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Examining the Need for and Completing a Revision of
the New Teacher Mentoring Program
at Burlington City High School

by
Aimee Davis Martin

A Master's Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the
Master of Arts Degree in The Graduate School of
Rowan University
May 2000

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 2001

Abstract

Aimee Martin

Examining the Need for
and Completing a
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Teacher Mentoring
Program at Burlington City
High School
Completed 2000
Dr. Capasso
Supervision and
Curriculum Development

The purpose of the study was to improve the new teacher mentoring services offered at Burlington City High School to provide a more effective assimilation of first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the school. The intern studied the mentoring practices in place at BCHS, interviewed veteran staff, and surveyed new teachers regarding the program. The conclusions of the study indicated a need for revised and improved mentoring practices, and suggested a need for increased collaboration among staff. Based on the information collected and research on mentoring, the intern developed a New Teacher Assimilation Program, to be initiated in the 2000-2001 school year.

Mini-Abstract

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

Burlington City High School will benefit from a new teacher mentoring program aimed at assisting new teachers with their assimilation into the new working environment. Teacher preparation programs do not teach teacher candidates the practicalities of the job, and experienced teachers working in new districts are not yet versed on the inner-workings of the district, so some form of teacher-training for new employees must occur. A quality mentoring program is needed in Burlington City High School to provide first-year teachers and teachers new to the district with a foundation of knowledge regarding the daily occurrences of their new working environment. Ideally, this resource will be consistently available for the first year of a teacher's service to the school and beyond, as the need arises.

Teachers would be more effective if there were a strong sense of collegiality among co-workers. The sharing of ideas, strategies, techniques, and experiences needs to be developed to fulfill the educators' primary goal of providing the best educational experiences possible for our students. That can only be accomplished if the teachers themselves are enjoying a positive employee experience. In a significant way, the development of a new teacher mentoring program can assist in improving the employee experience, and can provide a foundation for new teachers to grow professionally.

The focus of the study was the need for strong mentoring for first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to Burlington City High School. In past years, few, if any, guidelines for new teacher mentoring were in place at Burlington City High School. In an effort to offer more assistance to new

teachers, and follow state guidelines, Burlington City High School, for the 1999-2000 school year, provided mentors only to those teachers required by the state to have mentors. Unfortunately, the experienced teachers new to the district were not provided mentors. The state requires that districts provide mentors only to individuals teaching for the first time in any school setting. This may include recent graduates or teachers following the alternate-route. There was no formal system in place at Burlington City for mentoring teachers that have teaching experience, but are new to the district. Furthermore, although the first-year teachers were assigned mentors, the extent to which these teachers were guided varied greatly. The building principal issued several forms to the mentors as suggested formats for planning with their new teachers, evaluating them and offering recommendations regarding future situations. There were few standards of practice for the mentors to follow, and, in past years, an adequate amount of support for a lasting period of time had not been experienced. Consequently, first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district generally found themselves in a struggle to assimilate, both professionally and socially, as they began their first year at Burlington City High School. This affected the quality of instruction, which directly impacted the students' education experience.

Much of the literature on the subject supports the need for strong mentoring programs for first-year teachers or experienced teachers new to a district. Additionally, teachers in Burlington City High School had expressed the desire to implement a more effective new teacher mentoring program. In a profession that all too often loses young employees due to frustration or feelings of overwhelm, it is imperative that school districts respond to the needs of their employees and the message of the literature: new teachers need support in the

form of mentors, and the mentoring relationship must continue throughout the first year of service and beyond. Better instructional practices, an easier assimilation within the workplace, and positive reinforcement are just some of the benefits that Burlington City High School's new teachers will experience as a result of the implementation of a new teacher mentoring program.

Purpose of the Study

The intern wished to learn more about the effectiveness of new teacher mentoring programs to enhance the first year of teaching and assimilation in a new school for new faculty in order to determine if the high school should refine current practices and implement a more effective mentoring program beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. The intern examined current practices and research on new teacher mentoring programs to develop an effective new teacher mentoring program. The intern also interviewed new faculty to the school this year and the mentors to which they were assigned to determine changes and improvements necessary for implementing a more effective mentoring program at Burlington City High School.

When a new teacher is overwhelmed with so many facets of the job, she may, in her attempt to deal with those frustrations, end up using less-effective strategies to cope. Developing a new teacher mentoring program may ease some of the difficulties of a new teacher. If the new teacher has a veteran teacher on which to lean when confused or frustrated, the wisdom and experience of the veteran teacher may enable the new teacher to deal with various situations more effectively. This, in effect, will enable the new teacher to more easily assimilate to her new surroundings and provide better learning experiences for her students.

Implementing this project will enable the intern to provide the staff and students of Burlington City High School with a service, a mentoring program for first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district, that will assist the new teachers in assimilating both professionally and socially into a new district, while enabling them to gain the support and guidance they need to provide the most effective learning environments possible for the students.

Definitions

The following terms are used in the research on mentoring first-year teachers or experienced teachers new to a district:

first-year teacher/ new teacher- any teacher working for the first time or a teacher with experience working for the first time in a district

mentor- a veteran teacher charged with providing ongoing assistance and support for a first-year teacher or a teacher new to the district

veteran teacher- a teacher who has several years of experience working in a district

Limitations of the Study

This was a study on developing a new teacher mentoring program for Burlington City High School, Burlington City, New Jersey, and was used only in that setting. The study was limited to the three first-year teachers and seven experienced teachers new to the school. Additionally, three veteran teachers were involved in the study as the mentors assigned to the first-year teachers.

Although the study itself was limited to Burlington City High School, the findings of the study indicated that other schools in the district may benefit from instituting new teacher mentoring programs, with some adjustments

appropriate for the schools' calendars.

Setting of the Study

Burlington City High School is located on Route 130 in Burlington City, Burlington County, New Jersey. Burlington City, founded in 1677, is a historic riverside community located twenty miles northeast of Philadelphia and seventeen miles south of Trenton.

The city has a population of approximately 12,000. The community is racially and ethnically diverse. Residents are employed in business and industry in the Delaware Valley area in clerical, technical, sales, managerial, and professional jobs. The total property tax rate in 1998 was 2.412 per hundred dollars of assessed value and the school tax rate was 1.592 per hundred dollars of assessed value.

The City of Burlington School District is made up of three lower elementary schools, an intermediate school, a junior school, and the high school. Since September 1999, educational services have been provided to three year olds on a half-day basis. A staff of approximately 157 teachers and 8 administrators is supplemented by guidance counselors, librarians, psychologists, nurses, social workers, speech therapists, learning disabilities consultants and other specialists. A total of approximately 175 professional staff are employed in our schools to meet the needs of approximately 1600 students.

