Reconceptualizing Massachusetts’ Public High School Mentoring Programs

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Reconceptualizing Massachusetts’ Public High School Mentoring Programs

A Dissertation Proposal Presented

by

Michelle L. Addario

Submitted to the Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Educational Leadership Specialization
Reconceptualizing Massachusetts’ Public High School Mentoring Programs

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Ph.D. Educational Studies
Educational Leadership Specialization

Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatures, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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Abstract

The goals of most secondary school mentoring programs are to advance the skills and competencies of beginning teachers while simultaneously reducing attrition and improving student learning. In Massachusetts, there is a lack of widespread efficacy in existing public high school mentoring programs. The purpose of this study was to examine how to reconceptualize such programs to increase efficacy. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design. An online survey compiled quantitative and qualitative data from 38 mentor teachers across Massachusetts. Six of the 38 online survey respondents were interviewed to garner additional, in-depth, qualitative data. Both the quantitative and qualitative instruments addressed three guiding research questions: (a) What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring? (b) What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective educational mentoring practices? (c) What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring? Adhering to phenomenological research, significant statements were disaggregated from the online survey and interview transcripts and coded for meaning. Codes were categorized and analyzed for themes which resulted in five findings. The findings revealed that, according to mentor teacher perceptions, current mentoring programs need significant revision and augmentation. Recommendations include mentoring programs based on explicitly stated goals, a focus on beginning teacher self-care, increased time for mentors and mentees to collaborate, and the formation of a mentoring program committee to oversee the complete cycle of school mentoring programs.

Key words: mentor, mentee, beginning teacher, mentoring program, mentorship
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my children, Audrey, and Nathaniel. As a single mother, it was challenging to work full time and be a full-time mother and doctoral student. My children have eaten a lot of take-out meals, gone to family events without their mother, and missed out on one-on-one time with their mother. Audrey, Nathaniel, and I all made sacrifices while I achieved my life-long dream of earning a doctorate. Through it all, my children remained understanding, supportive, and my biggest cheerleaders. Audrey and Nathaniel, this is for you. I love you!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Upon entering Lesley University, I knew that I would change professionally and academically while completing the doctoral program in Educational Leadership. There is, however, one change that I did not envision – personal growth. I am a much different person than I was when I started my studies in 2017. At the beginning of the program, I was a bit timid, somewhat withdrawn, and unsure of myself. Through each step of the journey, I became more self-assured, empathetic, and a better listener. I am graduating from Lesley as a person who has grown exponentially, in both personal and professional capacities. I am forever grateful for this tremendous experience.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. John Ciesluk, Dr. Brenda Matthis, and Dr. Wendy Murphy. Each one of you supported and guided me in unique ways. As my faculty advisor, Dr. Ciesluk, you and I worked closely and well. You were always there to cheer me on and review my work ad nauseum. Your attention to detail and clarity of vision helped shape my dissertation and led me to think harder. There is no one I would have rather had on my journey than you, Dr. Matthis. You were my unwavering cheerleader, always there with words of advice, encouragement, and kindness. You never let me forget the importance of the work I was doing, and I thank you for that, as well as your boundless empathy. Dr. Murphy, you constantly pushed me to think more deeply through your astute comments and questions. I am eternally grateful for your keen eye, insightful questions and comments, and kind words. Special thanks to my dear friend, Nancy, who listened to every challenge, frustration, and success I faced throughout this journey. A heartfelt thanks to my parents whose unwavering support allowed me to finish this dissertation and earn my degree. I love you both more than I can say!
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Personal Background

I will never forget the first time I entered high school. I was four years old and had accompanied my father to work because my mother was at home with my recently born baby sister. I thought that being a high school Spanish teacher, like my dad, looked fun. All the paper, gadgets, chalkboards, and commotion produced by the students was so exciting. As a child, playing “school” was one of my favorite activities. Of course, I always wanted to be a teacher and provide the students with fun and exciting lessons. Flash forward 22 years, and there I was, standing at the head of my own class as a preservice high school teacher. At the time, I was a young woman, of 27-years-old, still contemplating if teaching was the right career choice. Twenty-one years later, I know I made the right decision since I am about to finish my 24th year teaching high school Spanish. I will never forget my early days of teaching and how difficult it was for me as a preservice and beginning teacher, and the difference a kind, supportive mentor could have made.

Professionally, I have been both a mentor and an informal mentee. My first teaching job was an eighth-grade Spanish position. I was a nervous wreck. My Spanish was better after a semester of student teaching, but I was unsure how to manage a class of 13-year-olds while trying to teach them Spanish. However, there has always been one trait that has helped me win over my students; my ability to read teenagers, know what they are thinking, and build solid, personal relationships with them. That is how I got through my first year of teaching, which was a mild success. I was not assigned a formal mentor in 1998, my first year of teaching; that seems hard to believe. I was told that the eighth-grade French teacher would serve as an informal mentor if I had any questions. The problem was that I had a plethora of questions each day. My
informal mentor soon grew tired of her role and became very short with me. From that point on, any professional and personal relationship created deteriorated. Luckily, the head of the English department was a warm, skilled, and experienced teacher. Her son had been in my Spanish class the previous year and had a good experience, which helped me develop a close professional and personal relationship with his mother. She served as my mentor, friend, surrogate mother, and bridge to find my voice within the classroom. After four years of teaching middle school Spanish, I decided that seeing my students grow was vital to me, and high school was the perfect setting.

In 2002, I started my current Spanish teaching job. As a teacher new to the school, I was not assigned a mentor. Again, the lack of a formally assigned mentor left a void in my ability to learn school procedures, culture, and the teaching pedagogies of the World Language Department. I did not share any common planning time with my colleagues and was forced to have quick discussions with them as we passed each other in the hallway or for ten minutes during lunch. Next, what happened to me is what has happened to many teachers throughout history; I began to work in isolation (Boreen & Niday, 2000). Without the help of a formal or informal mentor, I took the curriculum I was given and shut my classroom door.

After teaching for about seven years, I was tapped to be a mentor to a teacher new to the district. She was not a beginning teacher, and I was not formally prepared to understand the difference between what my mentee might need versus the needs of a beginning teacher. Mentors were given a 3-hour training consisting mainly of procedural information, which is far from the continuous learning experience mentor teachers should have (SREB, 2018). I was looking forward to being a mentor teacher and building the kind of relational experience that I had missed. It appeared that we were doomed to fail from the beginning. I was too eager and
wanted to share everything I had learned from working a few years in the district; I was unaware that the proper focus of mentoring is mentee and student growth. The mentee was an experienced teacher who wanted to know procedural information, the curriculum, and then be left alone. I attempted to do my job and check in with her frequently to see if she had any questions, but she was resistant to any help I might have been able to give and ended up going into her classroom and closing the door. At the end of two years, she left the school. I felt like I had failed as a mentor. However, the responsibility to mentor properly did not just fall on my shoulders. I needed continual training, regularly scheduled mentor-mentee meetings, and more than a 3-hour initial training session (SREB, 2018). These issues still plague mentor programs today.

This chapter consists of the following sections: (a) statement of the problem, (b) purpose of the study, (c) guiding research questions, (d) definition of terms, (e) expected contributions to the field of educational leadership, (f) delimitations, (g) review of the literature summary, (h) overview of the method, and (i) chapter summary.

**Statement of the Problem**

Experienced mentors serve an irreplaceable function in the lives of beginning teachers. Research has demonstrated that comprehensive, multiyear induction programs accelerate the professional growth of new teachers, reduce the rate of new teacher attrition, provide a stronger return on states’ and school districts’ investments, and improve student learning (Goldrick, 2016).

The theory behind such [induction] programs holds that teaching is complex work, that pre-employment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all the knowledge and skill necessary for successful teaching, and that a significant portion of this knowledge can be acquired only on the job. (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 46)
As part of a robust induction program, the aim of mentoring is to advance the capacity of beginning teachers while increasing their retention with the eventual goal of “improving student growth and learning” (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 46).

During the 2010-2011 school year, only 27 states required any induction program (Ingersoll, 2012). Mentoring is compulsory in Massachusetts (DESE, 2018). Even with the advantages mentoring brings, there is still a lack of widespread efficacy in existing Massachusetts public high school mentoring programs (DESE, 2018).

Several factors contribute to the variability among mentoring programs available to beginning teachers in Massachusetts. Mentoring offerings are significantly impacted by the amount of training available to mentors, the availability of experienced mentors, and the duration of mentoring programs (DESE, 2018).

Mentor teachers need substantial training to be able to do their job effectively. Portner (1998) stated that mentor teachers must be prepared and adequately trained to mentor effectively. Being properly trained as a mentor requires continuous growth; a one-session seminar is insufficient (SREB, 2018). Mentor teachers need training frequently to improve their communication and problem-solving skills to help build capacity in mentees (SREB, 2018). Without the appropriate training and support, it becomes difficult for mentors to be assured of their role (Ganser, 1995). According to Ganser (1994), some mentors face numerous questions, including

how much advice to give, how often to meet, how much information to provide, how much to advise, help, and guide, how often to step in when the mentee is in need, [and] how involved to get in advising the beginning teacher regarding teaching styles, methods, etc. (para.9).
Other results of insufficient training are that mentors cannot further new teacher training nor impart pedagogical knowledge and skills that permit them to teach utilizing methods that differ from how they were taught (Ganser, 1994). Hudson (2013) purported that mentors are most effective when trained in a preparation program that applies to their school context. Not providing mentor teachers with appropriate training also limits their ability to build capacity in their mentees (Hudson, 2013).

Mentor training is required in Massachusetts, but there is no stipulation on the type and required length of training (DESE, 2018). Many Massachusetts school districts expressed a need for “higher-quality mentor training programs and materials” (DESE, 2018, p. 9), yet they failed to define what “higher-quality mentor training programs” look like. While 80% of Massachusetts’ school districts provided some mentor training in 2018, only 52% provided the mentor with any resources, including a handbook (DESE, 2018). In addition, 33% of districts provided training to mentors only once, independent of how often the teacher served as a mentor. Forty-five percent of districts offered mentor training once coupled with yearly refresher training. Substantial mentor training is nonnegotiable, especially when considering the supports mentor teachers are asked to provide preservice and beginning teachers.

Another factor that dramatically limits the efficacy of mentoring programs is the lack of available mentor teachers. Influential mentors must devote large blocks of time to their mentees. In 2018, almost half of all Massachusetts school districts had difficulty recruiting enough experienced mentors to work with their beginning teachers (DESE, 2018). It is evident that none of the remedies promoted by Massachusetts to account for the shortage of mentors sufficed because they all restricted the amount of time a mentor and mentee could spend together. To rectify insufficiencies in the availability of qualified mentors, Massachusetts’ districts (a)
employed mentors from other schools or districts, (b) used district administrators as mentors, and/or (c) assigned multiple mentees to one mentor teacher (DESE, 2018).

The quality of mentoring is negatively impacted if the mentor and mentee do not teach in the same school. In addition, not being in close physical proximity limits the time a mentor and mentee can spend together. And a lack of time together puts restrictions on the frequency and duration of meetings and observations, therefore, adversely affecting mentee growth.

Additionally, using administrative staff to serve as mentors is not ideal. Administrators already have a full schedule without the addition of mentoring. It might also be challenging to identify an administrator who has taught the same subject as their mentee, which hinders the acquisition of subject matter pedagogies and instructional methods. Furthermore, administrators usually evaluate teachers, and mentors should be nonjudgmental (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Finally, assigning more than one mentee with a full teaching load poses a disadvantage. In most schools, mentoring is an additional duty and does not qualify for a reduction in teaching load, even though mentor teachers need time away from their classes to observe mentees (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). This condition reduces the number of times a mentor teacher can watch their mentee teach. Varying durations of mentor programming is another hindrance to the success of mentor programs (DESE, 2018).

The duration of mentoring programs is often tied to the school context. Beginning teachers disproportionately work in lower-performing districts, often economically disadvantaged (DESE, 2018). Additionally, lower-performing schools provided mentoring services for the shortest duration in 2018 (DESE, 2018). That has resulted in the least prepared teachers working with the highest-need populations. The outcome of a short period of mentoring combined with high-need students is an inability of students to attain optimal growth. Beginning
teachers working in the lower-performing districts need to receive at least as much mentoring as their counterparts in higher-performing communities. “Too many beginning educators in one place can impact student achievement and unfairly put students in these schools at a disadvantage compared to their more advantaged peers” (Goldrick, 2016, pg. i). In addition to being impacted by a school district’s context, the effectiveness of mentoring programs is also affected by how much and what kind of training mentor teachers receive (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

“Lower performing districts are more likely to have one-year programs for beginning or incoming teachers, and less likely to have three-year programs, compared to higher performing districts” (DESE, 2018, p. 14). In lower-performing Massachusetts districts, 38% of beginning teachers only received mentoring services for part of or for one year. Conversely, only 24% of beginning teachers received mentoring services for either part of or for one year in higher-performing Massachusetts districts. In higher-performing districts, as many as 37% of beginning teachers were offered services for three years. Conversely, only 17% of beginning teachers engaged in three-year mentoring programs in the lower-performing Massachusetts districts. The duration of mentoring programs impacts teacher efficacy because “for student achievement, most of the studies . . . showed that students of beginning teachers who participated in some kind of induction had higher scores, or gains, on academic achievement tests” (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 51).

From what has been argued above, there is a lack of consistency in Massachusetts’ school districts’ mentoring programs. It is also apparent that such inconsistencies, if not rectified, could lead to a long-lasting, negative impact on the quality of teachers instructing Massachusetts’ students. One way to address such inconsistencies is to gain new understandings about how to
reenvision Massachusetts’ public high school mentoring programs. Then, those understandings can be used to design the types of mentor programs that can better support beginning teachers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to gain insights into how to reconceptualize Massachusetts’ public high school mentoring programs. In doing so, I solicited mentor teachers’ understandings of their experiences with educational mentoring to uncover practices that mentors believe are effective and ones that they do not implement faithfully. Furthermore, the study explored factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring.

The following three research questions guided the purposes of this study:

1. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?
2. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective educational mentoring practices?
3. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring?

**Definition of the Terms**

**Educational mentoring** is a relationship between a more experienced teacher and a less experienced beginning teacher. It is a "developmental relationship that is embedded within a career context" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 213). Schwille (2008) defined a mentor’s role as including “emotional support, occupational socialization, and pedagogical guidance” (p. 139).

**Beginning teacher** – A teacher with less than three years of total teaching service.

**Experienced teacher** – A teacher with more than five years of total teaching service.

**New teacher** – An experienced teacher new to a district.
**Reconceptualizing** – To visualize something in a new way (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

**Anticipated Contributions to the Field of Educational Leadership**

Reconceptualizing public high school mentoring programs has the potential to benefit approximately eight different stakeholders, from teachers to students and government agencies. This study could be helpful to (a) mentor teachers, (b) beginning teachers, (c) principals, (d) the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), (e) students, (f) assistant superintendents, (g) the educational community as a whole, and (h) curriculum developers and professional development organizations.

Many advantages emerge for mentor teachers when working with beginning teachers. Serving as a mentor teacher allows the mentor: (a) individualized professional development, (b) increased status in school, (c) a vehicle through which to reflect upon their practice, and (d) the ability to act as an agent of change (Drago-Severson, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 1992; Ahn, 2014; Asphors & Fransson, 2015). Each of the benefits mentioned above is examined in Chapter Two.

Working with a mentor teacher has almost limitless advantages for beginning teachers when done well. First and foremost, beginning teachers get on-the-job training; they can learn about teaching and instruction while guiding them with an experienced teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Traditionally, mentors have afforded their mentees two main functions: career and psychosocial support (Kram, 1985). Today, there has been a significant focus on the social-emotional nature of a mentor’s support and its significance (Schwille, 2008; Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Both school principals and district assistant superintendents can learn how to implement a new teacher training program at the administrative level. For example, a reconceptualized mentor program can allow principals to assess mentor teachers using reconceptualized guidelines.
Beyond implementing a new mentoring program, assistant superintendents also have the opportunity to develop, manage, and coordinate such a program.

This study may make it possible for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to implement new mentor teacher training programs and guidelines, implement new guidelines and benchmarks for beginning teachers, and create new policies regarding mentoring programs.

A newly envisioned mentoring program could change the way students learn. If beginning teachers were trained more collaboratively and for a longer duration, an increase in skills could impact the way students learn and what they can achieve (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

This study may contribute to the educational community holistically by helping to reduce the rate of new teacher attrition. With the guidance of an experienced mentor, beginning teachers receive more on-the-job training. In addition, training for a longer duration has been shown to increase mentee growth, giving new teachers the pedagogical and social-emotional tools they need to stay in the educational field (DESE, 2018).

Curriculum developers and professional development organizations may also benefit from this study. For example, it could inform curriculum that might be added to teacher educator programs and state and federal government agencies that develop mentoring guides and materials.

The last group of stakeholders who could benefit from this study are researchers. This study can illuminate areas of future research that build upon the results of this study.

**Delimitations**

This study was delimited in three specific ways. They included the participants, the setting, and me as the researcher.
Study participants were both experienced public high school educators and mentor teachers. The sample population for both the online survey and in-depth interviews consisted of experienced teachers who have taught for at least five years and served as a mentor teacher to a beginning teacher for at least one academic year. The participants did not have to teach any particular discipline.

The setting of the study was traditional public Massachusetts high schools. By delimiting the study to “traditional” high schools, it did not include magnet, charter, or mixed middle-high schools. The study was also delimited to single-structure high schools. The high schools used for this study consisted of grades 9-12.

As the researcher, I had to be aware of my own biases and assumptions and possible ways of bracketing them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As an experienced Massachusetts public high school Spanish teacher and former informal mentee and formal mentor teacher, I hold specific opinions regarding mentoring. To help bracket my biases, I examined the surveys and in-depth interview questions utilized and removed any possible biases through a Researcher Identity Memo. I also bracketed my assumptions regarding mentoring programs and relationships during in-depth interviews to keep my thoughts and opinions to myself. Finally, I focused on the lived experiences of my participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Review of the Literature Summary**

The theoretical underpinning for this study was guided by five areas of literature. In providing a rationale for addressing the study’s purpose, I examined (a) the history of mentoring, (b) educative mentoring, (c) adult learning theory and development, (d) the nature of mentoring, and (e) promising mentoring practices. Because scholarship has not or cannot clearly define mentoring in an educational setting, there is a dearth of information on reconceptualizing public
high school mentoring programs to better support beginning teachers in Massachusetts. Each domain of the literature review served an essential role in defining the guiding research questions for this study.

**The History of Mentoring**

An overview of the history of mentoring gives context to the relationship of mentoring as a whole and illuminates the need for a standard definition of mentoring. Mentoring originated in the literary world in the 8th century as a character in Homer’s epic poem, the *Odyssey* (Drago-Severson, 2009). Mentor was a trusted friend of Odysseus. However, from the 8th to the 20th century, the term remained relatively unknown and resurfaced outside the literary world in 1910 with the Big Brother’s Organization (Irby & Boswell, 2016).

From the Big Brother’s Organization, the concept of a mentor was used in the business world to symbolize an older, wiser person and a mentee or protégé (Higgins & Kram, 2001). The mentor supported the personal and professional development of the protégé (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Mentoring became adopted by the field of education in the 1980s and 1990s with the core responsibility of supporting the personal and professional development of a protégé (Irby & Boswell, 2016).

**Educative Mentoring**

Mentoring began to impact the field of education around 1980 (Irby & Boswell, 2016). Two popular models of educational mentoring gained appeal in the mid to late 1990s: *knowledge transmission or transformation* and *educative mentoring* (Richter, et al., 2013). *Knowledge transmission or knowledge transformation* is a model purported by Cochran-Smith and Paris (1995). Their theory grounded itself in mentors as expert teachers who transmit their knowledge of teaching within a hierarchically structured relationship (Richter, et al., 2013). *Educative*
mentoring, coined by Feiman-Nemser, served as the antithesis of knowledge transmission. The definition of educative mentoring was based on John Dewey's (1938) concept of educative experiences and had its roots in constructivism. Dewey posited a philosophy that reduced learning to a series of educative experiences. His theory was predicated on the fact that “every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem . . . is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p. 28).

Educative mentoring allows the mentors to provide their mentees with opportunities that support growth and development (Richter, et al., 2013). Mentors relate with their mentees in manners that “enable them to learn in and from their practice” (Richter, et al., 2013, p. 167). Educative mentoring allows teacher-learners to construct their own knowledge by associating new information with prior knowledge (Richter, et al., 2013). For the purposes of this study, I used Feiman-Nemser’s definition of educative mentoring as the lens through which I viewed mentoring in an educational setting.

Adult Learning Theory and Development

Development “involves expanding the cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities we need to manage the complexities of learning, teaching, leading, and living” (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018, p. 6). Due to the uniqueness of individuals, development occurs at different rates and times for distinct individuals creating innumerable life trajectories. “Developmentalists suggest that we all have the potential to evolve toward increasingly integrated and differentiated ways of making sense of the world” (Daloz, 2012, p. 48). For mentors to encourage mentee growth, it is helpful if they can identify the developmental stage of their mentee (Drago-Severson, 2009). That understanding can assist the mentor in creating differentiated, high-quality educative experiences for a mentee. There are multiple
theories of adult learning and development in existence. In Chapter Two, I examined Mezirow’s  
developmental theory*, and the relationship between the two.

**The Nature of Mentoring**

Mentoring relationships are dialectical and reflective (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Mentoring  
is a complex, dynamic, relational, contextual, and varied process. Yet, that very nature serves as  
a conduit through which the mentor and mentee can examine their assumptions and those of  
others while (Ragins & Kram, 2007) “developing tools for continuous improvement” (Feiman-  

According to Kram (1985), mentors have traditionally afforded their mentees two main  
functions: career and social-emotional. Career functions focus on helping mentees with career  
advancement, networking within the school, and protecting them from too many external  
demands. Social-emotional processes primarily deal with trust, intimacy, and helping mentees  
grow personally and professionally (p. 214). Schwille (2008) defined a mentor’s role more  
stringently by including “emotional support, occupational socialization, and pedagogical  
guidance” (p. 139).

**Promising Mentor Practices**

The traditional mentoring model is represented by an older, wiser mentor and a younger,  
inexperienced protégé working amidst a hierarchical structure. Just as pedagogies evolve, recent  
literature has shown the evolution of mentoring from a one-on-one relationship to more complex  
models (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Some emergent models of mentoring include (a) developmental  
networks, (b) peer mentoring, (c) e-mentoring; and (d) any combination of the models mentioned  
avove (Ragins & Kram, 2007).
Method

The following section addresses the different components of the study’s methodology: (a) the design approach employed and its rationale; (b) selection of the participants and setting; (c) instrumentation development; (d) data collection processes; and (e) data analysis procedures. It also includes a description of how my attitudes and biases towards participants were addressed.

Overview of Design and Rationale

This study is an explanatory sequential mixed method design, which entails two phases of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The first phase consists of collecting and analyzing quantitative data, while the second phase is qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data collected and analyzed during the quantitative phase allows the researcher to more knowledgeably choose a smaller sample population to interview during the qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, selecting a smaller sample population was not realized as only eight individuals volunteered to be interviewed. The utilization of the two phases resulted in a more detailed and insightful interpretation and discussion of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participant and Setting

The participants in this study needed to conform to specific criteria. All participants needed to be Massachusetts experienced public high school teachers of five years who have also served as mentor teachers for at least one year. During the quantitative phase of the study, a letter detailing the study and delimitations of its participants was sent to assistant superintendents in rural, suburban, and urban school districts of Massachusetts (see Appendix A). The letter contained an electronic link to a questionnaire to be filled out by district teachers (see Appendix B).
The setting was traditional public Massachusetts high schools. The definition of a “traditional” high school excludes charter and magnet schools and solely refers to free-standing high schools. This study did not examine cooperative high schools and combination middle/high schools.

**Instrumentation**

In this subsection, the development of instruments is detailed. Included are comprehensive explanations of the purpose of both the online survey and the follow-up interviews. Validity is discussed at the end of the subsection.

Following Creswell and Creswell’s (2018) guidelines for an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study, two instruments were used in this study: an online survey and follow-up interviews. The study began with the quantitative instrument, an online survey. As was previously stated, selecting the participant sample for follow-up interviews was unnecessary due to the small number of mentor teachers who volunteered to be interviewed.

**Online survey**

Statements and open-ended questions for the online survey were developed by looking at the study’s three guiding research questions. Statements and questions were formulated to allow participants to rate their levels of agreement or disagreement concerning mentors’ understandings, behaviors, and beliefs. The statements used a Likert scale between highly agrees and highly disagrees.

The online survey was developed using the Qualtrics website. The survey ends by asking the participants if they would be willing to participate in an interview and to provide their preferred format for doing so.

**Follow-up interviews**
The second instrument used in this study was follow-up interviews. Participants were first given a letter of informed consent to participate in the interview. The qualitative instrument is phenomenological because it asked a group of mentor teachers questions pertaining to the phenomenon of mentoring (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, phenomenology involves “interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon” and “discusses the essence of the experience for individuals,” which is “’what’ they have experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 77).

The follow-up interview questions were based on questions from the online survey. The survey was developed to assess mentors’ thoughts, reflections, and opinions. The follow-up interviews, however, were meant to contribute background information and reasons why the mentors gave the responses they did on the online survey.

