Implementing a teacher mentor program

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IMPLEMENTING A TEACHER MENTOR PROGRAM

by
Nan L. Holland

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Master of Arts Degree of The Graduate School at Rowan University 4/18/02

Approved by: Professor

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Abstract

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Implementing a Teacher Mentoring Program
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Dr. Theodore Johnson
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The purpose of the study was to develop a mentor program for novice teachers that will ease the inevitable anxiety that occurs during the first year and increase the retention rate of new teachers to the profession and at Camden High School. The intern monitored this program as its coordinator and conducted mentor training through regular workshops.

Management decisions related to mentoring influenced the quality of instruction and learning of both mentors and novices. Camden High School transmitted the school culture to novice teachers in a well-developed program. Through interviews, surveys, classroom visitations, reflective journals, and personal contact with a mentor, the intern was able to compile data to determine the effectiveness of the program.

It was clear that teacher mentors who participated in this study were forced to analyze their own craft knowledge by making explicit what had become automatic over the years in their teaching. In observing the responses of novice teachers over time, the intern saw that with mentor assistance, things that were of concern to them when the school year began became less of an issue as the year progressed. Camden High School’s program will be continued, and according to the participants, it reached its goals.
Each year, we have received many new teachers at Camden High School. Because the proper preparatory measures to offer assistance to new teachers were nonexistent, many teachers did not return the following year. The intern developed a mentor program that eased anxiety and increased the retention rate of new teachers.
Acknowledgments

I am sincerely grateful to my husband, Roy Holland, for his patience and love. To you, my dear, I say thank you. I also want to give special thanks to my daughter, Ursula Horton, for her professionalism, support, and encouragement throughout this process.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

What impact did a peer-mentoring program for teachers ultimately have on teachers new to Camden High School? Each year, we have received an increasing influx of new teachers at Camden High School, and many of them have entered the profession through the alternate route. Because the school had not instituted a mentoring program to offer assistance to new teachers, many of them do not return the following year. There had been no structured system in place to offer new teachers guidance with the school curriculum, daily lesson planning, or other responsibilities they were expected to fulfill. The intern desired to explore the area of new staff performance by developing a process that will enable new staff members to feel more sufficiently equipped to assume their professional duties. The intern observed a prominent need to develop and implement some kind of plan for our new faculty members.

In successful mentoring programs in other schools, mentors were provided with regular support throughout the year, not just during the early training phase. Mentoring-in-practice typically raised questions and concerns that were not evident in mentoring-in-theory. The selected mentors ordinarily needed, as well as valued, sharing a regular discourse about their mentoring duties.
Focus of the Study

Mentoring is a complex and specialized responsibility for a teacher, and prospective mentors require early training and ongoing support. Leaders at Camden High School must plan to make special efforts in mentoring and must ensure that our school and district personnel understand that mentoring is only one part of new teacher assistance. The effectiveness of this mentoring program depended on the resources allocated such as mentor training and release time for mentoring activities that was one of the limitations of the study.

Mentoring, when conducted under the best circumstances, is a productive professional activity that supports new teachers, gives veteran teachers the chance to contribute to their profession, fosters a close working relationship among teachers and other school professionals as members of a learning community, and leads to improved teaching and learning. Additionally, through mentoring veteran teachers can improve their practice and help make the teaching experience a positive one for new teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to develop a new teacher program with mentors that will ease the inevitable anxiety that occurs during those early months on the job. As a result of having a mentor teacher who will observe classes, answer questions, and provide direction, this program will reduce new teacher stress. The intern wanted to monitor this
program to determine if teachers would volunteer and participate in the training sessions that occurred. The goal was that through this program, young teachers would want to stay in the teaching profession and at Camden High School.

The leadership skills that were developed through this project promoted the success of all students by ensuring management decisions that influenced the quality of instruction and student learning. The intern studied previously developed mentor programs, and monitored and implemented a program that fit the needs of our school culture. The program attempted to minimize the sometimes lonely and traumatic “sink or swim” experiences of new teachers and to maximize conditions that enabled them to become effective teachers quickly. The experiences of teachers during their first few years of work are influential in setting a direction for their entire career. However, without systematic guidance, new teachers seized temporary and sometimes undesirable measures as permanent solutions for making it through the year or even through the day.

Mentoring also enabled veteran teachers to establish a special relationship, certainly professional and often personal, with a new teacher just entering the profession or an experienced teacher new to a school. When reasonable care was taken in selecting mentors and pairing them with beginners, this bond typically continued long after the official mentoring relationship ended, according to the research. This “connection” between mentors and protégés was a key feature in promoting the school as a learning community of professionals. Moreover, teachers whose preparation for mentoring includes learning about the developmental needs of beginning teachers will inevitably
find many ways to assist newcomers, even when they are not formally assigned to be mentors.

Veteran teachers frequently characterized working closely with novice teachers as a source of fresh ideas about curriculum and instruction that were immediately useful to them. Like cooperating teachers, mentor teachers emphasized that working with a new teacher required continual self-analysis of their own work, as they were asked to make explicit what had become automatic over the years in terms of procedural, curricular, instructional, and classroom management matters. Mentoring gave experienced teachers a way to validate their expertise and to “pass the torch” of their craft’s wisdom to a new generation of teachers. Additionally, it gave novice teachers special access to the experienced teacher’s expertise and wisdom, while simultaneously enriching the careers of those veterans.

Of course, achieving the promise of mentoring as a professional activity did not happen by magic. It required planning and special efforts by all of the school leaders to avoid potential pitfalls. The role of the mentor is a specialized and complex one. To assume, for example, that good or even outstanding teachers will be successful mentors without special preparation and support is dangerous, especially if the intended goals of mentoring extend beyond providing emotional support and information about policies and procedures, to providing technical assistance. In addition, the teachers most likely to volunteer to serve as mentors are usually professionally active, and the demands of mentoring may require that they be freed from some other professional obligations to be effective mentors.
The intended organizational change was the formulation of staff development and volunteerism on the part of the staff. The findings of the study were reported to the administration, faculty, and the Superintendent. This program reduced the number of frustrated, new teachers who simply were confused about their role and expectations in our school. This led to teachers having a more successful first year in our school with other staff and students. It helped them teach more effectively, helped children retain more, and ultimately, a better school resulted.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this mentoring program was to improve the teaching performance, to increase the retention of promising new teachers during their first year, to promote the personal and professional well-being of new teachers, and finally, to transmit the culture of the system to new teachers. By setting aside 30 minutes weekly throughout the school year, teachers learned important survivor skills. The teacher mentors chosen for the program were veteran teachers. Additionally, the program required a change in all participating teachers' schedules and the linking of common periods. These programs built on other new teacher orientation forms and combined them all into a New Teacher Handbook.

The intern used a variety of data gathering techniques. Observations and interviews were the most important tools used. The intern examined and followed new teachers throughout their first year of teaching. Also, the intern used checklists and
surveys to assist in formulating and compiling the results. The information was gathered throughout the months of March to May of this academic school year.

The research genre was, as indicated, a proactive research project with groundwork that began this fall with approval of the programs by the Board of Education. Additionally, meetings were held to set up work groups and do the scheduling logistics. The intern analyzed the process continually to determine what needed to be changed and reintroduced. Between February and March, surveys were distributed, collected, and analyzed. The findings were presented to the administration, faculty, the superintendent, and Board of Education concerning the effectiveness of the program.

Even with the best of intentions, prospective mentors need early training and ongoing support. Studies of new teacher mentoring programs have produced rich and useful professional literature regarding the knowledge and skills associated with effective mentoring. Without access to this information, mentors are disadvantaged; so to optimize the benefits of mentoring, mentors should be familiar with what is already known about teacher development, stages of teacher growth, and the needs of beginning teachers. They also should be familiar with the principles of adult development and adult learning since, as mentors, they function as adult educators, a role similar, but not identical to teaching children.