Professional staff members are certified by the New Jersey Department of Education and hold Bachelor's degrees. Approximately 47% of the professional staff hold master's degrees and one holds a doctorate. The median salary for teachers is approximately \$51,000.00 and for administrators, \$80,000.00. Total cost per pupil for the City of Burlington School District is

slightly more than \$10,000.00 per year. The overall pupil-teacher ratio is ten to one. The attendance rate of teachers and students is consistently in the mid-ninety percent range. The drop-out rate for students hovers around 5%. The percentage of students that pass the Grade 11 High School Proficiency Test is generally just below ninety percent, and the graduation rate percentage falls in the upper nineties year after year.

Burlington City School District has enjoyed a "receiving" school relationship with neighboring Edgewater Park School District since the 1930s. Students from Edgewater Park may attend Burlington City High School for grades nine through twelve. Edgewater Park is a multi-residential community of approximately 9000 located along the Delaware River just south of Burlington City. Students from Edgewater Park who attend Burlington City High School are bused to and from school, and are provided transportation home at the conclusion of any after school activities in which they may participate.

In the late 1980s, Burlington City switched from a type one, non-voting district to a type two, voting district. After the switch, the budgets did not pass for several consecutive years. More recently, however, five of the last six years of school budget initiatives were successful.

The site of the study, Burlington City High School, also houses the Junior School for grades seven and eight. The Junior School is treated as a separate school setting, with its own Vice Principal and central office area. The seventh and eighth grade students are not allowed to enter the high school portion of the building unless given specific permission to do so. Social functions such as school dances are held separately, with Junior School students attending one dance and freshman through seniors attending another dance. The high school, with a 97.5% June 1997 graduation rate and 78% of its graduates

enrolled in colleges, universities, and post-secondary schools, offers over 110 courses, including S.A.T. preparation courses and AP courses.

A variety of activities and sports programs are available to the students at Burlington City High School. Burlington City's sports teams are consistently competitive in the Freedom Division and the Blue Devil Marching Band is an award-winning group of talented musicians. Various academic clubs and organizations, including the FBLA, Yearbook, school newspaper and Mock Trial, are also available to the students. Because the number of students in the school is relatively small, many students are involved simultaneously with a great variety of school activities.

Student academic growth is evaluated annually. Most students take the California Achievement Tests yearly to determine their progress, as well as being tested in fourth grade on the ESPA, in eighth grade on the GEPA, and during their junior year on the HSPT. In 1998, 50% of the students demonstrated competency on the GEPA, and 82.2% of the students passed the HSPT. Various members of the Burlington City faculty meet monthly in Mathematics Committee and Writing Committee meetings to address the concerns of the state tests and align curricula to the New Jersey Core Content Curriculum Standards.

Burlington City High School has been awarded many financial grants, including the Goals 2000 Grant, which includes a partnership with the College of New Jersey. The Goals 2000 Grant, which concluded in the 1998-99 school year, provided, among other things, Internet training and staff development. The grant provided \$275,000.00 to the district over a three year period, and was used to transform all of the libraries in the district into full service media centers.

The City of Burlington School District has established its own web page

at www.burlington-nj.net on the World Wide Web. The page lists data relating to educational services and was developed by the high school's Webmaster Club. E-mail accounts have been provided to every staff member, and an Interactive Distance Learning classroom has been created so that students may take courses not available at Burlington City High School, but offered at other high schools or The Burlington County Institute of Technology. Such courses have included Russian and Psychology, and the students have responded well to the experience of receiving their instruction via a television system.

Historically, Burlington City High School has enjoyed a veteran staff with a very small number of new teachers annually. The school has also enjoyed long years of service from principals and vice principals. Within the past six years, however, there has been significant change, both with staff and administrators. The veteran staff has generally accepted the new teachers with open arms. During the past six years, however, the principal and vice-principal positions at Burlington City High School have seen two new faces at each position. This change has caused the confidence of the staff in the administration to waver. In turn, the spirit of the staff and willingness to participate in the numerous activities for which teachers generally give excessive amounts of personal time has diminished at Burlington City High School.

Despite the lack of consistency in administration at Burlington City High School, the district continues to work hard for its students. The current superintendent is an energetic, motivated leader, and the Board of Education works hard to promote high standards for the students and staff members. Curricular revisions and the creation of new courses and programs occur yearly in an effort to offer the most current educational services. With its Math Hotline

and Internet Café, as well as various night programs for adults in the community, Burlington City School District uses its resources to the maximum and provides decent educational services for members of the community.

Significance of the Study

Students need to be surrounded by capable teachers. That should be guaranteed by administrators who hire new staff. However, while capable, first-year teachers and teachers new to a district are often left to figure out things on their own. Without the benefit of knowing “how things are done” in a department, school building, or district, the new teacher may have trouble assimilating professionally and socially into the new setting, resulting in unnecessary stress to the teacher. This stress, coupled with the challenges of teaching, may prohibit some very fine teachers from providing the most effective classroom experiences for the students. Providing the first-year teacher and teachers new to the district with a mentor may ease some of the stress of trying to learn the “ins and outs” of a new working environment, and allow the teacher to concentrate on the real job at hand: educating the district’s youth.

Staff at Burlington City High School had on many occasions expressed the need for a more effective mentoring program and were eager to develop an improved program. While Burlington City High School has traditionally assigned mentors to first-year teachers, a formal program needed to be developed so that first-year teachers can take full advantage of the wonderful opportunity they have been given to learn from a veteran. Additionally, the mentors, who are willing to help, would appreciate standards of practice for their responsibilities. Current mentoring practices at Burlington City High School needed revision, and this study enabled the intern to work closely with new

teachers, veteran teachers, and administrators in the effort to provide a more effective, lasting mentoring program for first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district. Improvement in the support system available to new teachers may impact the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom, a true benefit to the students.

In terms of both school practices and classroom situations, it is the intern's belief that having a veteran teacher on which to lean will not only benefit the new teacher, but allow the veteran to be exposed to the enthusiasm and current knowledge of the subject matter that the new teacher can provide. Improving teacher collaboration will foster collegiality among employees of Burlington City High School, resulting in an exchange of methods and strategies from which veteran teachers may benefit. A new teacher mentoring program will be a beneficial service for a variety of employees, as well as the students, in Burlington City High School.