**Validity**

A researcher must ensure that validity is considered. One technique that researchers utilize to validate their data is to employ more than one collection method. Maxwell (2013) explained that triangulation, or using more than one data collection method, can increase the likelihood of the results being significant. In addition, it is imperative that researchers maximize “the importance of one phase explaining the other” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 223). Researchers can ensure that one phase explains the other by selecting participants from the quantitative phase to participate in the qualitative phase of the study.

**Data Collection**

This subsection delineates the data collection procedures for both the online survey and the follow-up interviews. What follows are detailed descriptions of the administration of each instrument.
Online survey

The first instrument was an online survey that was sent to participants via email on the invitation to participate (see Appendix A). Regarding the survey, participants needed to meet study criteria, their anonymity was protected, and researcher bias was addressed.

The online survey content was developed according to the three guiding research questions. The online survey statements and open-ended questions were divided into three different themes: mentor understandings, mentor behaviors, and mentor beliefs. The statements were put on a Likert scale enabling mentor teachers to indicate agreement or disagreement.

The online survey data was collected using the Qualtrics website. The invitation to participate explained that there was zero risk associated with the study. It also described how participation could provide further insight into the field of Education (see Appendix A). After one week, the pool of participants received a reminder email about the survey. My initial plan was to close the online survey two weeks after its inception. At the two-week point, however, I did not have between seven to ten interviewee participants, so I elected to keep the online survey open for an additional two weeks. After four weeks, eight mentor teachers volunteered to be interviewed.

All study participants remained anonymous in reporting the data. The names and the contact information of the participants were not associated with participants’ responses. All of the collected data was in the Qualtrics system and on a secured computer drive that required a password to access. All study participants received a letter of informed consent, which communicated the purpose of the research, procedures, benefits, and confidentiality. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any time during the study. The study is aligned
with the guidelines of the University IRB, and my contact information and that of my senior advisor were made available to participants.

While developing the online survey, it is necessary for the researcher to self-reflect to identify their own biases or assumptions. Honest self-reflection can assist the researcher in developing statements and questions that are more objective and not leading. I accomplished this through a Researcher Identity Memo (Appendix G).

**Follow-up interviews**

The second instrument was a protocol for follow-up interviews (see Appendix D). Questions for the interviews were developed as follow-up questions to the survey. The interview protocol served as the second or qualitative phase of the explanatory sequential mixed-methods study. As with the online survey, it was equally important to protect participant anonymity and address reducing researcher bias (member checking).

On the online survey, participants were asked if they would like to participate in follow-up, in-depth interviews. Participants for the interviews were chosen based on their willingness and availability to participate. The interviews were to occur via Zoom (video-conferencing), phone, or in-person. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, all interviews were conducted via telephone. The interviews were recorded on the application Voice Recorder. I transcribed two interviews by hand and utilized the translation service, Transcribeme! to translate the additional four interviews. As described in the following subsection, this led to the data analysis procedures. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of participants during the transcription, analysis, and reporting processes. Equally important in the second data collection phase of the study was attempting to reduce researcher bias.
To prepare the qualitative instrument, it was necessary to identify my assumptions and biases regarding mentors, roles, and responsibilities. This recognition helped temper my biases and assumptions (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Having been a mentee and a mentor teacher, I had to be aware of how my biases are personally crucial to this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that bracketing is typically necessary for a phenomenological study. For all intents and purposes, the study's second qualitative phase is phenomenological. To bracket personal experiences in a study, the researcher must view the phenomenon with a fresh perspective and compartmentalize prior experiences that could influence the data collection or analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Data Analysis**

In an explanatory sequential mixed-method study, the results from the quantitative data analysis are used to look for deeper meaning in the qualitative data and to choose participants for the in-depth interviews. The data collected from phases one and two were analyzed separately before data integration, or “connecting the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 222). Since this study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the first portion was quantitative.

**Online survey**

The data analysis started with analyzing the survey averages for each of the three areas that correspond with one of the three guiding research questions. The information gathered from the analysis gave a synopsis of tendencies for the larger participant pool. The quantitative information helped map out the emerging themes. The follow-up interview questions were closely aligned to the survey so that information on the same topics could be analyzed to gain a deeper understanding. After using the qualitative results to further interpret the quantitative
results, the third form of data interpretation examined “how the qualitative findings help to explain the quantitative results” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 223).

**Follow-ups interviews**

The data from the qualitative phase of the study were analyzed based on the nine steps of phenomenological analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The first step is to create and organize data files. The second step is to read through the interview text, make margin notes, and form initial codes. The mentor teachers’ personal experiences through epoche, or bracketing, is the third step. Epoche, or bracketing, is “the process of data analysis in which the researcher sets aside” their own experiences “to best understand the experiences of participants in the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314). The fourth step is to describe the essence of the phenomenon, which is the process of mentoring in this study. Next, the researcher develops significant statements. They then “list[s] every significant statement relevant to the topic and gives it equal value (Moustakas, 1994, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 314). That process is called *horizontalization*. Next, statements are grouped into meaning units, after which the researcher composes a textural description explaining “what happened” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199). After the textural description, the researcher drafts a structural description that illustrates “how the phenomenon was experienced” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199). The last step is for the researcher to develop the essence of the experience for all of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The final section of this study outlines the purpose and contents of each chapter in the dissertation.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter One introduces the reader to the major components of the study. It consists of the researcher’s personal background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, definitions of
important terms, anticipated contributions to the field of education, overview of method, delimitations, and a chapter outline.

Chapter Two reviews pertinent literature. It provides literary support for the study and serves the following purposes:

- It identifies key studies and documents the scope of the dissertation is meant to examine.
- It distinguishes among areas of consensus, dispute, and ignorance in educational leadership and evaluates the nature and quality of support for various contentions.
- It provides new insights or questions from the literature to offer a conceptual or theoretical framework on which the dissertation should be based.
- It prepares the reader to appreciate how the dissertation has the potential to contribute significant understandings of the given problem.

Chapter Three describes how the study was conducted. It includes a statement of the researcher’s worldview, a rationale for the design constructed to address the major purpose, and guiding questions. The chapter provides a clear picture of what was done to allow readers to evaluate the study’s conclusions' validity and emulate the research strategies in another setting. Next, the chapter examines how the research study was designed and executed in detail. Explanations about the survey instrument and interview protocol are included. Also included in chapter three are descriptions of survey participants, data collection methods, and data storage. Finally, chapter three also outlines possible biases held by the researcher.

Chapter Four presents an analysis of the data collected from both the quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (narrative) phases of the study. Data are presented using tables and descriptive paragraphs and may include excerpts from interviews that demonstrate emergent
themes uncovered during the data analysis. The guiding questions are used to organize the presentation of the data. From the organization of the data, readers may be able to formulate their own inferences. The chapter ends with a summary.

Chapter Five is comprised of an introduction, study summary, discussion, future research, and final reflections. An opening paragraph tells the reader how the chapter unfolds. The study summary briefly describes essential points made in chapters 1-4, why the topic is critical, and how the study was designed to contribute to new understandings of the topic. In the discussion subsection, the findings are discussed according to both practical and theoretical implications and recommendations, or action steps, for the field of educational leadership. The last subsection is a final reflection that articulates major takeaways from the study.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The mentoring of beginner teachers has been studied in the United States for over 30 years (Dawson, 2014). Even with “more than three decades of mentoring research,” there is still no shared definition of the practice (Dawson, 2014). Many educators agree that the principal purpose of mentoring programs is to “support and retain novice teachers” (Huling & Resta, 2001, p. 1). Other consequential aims are to increase student growth and provide professional development and leadership opportunities to experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Huling & Resta, 2001). The goals, as mentioned earlier, may be known within academia, but many mentors and mentees remain unknowing. Although there may be a commonality within the literature, the question of how to attain mentoring goals remains elusive. Without a shared conceptualization of mentoring and more consistency in the planning and implementation of beginning teacher mentoring programs, the goals may never be realized. This literature review aims to understand better how mentoring can support and increase the capacity of new teachers under the tutelage of a high-quality mentor. The discussion begins with the high rate of beginning teacher attrition. It is vital to examine beginning teacher attrition because research shows that high-quality induction and mentoring programs can aid in new teacher retention, positively impacting student learning and saving districts money.

Few professions have the high rate of attrition that plagues the U.S. system of education (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). “Over 30% of new teachers leave within the first five years of teaching, and over 50% of novices who teach in urban schools leave within the first three years” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003, as cited in Scherff & Daria, 2010, p. 5). The reason for such high turnover is multifaceted.
The high attrition rate can be partly attributed to the placement of beginning teachers. “New teachers are often assigned the most difficult subjects and the most challenging, diverse students in the highest-need schools” (Scherff & Daria, 2010, p. 5). Contributing to the rate of attrition is the fact that to be effective, beginning teachers need to simultaneously master two jobs within the school: learning how to teach (pedagogies) and teaching students. Further complicating the predicament is that beginning teachers do not receive enough support to guide them through the turbulent and emotional first year on the job (Scherff & Daria, 2010).

High teacher turnover is detrimental to student growth, as well as costly. At first glance, mentoring programs appear expensive. It is estimated that the cost of a high-quality induction program is $6000 per new teacher per year (Center for Teaching Quality, 2006, as cited in Scherff & Daria, 2010). Although this may seem excessive, the Learning Policy Institute has estimated that in urban areas, it costs more than $21,000 to replace a teacher who leaves (2017).

Aside from the cost, there is a second issue that negatively impacts the training of beginning teachers: teacher shortage.

To stave teacher attrition and provide a highly-qualified teaching faculty, many schools throughout the United States must provide induction and mentoring services to beginning teachers. Induction and mentoring are often referred to in the literature as two different processes. By separating induction and mentoring, they may appear to be two separate entities, which is not the case (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kaufmann, 2007). Induction is an umbrella term that The Center for Teaching Quality describes as going “…beyond mentoring to provide an extensive framework of support, professional development and standards-based assessments and evaluations” (Kaufmann, 2007). Induction programs can vary in their design and model. Still, most include (a) a high-quality mentor program, (b) ongoing professional development,
access to an external network of beginning teachers, and (d) standards-based evaluations of beginning teachers as well as the program itself (Kaufmann, 2007, para. 3).

The lack of comprehensive teacher training in some university programs, coupled with state and district inconsistencies in induction and mentoring programs, contribute to the national teacher shortage (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Castro et al., 2018). As a result of significant new teacher attrition, some students are not being educated by highly-qualified teachers, one of the requirements of the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act. Predominantly, persons of color and those living in poverty do not have access to highly-qualified teachers (Castro, et al., 2018). The inaccessibility of highly-qualified teachers is “vital . . . to the extent that they improve student academic achievement” (Amrein-Beardsley, 2006, p. 1). Poor student achievement is not the only disadvantage of the high attrition rate of new teachers. Some states and districts cannot find enough experienced teachers to serve as mentors (Goldrick, 2016). "A Teaching Quality" working conditions survey in Arizona found that only three out of five beginning teachers have a formal mentor (Scherff & Daria, 2010, p. 5). The most recent statistics on the number of U.S. states that mandate and fund induction and/or mentoring programs are data from a 2019 Education Commission of the States (ECS) study (2021). The study reported that thirty-one states require induction and/or mentoring support for new teachers. Ten states require induction and/or mentoring for one year, ten states require induction and/or mentoring for two years, and seven states require induction and/or mentoring for three years or no more than three years. (ECS, 2021, no p. #)

With such variation in state-mandated induction and mentoring requirements, it is apparent why mentoring remains a relatively misunderstood practice.
The difficulty of understanding the concept of educational mentoring partly stems from the dearth of a standard definition of the practice. Without a more universally accepted definition, there may never be a flexible conceptual framework from which multiple and varied school districts can work. It should not be surprising that there is not a standard working definition for mentoring because it is a relatively new educational practice in the United States.

Mentoring did not become part of the educational vernacular until the mid-1980s and did not gain actual notice until the 1990s (Irby & Boswell, 2016). Academic mentoring gleaned its practice from other industries such as medicine and business (e.g., Kram, 1985). Feiman-Nemser (2001) coined the phrase *educative mentoring* to describe how a mentor teacher designs educative experiences for their mentee. Although Feiman-Nemser was the first to coin the phrase educative mentoring, she based her terminology on John Dewey’s (1938) concept of educative experiences. This topic is further explored in section one of this chapter.

In addition to the lack of a consistent definition of the practice of mentoring, differing expectations and experiences of mentors and mentees are often contextually based. The contexts of a school dictate much of the success or failure of a mentoring program. Issues such as how many mentees one mentor is assigned, when, where, and how often the mentors and mentees meet, if the school’s administration supports both mentor and mentee, and the climate of the school (e.g., collaborative or solitary) all play a part in determining the expectations and reality of the mentorship. Other pertinent factors in assessing the quality of the mentor are the amount and kind of training the mentor receives if any.

To understand how to provide educative experiences to beginning teachers, mentors must be trained in andragogy. Adults construct meaning differently than children, and being an effective teacher of children does not necessarily translate into an effective teacher of adults
This chapter reviews Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory and Kegan's (1994) constructive-developmental theory as the lenses through which mentors can provide and construct educative experiences for their mentees.

To fully understand how to reconceptualize mentoring so that it more widely assists with retention and increases the capacity of new teachers, this paper examines seven areas of literature: (a) the historical context of mentoring, (b) the theoretical underpinnings of adult learning and development, (c) the roles and responsibilities of the mentor teacher, (d) the developmental stages of mentorships, (e) factors that contribute to and inhibit mentoring, (f) a comparison of the practice of mentoring in U.S. schools and Massachusetts, and (e) emergent models of mentoring. This chapter begins with an exploration of the evolution of mentoring from its beginnings in ancient Greece to its materialization in the field of education in the 1980s and 1990s.

**Historical Context of Mentoring**

The concept of a mentor was introduced to the literary world in the 8th century and remained there until the late 1800s (Irby & Boswell, 2016). With the establishment of the Big Brothers organization in 1910, the term became fully actualized in the United States. It was not, however, until the 1980s and 1990s that the word mentor became significant in the field of education, more specifically in preservice and beginning teacher training (Irby & Boswell, 2016). Over the past 30 to 40 years, there have been many incantations of an educational mentor and little agreement on a standard definition. Today, scholars appear to be no closer to the genesis of a shared meaning.
Literary Context

The concept of a mentor originated in the literary world and did not fully enter the field of education until the 20th century. The word mentor first appeared in print as a character in Homer’s epic poem, the Odyssey, published during the eighth century. Mentor was a trusted friend of Odysseus, who left his wife and son at home to fight in the Trojan War (Irby & Boswell, 2016). In his absence, Odysseus asked his friend Mentor to educate and advise his son, Telemachus. (Irby & Boswell, 2016; Drago-Severson, 2009; Barondness, 1995). The term mentoring did not appear in the United States until the 1778 publication of Ann Murry’s book, Mentoria: The Young Ladies’ Instructor. By 1839, there was a monthly magazine published called The Mentor and Fireside Review, and as early as 1884, teacher-student relationships were discussed in The Journal of Education. Ten years later, in 1894, The Teachers’ Mentor by Fitch, Huntington, and Buckham was one of the first books published to guide aspiring teachers. A periodical entitled The Mentor was founded in 1913 by a group of men who called themselves the Mentor Association. “This was likely the first formal mentoring group in the United States” (Irby & Boswell, 2016, para. 2).

Mentoring was not fully realized in the United States, outside of the literary world, until the establishment of the Big Brothers organization in 1910 (Irby & Boswell, 2016). In 1973 mentoring entered the field of education with the publication of a paper by Bradley and Adamson. The article discussed faculty member mentors at Empire College in New York and appeared in Research and Review's educational journal. In 1978, two seminal works were published. The first was an article by Shapiro, Haseltine, and Rowe, which appeared in the Sloan Management Review and concerned women having mentors. Collins and Scott (1978) wrote the second paper. Their article entitled "Everyone Who Makes It Has a Mentor" was published in the
Harvard Business Review. Scholars agree that a proliferation of mentoring literature debuted between the years 1980 to 1990 (Irby & Boswell, 2016). During that time, papers and articles appeared in such professional journals as Adult Education, Phi Delta Kappan, Education Digest, NASPA Journal, NASSP Bulletin, the Harvard Business Review, and Principal (Irby & Boswell, 2016). Although the research on mentoring is plentiful, there are few longitudinal studies and little agreement on how to define an educational mentor.

**Defining the Term Mentor**

Traditionally, a mentor has been an older, wiser person, and the mentee a protégé. The mentor's role has been to support the personal and professional development of the protégé (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Today, scholars disagree about the leading roles and responsibilities of a mentor and the mentorship goals. (Haggard, et al., 2010; Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). The one thing that has been agreed upon is that the term's primary definition relates to a "developmental relationship that is embedded within a career context" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 213). Most of the conflict surrounding the appropriate definition centers around the organization of mentoring programs, the roles and responsibilities of mentor teachers, the overall goals and objectives of the program, and the length and kind of mentor training. The roles and responsibilities of the mentor must be clarified to avoid confusion and perhaps create a flexible conceptual framework for mentoring in education. How can high-quality mentoring exist in schools without a universal definition? Is a flexible structure doable without a shared meaning? An educational definition of mentoring is essential to improve the practice and ensure a high-quality education for all students and teachers.
The Educational Beginnings of the Mentor

Mentoring officially entered the field of education between 1980 and 1990. During that time period, there were two leading schools of thought regarding mentoring (Richter et al., 2013). Cochran-Smith and Paris (1999) espoused knowledge transmission or transformation. The central tenet of this theory is a mentor-defined role as the expert and the mentee as the protégé. The expert teachers, or mentors, would transmit their knowledge within a hierarchically structured relationship. The mentees resembled vessels whose role was to acquire the teaching knowledge transmitted to them by their mentor teacher and integrate said knowledge into their own teaching repertoire (Richter, et al., 2013). In the time period spanning 1998-2001, another mentoring methodology presented itself. Sharon Feiman-Nemser (2001) introduced the term educative mentoring, which she gleaned from John Dewey’s (1938) concept of educative experiences. Feiman-Nemser (2001) defined the term as a learning process in which the learner is an “active participant” (Schwille, 2008, p. 140), which she distinguished from more commonplace mentoring approaches that “emphasize situational adjustment, technical advice, and emotional support” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 17) Educative mentors believe in mutually constructing experiences through which mentees can learn and (Richter, et al., 2013) use their knowledge of teaching and learning to “assess the direction novices are heading and to create opportunities and conditions that support meaningful teacher learning in the service of student learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 18). Dewey posited a philosophy that reduced learning to a series of educative experiences. His theory was grounded in the fact that “every experience lives on in further experiences. Hence the central problem . . . is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p. 28). Educative experiences are those that allow the student to connect their current experience to their personal
life and past experiences as well as be carried into the future; they are activities that foster student growth.

Conversely, a mis-educative experience "has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (p. 25). Educational mentors can provide their mentees with educative or mis-educative experiences depending upon the training and skill of the mentor. An educative experience is where the mentor and mentee co-construct a developmentally challenging task for the mentee to accomplish in a highly-supported environment. The student-teacher becomes the teacher through observation, doing, and reflection. To better understand how mentors can create educative experiences for their mentees, it is helpful to examine adult developmental stages and how adults make meaning and learn from their experiences.

**Theoretical Underpinnings of Adult Learning Theory**

A few decades ago, adulthood was symbolic of a fully developed brain, meaning that adult development was thought to have a cognitive ending point (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018). Due to more recent advances in psychology and neuroscience, it is now known that the brain possesses a neuro-plastic quality that enables its development to continue throughout adulthood (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018). However, what exactly does that mean? Enduring cognitive development allows an individual to understand oneself and others better. It also helps individuals connect more meaningfully with others while continuing to learn, teach, and adapt (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018). Development “involves expanding the cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal capacities we need to manage the complexities of learning, teaching, leading, and living” (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018, p.). Due to the uniqueness of individuals, development occurs at different rates and times for other people creating innumerable life trajectories. “Developmentalists suggest that we all
have the potential to evolve toward increasingly integrated and differentiated ways of making sense of the world” (Daloz, 2012, p. 48). For mentors to encourage mentee growth, it is helpful if they can identify the developmental stage of their mentee as well as how their mentee makes sense of the world (Drago-Severson, 2009). That understanding can assist the mentor in creating differentiated, high-quality educative experiences for their mentee. There are multiple theories of adult learning and development in existence. For the purposes of this study, I explore Mezirow’s (1997, 2000, 2009) transformative learning theory, Kegan’s (1983, 1994, 2009) constructive-developmental theory, and the relationship between the two.

**Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory**

According to Mezirow (1997, 2000, 2009), there are no fixed truths. Instead, an individual spends a lifetime negotiating meaning via the lens of prior experiences, contextual meanings, and critical reflection. In the absence of set facts and a rapidly changing world, adults hesitate to trust what they know (Mezirow, 2000). All human beings, however, need to be able to make sense of their experiences to acquire new knowledge (Mezirow, 2000). To facilitate that understanding, adults must learn to compose more steadfast beliefs by "assessing their contexts, seeking informed agreement on their meaning and justification, and making decisions on the resulting insights" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).

Mezirow (1978) introduced his theory of adult learning to the field of education in “Perspective Transformation.” He purported that learning occurs through the interpretation and critical reflection of experiences, a process he named *transformative learning*. Transformative learning can be contrasted with informational learning (Mezirow, 1997). An individual utilizes both informational and transformative learning, however, for different gains (Mezirow, 1997). The former is associated with increased general knowledge, skills, and competencies. On the
other hand, the latter changes how a person thinks and feels. Transformative learning involves an adjustment in an individual's *frame of reference*: the sum of adults’ experiences, which includes “associations, concepts, values, feelings, [and] conditioned responses” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). All adults have distinctive frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000). When an adult experiences something new, the knowledge received filters through their frame of reference and is integrated with their existing way of seeing the world (Mezirow, 2000). New growth is attained by reflecting deeply upon the experience; this process results in a person seeing the world from a new perspective (Mezirow, 2000).

*Frames of Reference*

Individuals may be aware or unaware of their frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000). Most closely held beliefs and values are formed from iterative experiences that occur outside of one’s awareness (Mezirow, 2000). Frames of reference consist of *habits of mind* and *points of view* (Mezirow, 1997). Habits of mind are common ways of "thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions" (Mezirow, 1997, pp. 5-6). Habits of mind express themselves as distinct points of view, defined as “the constellation of belief, value judgment, attitude, and feeling that shapes a particular interpretation” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6). Frames of reference are generally the product of cultural assimilation and childhood experiences (Mezirow, 1997). Points of view are more prone to adaptation than are frames of reference because they are more accessible to an individual (Mezirow, 1997). The easy accessibility makes them susceptible to feedback from others. Frames of reference can only be transformed by critically assessing one's beliefs (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18). Generally, individuals become reflective of their views when they become problematic.
Through transformative learning, an individual’s current frame of reference is altered to become more discerning and comprehensive (Mezirow, 2009). The newly acquired discernment and comprehensiveness make the production of more substantiated beliefs possible (Mezirow, 1997, 2000, 2009). In other words, as an individual undergoes transformative learning, they can better understand their ways of knowing and eschew previously held assumptions. Mezirow (1997) argued that transformative learning occurs in one of four ways: (a) expanding upon existing frames, (b) learning new frames of reference, (c) transforming points of view, or (d) transforming habits of mind. (p. 7)

Mezirow’s (1997, 2000, 2009) transformative learning theory has a constructivist orientation because it asserts that transformations (learning) occur when one can interpret, interact with, and reformulate their own experiences.

**Kegan’s Constructive Developmental Theory**

To best support the developmental growth of beginning teachers, mentors must understand how adults make meaning. Kegan's (1983) constructive-developmental theory illuminates how people make sense of their experiences. The constructive-developmental theory is based on three main ideas:

1. *Constructivism:* The way that “persons or systems constitute or construct realit[ies]” through the meaning-making of experiences (p. 9);
2. *Developmentalism:* How “organic systems evolve through eras according to regular principles of stability and change” (p. 9); and
3. *Subject-object balance:* The developmental activity of equilibration; the taking one’s meaning-making subject and making it object, which leads to a state of
equilibrium. This iterative process continues during one’s lifetime creating disequilibrium and equilibrium as one grows developmentally. (p. 9)

The constructive-developmental theory focuses on the individual as an active maker of meaning gained from cognitive, affective, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences (Drago-Severson, 2009). Kegan (1983, 1994, 2009) purported that there are five orders of consciousness or developmental stages that human-beings transition through as their knowledge about themselves and the world expands. Kegan (1983, 1994, 2009) has argued that transformative learning, as posited by Mezirow (1997, 2000), is the driver that transports adults from one level of consciousness to the next. Kegan (2009) also stressed that transformative learning allows an individual to distinguish between informational and transformational knowledge. Kegan (2009) interpreted transformational learning as “an epistemological change rather than merely a change in behavior, repertoire, or an increase in the quantity or fund of knowledge” (p. 41). A transformation of epistemology refers not to what one knows but how one knows it.

Epistemology is the study of the origins and limits of human knowledge; it is also known as the theory of knowledge (“Epistemology,” n.d.). It has been argued that epistemological change is “less of what happens to us and more what we make of what happens to us” (Kegan, 2009, p. 44). There are two main processes involved in epistemological transformation: meaning-forming and reforming one’s meaning-forming (pp. 44-45). Meaning-forming occurs when an individual constructs meaning through personal experiences. Remaking an individual’s meaning-forming is a metaprocess that changes their epistemology.