Finally, in helping to induct novice teachers into an organization known as “school,” mentors should also understand schools as complex organizations with social and workplace norms, sanctions, and history. Mentors also need training in skills that are not typically part of teacher preparation. Although it is possible to transfer many of the
communication skills that are part of teaching to mentoring, mentors are most successful if they have opportunities to study and practice conferencing skills. Mentors also benefit from assistance in becoming skillful in the systematic observation of teaching to provide novice teachers with information about their teaching that is objective, non-threatening, and responsive to their needs. If mentors are intended to influence how novice teachers teach and not just to offer them support and encouragement, their preparation should include training in peer coaching.

Definition of Terms

- **Alternate Route Teachers** – A teacher of the alternate route is one who has either received their degree in the subject area they are teaching without teacher training, or has entered the teaching profession directly from the workforce without teacher training. These teachers are allowed to enter the profession of teaching under close supervision and scrutiny.

- **Teacher Mentor** – The word “mentor” originated from the character named Mentor in Homer’s epic poem, “The Odyssey.” Mentor was the wise and trusted companion of Odysseus under whose care, his son, Telemachus, was placed when he left on his journey. Mentor can be both male and female as evidenced by the fact that Athena, Goddess of Wisdom, used the guise of Mentor to serve as the counselor or advisor to Telemachus when he ventured forth on his journey to meet his father. Mentor is the personification of wisdom, trust, and faith. Since then, a mentor has been a respected
and experienced teacher who provides someone with limited experience access to his or her experience and wisdom in their area of expertise. A mentor is a seasoned teacher who lends support, guidance, and craft knowledge to a new teacher.

- **Novice Teacher** – A novice is one who is new to an occupation, activity, or is a beginner. Teachers who are in their first year of teaching are considered novices.

- **Protégés** – Teachers who are in their first year of teaching are considered protégés to their mentors.

- **Anticipation Phase** – The Anticipation Phase begins during the student teaching portion of pre-service programs. The closer student teachers get to complete their assignment, the more excited and anxious they become about their first teaching positions. They tend to romanticize the role of the teacher and the position. New teachers enter with a tremendous commitment to making a difference and a somewhat idealistic view of how to accomplish their goals. This feeling of excitement carries new teachers into the first weeks of school.

- **Survival stage** – The first month of school is very overwhelming for new teachers. They are learning a great deal, and at a rapid pace. New teachers are constantly bombarded with a variety of problems and situations they had not anticipated. Despite increased field experiences and required courses in teacher preparation programs, new teachers are caught off guard by the realities of teaching. During this phase most new teachers are struggling to keep their heads above water. They
become very focused and consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching. There is little time to stop and reflect on their experiences.

- **Disillusionment Phase** – After six to eight weeks of non-stop work, new teachers enter this phase. The intensity and length of this phase varies among new teachers. The extensive time commitment, the realization that things are not going as smoothly as they would like, no hope of improvement is seen, and low morale contribute to this period of disenchantment. New teachers begin questioning both their commitment and their competence. Many new teachers become physically ill during this phase from the added stress and insufficient sleep.

- **Rejuvenation Phase** – This phase is characterized by a slow rise in the new teacher’s attitude toward teaching. It generally begins in January. Having a winter break makes a tremendous difference for new teachers. It allows them to resume a more normal lifestyle with plenty of rest, food, exercise, and time for family and friends. The vacation is the first opportunity that new teachers have for organizing materials and planning curriculum. It is time for them to sort through materials that have accumulated and prepare new ones. This breath of fresh air gives novice teachers a broader perspective with renewed hope. They seem to be ready to put past problems behind them.

- **Reflection Phase** – The reflection phase, beginning in May, is a particularly invigorating time for first-year teachers. Reflecting over the year with other new teachers, support teachers, or even by themselves, they highlight events that were
successful and those that were not. They think about the various changes that they plan to make the following year in management, curriculum, and teaching strategies. The end is in sight and they have almost made it, but more importantly, a vision emerges as to what their second year will look like which brings them to a new phase of anticipation.

Limitations of the Study

The school has approximately twenty new teachers each year. This program provided first year teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and confidence they needed in order to minimize their risk of failure in our large, impersonal, high school. It provided them with a veteran teacher who guided them and worked closely with them. The study was limited to all new teachers coming to Camden High School and veteran teachers in their subject and grade area (perhaps as many as 10 subjects). Further limitations were set around the time of day they had common mentoring time, and by whom the assigned mentor was, and funds available for this program.

Setting of the Study

Camden City Public Schools is the largest urban school district in South Jersey with 19,000 students. The district is located in one of the poorest cities in America and is the poorest city in New Jersey. The city was the site of many industries years ago and was a thriving urban center on the move. It has lost its industrial base and has been a city
described by *Time Magazine* as "a city the world forgot." The city was on the front page of *Time Magazine* in the early 1990’s with a headline that read, “Who Could Live Here?” This article served to put the city in the spotlight, and the lawsuit against the State of New Jersey called Abbott v Burke began to get traction. The Abbott in Abbott v Burke was a student in the Camden City Public Schools who graduated and sued the State, because he felt he received an inadequate education and that the State had failed to uphold its constitution that guarantees every child a thorough and efficient education. The case began some twenty-five years ago, and has helped the city to receive some of the needed funds so that they can offer programs for its 19,000 students.

The site chosen for the study was Camden High School. The teachers were new to our school and/or the district. This was a natural place for this activity, because the turnover of the teaching population is very high. The high turnover is due to the reputation that the school district has for low-test scores, low salary, high absentee rates among staff and students, crumbling schools, and deteriorating buildings. Since the 1950’s, the economic base of Camden has been declining. Employers and businesses have moved out into the suburbs, and those residents with the means have followed them. There has been some limited growth, but overall the business climate has been poor. Camden lacks a strong tax base for supporting public education. The infrastructure to support new businesses is of poor quality, going back to the last century in places. This makes it difficult to attract new companies into the city. Therefore, the vast majority (89%) of the money used to support Camden City Schools comes from the State of New
Jersey; 6% of the money comes from the Federal Government, and as a result passing a referendum in Camden is never a problem.

The student mobility rate for Camden High School is 38.3% as of 1998, and it has not changed very much. The poverty rate is 47%, and as a result, education is put on the back burner for some of our students. The general education level of the city indicates that only 48.2% of the population has a high school diploma or better. Additionally, the dropout rate for Camden High School is 11.5%. The median income is just over $17,000, and these statistics make it difficult to attract and retain new teachers, in such a way that a peer mentor program would go along way toward keeping our teachers.

The community that is served by Camden High School consists of many nationalities and cultures. Many families are headed by a single parent or have a grandparent raising the children. There is a large Hispanic population attending Camden High School, and many are enrolled in the bilingual program. These students may be American born with Puerto Rican roots or have recently arrived from any of a number of Central and South American countries, such as: Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Costa Rica, etc. Among the African American population most are American born, but some do come from African countries like Nigeria and Ethiopia or the Caribbean countries, such as the Bahamas or Jamaica. This culturally diverse population actually makes school interesting and exciting, but also challenging, working with different types of people.
Organization of the Study

The heart of effective mentoring is the time that mentors and their protégés spend together. Mentors are generally interested in being provided with some time released from other obligations to engage in central mentoring activities. Mentors and protégés need time to discuss the beginner’s experiences, to engage in collaborative problem solving, and to set professional goals. To include classroom observations as a mentoring activity requires additional time for the classroom visitor. If the program is limited to only shared lunch and preparation periods, that infrastructure ignores the purposes for a teacher-mentoring program. Our teachers benefited a great deal from an established and structured teacher-mentoring program.

What reasonably can be expected of mentoring is significantly related to the amount of time available for mentoring. This time can be maneuvered through obtaining substitute teachers, administrators willing to take over classes, other teachers who help out by covering classes, or including the students of the mentor or novice teacher in their own classroom activities. Perhaps the greatest possible pitfall for mentoring and especially for mentors is failing to understand the role of mentoring within the broader context of novice teacher induction. Leslie Huling-Austin (1990) points out that the success of novice teachers depends largely on the teachers themselves, workplace conditions, and induction support. Indeed, novice teachers bring to their work varying degrees of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for good teaching. It is
inappropriate to view the primary role of mentors to be the remediation of weak teachers. At the same time, mentoring is very appropriate for even the best-prepared and promising novice teachers to bring them up to “full speed” more quickly and completely than might otherwise be the case.