Organization of the Study

This chapter offered an introduction to the topic of mentoring first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to a district and provided some insight to the community and school setting in which the study took place. The following chapter will focus on a review of the literature on mentoring first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to a district. Chapter three will discuss the design of the study, and chapter four will present the research findings. Conclusions, implications, and further study of new teacher mentoring will be detailed in chapter five. References, appendices, and biographical data will conclude the paper.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

We need teachers to be productive-- productive in their efforts to engage students in the learning process, productive as they participate in faculty meetings, productive in their classroom management skills, and productive in their integration into the afterschool activities that are so vital to the well-rounded education schools promote for their students. It is difficult to be productive without a feeling of support in the work environment. Teachers benefit from the support and collaboration of fellow teachers.

A review of literature on the subject of new teacher mentoring yielded overwhelming support for the following assertions:

1. To retain competent teachers, new teachers need support in the form of year-long mentoring programs as they assimilate professionally and socially into their new working environment;
2. Mentoring programs are beneficial to new teachers, veteran teachers, and students;
3. Mentors need guidelines and an understanding of the expectations for the mentoring program;
4. The school principal plays a key role in providing expectations for the new teachers.

These assertions should be considered when a district seeks to implement a program of support for its new teacher.

Much of what a teacher faces in her beginning years of teaching is not taught in teacher-preparation programs and is not second nature to the new teacher. In an effort to retain teachers, school districts must recognize the

challenges new teachers face and make an effort to address the needs of first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to a school. As many businesses do, schools often assign mentors to new employees. Offering a mentoring relationship is beneficial; however, the quality of the mentoring relationship is key to the successful professional and social assimilation of new teachers to new school settings.

Mentoring new teachers is not a new development in education, but the intensity of the “buzz” about it has increased in recent years. Much of the research done in past years on mentoring first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to a district dealt with how to set up mentoring programs in schools and the notion that mentoring is helpful. More recently, however, the literature has shifted to focus on the significance of establishing new teacher mentoring programs and the emphasis on carrying those mentoring relationships beyond the first month of the school year. An examination of this recent literature offers justification for the implementation of mentoring programs. More specifically, the research shows the need for the mentoring relationship to include open lines of communication, and be a lasting support system among colleagues with various years of experience.

Mentoring first-year teachers and teachers new to a district is an indispensable element in the cultivation and retention of competent teachers, as suggested in a review on teacher mentoring by Sharon Feiman-Nemser for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education:

Mentoring is a critical topic in education today and a favored strategy in U.S. policy initiatives focused on teacher induction. Besides creating new career opportunities for veteran teachers, assigning mentors to work with beginning teachers represents an improvement over the abrupt and unassisted entry into teaching that characterizes the experience of many novices.

Still, the promise of mentoring goes beyond helping novices survive their first year of teaching. If mentoring is to function as a strategy of reform, it must be linked to a vision of good teaching, guided by an understanding of teacher learning, and supported by a professional culture that favors collaboration and inquiry. (1998)

Merely assisting first-year teachers with which texts to use and the art of setting up a grade book will not provide the nervous, excited, overwhelmed, and anxious new teachers with the information they need to succeed. The mentor should be a presence in the novice teacher's life on a regular basis beyond her first year on the job. The very definition of a mentor is someone who is a lifelong support line, a person who is available, capable, and willing to assist or teach a novice in the field throughout her formative years and beyond, as circumstances and situations warrant.

Teacher preparation programs offered at colleges and universities teach teachers the substance of their job; mentors teach the practicalities of the job. It is one thing for a new teacher to know her subject area and feel confident in the content of her courses, it is quite another for her to feel utterly lost and frustrated in an attempt to fit in to an unfamiliar working environment. If the teacher is struggling, so too will the students. Quality, lasting mentoring relationships are imperative not only for the teacher, but for the students in her classroom. It is widely recognized that the first weeks and months of a teacher's career may very well be the time in which she settles for strategies that are adequate and then, so as not to leave her comfort zone, may not move beyond them. This is recognized in "Beginning Teacher Induction Programs: The Role of Principal" as the authors note that "without support and guidance, beginners often grasp the first strategies that work and cling to them throughout their careers" (Brock and Grady, 1998, p. 179).

The first experience in a classroom for a new teacher, regardless of the quality of the training she received during her college years, can be overwhelming. Just as in other professional settings, in teaching there is much to learn beyond the formal education one has received. From basic lunch room duty assignments to completing a Personal Growth Plan (PGP), retrieving needed supplies, or dealing with parents, a day in the life of a new teacher is a vast expanse of unknown territory. Providing teachers with a mentor can avail them of the support, guidance, reinforcement, and sounding board they need not simply to survive, but feel productive and purposeful. According to Dr. Mike Turner, in his article "Mentoring on Purpose," "A sense of purpose and the ability to be purposeful are key to personal and organizational success" (1999, p. 1).

A new teacher is faced with not only the demands of teaching, but of assimilating into a new environment that has in place established practices, procedures, and expectations. As the shock of all that encompasses a teacher's school day hits her, a new teacher may second-guess her decision to enter the teaching profession. The demands of the profession may outweigh the desire to educate children, and a district may lose a competent teacher. As stated in "Beginning Teachers: Are They Still Leaving the Profession?", "Beginning teachers' reasons for leaving have less to do with insufficient salaries, as one might suppose, than with a lack of professionalism, collegiality, and administrative support" (Marlow, Inman, Betancourt-Smith, 1997, p. 211). School districts must make an effort to retain competent teachers; there are many challenges a teacher faces that can easily be overcome with the support and collaboration of other teachers.

Statistics validate the need for quality mentoring programs in a district's

attempts to retain competent new teachers. According to “Beginning Teachers: Are They Still Leaving the Profession?” written by Leslie Marlow, Duane Inman, and Maria Betancourt-Smith, published in the March/April 1997 issue of *The Clearing House* some studies indicate, “as many as forty percent of beginning teachers resign during their first two years of teaching.” The Marlow article cites various other articles that have, based on various research studies, confirmed Marlow’s conclusions. The authors suggest that, at least in part, the reason behind such a vast amount of resignations is lack of professional support.

The Marlow, et al. article focused on a study undertaken by the authors that involved teachers in various geographic regions within the United States. Participants of the study were sent the Marlow-Hierlmeier Teacher Profile, a survey instrument designed to gather information regarding characteristics related to teacher career stability. The findings of the study indicate the need for beginning teachers and experienced teachers new to a district to be given opportunities to interact with colleagues who support working collaboratively, administrators who encourage teachers, and a community that has faith in the educational system. Marlow, et al. demonstrate, through the results of their survey instrument, that new teachers benefit from the support of not just one mentor, but an entire network of people, and that “the students in the beginning teacher’s classroom will be the ultimate beneficiaries of those interactions” (Marlow, et al., 1997, p. 213).