In constructive-developmental theory, a form of knowing always consists of one’s relationship between subject and object. Kegan (1983, 1994, 2009) stated that the subject-object link is the core of epistemology. Object is something that a person has control over, can reflect
upon, and take responsibility for (Kegan, 1983, 1994, 2009). Subject is that which cannot be controlled by the individual (Kegan, 1983, 1994, 2009). “What is ‘object’ in our knowing describes the thoughts and feelings we say we have; what is ‘subject’ describes the thinking and feeling that has us. We ‘have’ object; we ‘are’ subject” (Kegan, 2009, p. 45). As a person develops and transcends Kegan’s five orders of consciousness, things that were once subjects become objects. That transformation makes one’s way of knowing more complex. The following chart illustrates Kegan’s five orders of consciousness, the main characteristic of each, and what is subject and object (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1**

*Five Orders of Consciousness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order of Consciousness</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perceptual/Impulsive</td>
<td>Impulses, perceptions, social perceptions</td>
<td>Reflexes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Concrete/Opinionated</td>
<td>Needs, interests, wishes, cause &amp; effect, simple reciprocity</td>
<td>Impulses, perceptions, social perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interpersonal or “The socialized mind.”</td>
<td>Ideality, inference, values, interpersonal, mutuality</td>
<td>Needs, interests, wishes, cause &amp; effect, simple reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Institutional or &quot;The self-authoring.&quot;</td>
<td>Identity, authorization, self-regulation, self-formation</td>
<td>Ideality, inference, values, interpersonal, mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inter-individual or “The self-transforming mind.”</td>
<td>Interpretability of self and others, contradiction, inter-individualism</td>
<td>Identity, authorization, self-regulation, self-formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kegan, 2009, p. 47; Mezirow, 2000, p. 99; Drago-Severson & DeStefano, 2018, pp. 35-36)
In 1994, Kegan analyzed the rates at which people demonstrated different ways of knowing. He found that only 3-5% of adults in the United States exhibited order four competencies. However, since the 1994 estimates, the percentage of self-transforming adult knowers in the U.S. has grown to approximately 8-11% of the total population (Drago-Severson & DeStefano, 2018, p. 25). Positively, the constructive-developmental lens confirms that all individuals can continue to grow.

The existence of developmental stages indicates that individuals grow at differing points of readiness. How will a mentor recognize if their mentee has developed? Daloz (2012) argued that many stage theorists see growth as a quality that comes with greater wisdom and autonomy, not age. Jean Piaget (1952, 1963, 1932/1965) and other stage developmentalists have described individual growth in reference to one’s environment. Piaget posited that growth results from the interaction between the individual and their environment. “Organisms function in equilibrium with their environment. To maintain equilibrium, they must adapt; they must change in some way as the environment changes" (Daloz, 2012, p. 126). According to Daloz (2012), mentors “are both part of and apart from the environments of their protégés,” which allows them to see the tasks immediately before their mentees while keeping an eye on the broader context, which gives the emergent tasks meaning (p. 211).

Most theorists agree that growth produces “greater autonomy and ability to act separately from the demands of one’s environment” (Daloz, 2012, p. 130). Kegan (2009) understood growth as a transformation in how one makes meaning, a process that moves an individual from one developmental stage to another. To transform and grow, one must be appropriately supported and challenged (Kegan, 1994). Therefore, it would seem to follow that if a mentor can diagnose their mentee’s current developmental stage, they can better foster mentee growth.
Mentee Supports Based on Constructive-Developmental Theory

Mentees who are concrete or impulsive knowers (Kegan’s first and second Orders of Consciousness) feel best supported by mentors “who provide specific advice, concrete skills, and information about instructional and/or leadership practice” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 227). Those mentees are most comfortable when relationship expectations are explicitly stated. Mentors can guide concrete knowers’ growth by challenging them to think beyond one way of acting (Drago-Severson, 2009). Third-order knowers, or socialized knowers, are more capable of critical reflection. The socialized knower’s increased capacity for reflection produces a desire to gain acceptance from their mentor (Drago-Severson, 2009). When the mentor validates their mentee’s feelings and thoughts, the mentee feels accepted and heard. The receipt of validation creates relational trust, which generates risk-taking and growth on the part of the mentee. Self-authorizing or fourth-order knowers are more introspective than knowers in earlier stages (Drago-Severson, 2009). Greater introspection leads to an increased focus on learning which is facilitated through mentor feedback (Drago-Severson, 2009). Self-authorizing knowers make their own decisions; they decide if they will incorporate a mentor’s suggestions into their teaching or not. Self-authorizing mentees stand up for their beliefs and values (Drago-Severson, 2009). They do not seek external validation from their mentors but “internally assess a mentor’s feedback and decide whether or not they need it to improve their own competencies” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 228). Self-authorizing knowers view their association with their mentor as a reciprocal peer relationship. A mentor can intuit that their mentee is growing from a self-authorizing to a self-transforming knower when they can challenge the mentee’s personal ideology (Drago-Severson, 2009). A hallmark of the self-transforming knower is that they are less concerned with themselves and more open to the perspectives of others (Drago-Severson,
2009). Consistent with constructive-developmental theory, “to support a person’s growth from one way of knowing to another, the mentor – as a bridge – must first join and support the person in his or her current way of sense-making, providing continuity as the mentee is challenged to grow from one way of knowing toward the next” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 221).

Connections Between Mezirow’s and Kegan’s Theories

Both Mezirow and Kegan predicated their theories upon the fact that learning can only occur in a supportive environment. Kegan (1994) has spoken in-depth about the need to create a challenging yet supportive environment in which students will thrive. For learning to be efficacious, beginning teachers need to start cultivating growth from their current developmental stage (Kegan, 1994). If this does not occur, the mentee may not be able to make meaning, connections, or grow. Therefore, one of the roles of a high-quality mentor is to provide necessary supports and challenges to enhance mentee growth (Drago-Severson, 2009). Moreover, after having read substantial literature on mentoring, it is clear to me that the role of a mentor is multifaceted. The following section offers insights into essential mentor responsibilities.

Roles and Responsibilities of High-Quality Mentor Teachers

I assert that the role of a high-quality mentor teacher is complex, dynamic, relational, contextual, and varied. It is often assumed that good teachers make good mentors (Ambrosetti, 2014). That, however, is not always the case. Portner (1998) has stated that “it takes preparation and professional development for most teachers to mentor effectively” (as cited in Danielson, 2002, p. 184). According to Kram (1985), mentors in a business context have traditionally afforded their mentees two main functions: career and psychosocial (social-emotional). Career functions center around helping mentees with career advancement, networking within the school, and protecting them from too many external demands. Psychosocial or social-emotional
functions primarily deal with trust, intimacy, and helping mentees grow personally and professionally (p. 214). Schwille (2008) defined an educational mentor’s role more stringently by including “emotional support, occupational socialization, and pedagogical guidance” (p. 139). If the goal of mentoring is to support mentee growth by offering educative experiences coupled with the right supports and challenges, what mentor characteristics and responsibilities help meet that goal? In deciding how to best support mentee growth, it is important to keep in mind that “because every relationship is different, there is no one best way to mentor” (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 215). Ragins and Kram (2007) have argued that mentoring needs to support adult development “in the context of a personal relationship” (p. 215).

Initially, mentor teachers may serve as local guides “to smooth the entry of novices into teaching by explaining school policies and practices, sharing methods and materials, and solving immediate problems” (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992, p. 14). However, it is clear that although the explanation and sharing of introductory issues may temporarily reduce a novice’s anxiety, they do not provide pedagogical or instructional support. The actual role of a mentor is to help their mentee gain "the skills and dispositions to continue learning in and from their practice" (Schwille, 2008, p. 139). To reach that goal, the mentor teacher needs to assume many day-to-day tasks inside and outside the classroom.

**Within the Classroom**

Mentor teachers wear many hats within the classroom. One of their most important roles is demonstrating high-quality teaching to their mentee (Wang, O'Dell & Schwille, 2008; Massachusetts DESE, 2015). To study and help acquire high-quality instruction methods, the mentee should consistently observe their mentor teach classes (Field & Field, 2005). Throughout each of the mentor's teaching demonstrations, the mentee views the procedural and pedagogical
strengths of a more experienced teacher (Field & Field, 2005). Once the mentee has seen the
mentor teach over a certain amount of time, it is their turn to lead (Field & Field, 2005). At the
outset, the mentor and the mentee may teach collaboratively (co-teach) (Field & Field, 2005).
They may also decide to take turns leading the lesson and circulating amongst the students
(Schwille, 2008, p. 148). Although the mentor teacher has essential responsibilities within the
classroom, they have duties outside of the classroom as well.

**Outside of the Classroom**

From the combination of the literature studied, I have become well-informed that the role
of the mentor teacher carries with it many functions and responsibilities outside of the classroom.
A mentor teacher takes on procedural and pedagogical, social-emotional, or relational
obligations and the responsibility of providing the appropriate supports and challenges for their
mentee (Drago-Severson, 2009; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Schwille, 2008). All three duties help a
novice teacher “develop tools for continuous improvement” (Feiman-Nemser, 1996, p. 4).

**Procedural and Pedagogical Responsibilities**

From a procedural standpoint, a mentor and mentee should work together to develop
guidelines for their relationship (Pitton, 2006). At the beginning of the relationship, the mentor
and mentee are advised to (a) establish clear expectations based on teaching standards and a
school’s mission statement, (b) focus on developing a trusting relationship, (c) agree on how to
handle confidentiality, (d) and decide when, where, and how often to meet (Zachary, 2000;
Drago-Severson, 2009; DESE, 2018). Other procedural and pedagogical responsibilities of the
mentor teacher include co-planning lessons with the mentee, asking reflective questions, and
listening to the mentee’s questions (Schwille, 2008). Mentors should also observe the mentee
and give them constructive feedback. Meetings and debriefings should be held regularly.
(Schwille, 2008). The mentor is the person primarily in charge of understanding how to keep the lines of communication open and resolve conflicts and be responsive to the changing needs of the mentee (Danielson, 2002). Finally, mentors are obligated to help mentees learn how to teach by following professional standards for teaching and learning and decreasing their involvement as the mentee gains more confidence and control (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). In addition to procedural and pedagogical training, mentors also need to possess a range of relational skills to guide the social-emotional realm of their mentee’s life (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Social-Emotional (relational) Responsibilities

Mentoring is largely relational (Ragins & Kram, 2007). To be a high-quality mentor, one must possess a range of relational skills “such as vulnerability, empathetic and emotional competence. . . authenticity, and holistic thinking” (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 665). Possessing compassion helps mentors foster personal change and growth on the mentee's part (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The capacity a mentee possesses to regulate the stress and ambiguity associated with being a beginning teacher impacts their ability to secure a familiar relationship with their mentor; a safe, trusting relationship is conducive to mentee growth (Ragins & Kram, 2007). One way of building a trusting relationship is for the mentor teacher to share their experiences (Pitton, 2006). Teachers, like most adults, construct meaning from their experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Drago-Severson, 2009). Unfortunately, due to the sometimes-isolating nature of teaching, many teachers never share their personal experiences (Killion, 2000, as cited in Drago-Severson, 2009). Sharing experiences helps develop more relational trust between the mentor and the mentee (Killion, 2000, as cited in Drago-Severson, 2009). Another way of creating relational trust is for the mentorship to be non-evaluative (Feiman-Nemser, 1996). “According to conventional wisdom, mentors should assist, not assess because novices are more likely to share
problems and ask for help if mentors do not evaluate them” (Feiman-Nemser, 1996, p. 4). As relational trust grows, the mentee may feel more comfortable sharing their actual questions and concerns (Feiman-Nemser, 1996).

Mentoring relationships are dialectical and reflective (Ragins & Kram, 2007). This nature serves as a conduit through which the mentor and mentee can examine their own assumptions and others (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Over time, it may be possible to reframe those biases (Drago-Severson, 2009). It is equally crucial that mentors be mindful. One important way for mentors to be conscious is to understand the characteristics associated with the current developmental stage of their mentee (Drago-Severson, 2009). Such an understanding can help the mentor intuit how a mentee understands and makes meaning of their mentor’s support and guidance. Mentees comprehend their mentors’ advice differently depending upon how they construct meaning. (Drago-Severson, 2009). How can the relationship between a mentor and a mentee cultivate adult growth when individuals interpret experiences differently (Drago-Severson, 2009)? The following subsection addresses specific, necessary supports and challenges that nurture growth.

**Support and Challenge**

High-quality mentors are likely to provide their mentees with several growth-inducing supports and challenges (Daloz, 1986; Drago-Severson, 2009; Ramani, Gruppen & Kachur, 2006). Daloz (1986) articulated that a mentor’s primary function is to support and challenge the mentee while providing them with a vision of who they want to become (p. 212). Daloz (1986) purported that any exchange between a mentor and mentee involves a mix of supports and challenges. “The function of support is to bring boundaries together” while challenges peel such boundaries apart (Daloz, 1986, p. 213). The definition of a challenge is to open a gap between
the mentee and their environment. The existence of this gap produces tension between the mentee and their environment. Recognizing a new environment creates cognitive dissonance for the mentee, which can be described as an inconsistency between the mentee’s beliefs and actions. The only way to rectify the dissonance is through self-reflection. When this occurs, the mentee grows (Daloz, 1986).

An exchange between the mentor and mentee includes a mix of support and challenge, which happens simultaneously (Daloz, 2012). When supports and challenges work in tandem, they provide the mentee with vision. Daloz (2012) described vision as a “greater understanding” and challenges, models certain behavioral attributes that show the mentee who they can possibly become (Daloz, 2012, p. 230).

It is important that supports and challenges be balanced appropriately for growth to occur. Determining the mix of supports and challenges is the responsibility of the mentor because each individual mentee may require a unique combination (Daloz, 2012). The next two subsections provide a detailed overview of ways mentors can provide their mentees with various supports and challenges.

Daloz (2012) proposed that supports relate to “acts through which the mentor affirms the validity” of the mentees’ present experiences (p. 212). When a mentor acts empathetically it supports their mentee insofar as it acts as an acknowledgment of mentee feelings (Daloz, 2012). This combination of empathy and support initiates the development of trust between mentor and mentee (Daloz, 2012). Daloz (2012) defined the primary elements of mentor support as: (a) active listening, (b) providing structure, (c) serving as an advocate, and (d) sharing ourselves.

**Active Listening.** Active listening involves more than just the act of listening but is also characterized as dialectical. The mentor must listen carefully to their mentee and then engage
them in conversation, mainly in the form of reflective questions (Daloz, 2012, Drago-Severson, 2009; Rogers & Farson, 1987). Rogers and Farson (1987) asserted that active listening can transform people. They explained that "listening brings about changes in people's attitudes toward themselves and others; it also brings about changes in . . . values and personal philosophy" (p. 1). Because mentor and mentee relationships are focused on discourse, active listening is an indispensable skill for further mentee growth (Rogers & Farson, 1987).

**Providing Structure.** Providing close support and a known structure enables the most efficacious problem-solving (Daloz, 2012). Daloz has also purported that structure affords the mentee a “sense of safety” (p. 218) as well as enabling the mentor to express mentorship expectations.

**Serving as an Advocate.** Mentors are often considered as experienced and “powerful allies” (Daloz, 2012, p. 219) of their mentees. In this role mentors are responsible for protecting their mentees from an onslaught of requests from students, parents, other faculty members, and administration. They should also speak well of their protégé.

**Sharing Ourselves.** Mentors support mentees by getting to know who they are on a personal level. When mentors share parts of their lives with a mentee, it demonstrates a sense of vulnerability which in turn produces more trust. When a mentor teacher is open and honest with a mentee about their personal life it creates an environment where the mentee feels safe doing the same (Daloz, 2012). There is another very important support not mentioned by Daloz (2012) and that is enculturation.

**Enculturation**

The culture of a school is unique because it is built over time by the faculty (Peterson & Deal, 2002). Before discussing how a beginning teacher becomes acclimated to a school culture,
it is important to define it. Bryk and Driscoll (1988) defined school culture as “a distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal that prevails among colleagues” (p. 253). Peterson and Deal (2002) expressed the importance of a strong, positive school culture by asserting that in an absence of such culture, schools will “flounder and die” (p. 7). Peterson & Deal (2002) referred to “informal” practices “among colleagues” (p. 253), which are value-laden practices and beliefs that become standardized among the faculty but are not written down. Peterson & Deal (2002) also described school culture as often being comprised of “unwritten rules and assumptions” (p. 18). Discerning and becoming acclimated to a school is not an easy task.

Zeichner and Goe (1989) explained enculturation as “the process by which the individual becomes a participating member of the community of teachers” (p. 1592). Scholarship has asserted that new school faculty members can become members of the school community through two different processes: socialization or stage development. The first method of assimilation is through socialization. Socialization requires that mentors familiarize beginning teachers with school norms and procedures, help them assimilate into school culture, aid in instructional planning and classroom management, and provide feedback on lesson observations (Alhija & Fresko, 2010). Berliner (1988) promoted acclimatization through developmental stages. He proposed five stages of development: (a) novice, (b) beginner, (c) competent, (d) proficient, and (e) expert. A closer examination of Berliner’s developmental stages is presented in the forthcoming section entitled, “Developmental Stages of Mentorship.”

**Challenges**

Providing developmentally appropriate challenges can encourage mentee growth (Drago-Severson, 2009; Ramani, Gruppen & Kachur, 2006; Kegan, 1994). With supports, a mentor can
“conform his boundaries” (Daloz, 2012, p. 223). The opposite is true of challenges, which “peel boundaries apart” (p. 223). “The function of a challenge is to open a gap” between the mentee and their environment (p. 213). This forces the mentee into a new environment and provides them with unknown experiences which creates cognitive dissonance. The term cognitive dissonance was invented by Leon Festinger in 1951 who described it as an “intrinsic human need to close” such a gap (Daloz, 2012, p. 223). Although challenges can be difficult for mentees, the act of viewing a mentee challenge through an empathetic lens provides the mentor with the means to validate the mentee’s experience (Ghosh, Haynes, & Kram, 2013). Some of the ways that mentors can challenge their mentees follow.

**Setting Tasks.** Tasks can be any kind of activity that challenges the mentee by creating cognitive dissonance. Tasks can range from administrative to instructional and pedagogical. Sometimes the tasks can be incomprehensible to the mentee because the mentor exists in a developmental stage the mentee has yet to pass through. The mentor can help the mentee better understand the task at hand by asking the mentee to reflect upon it (Daloz, 2012).

**Engaging in Discussion.** If trust has been established between a mentor and mentee, the mentor can engage the mentee in discussions in which the mentee feels comfortable disclosing their progress and problems. The main reason for such dialogue is to assist the mentee in engaging with different perspectives and different ways of creating meaning (Daloz, 2012).

**Heating up Dichotomies.** Dichotomies occur when the mentor takes up a different point of view from the mentee. As with discussion, this can enable the mentee to see beyond their own meaning-making. If a mentee can comprehend their mentor’s perspective, presenting dichotomies will be a growth-inducing experience (Daloz, 2012).
Setting High Standards. According to Daloz (2012), setting high standards enables mentees to compose positive “self-fulfilling prophecies for themselves” (p. 229). An effective, high-quality mentor will challenge mentees to “challenge themselves” (p. 229). Another way to set high standards is to teach mentees to not only answer questions, but to ask critical questions.

Lack of or Insufficient Mentor Program Goals

In general, having specific goals improves individual and organizational performance (Lantham, 2004). Goals are meant to be tools of self-evaluation “to assess, monitor, and guide cognition” (Pintrich, 2000, p. 457). There are three main reasons why goals improve performance, they include (a) individuals focusing on goal-relevant tasks (b) goals energize individuals, and (c) goals “motivate people to use the knowledge they have that will help them to attain the goal or to discover the knowledge needed to do so” (Latham, 2004).

Within education, mentor programs serve as systems of support intended to increase career and personal competencies. Professional competencies are associated with teaching and pedagogy. Personal capacity refers to social-emotional supports such as “building confidence, encouraging self-esteem, listening, and enhancing self-reliance” (Richter et al., 2013, p. 167).

Huling-Austin (1988) identified five commonly accepted goals of teacher induction/mentoring programs that include, (a) an improvement in teaching performance, (b) increasing the retention of promising beginning teachers, (c) promoting the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers, (d) transmitting the culture of the system to beginning teachers, and (e) satisfying mandated requirements related to induction and certification (p. 9). Other possible results are increased student growth and the offer of more professional development and leadership opportunities for experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Huling & Resta, 2001).
There is a dearth of information regarding goal setting for teachers (Camp, 2017). Camp’s (2017) two-year study of twelve graduate teaching assistants illuminated four individual mentee goal areas: (a) being more prepared to teach, (b) eliminating “busy work,” which can create more worthwhile class activities, (c) increasing student interest, and (d) facilitating more productive, active conversations. (p. 63)

Although one cannot strictly utilize the goals of Camp’s (2017) study for the objectives of secondary school beginning teachers, they may provide a useful framework.

There has been some concern regarding the “development of mentoring programs” (Daresh & Playko, 1994, p. 1). One of the main reasons that some school districts shy away from implementing a new, or adding to and reorganizing existing mentor programs, is because the district perceives “that it is too difficult or time consuming” (Daresh & Playko, 1994, p. 1). Contrary to that perception are the benefits of district mentoring, which include a more capable staff, the creation of a culture of life-long learners and increased…motivation and job satisfaction” (Daresh & Playko, 1994, P. 4). In addition to mentor program goals, it is important for mentors to help mentees gain pedagogical skills and knowledge. One way of doing so is to utilize holding environments.

**Holding Environments**

Daloz (1986) postulated that the mentorship itself is a “holding environment for growth” (p. 221). He illustrated his hypothesis by using a bridge metaphor. In the metaphor, the mentor serves as a bridge that meets the mentee at their current level of development. Heifetz (1994) defined a holding environment as “any relationship in which one party has the power to hold the attention of another party and facilitate adaptive work” (p. 105). A holding environment is one in which the more independent person figuratively holds the hand of the protégé during “a process
of developmental learning” (p. 104). Kegan (1982) stated that a holding environment serves three functions, it (a) supports the whole person as well as how one makes meaning, (b) offers challenges when the mentee is developmentally ready, and (c) maintains its position as a mechanism for continuity. (as cited in Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 58)

As previously argued, mentees develop at different rates. Thus far, I have not investigated the developmental stages that student teachers experience; that idea is addressed in what follows.

**Developmental Stages of Mentorships**

Hawkey (1997) purported that it is the mentee's responsibility to "integrate and make sense of [the] different inputs they receive" (para. 7). How do they, however, accomplish such a task? Berliner (1987) argued that beginning teachers go through the following five stages of development: (a) novice; (b) beginner; (c) competent; (d) proficient; and (e) expert (as cited in Hawkey, para. 8). The novice stage is when the acquisition of simple tasks guide behavior; they are taught pedagogical rules that are context-free (Berliner, 1988). Examples of such rules are “give praise for right answers, wait at least three seconds after asking a higher-order question” and “never criticize a student” (Berliner, 1988, p. 2). Novices generally behave rationally, tend to be fairly inflexible and follow the rules and procedures espoused to them by their mentors. The first stage is when mentees learn objective facts and gain experience (Berliner, 1988).

After acquiring novice skills, a mentee moves on to the beginner stage (Berliner, 1988). In the beginner stage, a novice teacher can recognize contextual similarities and build up a reservoir of "episodic knowledge" (p. 3). The beginner stage is also the stage where context begins to impact mentees' decision-making skills although they still cannot ascertain what is essential (Berliner, 1988).
It is common at both the novice and beginner stages for mentees to lack the ability to take responsibility for their decisions (Berliner, 1988). This occurs because mentees are intensely "labeling and describing events, following rules, recognizing and classifying contexts" (p. 3). Because mentees are almost rigidly focused on more simple and procedural tasks, they "are not actively determining through personal action what is happening" (p. 3). In the first two stages of development, new teachers are necessarily in little control over their actions and essentially follow the edicts of their mentors (Berliner, 1988).

In the next three stages of development, mentees begin to be, and fully become, capable of willfully making their own decisions (Berliner, 1988). In the competent stage, mentees make informed judgments about setting priorities, making plans, and acting accordingly (Berliner, 1988). This is the stage when they can determine the importance of things about students and teaching (Berliner, 1988). Novice teachers in this stage are more attached to what is going on and to their students causing them to feel more emotional about their own successes and failures (Berliner, 1988). The proficient stage is when teaching intuition becomes apparent (Berliner, 1988). At a higher level of competence, skilled teachers "rely on a set of maxims or rules in their decision making drawn from personal experience and [the] prevailing culture of teaching" (Hawkey, 1997, para. 8). Proficient teachers see things more holistically which allows them to predict future events more accurately (Hawkey, 1997). The main delineation between proficient and expert teachers is that proficient teachers make decisions analytically and consciously (Berliner, 1988, p. 5). The first four beginning stages of teacher development rely on rationality. Expert teachers have been known to be categorized as “arational” (p. 5). They appear to act fluidly and effortlessly without regard to on-the-spot analysis (Berliner, 1988). Expert teachers usually do things that work in the classroom, and when an unexpected event may occur, they are
quick on their feet and make adjustments to practice (Berliner, 1988). Clearly, beginning teachers pass through developmental stages, but congruently, so does the mentorship.