Even though they may be well prepared and effective, mentors usually have no direct control over central features of beginning teachers’ work assignments (e.g., number of preparations, types of courses, schedule, duty assignment, “floating” or “carting” between multiple classrooms). Taken together, novice teachers themselves and working conditions may account for more of their occupational health and well being than anything mentors can offer. Accordingly, the difficulties or resignation of a new teacher, so often devastating to a mentor, may be the result of conditions over which the mentor has little influence. The challenge for educational leaders interested in maximizing the benefits of mentoring is to ensure that school and district personnel — teachers, administrators, support and clerical staff, school board members, and even parents — understand the role of mentoring as just one part of novice teacher assistance. For example, teachers may incorrectly view a mentor as a “fix it” person. The mentor-protégé relationship is a special one, but it does not supplant the other professional relationships that novice teachers have with their principal, department chairperson, or district curriculum specialist.

More importantly, having mentors does not negate the professional obligation of all teachers to assist newcomers in making a smooth transition from outsider to insider. Mentoring programs complement but do not replace other forms of novice teacher
assistance, including orientations, special meetings or workshops for new teachers, and regular staff development activities. Finally, the expected outcome of the mentoring concept depends largely on the resources allocated to it, like mentor training and released time for mentoring activities.

Beginning a new job is difficult in most occupations, but even more so in teaching, a profession that generally assigns the more difficult responsibilities to less experienced teachers. It is certainly true that some of those who leave teaching move into administration, counseling, library/media work, and other education specialties, and that some of them selected teaching in error as a career. However, many of those who leave teaching are highly qualified individuals who were unsupported at the beginning of their career.

Being a new teacher is a challenging experience. Novice teachers often use powerful metaphors and similes to describe the feeling. They describe images, like balancing on the edge of a steep cliff, bungee jumping, driving down a strange highway at night going 60 miles per hour, traveling in a foreign land and not knowing the language, and learning to walk again on a pair of backward-facing feet (Ganser 1997).

In a similar fashion, mentors use metaphors that are equally as powerful and revealing. They compare mentoring to close interpersonal relationships (e.g. parent/child, spouse/spouse). Components of mentoring are described, like variations of teaching (e.g., coaching), problem-prevention emergency services (e.g., 24-hour automobile towing services, safety net for a trapeze artist), providing directions (e.g., a directional compass, leading an expedition over familiar territory), and promoting growth
and development (gardening, making a custom garment) (Ganser 1998b). Under the right set of circumstances, mentoring is a productive professional activity that supports new teachers and provides experienced teachers with a unique way to contribute to their profession. This contribution can foster a close working relationship among teachers and other school professionals as members of a learning community, and that ultimately results in enhanced teaching and improved learning.
Chapter 2
Reviewing the Literature

Introduction

During the past decade much research has been done concerning the need for mentor programs to assist the novice teacher. The mentor literature indicates the importance of providing assistance to novice teachers (Huling-Austin, 1989; Odell, 1989). Odell (1992) suggests that teacher mentor programs may indeed work to reduce the attrition rate of new teachers. In her study, the normally high attrition rate for novice teachers was reduced to the lower rate usually associated with more experienced teachers. The scope and content of mentor programs vary across the nation. Huling Austin (1986) found four major goals for a mentor program. First, to improve the teaching performance; second, to increase the retention of promising novice teachers during the induction years; third, to promote the personal and professional well-being of novice teachers; and last, to satisfy mandated requirements related to induction and certification.

Since this list was originally published, Huling-Austin (1988) added a fifth goal to the list, which is to transmit the culture of the system to novice teachers. Odell (1989) seemed to agree with this when she stated, “novice teachers should be integrated into the
social system of the school, the school district, and the community.” Thies-Sprinthall and Gerier (1990) argue that novice teachers need more than supervision by a master teacher. They have designed a program to include support groups for novice teachers. These counselor-led groups meet in an informal setting to discuss common issues and share ideas. The purpose of these meetings is to get the novice teacher to think about themselves and their teaching. The counselor asks appropriate questions and becomes a sharing member of the group.

This approach includes questioning and reflecting as a strong component used in these programs, but only in the context of the mentor and the novice teacher. Lee and Barnett (1994) stress the importance of using reflective questions to allow the novice to reflect upon their own teaching. The mentor designs questions that will allow for this reflection. The same type of technique is used in the concept of Cognitive Coaching (Garmston, Linder, and Whitaker, 1993; Costa and Garniston, 1984). Cognitive coaching calls for a collaborative effort between the mentor and protégé. The mentor develops questions that encourage the novice to reflect on the teaching that occurred during an observation. The mentor then leads the novice in evaluating the teaching suggestion and making a plan for continuous improvement.

As the need and scope of mentor programs become clearer, the next logical step is to identify the types of teachers that will be able to carry out these programs. The importance of choosing the right mentor is well documented in research (Huling-Austin, 1990; Huling-Austin, 1992; Thies-Sprinthall, and Gerler, 1990). Odell (1989) suggests five criteria for the selection of mentors: (1) demonstrated excellence in teaching, (2)
demonstrated excellence in working with adults, (3) demonstrated sensitivity to the viewpoint of others, (4) demonstrated willingness to be an active and open learner, and (5) demonstrated competence in social and public relation skills.

Once the mentors have been selected, the issue of placement is extremely important (Huling Austin, 1989; Odell, 1989). The suggested guidelines for assigning mentors to novice teachers fall into three areas. First, mentors and novice teachers should be assigned by grade level and content area (Huling-Austin, 1992; Odell, 1989). This facilitates assistance with teaching strategies and content. Such an assignment may not be possible, especially in small schools, so care should be taken to find a means of enhancing the credibility of the mentor to the novice. Second, the novice teacher should be assigned a room as close to the mentor as possible (Odell, 1989). This simply facilitates the frequent meetings that are needed to provide the proper assistance. Finally, the assignment should be made with teachers using similar teaching styles and ideology (Odell, 1989). The training provided for the mentor then becomes an important factor in the induction process. In preparing the training, program designers need to keep in mind that mentors usually adopt one of three basic styles of mentoring (Huling-Austin, 1990).

Review of the Major Concepts

The first style of mentoring is that of responder. The responder encourages the novice to ask for help and then provides the assistance needed in the area of concern. Unfortunately, many of the day-to-day problems are not dealt with constructively. The
second style of mentoring is colleague. The colleague frequently initiates informal visits with the novice and whenever a concern is voiced. However, the novice, who has limited experience and view of effective teaching, determines the extent of the professional growth. The third and most effective style of mentoring is the initiator. Initiators accept the responsibility to facilitate the professional growth of the novice to the greatest degree possible. The mentor sees the novice teacher through the five stages of development of first year teachers. Knowing these stages helped the mentor develop a working relationship with their protégé. The stages are anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection. In this situation both the novice and mentor experience growth, as they work collaboratively.

With such diversity in mentoring styles, it is important to determine what should be included in the training of mentors. Research on mentoring suggests a variety of topics in which mentors need training (Huling-Austin, 1990; Odell, 1989; Gramston, Linder, and Whitaker, 1993; Lee and Barnett, 1994). Odell (1990) lists the following areas in which mentors should receive training: school district philosophy, needs, and priorities; district policies and operating procedures; working with the adult learner; stages of teacher development; concerns and needs of beginning teachers; clinical supervision; classroom observation; conferencing skills; teacher reflection; and fostering self-esteem and self-reliance in the novice teacher.