The Marlow, et al. study confirms that quality mentoring programs do not benefit only the new teachers. Students will reap the benefits of the support shown to a new teacher as she gains confidence in the classroom and with her productivity in the school setting. The vision and expectations of any school’s new teacher mentoring program should be developed with the best interests of

the students in mind.

Along with improved educational experiences for students, mentoring programs may also provide incentive, motivation, and serve as a springboard for rejuvenation within the veteran teacher population of a school. These benefits to students and veteran teachers are supported in "In Kentucky: Mentoring with a Mission," an article written by Sharon Brennan, William Thames, and Richard Roberts for the May 1999 issue of *Educational Leadership*. The authors present a comprehensive look into the Kentucky Teacher Internship Program, a program developed as a result of legislation enacted in 1985 for the purpose of requiring all first-year teachers to "receive a level of support and assistance that develops a strong, lifelong career foundation" (Brennan, et al., 1999, p. 49). Within this program, each new teacher is guided by a mentor teacher, a university representative, and the school principal. As the authors state, the benefits of the program reach beyond the new teacher and touch the students and mentors as well:

This program serves as a catalyst for growth for the beginning teacher as well as for each member of the support committee. Although the program supports new teachers as they form their professional identities, it also allows mentors to sharpen their analytical skills as they examine specific curricular issues with their mentees....Best of all, the program serves K-12 students by emphasizing student learning as the ultimate goal of all good teaching. (1999, p. 49)

The heart of the program emphasizes reflection of student learning as the premise for improving and refining effective teaching skills. The teachers are encouraged to implement a cycle of reflection: What did the teacher do? What effect did those actions have on the students? What will the teacher do next? The intern will practice this reflective model as she receives guidance and support during conferences with her mentor teacher (the mentor is paid for fifty

hours work with the intern on “growth issues”) and in committee meetings. Students are direct beneficiaries of this cycle of reflection; the teacher is constantly assessing her effectiveness in the classroom, and making adjustments where needed. Ultimately, the new teacher is assessed against the eight teacher standards adopted by the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board.

A survey representing 15 percent of 1998's 2,500 interns (new teachers in the mentoring program) indicated 97 percent of the respondents felt the committee members had provided helpful suggestions to improve practice, and 91 percent responded that the process helped them grow professionally. The program, while statistically a success, has also proven beneficial in practical ways. Many of the experienced teachers who were paid to mentor new teachers indicated that despite the long hours of commitment outside the school day, the partnership has prompted veteran teachers to reexamine their methods, and appreciate why they entered the profession in the first place. As the authors conclude, “In short, the partnership that this program creates between new and master teachers appears to foster a collaborative spirit and inject an important element of mutual respect into the profession” (Brennan, et al., 1999, p. 52).

Support for mentoring programs comes from beyond the confines of the practice of teaching. For example, in “Training an Associate: Garbage In, Garbage Out,” an article in the Spring 1998 issue of the American Bar Association's Litigation, authors William M. McErlean and Howard L. Teplinsky discuss the virtues and the necessity of providing quality mentoring relationships to young lawyers to assist in the development of the law firm associate who is productive, qualified, and capable of carrying out the functions

of her job. These are the same qualities that school districts desire in their employees.

A successful mentoring relationship requires that the mentor be someone who is capable and willing to offer the new employee continuing support and guidance. If we are to develop mentoring programs to enhance the effective assimilation of first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to a district, we must encourage veteran teachers to participate in the program. Assuming the responsibility of mentor is an extension of a teacher's role as an educator. In the role of mentor, the focus of one's teaching and guidance is a colleague. It takes a talented person and teacher to mentor effectively.

The McErlean and Teplinsky article suggests the need for mentors who can provide quality "training" for the new associate. The good mentor for a new associate in a law firm, according to McErlean and Teplinsky, possesses certain qualities which, though termed differently, parallel the qualities desirable in a new teacher mentor. "A mentor's ability to teach is vitally important." (McErlean & Teplinsky, 1998, p. 54). McErlean and Teplinsky cite the following additional qualities needed in a mentor: the ability to relate interpersonally with someone less experienced; the mechanical knowledge essential to being a successful litigator; the ability to communicate well with clients; the ability to communicate well with other lawyers in the firm; and the ability to develop business (1998, p. 54). In the school setting, for new teacher mentors, these qualities mean being able to relate interpersonally with someone less experienced, having the knowledge essential to being a successful educator, the ability to communicate well with students, the ability to communicate well with other staff members in the building and district, and the ability to promote the importance of quality education.

In "Beginning Teacher Induction Programs: The Role of the Principal," an article published in the January/February 1998 issue of *The Clearing House*, Barbara L. Brock and Marilyn L. Grady stress the need for training mentors. "Schools need to establish criteria for the selection of mentors, define mentors' roles, and provide training to meet role requirements" (Brock & Grady, 1998, p. 182). That training can come in various forms: courses that discuss supervision techniques or adult learning styles; workshops run within districts to create a vision and expectations for the mentoring program; or a series of mentor teacher sessions in which the mentors themselves collaborate and share mentoring experiences.

As James B. Rowley asserts in his article entitled "The Good Mentor," published in the May 1999 issue of *Educational Leadership*, many teachers with more than a handful of years of experience in the teaching profession cannot identify someone in their careers as their mentor, someone who had a positive and lasting impact on their lives. Many teachers have to rely on the informal support of a generous colleague. While the informal support of a colleague is invaluable, Rowley finds it unfortunate that many teachers recall their first years in teaching as lonely and difficult. He has spent the past ten years helping districts design mentor programs, and as a result, has learned what works and what does not work in a successful mentoring program. Rowley defines in his article six basic but essential qualities for a good mentor:

- The good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring.
 - The good mentor is accepting of the beginning teacher.
 - The good mentor is skilled at providing instructional support.
 - The good mentor is effective in different interpersonal contexts.
 - The good mentor is a model of a continuous learner.
 - The good mentor communicates hope and optimism.
- (1999, p. 20-22)

Many of these same qualities are echoed in the McErlean and Teplinsky article. The literature reveals that the role of a mentor is a serious commitment. The new teachers' professional success can be strongly influenced by the mentor, and thus it is a role that requires considerable training and involvement. A successful mentoring relationship cannot occur without the commitment of the mentor and a strong vision for the mentoring program.

