional development
  - Strengthens teaching practice based on observer feedback and other types of performance data
  - Shares new information and lessons learned with colleagues
  - Serves as a critical friend for colleagues, both providing and seeking meaningful feedback on instruction
- 3**
  - Proactively seeks out and participates in professional learning activities
  - Fully integrates knowledge gained in professional learning communities, collaboration with peers and leadership, and focused professional development
  - Strengthens teaching practice based on observer feedback and other types of performance data
  - Shares new information and lessons learned with colleagues
- 2**
  - Participates in required professional learning activities
  - Applies knowledge gained from professional learning but does not fully integrate the new information
  - Applies some observer feedback to improve teaching practice
- 1**
  - Participates in required professional learning activities
  - Does not apply knowledge gained from professional learning
  - Applies little or no observer feedback to improve teaching practice

#### **Evidence:**

# Domain IV: Professional Responsibilities

Evidence may include documentation of communication, classroom observations, and pre- and post-observation conferences.

## 9. ESTABLISHES AND MAINTAINS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES/GUARDIANS

*Teacher:*

- 4**
  - Partners with families/guardians to coordinate learning between home and school
  - Establishes mutual expectations for student learning with families/guardians
  - Includes students and/or families/guardians in the planning of positive reinforcements for progress
  
- 3**
  - Partners with families/guardians to coordinate learning between home and school
  - Establishes mutual expectations for student learning with families/guardians
  
- 2**
  - Communicates with families/guardians reactively concerning student academic progress and development, and outreach is mostly for intervention or corrective reasons
  
- 1**
  - Rarely or never communicates with families/guardians

### Evidence:

## APPENDIX E: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROTOCOL

### Professional Development Plan Template

**General Research Topic:** Increasing teacher retention

**Specific Research Question:**

- What were areas of success in the implementation process
- What factors had a negative impact on the implementation of the teacher mentor program?
- To what extent did principals implement the mentoring program with fidelity?

**Conceptual frameworks:** *collaboration, mentoring, gradual change, culture*

**Statement of Consent:**

*This professional development plan is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Jimmy Weeks from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of teacher mentoring on teacher retention. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:*

*jimmy.weeks@leecountyschools.us  
jhweeks@go.olemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu; (662)915-1459 (office)*

*This professional development plan is designed to assist the beginning teacher in taking ownership of his or her own professional development and growth. Upon completion of principal observations and mentoring sessions with the mentor teacher, the beginning teacher will prescribe professional development activities for himself or herself to improve classroom teaching skills.*

## Individual Teacher Professional Development Plan (PDP) Template

<b>District Name</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Teacher Name</b>	<b>Assignment/Department/Grade Level</b>	<b>Rating &amp; Date of Most Recent Summative Evaluation</b>
<b>Supervisor Name</b>	<b>Principal Name (if different)</b>	<b>Plan Begin/End Dates</b>

### I. Areas Identified for Development of Professional Practice

No.	Areas Identified for Development	Rationale/Sources of Evidence
1		
2		
3		

### II. Professional Learning Goals and Activities

Area No.	Professional Learning Goals	Initial Activities	Follow-up Activities (as appropriate)	Estimated Hours	Completion Date
1					
2					
3					

### III. District and School PDP Support

District/School Administrator Support Activities

*My signature below indicates that I have received a copy of this Professional Development Plan and that I understand and contributed to its contents.*

Teacher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. PDP Progress Summary

### *Interim Review of PDP Progress*

Area No.	Demonstrated Progress	Sources of Evidence	PDP Revisions (if applicable)	Review Date
1				
2				
3				

*My signature below indicates that I have reviewed the information recorded in the Interim Review of PDP Progress and that I understand its contents:*

Staff Member's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Summative Review of PDP Progress*

Area No.	Professional Learning Goals	Expectations Met (Y) or Not Met (N)	Sources of Evidence	Summative Review Date
1				
2				
3				

*My signature below indicates that I have reviewed the information recorded in the Summative Review of PDP Progress and that I understand its contents:*

Staff Member's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX F: CULTURE LOG

### Creating School Culture Log

**General Research Topic:** Increasing teacher retention

**Specific Research Question:**

- To what extent, if any, did the culture of the school become more supportive?

**Conceptual frameworks:** *collaboration, mentoring, gradual change, culture*

**Statement of Consent:**

*This log is part of an applied research study to fulfill partial requirements for a Doctor of Education degree for Jimmy Weeks from The University of Mississippi. The study is analyzing the effects of teacher mentoring on teacher retention. Any questions regarding the project and its findings can be emailed to:*

*jimmy.weeks@leecountyschools.us  
jhweeks@go.olemiss.edu*

*Any questions can also be directed to the Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doug Davis, by email or by phone at The University of Mississippi:*

*drdavis@olemiss.edu; (662)915-1459 (office)*

*This log is to be used to document activities conducted to foster and build a supportive culture in the school. It is to be used as on-going documentation throughout the school year. The researcher will use this form as data collection.*

### Culture Building Activity Log

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Person completing form: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity	Yes	No	Date
Examples: welcome reception for new teachers, staff meals, informal conversations with admin, scheduling decisions, etc...			

VITA

**Jimmy Holland Weeks**

**EDUCATION**

1999  
Masters of Educational Leadership, University of Mississippi

1996  
Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education, Mississippi State University

1989  
High School Diploma, Tupelo High School

**ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT**

2012-Present  
Superintendent of Education, Lee County Schools

2010-2012  
Assistant Superintendent of Education, Lee County Schools

2003-2010  
Principal, Mooreville Elementary School, Lee County Schools

2002-2003  
Principal, Verona School, Lee County Schools

2000-2002  
Principal, Nettleton Primary School, Nettleton Schools

1997-2000  
Middle School Science Teacher, Lee County Schools, Guntown Middle School

**PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS**

K-6 Elementary Education, Mississippi License

Administrator, Career Level, Mississippi License

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS)

Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA)

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) member

Mississippi Professional Educators (MPE) member

Board Member – Itawamba Community College

National Institute for School Leadership (NISL)