In addition, Huling-Austin (1992) suggests that mentors should be warned about unrealistic optimism in new teachers. New teachers have a tendency to believe that since their experience and training went well that teaching is not a difficult task. Mentors need
to be prepared to assist the novice with the reality shock that usually occurs during the first year (Veenman, 1984). If the role of the mentor is to be fully realized, it is necessary for the mentor to develop his/her own role by considering the individual characteristics and needs of the novice with whom he or she has been assigned (Huling-Austin, 1990). Veenman (1984) identified the needs of beginning teachers in schools that provided no assistance for novices. The needs, in rank order, were: (1) assistance with disciplining students, (2) motivating students, (3) providing for individual differences of students, (4) assessing students’ work, (5) relating to parents, (6) organizing class work, and (7) obtaining materials and supplies.

Odell (1989) observed a group of novices who were receiving assistance from their school system and compiled a different list of needs. In rank order those needs were: (1) ideas about instruction, (2) personal and emotional support, (3) advice on resources and materials for teaching, (4) information about school district policies and procedures, and (5) ideas for additional techniques on classroom management. The suggestion is made that the difference in the two rank orders might indicate that when novice teachers are in mentor programs, they might be able to focus on instructional needs rather than concentrating mainly on disciplinary issues.

Reflective questioning is a skill that must be developed. It can then be used to assist both mentors and novice teachers in doing a self-analysis for continuous progress (Lee and Barnett, 1994). The study suggests that the mentor should guide the novice in using reflective questions to analyze what happened and why. Garmston, Linder, and Whitaker (1993) expand on the use of reflective questions and move into the concept of
cognitive coaching. This concept requires the mentor and novice to work collaboratively, using reflection to gain insights and knowledge about their teaching process. Not only do mentors and novice teachers gain insight and knowledge by reflecting on their own situations, but also they will learn to work in a collaborative environment. No longer are stand alone, quick fix, “make and take” workshops viewed as adequate. Today’s staff development activities for teachers aim to create schools as learning communities, not only for the pupils they serve, but also for the professionals working in them.

A comprehensive vision of mentoring recognizes that being a mentor is a unique professional role for veteran teachers that can enhance their own professional development and career. This makes mentoring an even more desirable professional activity, beyond its part in providing beginning teachers with a more humane and professionally sound induction into teaching, than a “trial by fire” that serves neither new teachers nor their students. Understanding the benefits of mentoring for beginning teachers is important, but recognizing the promises--and the pitfalls--of mentoring for the experienced teachers who elect to serve as mentors is equally important.

New teachers need time to learn the teaching process. To facilitate this process, they should not be given full teaching loads and multiple teaching assignments (Huling-Austin, 1992; Terry, 1985). Administrators should realize that it would be the students who eventually suffer because the novice does not have the time to prepare. The new teacher needs fewer non-teaching duties, so that more time can be spent on developing lesson plans (Huling-Austin, 1992; Terry, 1985). Finally, novice teachers
need support from mentors and administrators (Terry, 1985; Odell, 1989; Huling-Austin, 1992).

As the mentor begins to assist the novice in meeting their needs, research shows that there are definite benefits for the mentor. Hawk (1986-87) interviewed teachers who were serving as mentors in schools. About two-thirds of the teachers responded that they had definitely experienced positive professional growth as a result of the experience. Their responses fell into three broad categories: (1) forced me to focus on and improve my own classroom teaching skills, (2) made me aware of the need for educators to communicate with each other, and (3) helped me better understand the principal and central office supervisors’ roles. In small discussion groups, they indicated how helpful it was to discuss specific behaviors that were expected of an effective teacher. They also mentioned the positive experience of discussing educational issues with other professionals in a helping atmosphere. All of the mentors felt that there was not enough time available to perform their roles, but the benefits they gained from the experience seemed to make the time demands more acceptable.

Odell (1989) found that mentor teachers also gained satisfaction from sharing information about teaching processes. Discussing teaching issues with novice teachers helped the mentors define the rational for their own teaching. They also discovered that training sessions for mentors provided new information about the teacher-learning process and made them more aware of the development process of becoming an effective teacher. The introduction of reflection into the process of mentoring provides benefits for both the mentor and novice teacher (Huling-Austin, 1990; Garmston, Linder, and
Whitaker, 1993; Lee and Barnett, 1994). Through reflective questioning and cognitive coaching, the mentors begin to reflect on their own teaching as well as that of their novice teachers. During this process the mentors experience professional growth of their own.

Research strongly supports the concept of mentoring novice teachers. Evidence exists that induction programs do make a difference. If the novice teacher is to be allowed to grow professionally and become the best teacher he/she can become, educational leaders need to take the research seriously. Through collegial coaching opportunities, both the mentors and novice teachers will experience growth that will benefit the students in any school.
Chapter 3
Design of the Study

Introduction

The study focused on several in depth methods that had at its core the needs and concerns of the teachers at Camden High School and the state mandated standards and guidelines for the establishment of such programs. The study created a monthly calendar of events that could be carried out beginning in August of 2001. The intern reviewed with all appropriate personnel the areas of concern that was focused on in this study. The data collection instruments used consisted of the following: the structured interview, questionnaires, reflective journaling, icebreakers, workshops with evaluations, tutorial calendar, surveys, learning modules, charts and graphs.

General Description of the Research Design

The intern used both quantitative and qualitative methods to show implementation and the results of this study. The quantitative design included the number of contacts that occurred between the new teacher and the mentor. This study conducted workshops monthly with the novice teachers and their mentors. Sessions occurred with the new
teacher and the mentor teacher to inquire about their needs, and they were provided with responses and other aids as needed. The mentor and the novice kept a record of all of these interactions.

The novice was always encouraged to ask whenever he or she was in doubt about anything. The instruments and themes for the workshops were developed through the questions that were asked. Additionally, the study refined the communication and reflection skills for perspective mentors. Moreover, the mentors were trained in coaching as a strategy for effective mentoring.

The results of the *Novice Needs Assessment Survey* (Appendix A1) determined that the needs of the novice teachers were: (1) disciplining students, (2) motivating students, (3) providing for individual differences, (4) assessing students' work, (5) relating to parents, and (6) organizing class work. The intern then designed training sessions to meet these established needs. As the mentor and novice met during their weekly sessions, modifications were made in the training schedule. Our goals were to make sure our novice teachers were as stress-free as possible during their initial year at Camden High School. The study enabled the veteran teacher to reflect on his or her own experiences as a first year teacher and a bond was developed between the mentor and novice for all to see.

When new teachers began teaching for the first time, they were excited and ready to conquer the world, but they also felt anxious and maybe even a little inadequate. The mentor built confidence, became an encourager, and gave help and advice as a part of the program. Numerous charts and graphs were designed based on the needs of the novice
and the training needed for the mentors. Mentors kept trainer notes in order to be able to recall specific information needed to implement a particular strategy. The intern then met once a month with the mentors and their protégés.

In August, novice teachers came into the school for orientation and received the first of a series of monthly training sessions that included an information packet. This information packet included the materials that would be covered in the opening meetings. The goal of the first meeting was to make sure the novice teacher would be ready for the opening day. The packet contained:

- A map of the school
- Policy books containing procedures and policies,
- Mentor assignment,
- Schedules,
- Grade books,
- Duties,
- Pay day,
- Lesson plan review sheet,
- Dress code,
- Discipline policy,
- Principal's expectations.

The mentor and the novice had regular meetings or contacts of some kind, and they both recorded an activity log. The meetings and/or contacts lasted from a few minutes to perhaps fifteen minutes daily depending upon the needs of the novice and the availability of the mentor. The teacher mentors received training so they could respond to their novice teacher during their regular daily, weekly, and monthly contacts. They
brought their logs and reflective journals to these sessions, and they were used in our discussions.

During September, the monthly focus of the program included the following:

- The first observation
- Grading
- Payday
- Discipline and classroom management
- Resources
- Lesson plans
- Time management
- Non-instructional duties
- Parent contacts and conferences, back to school night
- Paper work, paperwork, and paperwork!

Additional subjects were presented to novice teachers during this month, and they were discussed on an individual basis.