**Mentorship Development**

Through work completed in Amherst, MA, Martin (1994) named three developmental stages of an educational mentor-mentee relationship, the: (a) formal stage, (b) cordial stage, and (c) friendship stage (Martin as cited in Hawkey, 1997). During the formal phase, beginning teachers introduce themselves to their mentors as future teachers (Hawkey, 1997). The cordial stage is characterized by growing relational trust between the mentor and mentee on both a professional and personal level (Hawkey, 1997). In this stage, mentors present themselves more as instructors and hope to instill confidence in their mentees (Hawkey, 1997). The friendship stage is marked by growing confidence in the mentee; they genuinely see themselves as prospective teachers (Hawkey, 1997). During this stage, mentors may begin to withdraw from the classroom and allow the mentee to take over more. While this can be confidence-boosting to some mentees, others may feel abandoned which could lead to resentment (Hawkey, 1997). The simplicity portrayed within the stages of mentor-mentee relationships as established by Martin (1994) belies the real complexity of the relationship (Hawkey, 1997).

The complexity of the mentor-mentee relationship can mainly be attributed to the facts that it involves the different personalities of the mentor and mentee, the interpersonal connection between the two, career, educational and emotional development, and the differing world views of the people involved (Hawkey, 1997). The complexity inherent in the relationship can engender a high probability of difficulties (Hawkey, 1997). During times of adversity, it is crucial for the mentor to stay open to the assumptions of their mentee while simultaneously helping the mentee unpack their preconceptions (Hawkey, 1997). It is helpful if mentors can
keep in mind that resistance to change is normal and “an integral part of any change process” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p. 1298). There are also attitudinal and behavioral reasons that may cause mentees to appear unopen. “Mentee resistance is known to occur when a mentee displays behavior and attitude that are contrary to the one that enhances the mentoring process” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p. 1298). Even during adversarial times, mentoring relationships produce many benefits for both the mentor and the mentee (Drago-Severson, 2009).

**Potential Benefits of Mentoring**

Mentoring can be advantageous for the mentor, the mentee, and hopefully the state of education (Drago-Severson, 2009; Danielson, 2002; Scherff & Daria, 2010; Goldrick, 2016). As was discussed in the introduction of this chapter, one of the hopes attached to a mentoring program is that it can help stave beginning teacher attrition and job-turnover (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). High turnover rates, students taught by multiple teachers per year, and a young, untrained educational staff lead to poor student achievement (Goldrick, 2016). Teacher attrition is also a costly program that most states cannot afford (Scherff & Daria, 2010). A benefit of mentoring that has not yet been addressed is the possible impact it can have on the professionalization of teaching (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).

**The Professionalization of Teaching**

Just as there is conflict surrounding the definition of the word “mentor,” there is also discord associated with a common meaning of the word “professionalization” (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008, p. 107). The uncertainty affiliated with the lack of a shared definition of professionalization does not exist for sociologists, however, who have realized a conceptual model. The model is comprised of “organizational and occupational characteristics associated with professions and professionals” (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008, p. 107). The most pertinent
characteristics include advanced training, licensure and credentialing requirements, a positive working climate, an active professional organization, workplace control, a relatively high salary, and a high level of prestige (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). Sociologists define credentials as the level of expertise and complexity involved in a particular career (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). The job must require intellectually challenging tasks and knowledge that are not easily acquired nor widely held (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). Because teaching exemplifies the essence of credentialing, mentoring can help teaching be defined as having a high level of professionalization (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). There does exist, however, a vast range of professionalization among different schools, much of which is contextual (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). The most significant contextual factors are the school sector (public or private) and the socioeconomic status (“SES”) of the area's citizens (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). The following table illustrates the percentages of teachers who participate in induction/mentoring programs based on the contextual factors of low and high poverty in public and private schools (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2**

*Percentage of teachers who participate in mentoring dependent upon intersectionality of school sector and SES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Poverty</th>
<th>High Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public Schools</strong></td>
<td><strong>Private Schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ingersoll & Perda, 2008, p. 109)

It is the hope that as more schools provide, and more teachers participate, in high-quality mentoring programs, the level of professionalization of the education industry will also rise (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008).
The Benefits of Mentoring for Mentor Teachers

It is not a new idea that mentor teachers procure benefits from fulfilling that role (Huling & Resta, 2001). As early as the mid-1980s educators began to investigate the efficacy of mentoring for mentor teachers (Huling & Resta, 2001). In a 1986 study, 178 mentor teachers were asked to respond to the statement that participation in a mentoring program “provided positive professional growth” (Hawk, 1986 as cited in Huling & Resta, 2001, p. 2). Over two-thirds of respondents answered definitely to the statement (Huling & Resta, 2001, pg. 2). Respondents were then asked to elaborate on the benefits they received. Hawk (1986) was able to code results as falling into one of three categories: (a) helped improve mentors’ teaching skills, (b) mentors developed a greater understanding of the need to communicate with colleagues, and (c) it increased mentors’ comprehension of principals’ roles (Huling & Resta, 2001, p. 2). Being an educational mentor provides a veteran teacher with many professional and personal benefits (Kram, 1983; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Drago-Severson, 2009; Ambrosetti, 2014). Such advantages include (a) individualized professional development and increased status in school, (b) a vehicle through which to reflect upon their practice, and (c) the ability to act as an agent of change (Drago-Severson, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 1992; Ahn, 2014; Asphors & Fransson, 2015). Over the course of the next three subsections, I explore each of the previously listed benefits.

Professional Development

In the early to mid-1990s, being a mentor was viewed as a rare opportunity for veteran teachers to fulfill their professional and career development obligations (Fessler & Christensen, 1992; Freiberg, Zbikowski, & Ganser, 1996). The uniqueness of the mentoring experience made it an even more desirable professional activity, beyond its part in providing beginning teachers
with a more humane and professionally-sound induction into teaching. This stood in stark contrast to the former "'trial by fire'" induction that served neither new teachers nor the students they teach” (Ganser, 1997, p. 3). Over the course of a three-year study by Freiberg, Zbikowski, and Ganser (1996), mentor teachers reported never having felt so “professional” nor having been treated so professionally. At the end of their three-year term as mentors, four out of the five veteran teachers moved on to some form of teacher-leadership within the district and one mentor teacher retired (Freiberg, Zbikowski, and Ganser, 1996). On the contrary, through my own experience, I have seen that professional development is often a point of contention for teachers. The complaints about professional development have been well documented and most often cite the following shortcomings:

- It is usually disconnected from the everyday practice of teaching.
- It is too generic and unrelated to the curriculum or to the specific instructional problems teachers face.
- It is infrequent and implemented as a single event or led by an outside consultant who drops in to conduct a workshop and never returns to the school or district. (DeMonte, 2013, p. 4)

Often the professional development offerings are unfocused and inefficient with regards to increasing student achievement (Odden, A, Archibald, S, Fermanich, M. & Gallagher, H.A., 2001). As a veteran Spanish teacher working in the same district for the past 20 years, I have never participated in a professional development offering that specifically benefited world language teachers or student achievement. In contrast, mentoring can also provide a forum for teachers to change or alter practices, but often, only if the school or district grants the mentors extra time during the day (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). DiGeronimo (1993) stated that “in some
cases, veteran teachers volunteer to serve as ‘buddy teachers' with little or no reduction in teaching responsibilities” (as cited in Ganser, 1994, p. 3). On the other hand, some teachers are freed from their regular teaching assignment to serve as full-time mentors (Dollase, Ganser, Freiberg & Zbikowski, 1992 as cited in Ganser, 1994; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). There are also teachers whose class loads get reduced to allow for extra time to work with mentees either in planning, observing, or post-teaching conferences (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Furthermore, working with a mentee encourages the mentor to reflect upon their current practice, a substantial benefit (Ganser, 1994).

**Reflective Practice**

Some mentors have underscored the fact that assisting a beginning teacher encourages self-inquiry (Ganser, 1997). Others note that mentoring is an impetus to become reflective “about their own beliefs about teaching, students, learning, and teaching as a career” (Ganser, 1997, p. 4). In addition to providing time to self-reflect, mentoring gives veteran teachers the occasion to substantiate their professional accomplishments characterized by several kinds of reflective behaviors (Ganser, 1997; Schön, 1987). The first of these is *knowing in action*, which is defined by the ability of an individual to unknowingly respond to unanticipated events that occur in routine activities (as cited in Danielson, 2002). The second of Schön’s (1987) reflective behaviors is *reflection in action*, which is the capability to change one's path of action midstream (as cited in Danielson, 2002). This behavior includes a teacher analyzing options and making a shift in action on the spot (Danielson, 2002). Schön's (1987) next behavior is *reflection on action*, which takes place after the lesson, when the teacher determines what went well and what needs to be reworked (Danielson, 2002). Reflection on action elicits the final behavior known as *reflection for action* (Danielson, 2002). Reflection for action occurs when a teacher has
scrutinized their practice and, “reconceptualizes her assumptions about the learners and their understandings” (Danielson, 2002, p. 184) and intends to clarify or supplement the previous lesson during a future class (Danielson, 2002). Lastly, mentors can be agents of social change as they work to educate beginning teachers on issues relating to equity and diversity (Feiman-Nemser, 1992; Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

**Mentors as Change Agents**

There are two significant ways in which mentors can serve as change agents: agents of school cultural change (isolation versus collaboration) and equity and diversity (Feiman-Nemser, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 2010). As "agents of cultural change" (Feiman-Nemser, 1992, p. 17), mentors work to change traditional patterns of teacher isolation by creating networks between their mentees and other colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 1992). Forming such networks can be as simple as fostering conversations among teachers regarding practice or planning time for teachers to visit each other’s classrooms (Feiman-Nemser, 1992). Darling-Hammond (2010) asserted that the paramount issue in teacher education is to foster “learning about and from practice in practice” (p. 42). I understand “practice in practice” (p. 42) to include the fact that beginning teachers learn while they teach. Darling-Hammond (2010) continued to argue that based on strong education programs, it is clear that “learning to practice in practice, with expert guidance, is essential to becoming a great teacher of students with a wide range of needs” (p. 40). I assert that a high-quality mentor teacher should advocate for school climate change, equity, and the respect and celebration of diversity.

Today there exist differences among teacher training methods that have implications for the nature of the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Darling-Hammond (2010) posited that we are currently living in a knowledge-based society which demands highly-developed teaching
of more complex skills. She argued that U.S. society has returned to the 19th-century factory model of education with the hiring of unprepared teachers, which elicits the use of "scripted curriculums" to counterbalance the absence of expertise (2010, p. 38). Scripted curriculums will not improve student learning because they are incapable of meeting the individual needs of diverse learners or addressing critical thinking skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Moreover, the return to scripted curriculums often causes the removal of high-quality teachers who refuse to abide by the new status quo that jeopardizes their capacity for teaching creatively and well (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

There is little empirical evidence regarding the competencies needed by mentors to guide mentees on issues of equity and diversity (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Novice U.S. teachers, “especially those underprepared, are disproportionately placed in classrooms with students of color, from lower-income families, and with diverse language abilities” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 844). Beginning teachers who are overwhelmed may have a difficult time transferring their attention from their work to individual students and how to satisfy their learning needs (Achinstein & Athanses, 2005). Often, mentoring programs are associated with standards for addressing the needs of diverse students, however, many of the programs, when put into practice, dissatisfy (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Little (1990) claimed that an equity-designed curriculum is better characterized as “situational adjustment, technical advice, and emotional support” (as cited in Achinstein & Athanses, 2010, p. 844). That does not mean that mentor teachers should not strive to teach their mentees ways to support diversity and reduce the achievement gap between socioeconomic classes. Narrowing of the achievement gap is essential for equality.
Equity does not just refer to closing the achievement gap, but also to ways in which that can happen (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). One measure teachers can employ to help reduce the achievement gap is to give diverse supports to different students to help meet their socio-emotional and academic learning (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). Affirming, seeing, and celebrating diversity is another method mentors can pass on to their mentees. “Affirming diversity is to celebrate its richness and also to understand how diversity enhances learning for all” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 845). Recognition and comprehension of diversity and equity issues, however, also necessitate an understanding of the inequities that exist in larger social contexts and how they impact the ways in which issues of diversity and equity appear and are managed in schools (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). This mandates knowledge of how “issues of race, ethnicity, language, and class impact teaching, learning, and schooling” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 845). The focus on equity and diversity by beginning teachers, however, can be problematic (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). The main concern is that the majority of new teachers are predominantly white, from the middle-class, and monolingual (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). They are frequently unskilled in how to teach diverse learners and how to celebrate diversity in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001, as cited in Achinstein & Athanases, 2005). This disparity creates a cultural mismatch between the beginning teacher and their students (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

When mentees are culturally mismatched with some of their students (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005), the situation requires more than a mentor who solely disseminates procedural and technical knowledge. Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) stated that the dynamic calls for a mentor who possesses a moral perspective associated with "justice, fairness, and ethics, and political dimensions related to power, interest, and conflict (as cited in Achinstein & Athanases,
This is where Feiman-Nemser’s (2001) educative mentoring may be able to add to the mentee’s understanding of equity. Educative mentoring includes focusing on students and problems, questioning beginning teachers’ thinking, and discovering ways to elicit productive thinking (Achinstein & Athanses, 2005). In addition to trying to instill an understanding of equity and diversity issues, being a mentor carries with it other challenges and pitfalls.

**Factors That Contribute to and Inhibit Mentoring**

Many factors need to fall into place for a mentorship to support mentors' and mentees' professional and personal growth. Additionally, there are factors that inhibit mentorships.

The factors that contribute to and inhibit mentoring are often the inverse relationship of each other. An example of how a factor can both positively and negatively affect a mentorship is the concept of time. Many mentors teach a full class load and have organizational responsibilities as well. When the mentor does not receive any release time it becomes difficult for the them to give the mentorship the kind of time it needs to be effective (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Inversely, there are some schools where mentor teachers are full-time mentors or receive a reduced workload so that they may spend more time working with their mentee (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Concepts such as time, mentor training, and mentor-mentee matching, can both contribute to and inhibit the mentoring process. There are also difficulties for which solutions are rare.

**Time**

Time can be both a contributing and inhibiting factor in mentorships. Mentorships that rely on little time during the school day to meet and collaborate can negatively impact a budding mentor-mentee relationship (Ganser, 1994). Conversely, sufficient time can positively affect the mentorship (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).
Mentor teachers have cited a lack of time as their biggest concern in mentoring a new teacher (Ganser, 1994). To teach classes and mentor a beginning teacher, some of the mentor teacher’s professional duties must remain undone or completed after school hours (Ganser, 1994). On the other hand, some teachers are freed from their regular teaching assignments to serve as full-time mentors (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The fact remains that mentor-mentee relationships are reciprocal, meaning that the mentor also benefits from and grows because of the relationship (Drago-Severson, 2009). The reciprocity of the relationship has even been cited as helping mentors become more reflective about their work (Ganser, 1994).

Despite the growth of a more reflective practice, mentor teachers still face an overabundance of difficulties (Ganser, 1994). Secondary teachers whom both teach classes and serve as a mentor have a dual purpose: one as the teacher of young people and the second to educate an adult (Ganser, 1994; Jaspers, et al., 2014). Frequently, mentors and mentees are not given enough time during the school day to co-plan, debrief lessons, and schedule regular meetings for reflection and support (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). If teachers are not given additional time during which to perform their mentor responsibilities, either their students or the mentees are going to suffer; usually, it is the mentees (Ganser, 1994; Jaspers, et al., 2014). Many mentors are often undertrained, as well as pressed for time.

**Training**

Without the appropriate training and supports, it becomes difficult for mentors to be assured of their role (Ganser, 1995). Ganser (1994) raises several questions that mentors ponder, how much advice to give, how often to meet, how much information to provide, how much to advise, help, and guide, how often to step in when the mentee is in need, [and]
how involved to get in advising the beginning teacher regarding teaching styles, methods, etc. (para.9)

Proper mentor training allows mentors to utilize teaching methods that differ from how they were taught (Ganser, 1994). Additionally, one cannot assume that a highly effective teacher will automatically make a highly effective mentor (Portner, 2008). A mentor teacher needs to understand adult learning and development, which has already been addressed. Being trained in several different facets is nonnegotiable (Ganser, 1994). From time demands to training, mentorships carry with them other elements that can be a help or hindrance, such as mentor-mentee matching.

**Matching**

An issue that can immediately help or hinder the mentor-mentee relationship in secondary schools is the “match” (Ganser, 1994). Some mentors and beginning teachers are "mismatched" while others are perfectly matched. (Ganser, 1994). There are many ways a mentor and mentee can be mismatched, but the most common mismatches occur when the mentor and mentee: (a) teach different subjects, (b) work in different schools, and/or (c) share different teaching philosophies (Ganser, 1994). Inversely, if the mentor and mentee teach the same content area, work in proximity, and share similar teaching philosophies their bond will be strengthened (Thies-Sprinthall, 1990).

**Difficulties for Which Solutions are Rare**

There are several difficulties from which mentorships can suffer where effective solutions are rare. Sometimes beginning teachers are not sufficiently dedicated to teaching (Ganser, 1994). In these situations, the work associated with being a mentee may cause novice
teachers to leave the profession (Ganser, 1994). Mentors also worry about being looked upon as authority figures and often wonder how their advice will be taken by mentees (Ganser, 1994).

Moreover, novice teachers may feel overwhelmed. When this transpires, they may be “somewhat reluctant to receive guidance that pushes them beyond their zones of proximal development or what they can manage during this early stage of a teaching career” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 859). One way to possibly alleviate these difficulties is the creation of a healthy mentoring environment (Enz, 1992).

This chapter has already explored some of the factors that help create a healthy mentoring environment such as matching mentor and mentees by grade level and content area, physical proximity, and sufficient time. There are two other factors that add to the creation of a healthy environment: attributes of the mentor and a framework of support (Enz, 1992).

As has been mentioned, mentoring is complex. “The title of mentor bestowed on veteran teachers, is a weighty responsibility” (Enz, 1992, p. 65). Mentor teachers need to be experts in pedagogical and content knowledge, and the ability to nurture and support others (Enz, 1992). Additionally, there are certain personality characteristics that facilitate a healthy environment. When possessed by the mentor, traits such as thoughtfulness, confidence, and integrity benefit the mentorship (Enz, 1992). Thoughtfulness is present in mentors when they view mentoring as an opportunity for self-reflection and personal growth (Enz, 1992). Thoughtfulness also enables mentors to successfully vary supports and challenges based on the cognitive development of the beginning teacher (Head, Reiman, & Thies-Sprinthall, 1992). This relates to Kegan’s “Orders of Consciousness” which was discussed in the adult learning and development section of this study.

Confidence and an outgoing personality also contribute to a healthy environment. When a mentor possesses confidence, they are willing to share ideas and materials which can aide in the
beginning teacher’s development of pedagogical and instructional knowledge (Enz, 1992). In addition to thoughtfulness and confidence, integrity is an essential characteristic of an effective mentor (Enz, 1992). Mentors can be viewed as leaders in their school community. One cannot be considered a true leader unless they exemplify personal and professional integrity (Enz, 1992).

Another factor that can determine the success of the mentorship is an established framework of support (Enz, 1992). A framework of support is defined by established mentor program goals, mentorship goals, identifying and providing the necessary resources (i.e. personnel, physical facilities, time, and financial commitments), and deciding on a delivery system (Enz, 1992). Effective delivery systems include defining the mentor’s responsibilities, matching criteria, and training requirements (Enz, 1992). A well-established framework is a prerequisite for an effective mentorship. It would be helpful if every state and school district in the United States could decide on and institute a framework that supports their school mission before mentorships are established. On paper, the number of states participating in induction and mentoring programs is increasing, but looks can be deceiving (Goldrick, 2016). What follows is a look at mentoring in Massachusetts and across the U.S.

**A Comparison of the Practice of Mentoring in the U.S. and Massachusetts**

Goldrick (2016) purported that only a few states have high-quality induction and mentoring programs to support beginning teachers. Massachusetts has, on paper, what appears to be a strongly articulated state mentoring program. (Goldrick, 2016). Based on the 2018 Massachusetts “Statewide Induction and Mentoring Report,” however, it was reported that many districts are not faithfully following the state’s protocol leading to dissonance among districts. The following subsections outline the state of mentoring in the United States and in Massachusetts.
The State of Mentoring in the United States

In 2016, the New Teacher Center (NTC) published a report entitled, *Support From The Start: A 50-State Review of Policies on New Educator Induction and Mentoring*. The report detailed that many states have limited mentoring for beginning teachers and often, what is provided is not supportive enough. Numerous programs also fail to provide ongoing professional development for mentor teachers (Goldrick, 2016). Connecticut, Delaware, and Iowa are the only states that met most of the NTC’s important criteria for high-quality systems of beginning teacher support, which is addressed later in this chapter.

Results of The NTC 2016 Report

To collect data for their 2016 report, the NTC conducted a survey of beginning teachers. A “sizeable percentage of beginning teachers” said “that they were not assigned a formal mentor – even in states with a mentoring requirement” (Goldrick, 2016, p. iiv). Only fifteen states required mentoring in the first two years of a new teacher’s career. Most states only supported beginning teachers during their first year on the job. Nine states required support for beginning teachers beyond their first two years: Delaware, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, and Vermont. The 2016 survey illuminated that only sixteen states provided some funding for induction and mentoring, one fewer than in 2012 (Goldrick, 2016). To help states develop their own successful induction and mentoring programs, the NTC developed nine criteria of successful mentoring programs.

NTC Mentor Program Criteria

In 2012 and 2016 the NTC published comprehensive reports after investigations of the induction and mentoring policies of all fifty states. The result of the 2015-2016 study is nine criteria concerning necessary characteristics of high-quality induction and mentoring programs.
The first criterion implores states to require that all beginning teachers receive induction support (mentoring) during their first two years in the profession (Goldrick, 2016). The second criterion outlines mentor quality by suggesting that state policy require a rigorous mentor selection process, foundational and ongoing training for mentors, a well-developed and articulated mentor-mentee matching system, and a reduced or “manageable” caseload for beginning teachers and access to full-time mentor teachers (Goldrick, 2016). Providing release time for mentor teachers and dedicated mentor-beginning teacher contact time is the third criterion. The fourth criterion details supports that assess the overall quality of induction and mentoring programs by (a) requiring regular observations of beginning teachers by mentors, (b) providing instructional feedback to mentees, (c) dedicating time for mentees to observe experienced teachers, and (d) encouraging beginning teachers to participate in a learning community or peer group (p. ix). To allow for high program standards, the fifth criterion states that local beginning teacher induction programs should “adopt formal program standards that govern the[ir] design and operation” (Goldrick, 2016, p. ix). Induction and mentoring programs must have their own funds appropriated to them; this is the sixth criterion. Funds can be allocated in two different ways: (a) states can authorize and appropriate dedicated funding; and/or (b) they can establish “competitive innovative funding” (Goldrick, 2016, p. ix). The seventh criterion concerns educator certification and/or licensure. The NTC advocates that states
warrant beginning teachers to complete an induction program to move from an initial to a professional license or certificate. Program accountability is the eighth criterion. The NTC proposes that states assess and monitor induction programs through methods such as evaluation, program surveys, and peer review. The last criterion concerns teaching conditions. The NTC advises states to: (a) adopt formal standards for teaching and learning conditions, (b) conduct a regular assessment of such condition, and (c) incorporate improvements into school improvement plans (Goldrick, 2016, p. ix).

Goldrick (2016) cited Massachusetts as a more progressive state in the development and implementation of induction and mentoring programs. While the Massachusetts mentoring framework may appear forward-looking on paper, one must question if the regulations are being faithfully carried out. An examination of mentoring in Massachusetts follows.

**The State of Mentoring in Massachusetts**

In 2018, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) published the *Statewide Induction and Mentoring Report*. The study examined mentoring programs in 291 school districts in the state (DESE, 2018) School districts’ superintendents responded to questions on the DESE developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was created based on the following assumptions and/or information:

- Two thousand five hundred beginning teachers join Massachusetts public schools annually.
- On average, beginning teachers are less effective than more experienced ones.
- The lack of supportive relationships with colleagues ranks among the top influencing factors of teacher retention.
Effective induction and mentoring programs improve student achievement, increase new teacher effectiveness and retention, reduce district recruiting costs, and expand teacher leadership opportunities. (DESE, 2018)

Mentoring programs were rated according to performance indicators of beginning teachers, mentor-mentee matching methods, length and duration of mentor training, length of mentorship and frequency of collaborative time, activities that mentors and mentees engaged in together, funding, and efficacy of the current program. Due to its length of mentor and mentee training, length of mentorship, frequency of collaborative time, and funding, Massachusetts received high marks. An exploration into the Massachusetts’ performance indicators of beginning teachers and the Massachusetts’ teacher rubric is necessary to understand how teacher performance is evaluated.

Massachusetts’ Teacher Rubric

Before reviewing the data on beginning teachers’ performance, it is essential to understand how Massachusetts teachers are evaluated. Teacher supervisors (department heads, assistant principals, principals, etc.) rate teacher performance based on a rubric consisting of four main standards which are further broken down into performance indicators. The following table from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) (2018) outlines each standard and the performance indicators within each standard (see Table 2.3).
Table 2.3
*MA Teacher Performance Rubric*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard I: Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment</th>
<th>Standard II: Teaching All Students</th>
<th>Standard III: Family and Community Engagement</th>
<th>Standard IV: Professional Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Indicators</td>
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Teacher evaluators rate teachers in each standard and indicator as *unsatisfactory, needs improvement, proficient,* and *exemplary.* The next subsection details beginning teachers’ performance based on the Massachusetts’ teacher rubric.