In conjunction with mentor training, Brock and Grady assert the need for the guidance of new teachers to come from the top administrator in the school. In "Beginning Teacher Induction Programs: The Role of Principal," Brock and Grady discuss the results of their study regarding expectations new teachers and principals have of each other. Random samples of 75 principals and new teachers in the state of Nebraska were mailed surveys, with a response rate of 75 percent and 65 percent, respectively. The surveys questioned each sample group as to expectations each had of the other. The principals indicated certain proficiencies they expect to be demonstrated by their new teachers, and the new teachers indicated some areas with which they had encountered problems and would have appreciated assistance.

Responses indicated the main difference expressed by the teachers and principals was the "length and comprehensiveness of the induction program." Principals reported they provide a fall orientation, mentors, and evaluations. Teachers reported a need for a year-long induction program that included mentors (Brock & Grady, 1998, p. 181). Additionally, the teachers emphasized the need for mentors that could offer assistance not based solely on the new teachers' questions. Clearly, new teachers and principals have expectations of each other which may be addressed in a comprehensive mentoring program.

The study indicates that principals are aware of the need for assistance

for new teachers. In various forms, the principals are a key source of support and guidance. Brock and Grady suggest that "...more structured and comprehensive mentorships will develop as principals observe their positive long-term effects on the improvement of teaching and the retention of quality teachers" (1998, p. 182). In order to see the long-term effects, schools, and most importantly, principals, must make a commitment to the success of the mentoring program.

New teacher mentoring can have a substantial impact on a district. Inexperienced teachers need guidance as they assimilate to the expectations of their new working environment, feedback on their methods, and a support system that fosters professional growth. Experienced teachers new to the district would benefit from the availability of a veteran teacher for the purposes of acclimating to the expectations and practices in their new working environment. Teachers of all levels of experience should have the opportunity to work collaboratively, sharing and exchanging strategies, experiences, and support. Students in the district would benefit from more confident, competent teachers that bring with them to the classroom a large network of support. Principals need to take an active role in the network of support offered to new teachers. If inexperienced teachers are leaving the profession due largely to a lack of support, school districts must recognize that this is a problem that can be remedied through the implementation of effective mentoring programs.

Chapter 3

The Design of the Study

General Description

The study used action research in an effort to gauge the needs of first-year teachers and teachers new to Burlington City High School and determine the improvements needed to the current mentoring program.

Burlington City's vice principal is in charge of the current new teacher mentoring/orientation program, which was put into effect during the 1999-2000 school year. Few standards of practice were in place. The intern's role during the 1999-2000 school year was that of observer, information-gatherer, and advisor; however, the information gathered over the course of the 1999-2000 school year has produced a plan for a revised new teacher mentoring/orientation program for the 2000-2001 school year.

In an effort to gather necessary information for the improved plan for the new teacher mentoring/orientation program, the intern utilized three action research methods. Along with observation and verbal interviews, the intern administered a written survey (see Appendix A) to the ten new teachers to the school. The feedback was used to assess the current mentoring program and address the areas of the program that needed improvement. Finally, a proposal for a revised mentoring program was created for the 2000-2001 school year.

Development and Design of Instruments

The development and design of the survey instrument grew from the verbal feedback from the new teachers. After observations of the few new teacher meetings held by the vice principal, and interviews of the new teachers regarding the effectiveness of the meetings, a survey was developed.

The survey consisted of ten open-ended questions. The first five questions were applicable to only the first-year teachers who had been assigned mentors. The remaining five questions were applicable to the first-year teachers as well as experienced teachers new to the district.

The questions assessed the current new teacher mentoring/orientation program and encouraged the participants to recommend changes for the program in the future.

Description of Sample and Sampling Technique

The individuals that participated in the survey were individuals teaching in Burlington City High School for the first time. This included three first year teachers and seven experienced teachers new to the Burlington City School District. As there was a manageable number of participants, the intern felt it would be appropriate to survey the entire population.

Description of the Data Collection Approach

The survey was put in each of the participants' mailbox in the main office. The survey began with a cover letter which encouraged the participants to complete the survey and instructed them to return their completed survey to the intern, in person or anonymously, within one work week.

At the conclusion of one work week, the intern placed another letter in each of the participants' mailbox. The follow-up letter thanked the participants who took time out of their busy days to complete and return the surveys. The letter also encouraged those who had not returned the surveys to please do so. The letter reassured the participants that the information they provided would be valuable in improving the current new teacher mentoring/orientation program.

Their input would benefit future colleagues, which would inevitably reach the students and other faculty members.

Description of the Data Analysis Plan

As the survey consisted of ten open-ended questions, the results can be assessed qualitatively, not quantitatively. The intern read the completed surveys, and charted the responses according to similar feedback (see Appendix B).

The intern, during personal conversations with the new teachers before and after completion of the surveys, learned that many were apprehensive about putting their true thoughts on paper due to their non-tenured status. Prior to completion, the intern reassured the new teachers that the questions did not prompt the participants to respond with any personal assessments of any teachers or administrators; the survey asked for an assessment of the current program and services offered to date. After completion, the intern understood that several applicants responded cautiously and may not have expressed their true feelings regarding the current program and services offered to new teachers.

The responses were used in the effort to develop an improved new teacher mentoring/orientation program for Burlington City High School.

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

Information Found

The surveys completed by new staff members provided an assortment of recommendations regarding the continuation of some current effective mentoring practices and suggestions for improvements in the mentoring program for future new staff members. As a result of the surveys and conversations with new staff, veteran staff, mentors, and administrators, many suggestions were considered in an effort to produce an improved new teacher mentoring program for the 2000-2001 school year at Burlington City High School.

Currently at Burlington City High School, there is no enthusiasm and very little effort among staff members to recognize the value that an effective mentoring program can have on new teachers. Consequently, the information obtained from the New Teacher Survey ranges from very general to very specific. Appendix B offers a compilation of the responses to the New Teacher Survey. Some responses are presented verbatim from the surveys, others in generalized form.

All new teachers responded that they enjoyed regular accessibility to their mentors. Generally, the first-year teachers and their mentors met weekly or more often on an informal basis, and the first-year teachers indicated they were pleased with this frequency. The first-year teachers indicated that the mentors have been able to provide them with answers to all of their questions. While one first-year teacher expressed concern regarding a lack of time available to meet during the school day with the mentor, all first-year teachers expressed

gratitude regarding the support they have been shown by their mentors.

In addition, all new teachers that responded to the survey indicated that from time to time they have reached out to other staff members for assistance. Most indicated they had sought help from fellow teachers within their departments, while a few indicated they had reached out to their Department Head or teachers with whom they share lunch periods.

As Appendix B shows, most new teachers responded “somewhat” when asked if the new teacher meetings to date had provided them with the information they need to be successful at Burlington City High School. However, more than one indicated that the few information sessions provided were not presented in a timely fashion.