The month of October brought with it more concerns and a focused agenda for the mentors. The novice teachers’ growing concern was developing confidence in the quality of their classroom instruction. Frequently they needed their mentors to encourage them and to validate their teaching ability and effectiveness. This month was a crucial one for developing trust between mentor and novice. The general session this month established the following items:

- Time management
- Staff development vs. workdays
- The end of the marking period
- Regrouping for instruction
- Report cards
- Parent conferences
At the regular sessions with their novice teachers, the mentors continued to serve and respond to questions as needed by their own protégé.

During the month of November, mentor training prepared mentors for impending challenges and needs of their protégés to help them respond to the needs and concerns of their novice teachers. This month the focus was in the following areas:

- Motivation
- Thanksgiving schedule
- Interference from sports (students, game days, pep rallies etc.)
- Curriculum alignment
- Formal evaluations
- Fatigue

The month of November contains more holiday time than any month during the school year; thus the focus of this month was limited. Novice teachers were experiencing their lowest confidence points. They needed continued encouragement and support during these weeks.
The sessions for the months of December and January were combined, and the meetings focused on the following agenda items:

- Grades
- Exams
- End of course tests
- Exhaustion
- Money-Christmas is vacation
- Holiday programs
- Discipline-Christmas
- Self-doubt
- Mid-year crisis
- Second semester
- Finishing this term
- Pass/fail rates
- Apathy (student’s and their own)
- Student motivation
- Are my students learning?

The monthly meeting focused more on the consistent concern of the novice teacher about the effectiveness of their classroom instruction. The question, “Are my students learning?” was echoed over and over again when perusing activity logs and reflective journals, as well as in discussions. Many mentors had to work very hard at relieving doubt from the novice teachers’ minds. The new teachers had doubts about what they were doing in the classroom, and why they were doing it. Mentors struggled with this problem often, and the reflective journal and classroom visitations were helpful in reestablishing confidence.

February brought with it many new agenda items and challenges. The following items were the focus for the agenda:
- Testing and exams
- Final evaluations
- The weather
- Cabin fever (student's and their own)
- Classroom management
- Changes in student behavior
- Job security
- Facing new students and started the year again with new students
- Changing rules
- Getting it all done

The remainder of the year (March, April, May, and June) focused on these agenda items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARCH</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finishing the curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working on portfolios</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APRIL</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End of the year timelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retention Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development &amp; Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Athletics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAY</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class standing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pass/fail rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Next year's budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant disruption on the intercom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End of the year programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Their job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rehiring for next year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the regular monthly meetings, veteran teachers wrote reports about the growth of their novice. We shared in the discussion where problems arose about the handling of particular situations. It was determined that certain pairings were not the ideal situations for either mentor or novice. Where possible we worked more with that team in order to continue to meet the goals of the program. With one particular novice it became apparent that more help was needed, and the intern decided to assist the novice in addition to the mentor teacher's help. The intern made it clear to all of the novice teachers that they could share anything with the intern and the information would be confidential, and the intern would remain neutral. A relationship between one such novice was especially important and fruitful to the intern. It is the story of this novice that was followed in the development of the research instrumentation.

Development and Design of the Research Instrumentation

The novice teachers were made to feel confident about their role as a teacher by completing daily, weekly, and monthly reflection logs. This study focused on the difficulty of becoming a reflective practitioner, because it required time, practice, and an
environment supportive for the development and organization of the reflective process. Everyone connected worked hard to offer support to the novice teachers. They were encouraged to find a structure and method of reflection that suited them from the chart provided to them.

Coaching for each novice was need-specific to the individual. The mentoring relationship, the Camden City School District, and therefore, the research design instruments used were reflective of that need. It was helpful to remember that coaching is defined “as a nonjudgmental process built around a planning conference, observation, and reflective practice.” The goals of coaching that were established were (1) to establish and maintain trust; (2) to facilitate mutual learning; and (3) to enhance growth toward individuality while acting interdependently with the group/coaching partner.

Development of the Sampling and Sampling Techniques

Novice teachers were encouraged to use the following strategies to help them focus on skill development and/or problem solving:

- Research on instructional theories
- Videotaping
- Reflective questioning or reflective strategies
- Peer feedback
- Collegial dialogues
- Peer feedback
- Action research
- Journaling
- Study groups
- Reading professional literature
- Peer observations and classroom visits
- Demonstration/modeling
Camden High School is a very large urban center, and there were 21 new teachers to our school this year. Teachers used collaborative reflective conferencing and selected data to be collected on an individual need basis. Individually, the mentors described the data, analyzed the data, appraised the data by individually determining its impact, and then they transformed the information into an individual plan for their novice. At our regular meetings, we discussed their concerns and exchanged information. A great deal of the feedback in our meetings was verbal, and consequently due to time constraints, it was sometimes difficult to get the mentors to record their novice questions and write their responses down. It was extremely important to review the logs, because it enabled the intern to deliver an answer to their questions, so that the entire group might benefit.

Description of the Data Collection Approach

Novice teachers generally wanted feedback about their techniques in delivering their lessons. The intern provided a form, a graph, a survey, and other tools that were needed by the novice and the mentor in order to provide data.

The intern created the following goals and activities that were used during the training sessions for mentors and their protégés:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal/Purpose:</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To establish a set of ground rules to bring a sense of</td>
<td>Group Juggling Ground Rules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Activity/Trainer/Seminar Evaluation form (Appendix A10-13) was created and given to the mentors after the three-day training to determine the merits of the instruction that were being presented to the mentors. A chart was created to set up the different phases of the program. A sample chart follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Overview of Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II</td>
<td>Concerns of the Novice Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III</td>
<td>The Role of the Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part IV</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part V</td>
<td>The Reflection Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part VI</td>
<td>The Coaching Style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 3: Chart of Program Phases.
When mentors received the training on these topics, a perceived mastery was noted through the completion of the activities and interactions during training. If a training session needed more activities to reach the purpose, another similar type of activity was then used. Some sessions only required one or two of the activities, while others required four or five. The purpose of the mentor training was to make sure each mentor left the session feeling very confident that they were ready to do the job. The training session for the mentors took three days during the summer, so they were ready to begin in September. A request was made to the School Management Team of which the intern was a member that the volunteer teachers be paid at the regular workshop rate for attending the training. As a member, the intern stressed the importance of keeping good quality staff at our school. The mentors were paid the workshop fee, and the volunteers seemed eager and ready to begin. Most felt that this was a part of their jobs, and many commented that it made them feel they were contributing to their profession.

Overall, data was gathered from reflective journaling, group session discussions, personal conversations, and question and answer sessions. Novice teachers called the intern over the telephone, e-mailed the intern, and sent the intern questions through their mentors. This process was very informative and engaging for all of us. It truly allowed the mentors to reflect on the early experiences they had in their first schools.

Description of the Analysis Plan

Using the data from the mentors and their novice teachers, the intern was able to make an assessment to the administration and staff about the tremendous needs of novice
teachers and what a wonderful experience it is to work with them. The intern was also
able to talk about the growth of veteran teachers by having them talk about their
experiences. The intern reflected on the level of concerns that existed among all of the
participants in this process, and as a result, enabled this practice to be a continuous
process in our school. Presentations before the administration, faculty, and the Board of
Education subgroup on personnel will be used.

In looking at all the experiences of the novice teachers, an analysis of all the data
will be reviewed. The analysis will provide a course of action and allow the school to
compare the State guidelines and align them with the school’s goals. The State’s
program provides money for the mentors, which solves the funding problems. The data
will tell us how far we have come in meeting the needs of novice teachers and how far we
still need to go toward reaching all of our goals. Sensitivity for all involved in this
process is very important if we expect to be successful in creating a program where all
benefit.
Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Introduction

Every year, we receive numerous new teachers at Camden High School, and many of them do come without previous teacher training. Many of these new teachers did not return to teaching a second year, because there was not a support in place for them to offer guidance with their curriculum, daily lesson planning, or other requirements. Through observing this trend, the intern studied the area of new staff performance and developed a process that enabled new staff members to assume their duties feeling more efficient and confident.