**Massachusetts’ Beginning Teacher Performance**

When examining the performance of beginning teachers in Massachusetts, the questionnaire indicated that the performance rating of a school tended to influence the proficiency of beginning teachers. A mere nine percent of districts reported that beginning teachers were “fully ready” to meet district needs (DESE, 2018, p. 3). Higher performing districts were more likely to report that beginning teachers were “mostly ready” (DESE, 2018, p. 4). The difference in “mostly ready” and “fully ready” likely stemmed from Standards I (Curriculum, Planning and Assessment) and II (Teaching All Students) (DESE, 2018, p. 4).
On average, lower performing districts had more challenges than higher performing districts (DESE, 2018, p. 3). Some of the challenges included a shorter duration of mentoring programs, difficulty in identifying enough quality mentors, and mentoring programs that only moderately or minimally impacted teacher retention. Also, among lower performing districts, data showed that twenty-two percent of beginning teachers were “minimally ready” or “not ready” in Indicator II (cultural proficiency) (DESE, 2018, p. 4). It appears that the difference in cultural proficiency can be explained by the fact that lower performing schools, on average, have a more culturally-diverse student body and a mostly White teaching faculty (DESE, 2018). A mostly White teaching staff and a more culturally-diverse student body creates dissonance, a lack of cultural understanding between teachers and students, and ultimately lower job satisfaction on the part of beginning teachers (Caswell, 2018). Another factor that can influence job satisfaction for beginning teachers is the strength of the match between mentor and mentee.

*Mentor-Mentee Matching*

Mentor-mentee matching is one of the most prevalent determining factors in the success or failure of a mentorship. The three most common ways that districts match mentors and mentees include: (a) supervisor recommendation (90% of responding districts), (b) mentor evaluations of either proficient or exemplary (76% of responding districts), and (c) mentee feedback from previous years (68% of responding districts) (DESE, 2018).

Scholarship recommends matching mentors and mentees who teach the same grade and subject and work in the same school (Bey & Holmes, 1992). It is also preferable for each mentor to only be assigned one mentee and to either be a full-time mentor or get release time to work with mentees. (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Included in the issue of matching is the fact that there are often not enough mentor teachers to work with each beginning teacher (DESE, 2018).
Some mentors simultaneously work with multiple mentees annually. Another determinant in the efficacy of the mentorship is the amount of training, if any, that mentor teachers receive (DESE, 2018, Portner, 2008).

**Duration and Quality of Mentor Training**

Research has demonstrated that most mentors receive some type of training, however, the quality and duration of said training varies greatly (Wolfe, 1992; DESE, 2018). In Massachusetts, nearly all districts reported some formal mentor training (DESE, 2018). The type and quality of the training was not specified. DESE’s *Mentoring Report* stated that in 2018, although most mentors received training, the majority did not receive annual training. Almost half of all districts provide refresher training for mentors. Thirty-three percent of reporting districts provided one-time mentor training, forty-five percent of districts had a one-time mentor training course with yearly refresher training, while eleven percent of districts only provided training once every three or more years (DESE, 2018). While most districts provided at least minimal mentor training, many districts expressed a need for higher-quality mentor training programs and materials. There appears to be little consistency in the contents of mentor training since over eighty percent of districts develop and lead their own mentor training (DESE, 2018). Since the type of training was not detailed in DESE’s *Mentoring Report*, it is impossible to know if mentor teachers were trained in adult development and learning theories. Researchers purported that andragogy should be a necessary part of mentor training (Schwille, 2008).

**Andragogy and Socio-emotional Support**

Schwille (2008) posited that being skilled in educating children does not necessarily correlate to someone successfully mentoring and educating an adult. Pedagogy and andragogy are two separate concepts as was discussed in the adult learning section of this chapter. Also
missing in the Massachusetts 2018 Mentoring Report is information on social-emotional competence and the needs of beginning teachers. A significant amount of mentoring should be devoted to helping the mentee network with other teachers and supporting them emotionally during the turbulent first years of teaching (Scherff & Daria, 2010) While DESE’s 2018 Mentoring Report does not specify the contents of mentor training, it does provide some effective training approaches.

**Effective Mentor Training Methods**

Massachusetts districts may wish to consider some of the mentor training approaches that lead to the development and implementation of more effective mentoring programs. Possible approaches include

- different training for elementary and secondary school teachers,
- assigning mentor coordinators to facilitate mentor training throughout the year,
- sending mentor coordinators to external training, and
- developing interactive, online mentor trainings. (DESE, 2018)

DESE’s 2018 Mentoring Report also suggested ways that each district can differentiate their mentor training programs, enabling them to focus on areas of need. One strategy involves the structure and content of mentor training. DESE (2018) suggested a mentor training structure that includes book and article studies, case studies, role-playing of challenging scenarios, problem-resolution practice, and watching and discussing videos that show mentoring in action. The last strategy the Mentoring Report suggested is for mentor training to tie into district improvement plans, thereby setting clear expectations and goals for the mentor, namely that mentors be empathetic, nonsupervisory, and nonevaluative.
Examining DESE’s 2018 *Mentoring Report* illuminated some areas of needed improvement and possible methods for better training mentors. The 2018 *Mentoring Report* detailed that almost all districts have had problems in finding high-quality mentors. The shortage of high-quality mentors does not bode well for the retention and development of beginning teachers. There are, however, some emergent methods of mentoring that may help counteract the lack of qualified mentors.

**Emergent Mentoring Practices**

The traditional mentoring model is represented by an older, wiser mentor and a younger, inexperienced protégé. Just as pedagogies evolve, recent literature shows the evolution of mentoring from a one-on-one relationship to more complex models (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Some emergent models of mentoring include: (a) developmental networks, (b) peer mentoring, and (c) e-mentoring (Ragins & Kram, 2007). These three practices are discussed in the following subsections.

**Developmental Networks**

Higgins and Kram (2001) defined a developmental network as “the set of people a protégé names as taking an active interest in and action to advance the protégé’s career by providing developmental assistance” (as cited in McManus & Russell, 2007, p. 275). Scholarship has also indicated that the more diverse the sources from which a protégé gains developmental assistance, the more successful the mentoring relationship will be (McManus & Russell, 2007). Ragins and Kram (2007) based their idea of mentoring networks on social network theory. Social network theory provides a framework through which one can better understand the magnitude of developmental networks (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Two framework ideals that developmental networks have received from social network theory are the vast
number of sources from which individuals can draw on for help and the emotional closeness and high level of communication that exist in these relationships (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 660). Developmental networks are derived from multiple sources and can enumerate outcomes like satisfaction and career development (Ragins & Kram, 2007). There is no indication of whether the individuals who make up the developmental network need to be older, more experienced, or if there is a specific number of individuals necessary to form a network (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The next subsection speaks to the benefits of peer mentoring, which can function as an important component of one’s developmental network.

Peer Mentoring

McDougall and Beattie (1997) defined peer mentoring as a “process where there is mutual involvement in encouraging and enhancing learning and development between two peers” with peers being identified as “people of similar hierarchical status who perceive themselves as equals” (as cited in McManus & Russell, 2007, p. 278). Peer mentoring relationships are typified by two individuals with complementary skills and personalities which, when combined, constitute a whole (McManus & Russell, 2007). It is necessary that both partners in a peer mentoring relationship exist at similar developmental stages so that they can best benefit each other professionally and psychosocially (McManus & Russell, 2007). The relationship is also symbolized by a process that is “directionally parallel” (McManus & Russell, 2007, p. 281). Some of the activities peer mentors engage in are observing one another’s teaching, sharing observations and feedback, and working collaboratively to confront both professional and personal issues (Forbes, 2004).

The benefits of peer mentoring are congruent with traditional forms of mentoring, perhaps lowering stress and anxiety (Forbes, 2004). Scholarship has described the benefits of
peer mentoring as relating to a strong sense of support and collegiality (Forbes, 2004). The reciprocal disposition of peer mentoring fosters intimate trust and helps to allay potential seclusion and burnout (Forbes, 2004). Teachers who have participated in peer mentoring did acknowledge the lack of perspective and input from a traditional mentor, but felt that the more easygoing nature of the peer relationship was more advantageous (Forbes, 2004). Peer networks do not need to take the place of traditional mentorships; they can serve as a supplement or compliment to a more traditional mentorship. Another model of mentoring that helps reduce some of the stress associated with traditional mentoring relationships, often used in tandem with peer mentoring, is e-mentoring (Kahraman & Kuzu, 2016).

E-Mentoring

E-mentoring is a relationship model that is usually conducted via electronic mail and “web-based and computer-aided tools” (Kahraman & Kuzu, 2016, p. 77). It is utilized as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, a traditional and/or peer model of mentoring (Kahraman & Kuzu, 2016). As an alternative to conventional mentoring, e-mentoring removes some of the structural requirements of a traditional relationship, such as a regular meeting time and location (Kahraman & Kuzu, 2016). E-mentoring provides additional flexibility regarding increased and asynchronous response time (Kahraman & Kuzu, 2016; Ligadu & Anthony, 2014). Scholarship has also purported that the asynchronous nature of e-mentoring enables it to be a more reflective medium due to the additional time it provides to internalize and process information (Ligadu & Anthony, 2014).

I contend that although e-mentoring can allow for increased processing time, it does not provide for the immediacy of some teaching needs. As an alternative to in-person mentoring, e-mentoring falls short (Kahraman & Kuzu, 2016). In conjunction with traditional mentoring,
however, e-mentoring has the potential to increase mentee learning (Ligadu & Anthony, 2014). One way to utilize e-mentoring in conjunction with traditional mentoring is to form online peer mentoring circles via a public forum (Ligadu & Anthony, 2014). In this scenario, mentees from the same university or college who may be working at different schools, can post comments and/or ask for advice (Ligadu & Anthony, 2014). Both peers and mentors have access to the forums (Ligadu & Anthony, 2014). In this scenario, mentees have the knowledge and background afforded to them by a seasoned mentor and the comfort and collegiality that is associated with peer-mentoring (Ligadu & Anthony, 2014). This may be a new mentoring model for the future as it provides the best of both worlds.

**Chapter Summary**

Mentor relationships have existed for centuries. Today, educational mentor relationships may help reduce teacher attrition rates, fiscally benefit school districts, serve as professional development for both the mentor teacher and the mentee, and have the potential to change school culture and teaching pedagogies.

This chapter explored the historical contexts of mentoring as well as its transition to the field of education in the 1980s. A critical part of the change was Feiman-Nemser's (2001) concept of educative mentoring. Within the contexts of educative mentoring, the mentor provides experiences that enable the mentee to connect those experiences to their past and present as well as lay the groundwork for future connections. These educative experiences help support and challenge the mentee, which is how he or she will acquire more knowledge, independence, and eventually growth.

To understand how to assist mentee growth, mentors familiar with adult learning and development theories are more effective. Mezirow’s (1997, 2000, 2009) transformative learning
theory was chosen as the foundation for how adults learn. Next, Kegan’s (1983, 1994, 2009) five orders of consciousness were investigated to define adult developmental stages. The study of Mezirow and Kegan formed a congruent relationship because transforming the way one makes meaning (transformative learning) is the vehicle which allows an individual to pass from one developmental stage to another. Through the lens of constructive-developmental theory, an argument detailing how individuals grow at different rates due to their unique developmental processes was presented. Using Piaget’s (1952, 1963, 1932/1965) definition of growth, it was shown that growth can be equated with increased independence.

This chapter also illustrated the characteristics and responsibilities of high-quality mentors both inside and outside of the classroom. The most salient feature of high-quality mentors is that they support and challenge their mentees both professionally and psychosocially. To put growth in context, it was essential to address the different stages of mentor-mentee relationships in general, as well as the developmental stages of an educational mentoring relationship. I utilized Martin’s (1994) study to describe the relational developmental stages. To illustrate how mentoring is advantageous, I looked at the benefits it presents to both the mentor and the mentee.

Aside from the fact that mentoring contributes to both the professional and personal growth of the mentee, it is also beneficial for the mentor teacher. One of the most important advantages for mentor teachers is that it gives them the context to become more reflective about their own teaching. Reflective mentors often find new or different ways to teach and therefore aid in increasing student growth and achievement. In addition to reflection, mentoring provides mentors with high-quality professional development. Mentoring also benefits the field of education in general as it assists with the professionalization of the field of education and enables
mentors to act as agents of social change. Mentoring is not without problems, however, many of them stemming from the fact that there is not a shared meaning of the mentoring process.

Problems inherent in the mentoring process include mentor and mentee mismatches, insufficient training for mentors, and inadequate time allotment to effectively train mentees and plan and teach their own classes. A significant gap in scholarship is the lack of a standard definition of the mentoring process. Uniformity in mentor training, time allotment, and mentee growth may one day produce a shared definition. Without such a description, mentoring may never reach its full potential.

There are also factors that contribute to an effective mentorship. Elements such as sufficient time, proper mentor training, matching consistent with grade level and content area, proximity, and a healthy environment assist in an effective mentoring program. Traits of a healthy environment include the personality attributes of the mentor and a framework of support. Mentors should be thoughtful, confident, and possess integrity. An effective framework of support is characterized as having defined mentorship goals, necessary resources, and an established delivery system.

To fully understand the incongruency of mentoring programs and the dissonance that can ensue, it was essential to look at the state of mentoring in the United States. Through nine criteria developed by the NTC, mentoring programs from all fifty states were compared. It was discovered that most fall short, in all nine criteria of being a high-quality mentoring program including insufficient mentor training time, inadequate collaborative time for mentors and mentees, and the length of support provided to beginning teachers. Massachusetts is one of the states that was ranked relatively high in the NTC report.
To get a clearer picture of the true state of mentoring in Massachusetts it was obligatory to further examine the state’s 2018 report. I scoured DESE’s Induction and Mentoring Report and discovered that state regulations are not being carried out faithfully by many districts. There are, however, a few emergent models of mentoring that may prove to alleviate some of the problems related to the relational process.

I ended my investigation with a look into three newer models, or reconceptualizations, of mentoring. The first reconceptualization I reviewed was developmental networks which grew out of Kram’s (1983) systems theory work. Instead of working with one mentor, developmental networks allow mentees to consult a variety of people who enhance their growth. The second model I discussed was peer mentoring. Peer mentoring may be like conventional mentoring relationships, or more analogous to a developmental network. Peer mentoring is a relationship that occurs between colleagues who are at approximately the same developmental stage and have taught for roughly the same number of years. E-mentoring can serve as a supplement to traditional mentoring or in lieu of it. E-mentoring can also combine developmental networks, peer mentoring, and traditional mentoring. With e-mentoring, it is possible that a mentee could be paired with an experienced mentor and utilize the internet and web-based platforms to connect with peers. It can also serve as a substitute for face-to-face mentoring. Scholarship suggested that no one has thoroughly considered the combination of the four different kinds of mentoring, but it may provide the best experience for both mentors and mentees.

Mentoring is going to continue to be a controversial issue until and unless researchers and theorists can agree upon some flexible framework or universal definition of the mentoring process. The concept of mentoring can benefit the mentee, the mentor, and the state of education.
if, and only if, a shared definition can be agreed upon. Without a common meaning and a flexible framework, I fear the process may not evolve from its current state.
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into how to reconceptualize Massachusetts’ public secondary school mentoring programs. Secondary goals were to uncover characteristics that help could stave teacher attrition and support new teacher growth. Even though Massachusetts has a well-thought-out and specific mentoring program there is still a lack of widespread efficacy (DESE, 2018). Overall, this study sought to uncover possible reasons for mentoring inconsistencies that exist throughout Massachusetts and reconceptualize the program to reduce discrepancies, promote mentor and mentee growth, and lower the attrition rate of new high school teachers.

Several factors contributed to the variability among mentoring programs available to beginning teachers in Massachusetts. Mentoring offerings are greatly impacted by the amount of training available to mentors, the availability of experienced mentors, and the duration of mentoring programs (DESE, 2018). The Massachusetts Mentoring Program also lacks a socio-emotional component and overall is not being carried out faithfully in many school districts (DESE, 2018). This study was inspired by my own experiences as a mentee and mentor with limited supports. My review of the literature examined research that can help illuminate a better understanding of how mentoring can support and increase the capacity of new teachers under the tutelage of a high-quality mentor. While there is a wealth of literature on mentoring in the business and medical domains, there is still a need for more research into the training of educational mentors and how to define their role. The lack of research on this specific issue inspired this study: an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study that began with a survey and led to a series of interviews with mentor teachers across Massachusetts.
Following the Introduction, Chapter Three is organized according to the following sections: (a) philosophical worldview and influence of social and cultural perspective, (b) overview of the design, (c) participants and setting, (d) development of instruments, (e) data collection procedures, (f) data analysis procedures, (g) delimitations and limitations, and (h) chapter summary.

**Philosophical Worldview and Influence of Sociocultural Perspective**

As a child attending school, it was obvious that some teachers were more effective than others. I always assumed that being an effective teacher was akin to possessing a “teacher gene” or some innate ability; I never thought about how teacher training or the influence of a mentor teacher might help shape teachers’ efficacy. I grew up in a predominantly White, middle, and upper-class rural town in New Hampshire, where most students were well-behaved and there was a dearth of serious misbehavior and cultural diversity. Most teachers were able to focus on their teaching and student growth. I was the epitome of “White privilege.” Both of my parents were educated, successful business owners. We traveled multiple times a year, and I never had to go without.

My childhood upbringing and educational experiences were my only points-of-reference. I continued my White, middle, and upper-class education at Colby College. At Colby, I was surrounded by skilled professors and students whose backgrounds were similar to my own. It was not until I entered Harvard University to earn a master’s degree in teaching and learning that I became fully aware of the plethora of cultural and educational backgrounds that exist. I was soon interacting with students, some of whom did not grow up with my level of privilege.

During my first year of teaching, I was matched with the only other world language teacher in the building, a veteran French teacher. Unfortunately, the French teacher did not have
any interest in supporting me as a mentor and I learned to teach by the method Ingersoll (2012) calls “sink-or-swim” (para. 1). I was the first teacher to arrive at school in the morning and the last to leave in the early evening. I studied tirelessly to stay afloat in the classroom. This was not the way I thought teachers became prepared to teach. Although I learned a great deal about education at Harvard, it was more theoretical and less practical. After earning my master’s degree, I was not prepared to enter the classroom and teach. My assumption that teaching was more-or-less an innate skill was supported by the first principal with whom I worked. Early into my second year of teaching, he called me into his office and informed me that he was not sure “I had what it takes to be an effective teacher.” I was stunned and disappointed. I am, and always have been, a diligent worker; someone whose work ethic enables them to succeed in a multitude of situations. I continued to learn to teach by trial-and-error. I did not begin to feel confident in the classroom until I had been teaching for roughly five years. My journey to become an effective teacher informed my assumption that there must be a better way to train and prepare teachers.

Completing a teacher preparatory program does not always engender the skills teachers need to become highly qualified. During my first years of teaching, I realized there was a practical piece missing. As I reflected further, I realized that the missing piece was a high-quality mentorship. To learn more about this phenomenon, I knew I wanted to investigate how teachers have been mentored, are currently mentored, and a possible mentoring reconceptualization.

My teaching career has been a reflective process of varying degrees. Initially, I had to recognize that I was raised in a subculture of privilege (Miller and Garran, 2008) that included being White, middle class, and having educated parents. The reflective process allowed me to
address my assumptions while safeguarding the detachment of said biases and assumptions from the lens I employed to view this study. At Harvard, I became more aware of educators’ different professional and personal experiences. The continuum of reflection I have experienced over the last twenty-two years has given me the skills I need to bracket my personal biases and assumptions to ensure as objective and valid a study as possible. The process of self-reflection also allowed me insight into the worldview needed to guide my research. Understanding that my own experiences were not representative of how all beginning teachers learn to teach was an indispensable revelation.

Based on my own experiences of learning how to teach, the theoretical and philosophical lens through which I viewed this mixed-methods study is social constructivism. Through personal learning experiences, I concluded that not all first-year teachers, first-year college students, or first-year graduate students experience the same reality. The way individuals make meaning is through the assimilation of their experiences within a social and historical context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Objective reality does not exist; individual personal realities are valid and valuable (Raskin, 2002). Raskin (2002) posited that “all constructed meaning represents a point of view” (p. 2). In other words, points of view, or realities, are not purely objective and are constructed through interaction with others (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The goal of a constructivist researcher is to “construct the meaning of a situation” through the interpretation of participants’ experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 24).

Within the confines of this study, being privy to individual realities was accomplished through online survey open-ended and follow-up interview questions whose answers demonstrated the complexity of multiple individual realities; those of mentor teachers varied
greatly. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Constructivism is the worldview that enabled me to take
varying and similar experiences and make broader generalizations.

**Overview of the Research Design**

This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the three guiding
research questions. This section describes and provides a rationale for the guiding research
questions and the explanatory sequential mixed methods design approach.

**Guiding Research Questions**

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study has addressed the following three
guiding research questions:

1. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of
   mentoring?
2. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective educational
   mentoring practices?
3. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and
   conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring?

Each of these three guiding questions was first addressed in the online survey. An invitation
for experienced mentor teachers to participate in the survey was attached to an email that was
sent to Massachusetts high school principals. The email asked the school principals to forward
the invitation to members of their faculty who were, or are, experienced mentor teachers. The
themes of the online survey were further addressed in the in-depth interviews where interviewees
were asked questions that corresponded to the statements on the online survey. The survey was
anonymous, but teachers who wanted to partake in the interviews provided their contact
information. The objective of the mixed methods design was to gain further insight into and a
deeper understanding of participants’ initial responses.

**Mixed Methods Design Approach**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) wrote that there are three domains of research studies:
quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Mixed methods design was the research format
chosen for this study and is defined as the “integration of qualitative and quantitative data [that]
yields additional insight beyond the information provided by either the quantitative or qualitative
data alone” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). The premise of the integration is that each method
has its strengths and weaknesses. When used in tandem, the strengths of each are maximized and
the limitations are minimized which can produce a more insightful, deep study (Creswell &
Creswell, 2018).

Mixed methods research is a broad approach that involves a plan to conduct research, a
philosophical worldview, a research design, and specific methods of data collection and analysis.
Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) contended that mixed methods enabled the researcher to both
generalize the results as well as “develop a detailed view…of a phenomenon” (p. 19). The next
subsection details the type of mixed methods design used in this study: explanatory sequential
mixed methods.

**Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design**

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed method design, which entailed two
phases of data collection and analysis. The first phase consisted of the collection and analysis of
quantitative data, while the second phase was qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data
collected and analyzed during the quantitative phase produced a smaller sample population to
interview during the qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative data, along
with the study’s guiding research questions, were also useful in creating discerning, open-ended qualitative questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The utilization of the two phases can result in a more detailed and insightful interpretation and discussion of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although characterized by two phases of data collection and analysis, sequential mixed methods also includes a third analysis, or discussion phase, in which the researcher “specifies how the qualitative results help[ed] to expand or explain the quantitative results” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 223).

The qualitative portion of the study is phenomenological. Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that a phenomenological study “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 75). In other words, phenomenology studies “‘what’ they [the participants] have experienced and ‘how’ they [the participants] experienced it” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 77). In this case, the phenomenon was being a Massachusetts public high school mentor teacher. There are multiple kinds of phenomenological studies and this study is best characterized as transcendental because it focused on the “description[s] of the experiences of the participants” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78).

After identifying a phenomenon to be studied, the second step in a transcendental phenomenology is for the researcher to utilize the concept of *epoche* (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 78), or bracketing his or her own experiences as much as possible (Moustakas, 1994). The setting aside of a researcher’s own experiences allows them to view the experience freshly, “as if for the first time” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 78). Bracketing will be discussed in more detail later in the “Development of Instruments” section of this chapter. The setting and participants are discussed in the next section.
Participants and Setting

The participants in this study had to conform to specific criteria. All participants needed to be Massachusetts experienced public high school teachers of at least five years who have also served as mentor teachers for at least one year. During the quantitative phase of the study, an email detailing the study and the delimitations of its participants was sent to high school principals in rural, suburban, and urban school districts of Massachusetts (see Appendix A). The email asked the principals to forward the invitation to participate in the study to all qualified mentor teachers (see Appendix B). I hoped to get a cross-section of rural, suburban, and urban teachers. Thirty-eight teachers participated in the quantitative phase of the study although all 38 did not respond to all 50 statements/questions. The qualitative phase of the study included six interviewees. It should be noted that two of the interviewees work at the same high school where I teach. I tried to avoid using colleagues as participants, but I lost contact with three or four potential interviewees during the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic. Without the inclusion of my colleagues, I would have only had four interviewees, which, according to Creswell and Poth (2018) is on the low end of necessary participants for a phenomenology.

I have solely taught in the state of Massachusetts and have been a high school teacher for 18 of 22 years. Per these circumstances, traditional high schools in Massachusetts were my choice for the setting of the survey. The definition of a “traditional” high school excludes charter and magnet schools and solely refers to free-standing high schools. There are 172 said high schools in Massachusetts (DESE, 2018). Cooperative high schools and combination middle/high schools were not examined in this study. The next section details the development of both the quantitative and qualitative instruments as well as delves into the topic of bracketing: a means to develop as objective an instrument as possible (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
Development of Instruments

The development of instruments includes comprehensive explanations of the purpose of both the online survey and the in-depth interviews. Following Creswell and Creswell’s (2018) guidelines for an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, two instruments were used in this study: an online survey and in-depth interviews. The study began with a quantitative instrument, an online survey. After analyzing the data received from the quantitative instrument, participants volunteered for the qualitative instrument, in-depth interviews.