When asked for suggestions for topics and opportunities for future new teacher meetings, the respondents offered a variety. From discipline tactics to GEPA and HSPA information, to grading procedures and information on the classification of students, the responses suggested a desire of the new teachers to be provided with information necessary for assimilation into the new school setting, as well as for professional growth.

Most respondents indicated that all new teachers to the district should be provided a person to whom the new teacher can go with questions or for support. Only a few suggested new teachers with experience didn’t require as structured a program as the New Teacher Mentoring Program may provide.

Finally, the new teachers indicated a few additional suggestions for the revised program, including requiring mentors for all special education teachers, and providing an information session within the first two weeks of the school year for explanation of paperwork requirements.

Of equal importance to the development of a revised New Teacher

Mentoring Program were the suggestions and feedback obtained from the intern's interviews with veteran staff members. Beyond the responses to the questions regarding the veteran teachers' views most of the interviews involved discussions regarding first-year teaching experiences. However, to ensure consistency, the same six questions were asked of each of the veteran teachers interviewed. Appendix C offers a compilation of the variety of responses to the six questions.

The four mentor teachers responded in the affirmative when asked if they felt prepared to mentor a new teacher. Their years of experience and familiarity with the district and school practices were formidable, yet all suggested that beyond the new teachers' mid year evaluations, not much has been done by administrators to monitor the mentoring relationships.

While only four teachers are mentors this year, many others indicated that in some way shape or form, they have assisted both first-year and experienced teachers new to the district this year. Every teacher interviewed asserted the notion that all first-year teachers should be assigned mentors. The general consensus was that it couldn't hurt, yet could provide a world of difference in the level of confidence and preparedness a new teacher takes into her classroom.

Furthermore, when asked whether experienced teachers new to the district should be assigned mentors, all of the veteran teachers agreed that even experienced teachers need questions answered when new to the district. Many of the veteran teachers interviewed spoke of a sort of buddy system that was in place at Burlington City High School many years ago. The veteran teachers suggested implementing a type of buddy system for the experienced teachers new to the district because it would not be as formal as mentoring, yet

would provide the new teacher with a consistent source for information and guidance during her assimilation process into the new professional environment.

The intern asked the veteran teachers to comment on the things that were most helpful to them when they were first-year teachers or new to a district. Communication with colleagues seemed to be the key. Having another teacher with whom to talk, vent and plan, as well as bounce ideas, and talking with other new teachers, enabled the now veteran staff to assimilate more effectively into their new professional environment. Receiving positive feedback from peers or administrators strengthened confidence, as well.

Finally, the intern asked the veteran teachers to offer suggestions regarding revision of the new mentoring program. Significant suggestions included more orientation meetings for new teachers on building practices, opportunities for new teachers to discuss experiences, buddies for experienced new teachers, time compensation and training for mentors, and more opportunities for collaboration among veteran and new staff members.

The most telling responses from both new and veteran teachers commenting on mentoring dealt with a professional's preparation for her job. Unequivocally, the new staff members agreed on the need for a "question and answer" session early in the school year to familiarize them with policies and practices. Similarly, the mentors expressed the need for guidelines highlighting their "official" responsibilities. Whether just starting out or boasting decades of experience, the teachers showed a desire to feel prepared for their jobs.

What the Information Means

The information suggests that while Burlington City High School currently

has a program for mentoring new teachers, significant improvement can be made in the support of both first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district. The intern recognizes that the new teachers, in their non-tenured status, were somewhat hesitant to “speak out” when asked to offer critical analysis of the program currently offered. This may suggest the comments on the survey were not as specific or critical on paper as they may be in the minds of new teachers. However, as Appendix B indicates, the consensus among the new teachers is that guidance and support is needed in the first year of teaching, and any information offered must be done in a more timely fashion. The feedback from the teachers clearly indicates the need for revision in the current program.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Conclusions

Based on the research of the literature, discussions with teachers from other districts, information presented at the Leadership Conference seminar on New Teacher Mentoring, and the intern's efforts with the current new and veteran staff members at Burlington City High School, it was apparent to the intern that Burlington City High School's efforts to assist new teachers could be improved. Using the information from the research and conference, and feedback from various teachers outside the district as well as Burlington City High School staff, the intern developed a revised new teacher mentoring program, to commence in the 2000-2001 school year.

The study itself has had an effect on the intern's leadership development. While a great deal of effort was put forth by the intern in her challenge to revise the current new teacher mentoring practices, little leadership in terms of leading groups of people working together was experienced. A tremendous amount of work fell on the intern alone. That, however, was not without benefit. On the contrary, the project challenged the intern to take on significant supervisory efforts, including setting educational goals, designing instructional units, revising existing structures, monitoring new arrangements, and utilizing specialized personnel. To that end, the research, observations, planning, writing, interviewing, and establishment of the revised mentoring program allowed the intern to enjoy many leadership experiences.

The plan will be turned over to the Vice Principal, who is in charge of the mentoring efforts at BCHS. The few meetings on the subject between the Vice Principal and intern led the intern to understand that the plan the intern created

would be used for the upcoming school year. A description of the plan follows.

Implications

New Teacher Assimilation Program

In an effort to provide a more effective assimilation and promote more professional growth among new members of the faculty, Burlington City High School will employ a revised new teacher mentoring program beginning in the 2000-2001 school year. The effort will be called the New Teacher Assimilation Program.

Burlington City High School will assign mentors to first-year teachers, while new teachers with experience will be assigned a "buddy." The mentors to the first-year teachers will be required to meet state and school expectations, while the buddy system will meet only school expectations. Both mentors and buddies should have a minimum of three years of employment in the school system and should be members of the same department as the new employee. These matches will be made as soon as possible after the new teacher has signed a contract, with all matches being made by the end of the new teacher's first teaching week. Administrators and Department Chairs will collaborate to assign the matches.

The New Teacher Assimilation Program will be comprised of three components: Orientation, Mentoring, and Roundtables. Throughout the school year, there will be approximately eight meetings for the members of the program with the administrator in charge of the program, as well as monthly meetings between first-year teachers and mentors (to be scheduled and structured by the mentor and first-year teacher, following state and school guidelines). The goal of the program is to provide professional support and guidance for new staff

members, while providing an atmosphere of collegiality and motivation for professional growth.

The orientation sessions will be mandatory meetings for all new teachers. The orientation sessions will include, but not be limited to: the August meeting for the introduction of health benefits, pension information, and other administrative paperwork; a new teacher orientation meeting prior to the first day of classes in September for the purpose of district and building orientations and the community tour; a September meeting for explanations of building and district policies; and a late September or early October question and answer session. The administrator may call additional mandatory orientation meetings as the need arises.