Surveys were developed to provide information that ultimately helped new teachers have a successful first year. The intern presented a very general survey to the new staff members in early September and asked that it be returned on September 22nd. The intern received all surveys and began analyzing the data from the surveys. The first survey was named the Novice Needs Assessment Survey (Appendix A1) which served to analyze the tremendous anxiety felt by the novice teachers beginning teaching for the first time. For some of them, walking into the classroom that first day was very traumatic. The intern was able to use the responses to select the right mentor for each
new teacher. This information was shared with the principal on a continuous basis to solicit input and create assignments. The intern combined the scores and tallied the results. The findings appear below.

Teachers rated the following items from 1 for the lowest in importance to 5 for the highest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating students to learn</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplining students as needed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing for individual differences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of student progress</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to students</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating to parents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching to the curriculum</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing students for State and other standardized testing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining good professional relationships with your colleagues</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TABLE 4: Novice Needs Assessment Survey average results.*

This information helped the intern plan the first new teacher workshop that took place on September 26th. At our first session, mentors were assigned and an agenda was set for our monthly meetings that were scheduled for the last Wednesday in each month. Mentors were asked to meet with their assigned new teacher each week for at least 30 minutes, complete the following forms, and give them to the intern weekly:

- Weekly Mentor/Mentee Activity Log
- Weekly Interview Questions
- Alternate Weekly Interview Questions
- Teacher/Novice Contact Chart
- Novice Record and Evaluation of Contact with Teacher Mentor
Additionally, the intern distributed the *Novice Teacher Survey* (Appendix A2) to our 21 new staff members at our September 26th meeting as a part of the data gathering for agenda purposes in order that the planning for the very first mentor meeting could occur. All of the surveys were returned. This survey asked novice teachers to react to some general questions about teaching. It was apparent that the teachers were eager for the help of a mentor. The intern gathered the materials and began to analyze the data. The following are the results of the survey prior to the mentor assignments being completed:

**Novice Teacher Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are you most concerned about?</td>
<td>I'm concerned about whether my students are learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is your greatest fear about teaching?</td>
<td>That I won't be a very effective teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What do you need to know that will help you in the classroom?</td>
<td>Help with classroom management. Tell me how I get more teaching supplies. Tell me how to do a grade book and I need help with discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you have a mentor?</td>
<td>No mentor has been assigned to me yet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TABLE 5: Novice Teacher Survey cross-section (first 4 questions).*

The next portion of the survey was given periodically throughout the year to see if changes occurred based on the work of the teacher mentor and experience gained in the classroom.
5. Rank the following items in priority order? [1- lowest; 5- highest]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>February</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivating Students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing class work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading students’ work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Meetings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher lounge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 6: Novice Teacher Survey - sample of one novice’s responses over six month period (question 5).

In observing the responses of one novice teacher over time, the intern could see that with mentor assistance, things that were of concern to her when the school year began became less of an issue as the year progressed.

The Weekly Mentor/Protégé Activity Log (Appendix A3-4) enabled the intern to plan for the monthly sessions. All teacher mentors were required to submit a weekly log sheet. All log sheets were reviewed on a weekly basis and used to set up the agenda for subsequent meetings. Additionally, the information allowed us to address any immediate issues that concerned the novice teachers. In looking at one weekly log of a novice teacher, the intern felt the program was working well. The table below presents the results of a mentor/protégé meeting. The topics discussed at the session are included under each column of the review:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Topics Discussed Under Each Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Basic Orientation</td>
<td>Building policies, workshops, unwritten customs/mores, teacher/student handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interpersonal Support Systems</td>
<td>Parents, students, administration, colleagues, professional organizations, personal/family issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Managing Classroom</td>
<td>Student behavior, teacher’s expectations of student motivation, lesson planning, physical appearance/arrangement of classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/Climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td>Long-term goals/planning enforced rules, short-term goals, resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Pupil Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting</td>
<td>IEP (Individual Education Plan), assignment of grades, parent/teacher conferences, reporting to parents, feedback to students, specialized testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TABLE 7: The results of one Weekly Mentor/Protégé Activity Log (topics discussed). This session lasted a total of 35 minutes.*

Under the comment section of the log, the new teacher stated that she and her mentor met quite often, and that she was glad to have his help.

The intern also compiled a set of interview questions entitled, *Weekly Interview Questions* (Appendix A5). Mentors could use these questions when they made their contacts with their novice teachers during the week. The questions were icebreakers in the form of a survey. Mentors were free to use the questions to begin conversations with their protégés. A sample interview question survey of one mentor, and the responses from her novice teacher follow:
**Weekly Interview Questions**

1. **Do you have any concerns?**  *Can I make it to the weekend?*
2. **What activity or general occurrence last week made you uneasy?**  *All of them!*
3. **What do you need to know or have that will help you next week?**  *Other children*
4. **Do you have a parent conference next week?**  *No.*
5. **What problems are you having with discipline?**  *The students don't seem to listen to me!*

*TABLE 8: Weekly Interview Questions sample response.*

This novice was having a difficult time getting adjusted in the beginning. This program was designed to meet these common needs of novice teachers.

These comments sparked conversation, and the mentors would have been able to answer questions and to reassure the novice teacher that they were not alone. Out of these conversations another survey was needed to help continue the conversation. This survey was called the *Alternate Weekly Interview Questions* (Appendix A6-7). This was useful in case the mentor did not have a great deal of time to respond. The mentor could give it to his/her protégé to fill out on his or her own time, and at the end of approximately 10 days, the mentor could use it to spark their discussion at a time that they designated. The intern wanted the teachers to have all the tools they needed to provide aid and comfort to the new teacher who we wanted to stay with us for the long haul.

Much needed information was gained from the data that was used for the program as a result of this survey. In addition, the survey had a total of ten questions, and very
much like the other weekly survey, it was only to be used as a prelude to conversation. In terms of which questions they were to ask, the mentor was able to maintain his/her own discretion. The following is a sample of the data that was collected in September:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor’s Questions</th>
<th>New Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How has your classroom experience been so far?</td>
<td>I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you want to share anything with me about your teaching?</td>
<td>These kids are driving me crazy!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you feel about these issues?</td>
<td>Helpless. I think maybe, I chose the wrong profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you have any problems or concerns related to your teaching? If so, what?</td>
<td>My lessons are not going well this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How does it affect you and others you are involved with?</td>
<td>I am consumed with my job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there anything you’re questioning or wondering about?</td>
<td>Why so much paperwork? Are my kids really learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What is your reaction to what is going on in your classroom?</td>
<td>I wonder if I will make it until Christmas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What is your attitude towards your students?</td>
<td>I feel they are undisciplined, but I like children. It’s really hard work!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Do you have any reservations about teaching?</td>
<td>Yes, I don’t think I will come back next year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Is there any information you would like me to provide for you?</td>
<td>Yes, I need help doing my roll book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 9: Alternate Weekly Interview Questions sample responses from September.**

By January the novices were surveyed again, and the results were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor’s Questions</th>
<th>New Teacher Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How has your classroom experience been so far?</td>
<td>Very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do you want to share anything with me about your teaching?</td>
<td>Discipline problems are not anything I cannot handle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you feel about these issues?</td>
<td>Very comfortable with my ability. I think I like it now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you have any problems or concerns related to your teaching? If so, what?</td>
<td>No, students are more positive, and so am I. Students seem to respond to me better; I feel validated, and so do they.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How does it affect you and others you are involved with?</td>
<td>I am still consumed with my job, but it is better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is there anything you’re questioning or wondering about?</td>
<td>Why so much paperwork? Are my students learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What is your reaction to what is going on in your classroom?</td>
<td>Even though it takes a great deal of preparation, if you can reach a child, it is all worth it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What is your attitude towards your students?</td>
<td>Respectful. I have to work at it to keep them motivated and excited about learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Do you have any reservations about teaching?  
No, I think I will be back next year.