This section also includes a discussion regarding how bracketing can help researchers ensure their studies are as objective and ethical as possible. Before the commencement of any research study, all Lesley University researchers must gain approval from the Institutional Review Board. After the Institutional Review Board approves a student’s proposed study, they may want to immediately start bracketing their assumptions and biases before the development of any instrumentation. When researchers undertake studies with personal attachments, becoming aware of their biases and how they could potentially harm their study is essential. In order to maximize objectivity, I completed a Research Identity Memo (Appendix F) during which I explored the essence of who am I, why I was drawn to education, my theories on teaching and learning, and my assumptions concerning the mentor-mentee relationship. The following section delineates the development of the online survey, the in-depth interview protocol, and bracketing as a means of compartmentalizing individual biases “in order to successfully achieve contact with essences” (Laverty, 2003, para. 9).

Online Survey

Statements and questions for the online survey were developed by consulting the study’s three guiding research questions and the literature review. Statements and questions were
organized into three categories, each of which corresponded to one of the guiding research questions: mentors’ understandings, mentor supports and practices, and mentors’ beliefs. Participants were asked to rate their levels of agreement or disagreement on statements in each of the three categories. The statements used a 4-point Likert scale (highly agrees, agrees, disagrees, and highly disagrees). Statements and questions were limited to four choices so that there would not be any neutral responses that could have skewed responses.

The first category of statements and questions pertained to mentor understandings of essential traits, responsibilities, and characteristics of effective mentorships. The research question the first category explored was, “What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?”

The second category of statements and questions related to mentor supports and practices. Second category statements examined supports employed by mentors that allow them to aid in the personal and professional growth of beginning teachers. Supports considered were content area, instructional, and social-emotional. Second category questions and statements pertained to the research question, “What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective educational mentoring practices?”

The third and last category of statements and questions correlated with mentors’ beliefs. Mentors’ beliefs can be better understood as mentor teachers’ perceptions on issues such as how to spend shared time, the development of mentorship goals, and mentor competency. Third category questions and statements corresponded to the research question, “What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring?” The quantitative survey ended by asking the participants if they would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview and their preferred format for doing so.
Follow-up Interviews

The in-depth interview questions were based on the online survey. The survey was developed to assess mentors’ thoughts, reflections, and opinions. The in-depth interviews, however, were meant to contribute background information and possible reasons for why the mentors responded the way they did on the online survey.

Questions for the in-depth interviews corresponded to the study’s three essential research questions. Interview questions were organized according to the same three categories as the online survey: mentor understandings, mentor supports and practices, and mentors’ beliefs. To begin drafting interview questions I carefully read and reread the online survey and the answers participants supplied. As I read the closed-response statements, I reflected on how they could be transformed into in-depth interview questions. An example of this is the second statement of the online survey that declares, “Mentors have the skills needed to work one-on-one with a beginning teacher.” The interview question became, “What are the most important skills mentor teachers need to possess to work one-on-one with beginning teachers?” Another statement on the online survey was, “Mentors and mentees co-teach lessons.” Most respondents stated that they disagreed with this statement. For those participants who disagreed or strongly disagreed, the interview question was, “What are some factors that prevent mentors and mentees from co-teaching?” The question for the few respondents who agreed with the statement was, “How do mentor teachers and mentees work together to co-teach lessons?”

Although the online survey and the in-depth interviews work in tandem, they also differ. The first difference between the survey and the interview protocols is that the survey was developed as a quantitative instrument while the interview protocol was a qualitative instrument. The qualitative instrument can be further defined as phenomenological because it asked a group
of mentor teachers questions that pertained to the phenomenon of mentoring (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In phenomenology, the world and the person are inextricably linked. Phenomenology espouses that the world or reality cannot be separated from the person because its focus is the world as lived by a person (Laverty, 2003). Heidegger (1889-1976) postulated that the focus of phenomenology is to “illuminate details and seemingly trivial aspects within experiences that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding” (as used in Laverty, 2003, para. 9)

Another way in which the interview protocol differed from the online survey is that the interview ends with a reflective question on the practice of mentoring. The last question asks participants if there is anything they would change about the mentoring process. If the respondent stated that he or she would change something, I followed up my first question by inquiring what it is he or she would change and why.

For a researcher to develop the most objective study possible one must employ issues of trustworthiness; in this case: (a) bracketing, (b) reliability, and (c) validity. Bracketing is an important method that researchers can utilize throughout the study, but especially during the development of the instruments. To keep both the quantitative and qualitative instruments as objective as possible, I employed bracketing, which is discussed in the next subsection.

**Bracketing**

Bracketing one’s values and assumptions is a method that researchers use to prevent bias from negatively impacting one’s study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moustakas (1994) defined bracketing as a setting aside of personal experiences that allows for a new perspective. As an experienced Massachusetts high school Spanish teacher and former mentee and mentor, I hold specific opinions regarding mentoring. The first step in bracketing is reflection (Creswell & Poth,
2018). The reflective process allowed me to address my biases to ensure that I detached them from the lens I viewed this study. I became cognizant that my professional and personal experiences were not necessarily the same as other educators. This self-reflective process also helped me identify constructivism as the worldview with which to ground my research. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) purported that constructivists:

Understand the world as socially constructed through interaction where there are multiple realities and meaning is agreed upon in natural settings. As a researcher in social settings, you explore phenomena in the field and inductively arrive at an understanding of what is going on. (as cited in Durdella, 2019)

Understanding that my own experiences were not necessarily representative of how all beginning teachers learned to teach was an important revelation. The next section describes the procedures used to collect data from both the online survey and interviews.

Data Collection Procedures

Separate, yet equally secure and anonymous procedures were used to collect data from the online survey and the in-depth interviews. This section details the collection of the quantitative portion of the study, the online survey, and the qualitative part of the study, the in-depth interviews. It starts with an examination of reliability, or the consistency of the data collection procedures and is followed by a section on validity.

Reliability

Reliability is a necessary component of data collection procedures. It is important that a researcher ensures that their study is as reliable as possible, or consistent and stable. In other words, if another researcher were to conduct the same study it would yield similar results. Yin (2009) proposed some strategies for maintaining reliability. He urged researchers to document as
much of the analysis and coding procedures as possible. He also recommended that the researcher set up a database, check transcripts for errors, compare data with a coresearcher, and be aware of possible shifts in the meaning of codes. To start analyzing this study’s data, I set up a database that first included each participant’s demographic information (age, location, number of years teaching, and number of years mentoring). I transcribed two of the six interviews and read and reread all six interview transcripts for errors. As the only researcher in the study, I did not have to coordinate and compare another person’s perspective on the coding process. The memos from the coding process ascertained that all text I added to the associated categories carried consistent meaning. Reliability concerns itself with a stable study, while validity is related to credibility.

**Validity**

Maxwell (2013) purported that “validity is not a commodity that can be purchased with techniques” (p. 121). He explained validity as referring “to the correctness or credibility of a[n] . . . explanation” (p. 106). Maxwell (2013) also maintained that there is no objective truth because validity depends on the relationship of one’s conclusion to reality and that no analysis can completely guarantee that validity has been achieved. Even though a researcher can never be assured that validity has been captured, they do have a responsibility to utilize strategies that might help rule out validity threats (Maxwell, 2013). Bracketing and triangulation are two strategies Maxwell recommended employing. Since bracketing was already examined in the Development of Instruments Section of this paper, triangulation alone is discussed next.

Maxwell (2013) explained that triangulation, or using more than one data collection method, can increase the likelihood of the results being significant. He posited that using different collection methods serves as a check against each method. If methods of different
strengths and limitations all support a single conclusion, then the strategy has reduced the likelihood of bias. Besides, researchers must maximize “the importance of one phase explaining the other” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 223). Researchers can ensure that one phase explains the other by selecting participants from the quantitative phase to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. Maxwell (2013) also urged researchers to solicit feedback about the data collected and conclusions from participants. Participant feedback can safeguard against misinterpretation and help the researcher ask pertinent questions during the qualitative phase of the study.

Finally, Maxwell (2013) warned against a misconception. He declared that researcher bias is not to be completely eradicated from a study; that is not the goal. The true aim of validity is for the researcher to examine their possible biases and how they can manage them within the confines of their study. The main way of examining how past experiences have influenced a researcher’s choice of study topic, their beliefs, and their personal identity is through a “Researcher Identity memo.” Reason (1988) called this process critical subjectivity and described it as,

A quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary experienced; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away and overwhelmed by it; rather we raise it to the consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process. (p. 12)

The Researcher Identity Memo that I composed for this study follows.

**Researcher Identity Memo**

“The grain of truth in the traditional view is that your personal (and often unexamined) motives as researcher have important consequences for the validity of your conclusions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 26).
Throughout the course of my life, I have never felt that I quite “fit” in. I did not fit into the amorphous shape I was supposed to reside in within my nuclear family. With friends, I shifted form so that I would appear to “fit” in. I have never really known who I am. If I had to describe myself to someone, what would I say? I am a person of integrity, someone who cares and feels deeply, who lives in a world of glasses half-empty, who is passionate, curious, kind, unwell, misunderstood, forthright, diligent, and unsure. I could go on describing myself, but the most attributive words have already found their rightful place on the page. Ranking my self-descriptors, misunderstood, diligent, passionate, and unsure seem to resonate slightly more than the others. Misunderstood, diligent, passionate, and unsure categorize most of my life’s experiences. Misunderstood and unsure typify the feeling of never quite fitting in with the crowd. Diligent and passionate describe me at my best, usually taking over my persona when I am in a classroom or partaking in some form of academia. The one place I have always felt at home is within the confines of a classroom. Perhaps my life’s trajectory was set in motion many years ago when I first entered a classroom at the mere age of four.

I remember knowing that my father was a high school Spanish teacher, but not really understanding what that meant. He left our house early every morning, returned briefly in the afternoon and left again shortly, off to his second job. Early one winter morning, it was my turn to accompany my father to work as my mother was home resting with my recently born sister.

I loved school the very first time I entered the building. That day I received lots of attention from the other teachers, secretaries, and the students. Perhaps the optimism I felt on that first day set my life’s path. Perhaps it was coincidental. Whatever the reason, I have always felt most comfortable in the world of academics. I am inquisitive by nature, and that always boded
well for me in the classroom. My thirst for knowledge has rarely been quenched and I feel the happiest and most alive when in a classroom or working towards an academic goal.

As an elementary and secondary student, I thrived. I always worked diligently which was easily recognized by my teachers, with whom I consistently formed close relationships. Even though school was where I thrived, not everything came easy to me. Math falls into that category. The first time that math proved difficult for me was in the fifth grade. After struggling and not understanding the concepts, my parents hired a tutor; he quickly made sure that I got back on track. In high school math proved challenging, but I was relentless with the subject and always did well. That was my passion and diligence at its best.

I quickly ascertained that no two teachers are the same. Some were very enthusiastic, others more caring, some were stern, and others witty. Thankfully, most were a combination of those attributes although most teachers could be characterized as possessing one quality more than the others. I learned how to “read” my teachers. Each had a different way of viewing and perceiving the world which caused them to want their students to produce work according to their worldview. I played school as if it were a game. Most likely, due to my ability to change form to fit in, I ascertained how my teachers wanted their students to present their work, and that was what I did. In doing so, I found success in every classroom.

Relatively early into my schooling I also became cognizant of the fact that some teachers are better than others at presenting new information to their students and choosing activities to reinforce the newly-acquired knowledge. Why were some better than others? I chalked it up to differences in personalities and didn’t give it another thought until I entered a classroom as the teacher.
I earned my Master of Education at the age of 28 and started teaching 8th grade Spanish the following August. Eighth graders were highly inquisitive, energetic, talkative, and extremely social. It was difficult for me to engage all 25 at once to present a lesson or get them started on an activity. My intuition, not my teaching degree, told me that I needed to engage with the students one-on-one; get to know them as people, not just as students. Once I started showing genuine interest in who my students were, the academic portion of class fell into place. Twenty-two years later, I still use the same strategy, and always establish personal relationships with my students.

I hold the assumption that some people innately possess the qualities necessary to be an effective and inspirational teacher, and others do not. My bias tells me that no matter how hard some people work nor the level of academics they achieve, they may never be a high-quality teacher. This is a bias I must learn to temper during my research study. I also feel, however, that every beginning teacher deserves to be supported during their first few fledgling years. I was not supported by a formal mentor, and I am certain the lack of assistance slowed down the rate at which I improved as a teacher.

Another assumption I bring to this study is that all mentors are not created equal. Just because someone knows how to teach young people does not mean they know how to teach adults. Teaching young people and teaching adults are very different processes, and if a mentor teacher is unaware of this, he or she will not be able to support his or her mentee to the best of their ability.

My third assumption is that teaching is not a 7 a.m. to 2:20 p.m. job. To be a quality teacher one must work beyond the hours they are at school. There is not enough time in the teaching day to plan effective and engaging lessons, correct assignments, and tend to
administrative requests. Two days ago, I overheard a special education teacher telling another teacher how much more difficult teaching special education is than regular education. I do not know if that statement is true or not because I have never been a special education teacher, but his rationale made me see red. The special education teacher explained that teaching regular education is so much easier because once you create a lesson, you can use it over and over, for the rest of your teaching career. What? Did I hear that correctly? I wish that particular special education teacher would do my job for just a few weeks. He would quickly learn that any high-quality teacher does not simply recycle assignments from year to year.

My fourth assumption is that a mentor teacher needs to feel compelled to help new teachers and desire to work to the best of their ability. Most mentor teachers do not teach a reduced class load while serving as a mentor. This tells me that a mentor teacher essentially does two jobs within the time allotted to do one job. I believe this is why some mentors do not put their all into mentoring. To do both jobs effectively means that a mentor teacher would have to work around the clock.

I have always recognized my assumptions and biases regarding teaching and the job of a mentor but never committed them to paper until now. Seeing them in black and white is going to give me a resource to utilize during the data collection and analysis phase of my study as well as during the writing of chapters 4 and 5. I am confident that I will be able to focus on the lived experiences of the study participants and not let my biases interfere in a negative way after completing this exercise.

**Quantitative Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection for the online survey utilized the Qualtrics online site through Lesley University. The link to this private, secure site was included in the letter of introduction.
(Appendix B) that was first sent to 172 Massachusetts high school principals and later to 156 more. To acquire principals’ email addresses, I consulted the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s website. Listed on its website are email addresses for principals of every high school in the state. After receiving IRB approval on January 16, 2020, on January 18, 2020, I emailed the letter of informed consent (Appendix B) to 172 qualifying principals. A reminder email was sent one week later, on January 25, 2020. The survey was closed after two weeks. I successfully received 20 survey responses, with three respondents noting that they were interested in being interviewed. Respondents accessed the survey via a link on the letter of informed consent. The survey was created on the Qualtrics website.

Creswell and Poth (2018) postulated that a phenomenological study should consist of between “3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15” (p. 76). Because my quantitative survey only yielded three individuals who consented to be interviewed, on February 9, 2020, I sent another email (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) to 156 principals. On the same day, I also reopened the Qualtrics survey. On February 25, 2020, I closed the survey again. The second rendering of the online survey yielded an additional 18 participants. Out of the 38 survey respondents, eight agreed to be interviewed. It is noted that all participants did not rate all the survey statements. In full disclosure, two of the six mentor teachers interviewed for this study teach at the same high school where I teach. Ideally, I would have liked to avoid interviewing teachers with whom I teach. Additionally, it is noted that I only interviewed six participants due to the state closures during the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic.

**Qualitative Data Collection Procedures**

After reviewing the results of the closed-question online survey, I attempted to contact the eight mentor teachers who expressed interest in being interviewed, but I was only successful
in connecting with seven, all of whom I decided to be interviewed. On the online survey respondents were asked to share their preferred format for the interview (in-person, phone-call, or videoconference). One person requested an in-person interview, one person preferred either an in-person or video-conference interview, and four requested phone interviews. A day and time to conduct each interview was scheduled via email. Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus school closures, I lost contact with my participants for approximately two months due to the shift in remote learning. There was one participant who I was never able to reconnect with; therefore, I ended up with a participant sample of six. Additionally, because of the stay-at-home pandemic state orders, all interviews were conducted via telephone.

Upon beginning each interview, I read the consent form (Appendix B) to the participants. After receiving verbal consent from each interviewee, I then provided each participant with a summary of how he or she responded to the statements within each category of the online survey. After determining that the summaries were accurate, I proceeded with the interview protocol. The questions in the interview protocol sought a greater depth of knowledge from the participant. Achieving more acumen was mainly accomplished by asking questions that started with “what” or “how.” The interviews lasted anywhere from 32 to 59 minutes. At the end of the interview, I emailed the consent form to each interviewee. The participants each signed the consent form, scanned it, and emailed it back to me for my records. After completing all six interviews, I transcribed two of the interviews into separate Microsoft Word documents. The remaining four interview recordings were forwarded to Transcribeme! for transcription. The reason I decided to use a transcription service was because each of my interviews averaged one hour in length, which led to transcription durations of more than four hours per interview. What follows is a description of the data analysis procedures I employed.
Data Analysis Procedures

The online survey and the interview protocol were each organized according to the same three categories to make it easier to see major themes and connections between the quantitative and qualitative data. This mixed methods study began with an analysis of quantitative data garnered from the online survey. The following section describes (a) quantitative data analysis, (b) qualitative data analysis, (c) validity, (d) coding the data, and (e) interpreting major categories from the data.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The online survey generated quantitative data. Of the 328 principals emailed (some received the correspondence twice), I received 38 responses from mentor teachers. For each of the questions, Qualtrics supplied me with the mean and the standard deviation for each statement or question. The next step was to compare the standard deviation amongst statement responses to see where there was the least and greatest variance among participants. The variance allowed me to see where there was consensus amongst the mentor teachers and where there was discord.

The online survey provided numerical insight and preliminary results that played a role in developing questions for the interview protocol. The survey also guided me in establishing some a priori codes before analyzing the qualitative data (Saldaña, 2016).

Qualitative Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews were intended to provide more qualitative information about what was and was not happening, how things were happening, and the rationale for that information. The qualitative portion of the study was deemed phenomenological and followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) recommendations concerning how to analyze qualitative data through the coding process.
My original intention had been to specifically choose individuals that supplied varied responses. Of the 38 survey participants, only eight mentor teachers agreed to be interviewed; and, ultimately, I interviewed six. The demographic information of my participants varied little, but the answers they supplied were diverse allowing me a variety of perspectives. The individual experiences of my participants allowed me to learn more about why mentor teachers possess the beliefs they hold and why they behave the way they do. The interview protocol was divided equally into the three categories from the survey, providing me with a system whereby I could further investigate each of the three guiding research questions.

The in-depth interviews addressed the guiding research questions by asking certain questions that indirectly targeted them. For example, the interview protocol (Appendix C) included the statement, “Mentors provide opportunities for mentees to problem solve.” and, “If so, what are examples of such opportunities?” to address the first guiding research question: “What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?” Each interview question related to one of the three guiding research questions. The responses to those questions led to preliminary codes that were used to categorize participants’ perspectives (Saldaña, 2016). The coding process is where the deepest level of qualitative analysis takes place. The coding process is also where the researcher needs to perform checks to ensure that validity has been considered. It is important to consider how to increase validity during the data analysis processes.

**Coding the Data**

Coding data is a process that reduces large volumes of empirical information into words and/or phrases, making the data more easily accessible for analysis while simultaneously “increasing the quality of the analysis and findings” (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2020, p. 3). The
data in this study were analyzed according to a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, one of the seven methods discussed by Moustakas in his 1994 book. I chose this method of data analysis because of its practicality and useful approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

**Precoding**

I began coding with a technique Layder (1998) calls “precoding.” Precoding occurs when the researcher reads through the transcripts for the first time and underlines, highlights, or circles seemingly pertinent information. While engaged in this activity, the researcher can pay close attention to words and phrases that would answer each interview question but would also help explain, validate, or differ from the three sections of that interview protocol. The three sections of this study’s interview protocol are mentor understandings, mentor supports, and mentor beliefs.

**First Cycle Coding**

After completing the precoding phase of analysis, I transitioned to first cycle coding. I began by rereading the transcripts and looking for phrases or words that may have been highlighted during the precoding phase. Recurring codes were written in a codebook, which included the categories: theme, code, when to use the code, when not to use the code, and an exemplifying statement from one of the interviewees. I then went back to the transcripts and coded the data by either writing down interviewee quotes, a technique Saldana (2016) identifies as in vivo coding, or via versus coding. Finally, I transitioned to the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of coding (Chun, 2013, para. 8)

**The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method**

The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method requires a researcher to go through six phases of data analysis. For clarity, each phase is outlined in a separate paragraph.
The first phase is *epoche*. This stage calls for the researcher to “describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The act of revisiting experiences with the phenomenon allows the researcher to set their experience aside in a process called *epoche*, or bracketing. I accomplished this task through a Researcher Identity Memo (Appendix F). Bracketing allows the researcher to look upon the phenomenon with fresh, new eyes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Once a list of significant statements regarding how participants experienced the phenomenon has been compiled, the researcher reads through each interview transcript line-by-line and identifies significant units of meaning (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Horizontalization, or the process of giving each statement equal weight, is next with the outcome being a list of nonrepetitive or overlapping statements (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The result of horizontalization is a textural description, or what the interviewees experienced. In this case what the sample experienced is being a mentor teacher in Massachusetts.

Following the textural description, the researcher develops the structural description, or how the interview participants experienced the phenomenon. This process is also known as “imaginative variation” because it requires the researcher to use their imagination “to reflect the relationships (themes) pertinent to the experience” (Chun, 2013, para. 8).

Next, the researcher amalgamates the textural and structural descriptions to one characterization of the experience, which is its *essence*. It is important that the researcher focuses on the “space and time when the phenomenon” (Chun, 2013, para. 8) was observed.

The steps of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen as detailed are repeated for each interview participant. Once the researcher has an essence for each interviewee, they combine all of the textural-structural descriptions to create an essence of the experience as a whole.
Interpreting Major Categories from the Data

After the pre and first cycle coding as well as the utilization of a modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of coding, I analyzed the codes that were written down to see if some of them could be combined under a common theme (Saldaña, 2016). Once I decided upon major themes they were added to the codebook. I also created a mind map using the main themes. Subcategories were added to the mind map as off chutes of each major theme. The main themes are used as the major headings in the findings section (Chapter 4). After completing first cycle coding, I went back and memoed my initial thoughts and descriptions (Saldaña, 2016).

When memoing was completed, I shifted my attention back to the quantitative data. I looked for questions whose data would either help corroborate or refute the literary findings in Chapter Two. More specifically, connections were made to some of the literature detailed in Chapter Two. I also compared the quantitative and qualitative data to develop questions to inspire future research.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

This study was delimited in three specific ways. The delimitations included (a) the setting, (b) the population I chose to investigate, and (c) me as the researcher.

The setting of the study was delimited to the 172 traditional, public, Massachusetts’ high schools in rural, suburban, and urban areas. By delimiting the study to traditional, public, Massachusetts’ high schools, I purposefully excluded other state-wide public high schools such as charter schools, regional schools, virtual schools, and vocational/technical schools (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). The rationale for delimiting charter, regional, and virtual high schools as well as vocational schools was that potential trends and
codes may have become more apparent by studying the same kind of school structure and organization. The study also delimited the setting to single structure high schools. I did not investigate teachers who work at combined middle/senior high schools nor regional districts. The high schools used for this study consist of grades 9-12.

I chose to delimit the participants, in both the online survey and in-depth interviews, to experienced teachers of more than five years. According to Bolish (2001), a new teacher is a teacher who has taught for fewer than five years. My goal was to understand what mentor teachers do and believe. To achieve that goal, it was important that the study participants were experienced teachers who had also served as a mentor for at least one year. Participants had to meet the requirement of having served as a mentor for at least one year because, with limited training available in so many parts of Massachusetts, a first-year mentor is much like a first-year teacher; both can become victims of Ingersoll’s (2012) “sink or swim” (p. 47) characterization.

Study participants were simultaneously experienced public high school educators and experienced mentor teachers.

An essential act of making the study as authentic as possible was to delimit myself as researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher, I am a former mentee and mentor in the specific setting I chose for this study. The participants in my study were guaranteed complete anonymity. The only time names were required was if a participant agreed to be interviewed. At that point in time, I collected their real names but assigned them pseudonyms for the study. I also sent out emails to 172 principals to schools in Massachusetts where I did not know anyone. It must be stated that the high school where I am employed was part of this study. Two of my colleagues, a math teacher, and a special education teacher, were interviewed for this study. Being as transparent as I can allows the reader to better trust my analyses and findings.
In addition to the aforementioned delimitations, this study is defined by five specific limitations.

**Limitations**

Limitations are potential weaknesses in a study and are out of the researcher’s control (Simon, 2011). This study is limited by five factors: its small sample size, COVID-19, time constraints, the interviewees, and possible researcher bias.

The first limitation is the size of the study’s sample. Thirty-eight people responded to the online survey. Of the 38 people who replied, eight indicated that they would like to participate in in-depth interviews. Since only eight participants agreed to be interviewed, I decided to interview all eight. Between the close of the online survey, however, and the start of the in-depth interviews, schools shut-down due to COVID-19. In the end, I interviewed six mentor teachers. Due to the limited size of the study’s interview participants, I may be unable to generally apply my conclusions to a larger population although suggestions can be inferred.

As was stated in the previous paragraph, K-12 schools in Massachusetts closed at the end of the second week of March 2020 due to the coronavirus and COVID-19. The pandemic fostered an environment of staying at home and being with family. It was during this time that I lost contact with two of my prospective interview participants and was never able to re-establish communication. The result of the lost communication was that I interviewed six mentor teachers instead of the intended eight.