The second component of the New Teacher Assimilation Program will address the mentoring relationship between first-year teachers and their assigned veteran staff mentor. The state requires that all first-year teachers be provided a mentor. Additionally, Burlington City High School has, within the past school year, adopted a set of expectations for the mentoring relationship, including various forms on which the mentor must document strengths and weaknesses of the new teacher, as well as evidence of professional growth. The mentor is expected, as deemed necessary by both the first-year teacher and the mentor, to provide professional support, be a source of information and inspiration, and assist the first-year teacher in her acclimation to the job. In the effort to provide support and guidance, the school will require formal monthly meetings between the mentor and first-year teacher. As indicated earlier, the scheduling of the meetings will be determined within the mentoring relationship, as will the subjects of discussion. However, the monthly meetings are to be documented in summary form and submitted to the administrator in charge of

the New Teacher Assimilation Program. Doing so will ensure the novice teacher and the administration with written verification that every effort is being made to provide the teacher with support, guidance, and motivation for professional growth, which are the goals of this program.

For experienced teachers new to the district, Burlington City High School will assign buddies. Like a mentor for a first-year teacher, the buddy system will act as a method for providing teachers new to the district with an available source for information. Unlike a mentoring relationship, the buddy system will not require paperwork documenting evidence of professional growth. Experienced teachers new to the district have more of a need for orientation to the district than for professional guidance and support, although that will still be made available to the new teachers by their buddies.

The third component of the New Teacher Assimilation Program is Roundtables. As much of the research on new teacher mentoring shows, and responses from the intern's interviews with veteran teachers suggests, providing new teachers with a forum to discuss their experiences and receive feedback and support from their peers is essential to assimilation into a new district and into the profession. Burlington City High School recognizes the importance of professional collegiality and will offer throughout the school year three Roundtable discussions at "attendance is strongly recommended" meetings, open to both first-year teachers and experienced teachers new to the district. The administrator in charge of the New Teacher Assimilation Program may propose topics for discussion, or may open the floor to suggestions. The Roundtable discussions should provide an opportunity for all who are present to speak and receive feedback. To that end, the administrator should facilitate the meeting and maintain focus, but allow for an atmosphere of informal discussion.

Sample areas for discussion may include classroom management, discipline, handling stress, and other areas of professional concern. The new teachers should be encouraged to participate, encouraged to consider suggestions made by peers, and encouraged to offer support and guidance to their fellow new teachers. Roundtable discussions can open doors to professional collaboration for in the classroom activities as well as behind the scenes preparation and planning. Developing a source of support and guidance within the group of new teachers will enhance the support already provided by the mentors and buddies, and will strengthen the “team” atmosphere throughout the school.

The implementation of the New Teachers’ Assimilation Program will require the support of administrators, veteran staff members, and the new teachers. However, if the effort is put forth, new teachers to Burlington City High School should experience a guided assimilation into the district and profession. Additionally, veteran staff will have opportunities for professional collaboration and honing of their teaching skills. Overall, support among the professionals of the school district should become stronger.

Timeline for Implementation

June 2000: Principal informs general faculty of the desire to create a pool of mentors and buddies. Basic criteria is given: teacher must have tenure in the district and be a willing participant in the program. Pool of mentors should be established before the end of June.

June - Sept 2000: As new teachers are hired, Principal and Department

Chairpersons match mentors from the pool with incoming first-year teachers and buddies with incoming experienced new teachers.

August 2000: New teachers attend the district orientation.

First week of

Sept 2000: New teachers attend the building orientation. Mentors meet with Principal to discuss state and district expectations regarding paperwork.

Third week of

September: Mandatory meeting for new teachers to discuss policies and practices of the building

Monthly: Mentors and mentees meet to discuss observations, weaknesses and strengths, concerns, or simply “touch base” to get a sense of progress. Meeting times and topics are at the discretion of the pair.

First week in

October: Mandatory meeting for new teachers to engage in a Q & A session. Various representatives will comprise the panel: Head of Guidance, School Nurse, Union Rep., and an administrator

November: Roundtable discussion: proposed topics - classroom management and discipline. All new teachers, first-year or with experience, are encouraged to attend.

February: Roundtable discussion: proposed topic - handling stress. All new teachers, first-year or with experience, are encouraged to attend.

- May: Roundtable discussion: proposed topic - getting involved. All new teachers, first-year or with experience, are encouraged to attend.
- June: Mandatory Meeting- purpose is two-fold: first, the participants will reflect on the year, and second, will enjoy an end of year celebration for program participants. Certificates of participation will be handed out, and refreshments will be served. This is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the new staff, and show appreciation for the immeasurable support provided by the mentors and buddies.

Burlington City High School stands to experience a significant change in its approach to nurturing new teachers. From sporadic meetings between administrators, mentors and new staff, to a structured calendar of meetings and scheduled discussion topics, the support offered to new teachers will significantly increase. If the program is effective, in that new teachers feel a strong support system behind them throughout their first year in the district, then the faculty as a whole will be bolstered. Additionally, as there is an increased focus on fostering colleague cooperation, new teachers and veteran staff alike will be exposed to a variety of teaching and classroom management strategies. Professional growth should result.

Future Study

The New Teacher Assimilation Program should continue to evolve beyond its inception year. A plan has been set in place, but as state and district

expectations change, and the needs of new teachers continue to be identified, the program should be revised and updated.

Perhaps most significant area for future study is the need to identify the needs of mentors, and provide training for the mentors prior to engaging in the mentoring process. According to Ms. Nancy Smith, Assistant Principal at the C.W. Lewis Middle School in Blackwood, NJ, and presenter at the Second Annual Leadership Conference Mentoring Seminar, mentors should “have knowledge on such topics as adult learning, characteristics and perceived needs of beginning teachers, teacher socialization, good teaching skills, proficient conferencing skills, and familiarity with systematic observation of teaching” (Smith, 2000). It is the district’s responsibility to provide training in those and other areas, but accommodations for that segment of the program require further study.

In addition, of particular study should be the impact of the roundtable discussions. With the implementation of the New Teacher Assimilation Program, it will be the first time guided sessions for sharing experiences among colleagues has been offered incrementally throughout the first year of a teacher’s employment at Burlington City High School. Future study of the program will reveal the effectiveness of roundtable discussions, as well as imperative topics.

Finally, the reviews by new teachers at the end of the 2000-2001 school year should provide insight as to the overall effectiveness of the revised new teacher mentoring program, to be known as the New Teacher Assimilation Program, and prepare those involved with information needed to continue further development of the program.