10. Is there any information you would like me to provide for you?  
No, just continue to listen to me vent sometime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 10: Alternate Weekly Interview Questions – January findings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The novice added that she would feel her goals for her classes had been met if her students were able to think more clearly, express themselves better, communicate more effectively, and use critical thinking skills better. The intern believed that these comments from the novice teacher proved to be an asset to her mentor whom she raved about on every questionnaire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, each month we collected Mentor/Protégé Contact Charts (Appendix A8-9) from both the mentors and their protégés. These charts were helpful in identifying the general items that were being discussed, and at the monthly sessions, the most useful ones were a part of the agenda. They proved to be very useful, and they helped other novice teachers to be more prepared to handle some similar situations. The novice completed a chart, and the mentor completed one, as well.

Grand Tour Question

Did a teacher mentor program for novice teachers ultimately have a positive impact on teachers new to Camden High School? The overwhelming answer is yes, and further research and expansion will be continued in the coming years. The activities that were used this year will be evaluated at the end of the school year, and adaptation and refinement of the program will help it to become a much stronger one next year. In our
assessment, none of our participating teachers desire to leave; all will be returning next year if offered a teaching contract. Within the alternate route, teachers still have to pass the tests, but we are very optimistic that they will be successful. The key to any successful program is specific planning and consistent follow-up. With the data collection tools and the regular agenda in place, this program can continue to be successful.

The intern would like the resources to be re-allocated so that there are funds for supplies and refreshments that can be served at the workshops. There needs to be more professional developments for novice teachers. A resource book should be available or recommended, so that the novice teachers have another recourse for obtaining immediate information should they need it. Just knowing the information is available would provide them with added confidence.

Conclusion

It is extremely important for the mentor teachers to recognize and remember the intense anxiety and lack of confidence one experiences as a new teacher. The emotions increase all the more for those new teachers who have not had any formal education training. Support for these teachers is crucial for the school to maintain a favorable retention rate of new teachers. Without a supportive faculty, administration, and resource personnel, the potential for frustration and anxiety to act as the determiner of the novice teacher’s success as a teacher is almost a guarantee. Without the therapeutic relationship
with a more experienced teacher, the novice teacher will not have a realistic meter with which to measure their progress and potential as a teacher.
Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Teacher mentor programs are essential to the survival of novice and yes, even veteran teachers. Both groups can and do benefit from cooperative programs as this intern discovered during this study. During the past decade a great deal of research has been done concerning mentoring programs similar to the one established at Camden High School. All of the literature that the intern has encountered strongly supports these programs as essential to the longevity of new teachers. The high level of attrition experienced by the faculty was certainly reduced as a result of this program. Through its implementation, the program helped the faculty engage in an exercise somewhat therapeutic in nature while being encompassed in a supportive atmosphere.

The goals of the program at Camden High were similar to other programs. It was extremely important to our principal that new teachers receive help getting through the paperwork maze. Additionally, the sheer size of the building presented problems for our new teachers. The school needed to set realistic goals that could be accomplished. The goals that were set for the program were as follows:

- To improve teacher performance,
• To promote the personal and professional growth of new teachers,
• To help integrate new teachers to the school culture,
• To provide veteran trained teachers under direct supervision with the skills needed to help guide new teachers through the common phases of the first-year teaching experience.

In examining the program at this point in the process, many things have been accomplished for this first year of implementation. The goals that were set for the program were reached. We know that these goals have been accomplished largely because of the overwhelming responses from the new teachers about what invaluable help their mentors have been to them. They have stated that their first year would have been an unsuccessful one without a mentor. The relationships that have formed have been wonderful to see. Observing the change in the faculty strength has been refreshing.

Veteran teachers seem to be revitalized by sharing their knowledge of lessons and other creative skills that they possess. The intern also discovered that a few veteran teachers have decided to stay a little longer so they can share their skills with someone new in the coming year. Other teachers are beginning to ask about how they can participate in the program, so now we are beginning to see the volunteerism that we initially wanted. Most of the teachers will remain at Camden High School and in the program for at least three years.

The exit evaluation of the program was done in May. Teachers were given some choices from a list of support items they felt should be provided in the program for the upcoming year and continued for new first-year teachers. (Huling & Odell) The novice teachers told us that they feel new teachers need support in the following categories:
Category | Information Needed
--- | ---
Instruction | Information about teaching strategies and the instructional process
System | Procedures and guidelines of the school district
Resource | Collecting, disseminating, or locating resources for new teachers
Emotional | Offer personal support through empathetic listening
Managerial | Managing and organizing the school day
Parental | Need ideas and help in working with parents and in parent conferences
Discipline | Need guidance in managing behavior

*TABLE 11: Program Protégé’s Reflective Assessment of Novice Teacher’s Needs.*

All mentor programs need to have qualified mentors. If teachers are not dedicated and competent in the classroom problems will arise. It is strongly suggested that the program utilize the best teachers who can employ the best practices so the novice teacher can learn from the best. A list of characteristics are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentors are:</th>
<th>Mentors can:</th>
<th>Mentors Know:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive and genuine</td>
<td>Solve problems</td>
<td>The needs and concerns of the novice teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant</td>
<td>Assess and respond to the needs of the novice teacher</td>
<td>Adult development and learning theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Communicate effectively</td>
<td>The role of the mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and caring</td>
<td>Listen actively</td>
<td>How to build a helping relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credible</td>
<td>Manage time</td>
<td>Coaching and modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable and competent</td>
<td>Reflect</td>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy, accepting and empathetic</td>
<td>Resolve conflict</td>
<td>Interpersonal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Collect data</td>
<td>Effective teaching practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing and supportive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessments and methodology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*TABLE 12: Characteristics of an effective mentor.*

The first recommendation is a must for any program to succeed. The intern recommends that the building principal become actively engaged in the entire process. All novice teachers deserve to get to know the principal. They need to feel that he/she
cares about them and has an interest in their success. Principals need to acknowledge that novice teachers need more of their time and attention than veteran teachers do. It is unacceptable to only visit your new teachers when you want to observe them. Asking them how they are feeling and visiting their classrooms to see if help is needed is important to the psyche of any new teacher. Having socials periodically after school for all novice teachers is also helpful.

The second recommendation is that a portion of your budget be set aside to run the program. Many meetings were held and everyone tried to bring refreshments on a rotating basis. However, it would have run more smoothly if the district and/or school picked up the tab for all of the monthly sessions. In the long run, it will benefit your overall school climate and come back to you in a very positive way.

The next recommendation is that school districts have a responsibility to train the school mentors. Districts must have well trained teachers who as mentors are willing to share their craft knowledge and wisdom. Using veteran teachers as mentors in our schools may have other very positive effects in schools. It may help to delay retirements of some of our most talented teachers in the field. Veteran teachers need to be trained so that they will know how to channel their experiences and provide the best guidance to the new teachers. Through this study, it was evident that the mentors needed to be allowed to share their expertise with their protégés, and in so doing; many veteran teachers that would have considered retirement accepted the opportunity to contribute to their profession graciously.
In addition, the mentor and the novice teacher need to be in close proximity to each other in order for them to meet more often, and the mentor can offer quick aid. The mentor also needs to teach in the same department as the novice teacher. It would be very difficult to mentor someone out of your subject area, because neither the novice, nor the mentor would have the common ground of curriculum to give him or her the confidence in the mentor/protégé relationship. It is very important that they both teach and work in the same areas of the building, and preferably on the same floor.

Mentors also need to be appointed very early in the school year. As soon as new teachers are hired, the principal needs to be able to make assignments to allow the mentor and the novice to bond before the school year begins. Novice teachers need to be in a position to ask questions as they anticipate the opening of school and the new challenges they will have to face. Principals should establish this as a priority early and respond to novice teachers early and often in the beginning of the school year. The strength of new teachers lies in early preparation and competence. The best way to help them is to provide that help as soon as possible.

The study highlighted and assisted the intern’s leadership development in many ways. The intern instituted training sessions and workshops, while supervising discussions and meetings between the mentors and their protégés. In addition, the intern took a leadership role through monitoring the entire mentoring program as its coordinator. The intern examined and followed new teachers throughout their first year of teaching, which helped to refine the intern’s interpersonal and intra-personal communication skills. Furthermore, the intern then designed training sessions to meet the
established needs of the new teachers thus heightening their motivation and encouraging them to seek opportunities for professional growth. Finally, through employing human relations skills, the intern also met frequently with the mentors and their protégés, ironing out any difficulties and bolstering the productivity of their interactions.