Time can be seen as a double limitation in an explanatory mixed methods design study. Simon (2011) warned that a study conducted over a certain period of time is a mere snapshot, dependent on conditions occurring during that time. This means that if the same study were conducted during a different interval of time the results might vary from the first study. Delva et
al. (2003) postulated that surveys with time limits, of which, mine was one, can be limiting because people who struggle with time constraints are less likely to respond.

What and how interviewees respond to in-depth interview questions are out of the control of the researcher. Creswell (2012) posited that interviews provide indirect information because it is information that has been filtered through the views of the interviewees. He continued that not all people can articulate their thoughts and perspectives at the same level of aptitude.

Finally, no matter what a researcher does, there is always the chance that their bias could influence the data analysis process. Even when a researcher brackets their experiences, writes an identity memo (Appendix F), and utilizes triangulation, they cannot be one-hundred percent assured that data analysis is free from all bias and assumptions (Delva, Kirby, Knapper & Birtwhistle, 2003).

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter Three discussed the method used in this study. By utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the contextual factors that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring, what mentor teachers deem are effective mentoring practices, and mentor teachers understanding of mentoring were explored.

The philosophical worldview and influence of sociocultural perspective were discussed to provide a foundation and context for the study. A detailed overview of the research design, including a restatement of the three guiding research questions and how I utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, was presented. Additionally, the selection of the setting and participants, and an in-depth narrative of the development of both the quantitative and qualitative instruments were explained. Further, I identified that the study was to be coded according to a
modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Finally, statements of delimitation and limitation were shared. Chapter Four follows, in which the results of the study are presented and analyzed.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter Four presents and analyzes data collected from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Data are presented using tables, descriptive paragraphs, and excerpts from interviews that demonstrate emergent themes uncovered during data analysis. The guiding research questions are used to organize the presentation of the data. From the configuration of the data, inferences can be made. The chapter ends with a summary.

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study explored experienced mentor teachers’ roles in understanding how to mentor new teachers in Massachusetts public high schools more effectively. The impetus to conduct this study stemmed from four factors: the lack of a common definition of an educational mentor and their role, significant discrepancies among mentorship programs in Massachusetts public high schools, the high rate of new teacher attrition, and my experiences as both a mentee and mentor. In addition, the study sought to answer the following three guiding research questions:

1. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?
2. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective/ineffective educational mentor practices?
3. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring?

Chapter Three described the data collection and analysis procedures that led to the results reported in Chapter Four. Data collection began with assembling email addresses of principals who work in freestanding Massachusetts public high schools that serve grades 9-12. As defined
by Merriam-Webster (2021), a freestanding high school is unattached from other structures and stands independently upon its own foundation. One hundred seventy-two principals were emailed a letter of informed consent (Appendix A) with a link to a Qualtrics online survey (Appendix B). In the email, the principals were asked to forward the letter of informed consent to experienced mentor teachers who teach in their schools. A total of 20 mentor teachers rated most of the 48 online survey statements during the first two weeks, and four mentors consented to be interviewed over the phone or in person. Because four was not a substantial enough number of participants to conduct a qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I reopened the survey. I sent out an additional 156 emails to traditional, public high school principals. Some of the principals may have received double notification due to an overlap in the lists of schools/principals. Again, the principals were asked to forward the letter of informed consent and the Qualtrics online survey link to experienced mentor teachers in their high schools. Within two weeks, an additional 14 mentor teachers completed the survey, and four more teachers agreed to be interviewed. In March 2020, shortly after I had compiled the names and email addresses of the eight interview participants, Massachusetts’ public schools were closed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. I lost contact with two potential interviewees and completed the interviews via the telephone with a sample size of six.

The online survey presented literature-based statements concerning mentor teacher behavior and personal and professional traits that support new teachers. The online survey was divided into three action areas: mentor understandings, mentor supports and practices, and mentor beliefs. Each action area helped to answer one of the three Guiding Research Questions. For example, the survey part corresponding to mentor understandings contained 16 statements and one open-ended question. (2021). The survey section regarding mentor supports and
practices was comprised of 17 statements and two open-response questions. In contrast, the final survey segment, mentor beliefs, included 14 statements and one open-ended question. Mentor teachers were asked to respond to each online survey statement by rating their agreement on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1). Response averages for each statement elucidated the importance of various mentor actions and characteristics of high-quality mentoring.

Data were described using emergent themes, narrative language, and direct quotes from participants. Those data are presented and analyzed with interview data. Open-response questions were coded according to reoccurring phrases and themes that emerged from participant responses.

An interview protocol (Appendix D) was developed according to the same action areas outlined in the online survey. All six interviews were transcribed for coding during the analysis portion. I transcribed two of the interviews and, in an effort to save time, used the online transcription service transcribeme! to transcribe the other four. While the accuracy of the interviews I transcribed was superior to the transcription service, it would have taken me weeks to transcribe all of the interviews meticulously.

Data analysis commenced with the statistical data. Fundamental data were based on two determining factors. The first factor was the frequency of responses to the 48 online survey statements. The second factor encompassed the codes that emerged from the four online-survey questions. Likert scales are often based on five or seven points (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). This study employed a four-point Likert scale to obligate participants to choose from categories where an uncertain option was unavailable. Participants had to select from either strongly agree (4 points), agree (3 points), disagree (2 points), or strongly disagree (1 point). Tables are included
to represent the results. The absence of a nonapplicable option was strategic. Requiring participants to select one of the aforementioned Likert scale points would allow me to aggregate the most data for analysis.

The discussion for each research question includes the presentation and analysis of data for the statements on the online survey that focused on examining the frequency averages for each statement. The mean frequency data elucidated the statements mentor teachers most and least agreed with. Numeric trends then led to preliminary findings that were used as context for coding when beginning the qualitative analysis. In delineating findings, statements are extracted from online survey open-ended questions and follow-up interviews.

I chose to record and sort the qualitative data collected from the six interviewees by hand. In doing so, I followed a protocol called the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method (Chun, 2013, para. 8; Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015; Moustakas, 1994) and strategies espoused by Creswell & Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2016). The three steps of the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method consist of: phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and essence.

Phenomenological reduction includes bracketing, horizontalization, constructing invariant characteristics and themes, and composing textural descriptions (Merriam, 2009, Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis began with the researcher’s experiences, and the designation of equal value to each statement through horizontalization. With the assignment of equal value, the statements form segments of meaning (Merriam, 2009, Moustakas, 1994). The textural description (the “what”) is formed by grouping segments of meaning into themes (Merriam, 2009, Moustakas, 1994). The textural description is analyzed from varying perspectives which is called imaginative variation. The textural description is next combined with the structural description (the “how”) (Merriam, 2009, Moustakas, 1994). A textural-structural description is
generated for each interview participant by repeating the preceding steps. The last step describes the essence of the experience, which is the integration of all participants’ textural-structural descriptions into the composition of the sample group experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter Four is organized into four main sections, following the Introduction. The sections include (a) demographic information and (b-d) presentations and data analyses, with resulting findings, for each guiding research question. The chapter ends with a summary. Within the presentation and analysis of data for each guiding research question, there are three subsections: (a) online survey data, including closed and open-response statements, (b) data for interviews, and (c) delineation of findings.

**Demographic Information**

Table 1 presents demographic information for the six participants interviewed. No demographic information was collected on the mentor teachers who completed the online survey. The data are presented according to a pseudonym, gender, number of years teaching, age, district, the population of city/town served by the district, and median income. Following Table 1, a demographic narrative for each pseudonymous interview participant is presented. The demographic narratives will better situate the reader and provide more context regarding the subjects the participants taught and salient features about the mentorship programs at each high school.
Table 4.1
*Mentor Teacher Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th># of years teaching</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Median income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Newburyport</td>
<td>18,202</td>
<td>$103,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleanor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Newburyport</td>
<td>18,202</td>
<td>$103,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>W. Springfield</td>
<td>28,391</td>
<td>$51,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Gardner</td>
<td>20,719</td>
<td>$48,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Winchester</td>
<td>21,374</td>
<td>$152,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Millis</td>
<td>8,270</td>
<td>$106,336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four females and two males were interviewed. The number of years of teaching among participants ranged from 15 to 25 years, with a mean of 21 years. The age span of interviewees varied from 40 to 61 years old, with a mean age of 48. The mentor teachers interviewed came from cities as far east as Newburyport and as far west as West Springfield. The districts where the mentor teachers worked serve populations as small as 8,270 residents to as many as 21,374 residents, with an average of 19,193 residents. The cities/towns served by the districts that employ interviewed mentor teachers reported median incomes as low as $48,915 to as high as $152,196, with a mean of $94,270. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of participants. What followings is a demographic description for each pseudonymous interview participant.
Narrative Interview Participant Profiles

Lauren

Lauren is a 40-year-old mathematics teacher who has taught for 18 years. She works at Newburyport High School, a public high school northeast of Boston. Lauren has mentored four mentees, all in the field of mathematics. She became, what she calls “the co-mentor leader” two or three years ago. She describes her position as “a mentor for the mentors.” The two mentor leaders work closely with the district’s assistant superintendent to develop or acquire mentor and mentee training resources. Lauren stated that there is enough time to go over school logistics but not sufficient time to discuss pedagogy, which she described as essential.

Eleanor

Eleanor is 47 years old and has been teaching special education for the past 23 years. Eleanor also teaches at Newburyport High School. Eleanor’s school day consists of co-teaching classes and serving as a liaison for special education students. Eleanor reported that reflection is an important practice for both mentors and mentees. Eleanor also noted that the main drawback of the mentorship program at Newburyport High School is the lack of time for mentors and mentees to meet during the school day to co-lesson plan.

Allison

Allison is 46 years old and teaches visual arts at West Springfield High School. She has taught high school for 15 years and, before moving to secondary education, taught three years of middle school and five years of elementary school, all in visual arts. Allison currently holds two teaching certificates: visual arts certification for grades K-8 and visual arts certification for grades 9-12. Allison told me that she has mentored over 20 mentees and that in some years, she
worked with multiple mentees simultaneously. She is currently a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Allison is studying Teacher Professional Development.  

**John**

John is 50 years old and has taught for 24 years. He currently teaches at Gardner Public High School in the history department. He teaches primarily elective classes such as criminal psychology and civics. In addition to elective courses, John also teaches Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics. John disclosed that he has served as a mentor to beginning teachers for six to eight of his 24 years of teaching. He also said that there were years during which he mentored two or three mentees concurrently. John is presently the “mentor facilitator.” Responsibilities of the mentor facilitator’s position include arranging monthly mentor-mentee meetings and assisting in creating a mentorship curriculum. John described the two most essential mentorship components program at Gardner High School as matching mentors and mentees from the same subject area and providing a once-weekly common planning time for mentors and mentees.

**Steven**

Steven teaches in the history department of Winchester High School. Winchester is the most affluent town in the study, with a median income of $152,196. Steven is 45 years old and has been teaching high school for 12 years. He also holds a doctorate in history. In his teaching career, Steven has mentored one beginning teacher. After his only mentorship concluded, he assumed the position of “Co-Mentor Leader.” Steven disclosed that during his one-year mentorship, his meetings with the beginning teacher tended to focus on “fitting into the culture of the school and the students.” The mentor program at Winchester High School centers around one-hour monthly mentor-mentee meetings. Steven is concerned with helping new teachers “see
the big picture” because, in his opinion, “most of the ed schools…are behind the curve…in pedagogy.”

*Catherine*

Catherine has been an art teacher for approximately 25 years and teaches at Millis High School. Catherine is 61 years old and has mentored at least seven beginning teachers. She disclosed that during the last five years, Millis has had a “fairly formal mentorship program” with mentors and mentees required to meet for “30 minutes a week…one-on-one.” Due to the small size of Millis, Catherine believes that the mentor-mentee relationship should be “very collaborative” and “reciprocal.” In describing the mentorship program at Millis High School, Catherine shared that mentors and mentees have formal meetings “every other month” and that there is “no training for the mentors.”

A presentation and analysis of data with a delineation of findings for three guiding research questions follow. Subsections for each guiding question include data presented and evaluated to address each guiding question and a delineation of findings for each guiding research question.

**Guiding Research Question One: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?**

The first guiding research question was predominantly addressed through the online survey. Sixteen online survey statements, one open-ended survey question, and three in-depth interview questions were dedicated to answering this question. This section is divided into three subsections: (a) presentation and analysis of data for the online survey statements, including one open-ended question, (b) presentation and analysis of data for the interview questions, and (c) delineation of finding.
Presentation and Analysis of Data for Online Survey

This first subsection describes data collected from the online survey, including 17 closed-response questions and one open-ended question. In addition to the presentation of data, this subsection also specifies how the online survey addressed the first guiding research question.

Data from the closed-response portion of the online survey are presented in four tables for accessibility. Tables 4.2 - 4.6 are formulated to help answer the first guiding research question and clustered according to four action areas: (a) behaviors of effective mentors, (b) possible outcomes of mentorships, (c) the relational nature of mentoring, and (d) mentoring alignment.

Data from the open-response question are presented in Table 4.7. Tables 4.2 - 4.7 display data in response to mentor understandings. The results for the responses in all tables are presented using response frequencies, and a four-point Likert scale weighted mean rounded to the nearest hundredth.

Table 4.2 includes data for two online survey statements. The two statements were combined and listed under the action area: “Mentor Characteristics.” Participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement in response to the statements assembled under “Mentor Characteristics.”

Table 4.2
Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Mentor Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online Survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Characteristics</td>
<td>Mentors are well respected by other teachers</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>10(4)</td>
<td>22(3)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors have the skills needed to work one-on-one with a beginning teacher</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>15(4)</td>
<td>16(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All 34 online survey participants responded to both statements listed under “Mentor Characteristics.” There was little disagreement recorded for each statement. Most respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that mentors are well respected by other teachers and that they possess the skills needed to work with a beginning teacher one-on-one. None of the participants strongly disagreed with either statement, and the level of disagreement was low, with means of 3.24 and 3.35, respectively.

Table 4.3 exhibits data for three online survey statements. The three statements were grouped and listed under the action area: “behaviors of effective mentors.” Participants rated their level of agreement or disagreement in response to the statements that correspond with “behaviors of effective mentors.”

**Table 4.3**  
*Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Actions of Effective Mentors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online Survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions of Effective Mentors</td>
<td>Mentors provide opportunities for mentees to problem-solve</td>
<td>n = 33</td>
<td>13(4)</td>
<td>16(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>10(4)</td>
<td>22(3)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>19(4)</td>
<td>13(3)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>3.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With sample sizes of either 33 or 34 respondents, Table 4.3 demonstrates that most people who responded to all three statements, between 87% through 94%, either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with each statement. The majority of people surveyed believe that effective mentors should provide opportunities for mentees to problem solve and that effective mentors increase
their mentees’ efficacy and address their mentees’ specific needs. The level of disagreement was minimal, with averages of between .5 percent through .12 percent.

Table 4.4 exhibits data for five online survey statements gathered under the category “possible mentorship outcomes.” Participants rated their level of agreement or disagreement in response to the statements listed under “possible mentorship outcomes.” The results for the responses in Table 4.4 are presented using response frequencies, and a four-point Likert scale weighted mean rounded to the nearest hundredth.

### Table 4.4

**Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Possible Mentorship Outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online Survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possible Mentorship Outcomes</td>
<td>Mentoring increases student engagement</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>23(3)</td>
<td>4(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring increases student growth</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>25(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring advances school reform</td>
<td>n = 33</td>
<td>2(4)</td>
<td>12(3)</td>
<td>18(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring is a form of professional development</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>16(4)</td>
<td>17(3)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring provides opportunities to celebrate growth</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>13(4)</td>
<td>18(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 indicates that the majority of the 34/33 online survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that mentoring increases student engagement and growth, provides opportunities for professional development, and devotes time to celebrating growth. Eighty-five
percent of respondents agree that mentoring increases student engagement and growth. Ninety-one percent think that mentoring provides opportunities to celebrate growth and ninety-nine percent of respondents believe that mentoring is a form of professional development. However, the statement indicating that mentoring can advance school reform was divisive; there was a wide discrepancy between agreement (42.5%) and disagreement (57.5%).

Table 4.5 addresses data for three online survey statements that were rated by 34 participants. The three statements were arranged under the action area “relational nature of mentoring” for a more precise analysis and display. The results for the responses in Table 4.5 are listed using response frequencies and a four-point Likert scale weighted mean rounded to the nearest hundredth.

**Table 4.5**

*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Relational Nature of Mentoring*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online Survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational Nature of Mentoring</td>
<td>Mentoring is a non-evaluative relationship</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>24(4)</td>
<td>8(3)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring is a supportive relationship</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>24(4)</td>
<td>10(3)</td>
<td>0(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring is a confidential relationship</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>10(3)</td>
<td>5(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 reveals some of the survey's most strongly agreed-upon statements. All three statements were evaluated by 34 mentors, and levels of agreement were 94%, 100%, and 85%,
respective. Only .05% disagreed that mentoring is a non-evaluative relationship, and .14% that mentoring is a confidential relationship.

Table 4.6 addresses data for the last three online survey statements in the action area of “mentor alignment.” The results for the responses in Table 4.6 are presented using response frequencies, and a four-point Likert scale weighted mean rounded to the nearest hundredth.

**Table 4.6**

*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Mentoring Alignment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online Survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Alignment</td>
<td>Mentoring is aligned to state standards</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>16(3)</td>
<td>8(2)</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring is aligned with school/departmental curricula</td>
<td>n = 34</td>
<td>7(4)</td>
<td>20(3)</td>
<td>5(2)</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring is aligned to school/departmental assessments</td>
<td>n = 32</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>17(3)</td>
<td>8(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each online survey statement in Table 4.6 was rated by either 32 or 34 participants. The three statements in Table 4.6 display more significant disagreement than the statements in tables 4.2 through 4.5, illuminating that, as a whole, more mentor teachers do not believe that mentoring is aligned to state standards, school/departmental curricula, and school/departmental assessments. The level of disagreement was 29%, 20%, and 28%, respectively. Although a greater level of disagreement is illustrated in Table 4.6, the means still fall on the “agreement” side of the Likert scale. Next are the data for the one open-response survey question that pertains to guiding research question one.
Open-response Question #17 asked participants to detail one or two experiences in which they felt most effective as a mentor. Out of the 34 respondents, 23 mentors answered Question #17. Table 4.7 illustrates the ways that participants described their understanding of effective mentoring. Offering instructional advice was mentioned by six mentors, indicating that many mentors perceive that giving instructional advice is an effective mentoring support. The fewest mentioned supports are (a) having the mentor and mentee spend more time together, (b) mentors offering pedagogical advice, and (c) mentors supporting student-related issues.

**Table 4.7**

*Participants’ Described Understanding of Effective Mentoring (n=23)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Description</th>
<th>Number of Incidences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offering instructional advice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioned frequently by mentee</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping with administrivia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor and mentee working in the same department</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee observing mentors’ teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving general advice and support</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor and mentee spending more time together</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering pedagogical advice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting student-related issues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-six percent of the open-ended respondents surveyed described effective mentoring as being able to offer instructional advice to their protégés. One respondent stated that she encouraged her mentee to change a lesson plan and activities to engage the students further and increase student participation and learning. Another interviewee introduced “warm-up” activities to their mentee to help settle and focus students at the beginning of class. Mentors and mentees spent more time together, mentors offered pedagogical advice, and one participant cited
mentors supporting student-related issues as effective mentoring supports. The next subsection presents and analyzes qualitative data garnered from six participant interviews.

**Presentation and Analysis of Interview Data**

The presentation and analysis of data derived from follow-up interviews with six participants follows. Those data demonstrate participants’ described understanding of mentorships in three ways: (a) how mentorship time is spent, (b) important mentor skills, and (c) ways that mentor teachers best help mentees. Information gathered from participant interviews is detailed in Tables 4.8-4.10

Table 4.8 presents participants’ descriptions of how mentors and mentees spend the time devoted to the mentorship.

**Table 4.8**  
**Participant Descriptions of Mentorship Time**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrivia</td>
<td>Scheduling Demands</td>
<td>“A lot of it’s just checking in . . . making sure they’re aware of what’s coming up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logistical Demands</td>
<td>“And then there’s all the logistics of the building that get covered in meetings, you know, who do I find for this...all that stuff.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Meetings</td>
<td>“We have monthly meetings once a month for an hour that gets the mentors and the mentees together.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Needs</td>
<td>Mentee Requested</td>
<td>It’s all about them and 100% about supporting them. You can have an agenda about what you want…but at the end of the day, when you meet with them, they’re like, ‘I need help with this kid,’ that’s what monopolizes the conversation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional Support</td>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>“The first chunk of time is usually listening to frustrations…talk[ing] them off the ledge...try[ing] to calm them down.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enculturation</td>
<td>“It was mostly conversations about fitting into the culture of the school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>“Classroom management come[s] up because it’s fresh in your mind and it’s what’s happening during the day so that stuff is relatively easy to cover.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8 presents four categories, codes, and exemplifying statements in tabular form to view how mentor teachers describe what they do during the time set aside for the mentorship. Every interviewee spoke about administrivia and how it can monopolize mentorship time. In Table 4.7, offering instructional advice garnered the most frequency. Although it may not appear to be so, the weightiest category in Table 4.8 is instructional because classroom management makes up the bulk of the comments.

There is some overlap within the category of administrivia in that some of the logistical demands of teaching are presented to mentees during the specified monthly-meeting times. Lauren noted that mentees often utilize time with their mentors to discuss emergent needs, such as how to handle a particular situation with a student. Mentors also spend allotted mentorship time supporting their mentees from a social and emotional standpoint. Elena told me about how “the first chunk of time is usually listening to frustrations. . . talk[ing] them off the ledge. . . try[ing] to calm them down.” She also discussed normalizing initial new teacher stressors. All participants spoke about the importance of the enculturation process. They noted that when a new teacher understands who to go to for certain things, and the unspoken rules of the school, their mentees’ days run more smoothly. There was also consensus among mentors that some of the time mentors and mentees spend together needs to be devoted to classroom management, which can include disciplinary measures, seating charts, and how students enter and exit class.

Table 4.9 presents four categories, codes, and exemplifying statements in tabular form to illustrate how mentor teachers describe skills needed to be an effective mentor. The four categories that compose mentor skills are (a) social-emotional, (b) curricular, (c) pedagogical, and (d) constructivist.
### Table 4.9
*Effective Mentor Skills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>“I think a lot of it is just being understanding... letting them [mentees] talk and sort of take it where they want to.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonjudgmental</td>
<td>“I think having an open mind is probably number one and just non-judgment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>“Mentor teachers need to have good listening skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open-mindedness</td>
<td>“I would say open-minded to their [mentees’] teaching style and to nurture that because that’s what’s going to give them success.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>“To have the patience to work with them [mentees]... sometimes you get inundated with eight questions, especially at the beginning of the year. You’re trying to set everything up yourself and they’re [mentees] asking you [questions] – so you have to have a lot of patience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>“... being super flexible, and kind of being at their beck-and-ca”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Candor</td>
<td>“I think the willingness... to be candid.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passionate</td>
<td>“I eat, drink, and sleep teaching art.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tough love</td>
<td>“Open-mindedness, caring, commitment, but also be able to provide tough love sometimes.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>“You have to self-reflect... it’s a constant reflection.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>“[A] mentor teacher needs to have a greater understanding of... the content.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>“And then, obviously, to be knowledgeable about teaching.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the four categories, codes were derived from interview data. Under social-emotional skills the codes are (a) understanding, (b) nonjudgmental, (c) listening, (d) open-mindedness, (e) patience, (f) flexibility, (g) candor, and (h) tough love. I identify seven of the eight codes as positive traits; traits that mentors use to support what mentees are doing in the classroom positively. I understand the code “tough love” to be more negative in that it is telling a mentee what not to do instead of supporting what they do. While only one interviewee
mentioned the code “tough love,” it was important to include it since it is a departure from the first seven traits. Most respondents stated that mentors should be open-minded. From each of the next three categories, only one trait was gleaned. The code that corresponds with the category “constructivism” is self-reflection. Self-reflection is a trait that multiple participants identified. The code that derives from curricular skills is content knowledge. While only mentioned by one interviewee, if the mentor and mentee are matched by content area, knowing content could inform how mentors and mentees can spend time together. The final category is “pedagogical” skills. The code that corresponds to pedagogical skills is teaching. Again, this code was only mentioned by one interviewee.

Table 4.10 displays three categories and accompanying codes for how mentors believe they can best assist their mentees. The three categories represented in the following table are (a) mentee autonomy, (b) social-emotional, and (c) mentor capacity.

**Table 4.10**
**Participant Descriptions of How to Best Assist Mentees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Autonomy</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>“Not approaching it [mentorship] with any of your own expectations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>“I created a small orientation resource document... and then the other resources the mentors give.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional</td>
<td>Checking-in</td>
<td>“A lot of it’s just checking in... throughout the year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Support</td>
<td>“Just moral support. They don’t have a friend. They don’t know anybody. They need somebody.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Place to Vent</td>
<td>“...a place to vent and at the same time a place where the mentor can sort of read through that venting and see what issues the teacher [mentor] has to help them [mentee] resolve.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Capacity</td>
<td>Nonsupervisory</td>
<td>“I was always very clear to my mentee that I was not their boss and I’m not in any sort of supervisory capacity with them.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 4.10, mentors mainly focused on ways they can best assist mentees from a social-emotional perspective. All six mentors interviewed identified at least one social-emotional support they give to their mentees. Allison mentioned that her goal is to provide “moral support. They [mentees] don't have a friend. They don't know anybody. They need somebody. Whether they choose to remain your mentee and you develop a relationship with them later, it really starts there.” Allison and Eleanor voiced the importance of checking in with mentees frequently, especially at the beginning of the year. Eleanor stated that “it's [mentorship] just checking in because you know stuff changes throughout the year, making sure they’re aware of things that are coming.” Catherine told me that the best kind of mentorship is an informal and “easy kind of relationship” where mentor and mentees spend time “popping in and popping out of each other's classrooms.”