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Appendix A
Open-Ended Questions Survey of New Teachers to BCCHS

Open-Ended Questions Survey of New Teachers to BCHS/BCJS

If you have not been assigned a mentor, please skip to question #6.

1. Approximately how often do you and your mentor communicate regarding your professional responsibilities?

2. Is this often enough for you? (or too often?)

3. Approximately how often does your mentor visit your classroom as you are teaching?

4. Has your mentor been able to answer (or find answers to) all of your questions?

5. In your own words, please explain (in specific detail) in what ways your mentoring relationship has been effective and/or in what ways it has not been effective:

6. Other than a mentor, to whom have you turned the most for guidance or support? (you do not have to name names: just indicate whether it was a fellow teacher in your department, fellow teacher in another department,

an administrator, etc. . .)

7. At this point in the year, do you feel the New Teacher Meetings you have attended have provided you with information you need to be successful at BCHS/JS? Why or why not?

8. What topics or opportunities would you like to see offered at future New Teacher Meetings?

9. Do you feel that all teachers new to the district, whether “first year” or “with experience,” should be assigned a mentor or “teaching buddy”? Why or why not?

10. As a teacher new to this district, what recommendations would you make for an improved New Teacher Mentoring Program? Please be specific with your suggestions!

Appendix B
Compilation of Responses to New Teacher Survey

New Teacher Mentoring - Survey Results

The following is a compilation of the responses to the Open-Ended Questions Survey of New Teachers to BCHS:

If you have not been assigned a mentor, please skip to question #6.

1. Approximately how often do you and your mentor communicate regarding your professional responsibilities?
 - *all the time- daily!*
 - *we talk almost everyday but meet officially once a month*
 - *regularly*
 - *we talk daily*

2. Is this often enough for you? (or too often?)
 - *yes- it's great*
 - *perfect, plus I know she is always there for me if I need her!*
 - *yes*
 - *yes*

3. Approximately how often does your mentor visit your classroom as you are teaching?
 - *many times a day*
 - *every so often, she pops in and out*
 - *weekly*
 - *no set schedule- but does visit*

4. Has your mentor been able to answer (or find answers to) all of your questions?
 - *yes*
 - *yes- she is great*
 - *yes*
 - *yes*

5. In your own words, please explain (in specific detail) in what ways your mentoring relationship has been effective and/or in what ways it has not been effective:
 - *-- is just super supportive and we work well together. We share the workload and back each other up constantly*

- *a tremendous help*
 - *need a similar schedule to meet during day*
 - *My mentor has offered support, advice and answers to any question I might have. I usually run what I have planned for the week by her to see what she feels about the material. I feel pretty lucky about the mentor I have this year.*
6. Other than a mentor, to whom have you turned the most for guidance or support? (you do not have to name names: just indicate whether it was a fellow teacher in your department, fellow teacher in another department, an administrator, etc. . .)
- *department chair (mentioned several times)*
 - *fellow teacher in department (mentioned on almost every survey)*
 - *teachers in the same lunch period (mentioned twice)*
7. At this point in the year, do you feel the New Teacher Meetings you have attended have provided you with information you need to be successful at BCHS/JS? Why or why not?
- *more helpful so far to first-year teachers- redundant info for experienced teachers*
 - *somewhat*
 - *No. The information sessions were held too late in the year, after we needed the information*
 - *somewhat helpful*
8. What topics or opportunities would you like to see offered at future New Teacher Meetings?
- *topics have been appropriate*
 - *disciplinary measures and procedures*
 - *more info on the writing rubric and explanation of the HSPA and GEPA about a month after school starts*
 - *information on classification of students (how to grade and support ED and LD students)*
 - *shortcuts for marking papers*
 - *guidelines for grading*
 - *explanation of absentee and cut system and expectations for classroom teacher's records*
9. Do you feel that all teachers new to the district, whether "first year" or "with experience," should be assigned a mentor or "teaching buddy"? Why or why not?

- *I feel that any extra help or support would be welcomed by any new staff member*
- *First-year teachers could benefit, but experienced teachers might feel inhibited by the presence of a mentor or teaching buddy.*
- *Yes- a mentor or buddy just to get through the small stuff*
- *No- that is what the dept. head is for*
- *Yes! As long as that person helping is willing to help!*
- *Yes- I have someone to go to that I do not feel I am bothering because that person was assigned to me and the person usually has the answer to my question.*

10. As a teacher new to this district, what recommendations would you make for an improved New Teacher Mentoring Program? Please be specific with your suggestions!

- *special ed staff should be required to have a mentor, whether first-year or with experience*
- *give everyone a dedicated mentor teacher professional*
- *there should be a meeting early in the year regarding report cards, interim reports and other paperwork requirements.*

Appendix C
Compilation of Responses by Veteran Staff to Interview
Questions Regarding New Teacher Mentoring

Veteran Interviews- Response Compilation

The intern and teachers being interviewed talked at great length about first-year teaching experiences, as well as particular issues regarding the current new teachers and mentoring program. The responses below present a compilation of the responses to the six questions asked of each teacher interviewed.

1. Are you involved in the mentoring program this year?
 - *only those teachers designated as mentors for the first-year teachers said yes*
 - *many teachers suggested that they have assisted new teachers this year informally*
2. (For assigned mentors) Did you feel prepared to mentor a new teacher?
 - *"I know the ropes, and I'm experienced, but more clear cut guidelines or expectations from the school would have allowed me to feel as an integral part of the program."*
 - *all said yes, based on their own years of experience*
 - *all suggested that not much has been done by the administration to "check-up" on the mentoring relationships*
3. Do you think first-year teachers should be assigned mentors?
 - *all said yes*
4. Do you think experienced teachers new to the district should be assigned mentors?
 - *all agreed that even experienced teachers need questions answered when new to a district*
 - *most suggested the implementation of a buddy system (not as formal as mentoring, yet a source for information and guidance)*
5. What was most helpful to you when you were a first-year teacher or a teacher new to a district?
 - *having someone to talk, vent, and plan with, and bounce ideas off of*
 - *receiving positive feedback*
 - *"Talking with other new teachers to reaffirm that I wasn't the only one going through the hell I felt I was going through."*

6. What would you suggest be included in a revised new teacher mentoring program?

- *more orientation meetings for new teachers on building practices*
- *time compensation for mentors*
- *opportunities for new teachers to discuss experiences*
- *more training for mentors*
- *buddies for new teachers with experience*
- *more opportunities for collaboration among veteran and new staff members*

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