Implementing a teacher mentor program was very successful in its first year of implementation. The teachers that were involved will be returning to the program next year. New teachers are entering our schools every year and what we do, as an enlightened staff will go a long way toward having these talented people remain in our profession. They have made tremendous commitments to making a difference in the lives of young people.

A comprehensive vision of mentoring recognizes that being a mentor is a unique professional role for veteran teachers that can enhance their own professional development and career. This makes mentoring an even more desirable professional activity, beyond its part in providing beginning teachers with a more humane and professionally sound induction into teaching, than a “trial by fire” that serves neither new teachers nor their students. Understanding the benefits of mentoring for beginning teachers is important, but recognizing the promises--and the pitfalls--of mentoring for the experienced teachers who elect to serve as mentors is equally important.

Research strongly supports the concept of mentoring novice teachers. Evidence exists that induction programs do make a difference. If the novice teacher is to be allowed to grow professionally and become the best teacher he/she can become, educational leaders need to take the research seriously. Through collegial coaching
opportunities, both the mentors and novice teachers will experience growth that will benefit the students in any school.
References


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Appendix A
Research Instruments
Novice Needs Assessment Survey

The program, which is offered at Camden High School, is designed to assist you in meeting your responsibilities as a classroom teacher. An experienced member of the teaching staff has been assigned to meet with you on a regular basis and to assist you in adjusting to your new position successfully and with a minimum of difficulty.

The following survey is designed to assist the teacher mentor in understanding your individual needs and priorities as you enter the profession. Please complete the survey at your earliest convenience and return it to me by September 22, 2001.

Mrs. Nan Holland
Novice Teacher Mentoring Coordinator

Please rate the following job responsibilities in terms of their importance to your success in the coming school year.

* * Rate 1 being the least in importance and 5 being the highest * *

____ Motivating students to learn
____ Disciplining students
____ Providing for individual differences
____ Assessment of student progress
____ Relating to students
____ Relating to parents
____ Teaching to the curriculum
____ Preparing students for state and other standardized testing
____ Maintaining good professional relationships with your colleagues
Novice Teacher Survey

1. What are you most concerned about?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. What is your greatest fear about teaching?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. What do you need to know that will help you in the classroom?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have a mentor?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. Rank the following items in priority order? [1 - lowest; 5 - highest]

  _ discipline                      _ evaluations                      _ contracts
  _ motivating students             _ grading students’ work            _ testing
  _ lesson planning                 _ curriculum                         _ parents
  _ observations                    _ faculty meetings                  _ vacations
  _ supervisors                     _ teacher lounge                    _ standards
  _ homework                        _ organizing class work
**Weekly Mentor/Protégé Activity Log**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Date</th>
<th>Mentee School</th>
<th>Camden High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Contacts with Mentee</td>
<td>(Record contacts and discussions with mentee)</td>
<td>Check items covered during your communication and/or conference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Basic Orientation
- District/Building
- Building Policies
- Master Contact
- Other

### Workshops
- District Policies
- Special Services

### District/Building In-services
- Unwritten Customs/Mores
- Teacher/Student Handbook

### Interpersonal Support Systems
- Building
- District
- Parents
- Other

### Administration
- Personal/Family
- Students

### Colleagues
- Community
- Professional Organizations

### Managing Classroom Environment/Climate
- Pupil Behavior
- Time on Task
- Time Management
- Lesson Planning
- Teacher Expectations of Students Motivation
- Clearly Defined and Consistently Enforced Rules
- Physical Appearance/Arrangement Classroom
- Other

### Curriculum and Instruction
- Long-Term Goal/Planning
- Enforced Rules
- Short-Term Goal/Planning
- Material Selection
- Supplemental Print and Non-print media
- Resources
- Growth and Development
- District Scope and Sequence
- Instructional Techniques
- Educational Technology
- Professional Growth Opportunities
- Learning/Teaching Styles for pupils
- Other

### Pupil Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting
- I.E.P. (Individualized Education Plans)
- Assignment of Grades
- Informal Observations
- Test Construction and Evaluation
- Specialized Testing (IQ, Achievement, Administering)
- Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Reporting to Parents
- Feedback to Students
- Other
Comments/Observations: 


Weekly Interview Questions

1. Do you have any concerns?

2. What activity or general occurrence last week made you uneasy?

3. What do you need to know or have that will help you next week?

4. Do you have a parent conference next week?

5. What problems are you having with discipline?
1. How has your classroom experience been so far?

2. Do you want to share anything with me about your teaching?

3. How do you feel about these issues?

4. Do you have any problems or concerns related to your teaching? If so, what?

5. How does it affect you and others you’re involved with?

6. Is there anything you are questioning or wondering about?
7. What is your reaction to what is going on in your classroom?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

8. What is your attitude towards your students?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

9. Do you have any reservations about teaching?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

10. Is there any information you would like for me to provide for you?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
MENTOR/PROTÉGÉ CONTACT CHART

Completed by the Mentor Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Student Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Classroom Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Veteran Teachers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Curriculum</td>
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<td>2 Discipline</td>
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<td>3 Student Relations</td>
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<td>4 Classroom Management</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Veteran Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentor Training Seminar
Activity Evaluation Form

1. Which activity helped you the most?

2. What did you learn from this activity that will help you in serving as a mentor?

3. If you were asked to choose which activity needed to be changed, what would it be?

4. What should be done to improve this activity?

5. Rate the following activities from 1-5: 1=not useful; 3=adequate; 5=very useful.

   ____ 1. Group Juggling Ground Rules  1  2  3  4  5
   ____ 2. Post-It Notes  1  2  3  4  5
   ____ 3. KWL Worksheet  1  2  3  4  5
   ____ 4. Icebreakers  1  2  3  4  5
   ____ 5. Getting to Know You  1  2  3  4  5

Comments:


Assess the following activities using these ratings: SA (strongly agree); A (agree); UN (undecided); D (disagree); SD (strongly disagree). Circle your choice.

1. The trainer was prepared throughout the seminar.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

2. The trainer was knowledgeable and spoke clearly.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

3. He/she presented information in a logical manner.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

4. The information was presented at an appropriate pace.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

5. The trainer seemed interested in whether or not I learned.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

6. The trainer clarified difficult points using meaningful examples.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

7. The trainer listened attentively to participants.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

8. The trainer involved the participants in the learning process.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]

9. The trainer was available, able and willing to give help.
   \[ SA \quad A \quad UN \quad D \quad SD \]
Mentor Training Seminar
Program Evaluation Form

Assess the following activities using these ratings: SA (strongly agree); A (agree); UN (undecided); D (disagree); SD (strongly disagree). Circle your choice.

1. The training program was an enjoyable experience.
   SA A UN D SD

2. The training program was too theoretical to be useful.
   SA A UN D SD

3. The content was relevant.
   SA A UN D SD

4. This is one of the best training programs I have attended.
   SA A UN D SD

5. The atmosphere was conducive to learning.
   SA A UN D SD

6. Hand-outs were useful and understandable.
   SA A UN D SD

7. Visual aids were useful and understandable.
   SA A UN D SD

8. The physical facilities were adequate.
   SA A UN D SD

9. The sessions were well-managed and organized.
   SA A UN D SD
10. The pace was appropriate.

SA A UN D SD

11. Concerns raised by participants during the training were adequately addressed.

SA A UN D SD
**Biographical Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nan L. Holland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **High School**    | Dillard High School  
|                    | Goldsboro, NC    |
| **Undergraduate**  | Bachelor of Arts  
|                    | English/Secondary Education  
|                    | Fayetteville State University  
|                    | Fayetteville, NC |
| **Graduate**       | Master of Arts  
|                    | School Administration  
|                    | Rowan University  
|                    | Glassboro, NJ |
| **Present Occupation** | English Teacher  
|                    | Camden High School  
|                    | Camden, NJ |