In addition to social-emotional supports, Table 4.10 illustrates the interviewees’ perceived importance of mentee autonomy and the capacity of the mentor. Lauren and Steven both cited the significance of letting mentees lead mentorship conversations and, as a mentor, not imposing your agenda. Steven expressed that a one-on-one conversation will “lead towards where the mentee wants it to go.” Lauren also specified that mentors want the mentorship “to be helpful, something they need, not something they have to do.” Lastly, most mentors agreed that mentors can play an important leadership role in high schools but that their capacity is non-evaluative and non-judgmental. What follows is a delineation of findings for Research Question #1.

**Delineation of Findings for Research Question #1: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?**
The one finding for Research Question #1 was garnered from an analysis of the data compiled from the online survey and the follow-up interviews. Pertinent examples have been extracted from each instrument and used to substantiate the finding.

**Finding #1: Massachusetts mentor teachers assist beginning teachers with varied supports; although they perceive that social-emotional needs are paramount.**

The first finding is that Massachusetts high school mentor teachers recognize the diverse supports that beginning teachers need. Mentors are also confident in their ability to assist mentees efficaciously by employing numerous supports to help beginning teachers grow. Examining how mentor teachers describe their understanding of essential mentee supports began with an analysis of online survey data presented in Tables 4.2 – 4.7 and Table 4.12.

Mentor teachers are confident that they possess the skills needed to support the distinctive needs of beginning teachers. Table 4.2 illustrates the perceived certainty mentor teachers hold regarding their abilities to work effectively with beginning teachers. Table 4.2 also details mentors’ level of agreement with the statement that they have the skills needed to work one-on-one with a beginning teacher. Ninety-one percent of the 34 online-survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with that statement. Table 4.3 contains the statement: mentors address the specific needs of their mentees. Ninety-four percent of online-survey completers strongly agreed or agreed with that statement.

Table 4.5 addresses the relational nature of mentoring, including the statement that mentoring is a supportive relationship. One hundred percent of the 34 participants strongly agreed or agreed with said assertion. Mentor teachers also overwhelmingly declared that mentoring is a non-evaluative and confidential relationship, with 94% and 85% having strongly agreed or agreed with each respective articulation.
The online survey consisted of one open-ended question that focused on Research Question #1. Table 4.7 contains the responses to Question #17. Question #17 invited survey-takers to detail one or two experiences in which they felt most effective as a mentor. Twenty-three respondents shared their experiences. The most substantial agreement relates to mentors being able to offer instructional advice to mentees; six out of the 23 participants recounted that experience. Other necessary supports include helping with administrivia and frequently answering mentees’ questions.

Table 4.7 also displays a list of supports needed to ensure effective mentoring. The table lists the varied mentor skills required to train mentees productively. Mentor teachers reported that they feel competent when offering diverse advice, from instructional and pedagogical to general guidance.

Follow-up interviews also bolster the claim that mentor teachers must provide efficacious supports to beginning teachers. Table 4.8 describes how mentors and mentees spend their mentorship time. All six interviewees reported that mentors and mentees must meet for one-hour monthly. In addition, mentors and mentees must establish weekly, additional common meeting times. Experienced teachers communicated that monthly meetings and extra mentorship time are spent on various tasks. Table 4.8 lists how mentorship time is used. Mentors disclosed sharing information on administrivia, emergent needs, instructional advice, and social-emotional support.

Table 4.9 presents valuable mentor skills. This table illustrates the diverse set of skills needed to educate mentees adequately. The four skills reported include (a) social-emotional, (b) constructivist, (c) curricular, and (d) pedagogical. Overwhelmingly, the greatest perceived mentee needed assistance is social-emotional. In addition, mentor teachers articulated that they must be understanding, nonjudgmental, open-minded, flexible, patient, and candid when helping
mentees. Eleanor, an interviewed mentor teacher, underscored the importance of being understanding; “I think a lot of it is just being understanding . . . letting them [mentees] talk and sort of take it where they want to.” Interviewee Lauren discussed the mentor behaviors of nonjudgment, open-mindedness, and flexibility.

I think having an open mind is probably number one and just non-judgment, being super flexible, and kind of being at their beck-and-call. Because it’s all about them and 100% about supporting them. You can have an agenda about what you want, for lack of a better term, teach them, or introduce them to but at the end of the day when you meet with them and they’re like, “I need help with this kid,” that’s what monopolizes the conversation.

Mentor teacher John spoke to the importance of supporting mentees’ social-emotional well-being through patience. He declared, “to have the patience to work with them [mentees]. . . sometimes you get inundated with eight questions, especially at the beginning of the year. You’re trying to set everything up yourself and they’re [mentees] asking you [questions] – so you have to have a lot of patience.” In addition to social-emotional supports, mentors also acknowledged the importance of learning to be self-reflective and the need for curricular and instructional aid.

How to best assist mentees is shown in Table 4.10. Again, mentor teachers stated that the greatest mentee need is social-emotional support. Mentor teachers should possess wide-ranging abilities to help their mentees. They can address multiple supports with their mentees, including (a) social-emotional, (b) administrative, (c) curricular, (d) pedagogical, and (e) emergent needs. The data demonstrate that most of the guidance mentors give their mentees falls under the social-emotional category. Eleanor stated that mentors need to frequently “check in” with mentees throughout the year. Allison spoke about the need for moral support because “they don’t have a
friend. They don’t know anybody. They need somebody.” Although mentor teachers believe social-emotional supports are paramount, they also recognize that a diversity of help is important to provide mentees with all necessary supports.

Table 4.12 is entitled “Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Social-emotional Supports and Practices.” This table details mentor teachers’ agreement/disagreement with online survey statements about mentee social-emotional support. The five online statements that are most applicable to Finding #1 are (a) providing stress-reduction advice, (b) providing general social-emotional support, (c) validating mentees’ feelings, (d) promoting a sense of caring, and (e) maintaining trusting relationships. The sample size for each online statement was either 30 or 31. Between 93%–100% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with each of the five statements. Not only does the data support Finding #1, but it also details the types of social-emotional supports mentors most provide their mentees.

Guiding Research Question Two: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective/ineffective educational mentor practices?

The online survey and follow-up interviews addressed the second guiding research question. Eighteen online-survey statements, two open-response survey questions, and eight follow-up interview questions were dedicated to answering this question. This section is divided into three subsections: (a) presentation and analysis of data for the online survey statements, including one open-response question; (b) presentation and analysis of data for the interview questions; and (c) delineation of finding.

Presentation and Analysis of Data for Online Survey

This first subsection describes data collected from the online survey, including 18 closed-response questions and two open-response questions. In addition to the presentation of data, this
subsection also specifies how the online survey addressed the second guiding research question. Data from the closed-response portion of the online survey are presented in four tables for facile comprehension. Tables 4.11 - 4.14 are formulated to help address the second guiding research question and aggregated according to four action areas (a) instructional, (b) social-emotional, (c) cognitive, and (d) teaching and learning. Data from the open-response questions are presented in Table 4.15 and 4.16. Tables 4.11 - 4.16 display data in response to mentor supports and practices. The results for the responses in all tables are presented using response frequencies and a four-point Likert scale weighted mean rounded to the nearest hundredth.

Table 4.11 includes data for 13 online survey statements. The 13 statements were grouped and listed under the action area: Instructional Supports and Practices. Participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement in response to the exemplifying statements. The number of participants was either 30 or 31.
Table 4.11
Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Instructional Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Supports and Practices</td>
<td>Mentors provide instructional support</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>17(4)</td>
<td>10(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentees observe their mentors teaching</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>12(4)</td>
<td>13(3)</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors observe their mentees teaching</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>13(4)</td>
<td>17(3)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors and mentees plan lessons together</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>5(4)</td>
<td>13(3)</td>
<td>12(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors and mentees co-teach lessons</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>0(4)</td>
<td>7(3)</td>
<td>17(2)</td>
<td>7(1)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors and mentees debrief mentee-taught</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>11(4)</td>
<td>11(3)</td>
<td>9(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lessons together</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors give mentees feedback on the quality</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>9(4)</td>
<td>15(3)</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of their teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors increase mentees’ instructional</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>14(4)</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>repertoires</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the action area Instructional Supports and Practices, the online-survey statement that mentor teachers most agreed with is that they observe their mentees teach. Thirty out of 31 respondents (97%) either strongly agreed or agreed with that statement indicating that observing mentees teach is a standard practice of most mentorships. Ninety percent of mentors either
strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they increase mentees’ instructional repertoires. The statement that mentors provide general instructional support was strongly agreed upon by 85% of participants. Mentors and mentees co-teaching earned the most disagreement. Seventy-seven percent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the preceding statement indicating that co-teaching is not a practice of many mentorships.

Table 4.12 examines the social-emotional supports mentees receive from their mentors. The online survey contains five statements that fall under the action area of Social-emotional Supports and Practices.
Table 4.12  
*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Social-emotional Supports and Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional Supports and Practices</td>
<td>Mentors give mentees advice on managing stress</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>16(4)</td>
<td>12(3)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors provide social-emotional support</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>21(4)</td>
<td>10(3)</td>
<td>0(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors validate mentees’ feelings and thoughts</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>19(4)</td>
<td>11(3)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentoring promotes a sense of caring</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>20(4)</td>
<td>10(3)</td>
<td>0(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors establish and maintain trusting relationships with their mentees</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>17(4)</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>0(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors enculturate mentees to school procedures</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>21(4)</td>
<td>9(3)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample size for the action area Social-emotional Supports and Practices in Table 4.12 is either 30 or 31 mentor teachers. There was little disagreement with most of the exemplifying statements in this action area. The exemplifying statement with the highest mean is that mentors provide general social-emotional support to their mentees. One hundred percent of mentors *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with that statement. Mentors validating mentees’ feelings and
thoughts are *strongly agreed or agreed* upon by 97% of survey respondents. Concurrently, 97% of mentor teachers also *strongly agreed or agreed* that mentors enculturate mentees to the school and school procedures. This exemplifying statement is listed under Social-emotional Supports and Practices because when individuals feel competent and confident in their surroundings, they experience less stress and worry. All exemplifying statements for the action area of Social-emotional Supports and Practices are more agreed upon than any other action area in the online survey.

Table 4.13 investigates online-survey statements for the action area Cognitive Supports and Practices. Again, the two statements tabulated under this action area are disparate.

**Table 4.13**

*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Cognitive Supports and Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Supports and Practices</td>
<td>Mentors challenge mentees’ thinking and professional practice</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>10(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors teach mentees how to be self-reflective learners</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>14(4)</td>
<td>11(3)</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mentor teachers challenging their mentees’ thinking and professional practice was one of the more contentious statements in the study and comes closest to a 50/50 split. Sixty-seven percent of survey completers *strongly agreed or agreed* that mentors challenge mentees’ thinking and professional practice. Conversely, 81% of mentor teachers *strongly agreed or agreed* that they teach mentees to be self-reflective learners.
Table 4.14 tabulates the responses for two online-survey statements listed under the action area Teaching and Learning Supports and Practices.

Table 4.14
*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Teaching and Learning Supports and Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Supports and Practices</td>
<td>Mentoring increases student learning (achievement)</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>17(3)</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentors provide content area support</td>
<td>n = 31</td>
<td>10(4)</td>
<td>18(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14 shows that eighty-one percent of mentor teachers surveyed *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that mentoring increases student learning and achievement. In contrast, mentor teachers believe that the students of beginning teachers who do not have the support of a mentor do not achieve as much as the students of beginning teachers in mentorships. Ninety percent of survey completers either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that mentors provide content area support for their mentees. There is, however, one caveat. Not all beginning teachers are matched with an experienced teacher in their content area. It is unlikely for a mentor to provide content area support to a beginning teacher if they do not teach the same subject. Next are the data for the one open-response survey question that pertains to guiding research question two.

Open-response Question #35 asked participants to describe perceptions of their effectiveness as a mentor. Table 4.15 depicts how mentor teachers perceived their efficacy. Online-survey completers’ perceptions are divided into three main categories (a) mentees’ self-rating, (b) efficacy constraints, and (c) efficacy supports. Various codes regarding efficacy are catalogued under each category.
Table 4.15
*Mentor Perceptions of Their Efficacy* \((n=26)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Incidences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentors’ Self-rating</td>
<td>extremely (very) effective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(fairly) effective</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy Constraints</td>
<td>insufficient time</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>matching protocols</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy Supports</td>
<td>mentee openness (buy-in)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mentor-provided social/emotional support</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mentors’ desire to “pass on” knowledge</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>open/nonjudgmental mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15 outlines the perceived efficacy of mentors and the constraints and supports that affect their ability to be effective. The two categories that collected the most responses are that experienced teachers rate themselves as effective mentors and that they provide social-emotional support to their mentees. Each of the two preceding codes was commented on by 19% of respondents, respectively. Insufficient time was reported as constraining efficacy by 15% of the 26 survey takers. Another hindrance mentioned by multiple mentor teachers is matching protocols. Participants articulated that when a mentor and mentee teach different disciplines, it can handicap the competency of a mentor. Conversations regarding instructional methodologies and content issues are limited or non-existent when the mentor and mentee teach other subjects. In the category of efficacy supports, 15% of mentors declared that mentee openness or their willingness to “buy-in” increases the effectiveness of the mentor.

Open-response Question #36 invited participants to detail one or two least satisfying experiences that caused them to feel less effective as a mentor. Table 4.16 displays circumstances in which mentor teachers perceive they were less productive than they could have been. Online-survey completers’ perceptions are divided into three main categories (a) mentees’
lack of openness, (b) matching procedures, and (c) insufficient meeting time. Matching procedures are the processes a mentor leader and/or administrator undertake to decide which mentor will work with which mentee.

**Table 4.16**

*Participant Descriptions of Least Satisfying Experiences (n=26)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Incidences</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Lack of Openness</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>“I feel I have not been effective when placed with someone that is not willing to learn from the mentor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matching Procedures</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“I feel as if when placed with a mentee that is not in my subject area . . . I have not been as effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient Meeting Time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>“I feel like I need to be more attentive to my mentee . . . specified time directed at mentor/mentee relationships would be useful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overwhelmingly, the majority of respondents cited a lack of openness on the part of the mentee, which mentor teachers claim derails efficacious training. Mentee non-compliance can cause a breakdown in the mentorship, and often the relationship cannot recover. Mentor teachers did not discuss possible mentor actions or discourse that may have also altered the relationship's trajectory. Twelve percent of participants (the actual percentage was 11.5%, which was rounded to 12%) reported that matching procedures have the potential to impact a mentorship negatively. Most of the Massachusetts high schools mentioned in this study try to match according to discipline. When subject matching occurs, it can be advantageous to a mentorship. One survey completer detailed a difficulty that arises when mentors and mentees do not teach the same subject area. He stated, “my protégé teaches a different subject area and was struggling to teach one specific unit effectively. Since I am not knowledgeable in his subject matter, I was unable to provide effective feedback to help him with his issues.”
Insufficient meeting time can also impact the effectiveness of a mentorship. If schools offer to set aside common planning time for mentors and mentees during the school day, it often proves challenging to find such time. When common planning times cannot be scheduled, the time sometimes gets borrowed from other areas such as lunch or a mentor teacher’s prep period. Another unpopular solution is for mentors and mentees to meet one-on-one after-school. It should be noted that the sample size for this question is twenty-six. Table 4.16 provides responses for 17 participants. The decision not to tabulate the remaining nine responses was based on responses that were either nonsensical or did not answer the question. The following subsection presents and analyzes qualitative data aggregated from six participant interviews.

**Presentation and Analysis of Interview Data**

The presentation and analysis of data procured from follow-up interviews with six participants follows. Those data demonstrate participants’ perceived understanding of mentorship supports and practices in three ways (a) mentee needs, (b) mentors’ strengths, and (c) mentors’ weaknesses. The data acquired from participant interviews are detailed in Tables 4.17 - 4.19. Table 4.17 displays respondents’ understanding of mentee-needed supports. The Table introduces four categories and multiple codes, along with exemplifying statements for each code.
### Table 4.17

*Participant Descriptions of Mentee Needs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentee enculturation</td>
<td>Mentee Summer Orientation</td>
<td>“All the new teachers have a two-day orientation program before the start of school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Meetings</td>
<td>“When we do our [monthly] meetings…throughout the year we try to make it as differentiated as possible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Checking-in</td>
<td>“I check in on them in the beginning...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resource Document</td>
<td>“I created a small orientation resource document. They [mentees] just have one resource that they can look to throughout the year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moral Support</td>
<td>“. . . asking how they are and offering moral support.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Proximity</td>
<td>“I always recommend to mentors…sit with your mentee.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish Routine</td>
<td>“Help the new teacher get set at the beginning of the year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bureaucratic Navigation</td>
<td>“It’s . . . all the red tape and bureaucracy of . . . [the] classroom.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Training</td>
<td>Monthly Meetings</td>
<td>“. . . the monthly meetings are for mentors and mentees.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentee summer Orientation</td>
<td>“the one thing that I know was important was the professional development before school started. . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekly One-on-one Time</td>
<td>“They’re [mentees] expected to be meeting with their mentor almost once a week.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Additional Time</td>
<td>“Time to meet with mentees that is not borrowed time - time out of a prep or time after school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>“. . . they just need some reassurance, and they need to know that not everything they try is going to work out.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matching</td>
<td>“Typically, it's going to be someone within your . . . own department.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Summer PD</td>
<td>“Professional development before school. . . I think more time up front is probably more important to provide.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor Training</td>
<td>“Mentors get trained every year. A one day, five or six-hour training.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher-created Documents</td>
<td>“The material that’s been shared with us... is more created by individual teachers in-house.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly Meetings</td>
<td>“I think the ongoing monthly meetings with all the mentees and mentors help.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.17 displays mentor-perceived needs of beginning teachers. The category with the most codes is mentee enculturation. All six mentors discussed the importance of mentee enculturation; however, they did not always agree on how to enculturate beginning teachers. All six interviewees articulated the necessity of orientation before the start of the school year. All respondents also mentioned that monthly meetings for both mentors and mentees are components of high school mentoring programs in Massachusetts. Differences of opinion on how to accustom new teachers are also present. While some mentor teachers like to “check in” with their mentees, others preferred staying in close physical proximity and helping new teachers establish classroom routines.

Mentee training was also cited as a means of acclimating mentees to their new professional environment. Methods of mentee training echoed enculturation processes such as monthly meetings and summer orientations. The other two categories displayed are relational and resource needs.

Under relational needs, interviewees commented on the lack of one-on-one time to spend with their mentees. Respondents emphasized the need for time, but especially time that is “not borrowed time...time out of a prep or time after school...they should have designated, built-in time,” as stated by Lauren. Catherine concurred that mentees have relational necessities but expressed the need for reassurance that teaching is not a perfect practice and that everything they employ in the classroom might not be successful.

When asked what kinds of resources mentoring programs use, many participants needed a minute to think. Most mentors, again, commented on districts’ summer orientation programs and monthly meetings. Two experienced teachers reported that in monthly mentor-mentee meetings, they present teacher-created materials to new teachers. When this question was posed
to John, he responded that “the material that’s been shared . . . is more created by individual teachers in-house.”

Table 4.18 introduces interviewee comprehension of the strengths that mentors bring to mentorships. It presents three categories, eleven codes, and exemplifying statements for each code.

Table 4.18
Participant Descriptions of Mentor Strengths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Lessons Learned</td>
<td>No Pre-Determined Agenda</td>
<td>“Not having your own pre-determined agenda.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentee Autonomy</td>
<td>“I think a good leader shows the people they’re in charge of that they can do things on their own.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tough Love</td>
<td>“. . . it taught me to speak up a little more and be a little more stern when they [mentees] weren’t doing something. . . that parent tough love kind of thing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>“Work harder than other people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Care</td>
<td>“Today’s the day that I’m going to practice self-care.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentee Strengths</td>
<td>“Recognizing the strengths that they [mentees] might bring with them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogical Instruction</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>“And then obviously, to be knowledgeable about teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>“Mentor teacher needs to have a greater understanding of . . . the content.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional Competence</td>
<td>Nonjudgment</td>
<td>“Being supportive and . . . nonjudgmental and trying to help them . . . and trying not to judge when they are feeling frustrated or overwhelmed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positivity</td>
<td>“I just try to bring the happy side to it. . . I just try to make it fun, light-hearted.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>“I eat, drink, and sleep teaching.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.18 illustrates participants’ descriptions of their strengths as mentors. The first category is Leadership Lessons Learned. There was little agreement among experienced teachers regarding lessons learned and how they relate to mentoring beginning teachers. Two similar
codes are Mentee Strengths and Mentee Autonomy. Both codes relate to mentors informing mentees that they are not tabula rasa (blanks slates); they bring skills and traits with them and might be able to do more than they think they can. Work Ethic and Self-Care are two codes that, when combined, deliver one message: when at school, work as hard as possible, but recognize the point when one may need to scale back and take time out for self-care. Most mentors concurred that possessing pedagogical competence is necessary for effective mentoring. The last category, Social-emotional Competence, indicates that four out of the six participants articulated the importance of nonjudgmental mentors and of mentees knowing and trusting that mentors are not evaluators.

Table 4.19 displays participants’ descriptions of their weaknesses. It presents three categories: (a) social-emotional, (b) competing demands, and (c) cognitive skills, along with five codes and exemplifying statements.

**Table 4.19**

*Participant Descriptions of Mentor Weaknesses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional</td>
<td>Personality Conflicts</td>
<td>“It’s hard because it’s a relationship, and if you are matched up with someone who is nothing like you it's really hard.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building Personal Relationships</td>
<td>“I’m highly engaged with policy, with ideas, with thinking, and less with small talk, mundane things. And so, a lot of the commonalities that teachers share with each other . . . I don’t have.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing Demands</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>“I mean to spend more time with them [mentees] and do more with them, but I get caught up in my own stuff.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Skills</td>
<td>Knowledge Acquisition</td>
<td>“I’m not a fast learner.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>“I’m not the most organized person.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.19 illustrates a variety of weaknesses that mentor teachers identified in themselves. Both codes tabulated under the category Social-emotional Weaknesses are relational issues. Competing personalities and a lack of commonalities can strain mentorships and interfere with the efficacy of the relationship. Five out of six respondents reported a lack of time to meet one-on-one with mentees during the school day. Only one experienced teacher stated that the school where he works builds in weekly common planning time. The other five mentors found it challenging to accomplish their individual teaching demands and spend adequate time with their mentees. The final category is Cognitive Skills. Two participants cited organizational issues and speed of knowledge acquisition as shortcomings. What follows is a delineation of one finding for Research Question #2.

Delineation of Finding for Guiding Research Question #2: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers report are effective/ineffective educational mentor practices?

The one finding for Research Question #2 was garnered from an analysis of the data compiled from the online survey and the follow-up interviews. Pertinent examples have been extracted from each instrument and used to substantiate the finding.

**Finding #2: Massachusetts mentor teachers consider the enculturation of mentees a critical component of learning to teach.**

Learning the ins and outs of a profession and its facility takes time and is an integral part of becoming a seasoned professional. Having a formal or informal mentor available to aid in a smooth transition is beneficial. Both online-survey takers and follow-up interview participants agreed that enculturating a beginning teacher is the responsibility of the mentor teacher. Enculturation is a broad topic and can encompass a variety of supports and practices. The Open Education Sociology Dictionary (2021) defines enculturation as “the gradual process of an
individual . . . learning and adapting to the norms and values of a culture in which they are immersed.” School culture is a well-known concept. Examples of school cultures include supportive, collaborative, isolating, and cliquish (Gratch, 2001). Most data on the topic of teacher enculturation is found in Tables 4.12 and 4.17.

Table 4.12 (n=31) includes the action area enculturation. Thirty out of thirty-one online-survey completers, or approximately 97%, either strongly agreed or agreed that mentors help enculturate mentees. When asked about becoming encultured to teach, mentor teachers first mentioned bureaucratic policies and tasks. All six interviewed mentors reported the importance of the enculturation process in becoming an effective teacher. The six interviewees, however, did not agree on how to accustom mentees.

Table 4.17 presents interview Participant Descriptions of Mentee Needs. Four different categories were tabulated, but mentee enculturation garnered the most codes, with eight. Some ways mentor teachers described enculturing a mentee included summer orientation, monthly meetings, frequent check-ins, resource documents, moral support, physical proximity, and establishing routines. Four out of six respondents mentioned the tradition of a summer mentee orientation. Interviewee John stated that in his district, all beginning teachers “have a two-day orientation program before the start of the school [year]. We present information . . . do some fun game[s] . . . they’re paired up with their mentors . . . then we take them on a tour of the city.”

Even with a multiple-day orientation, not all processes get reviewed. According to Catherine, “the curriculum director does as good a job as she can of getting all the new hires together and . . . giving an introductory overview. But a lot . . . of little nuance[d] things fall through the cracks.” Most mentors alluded to enculturation being a process during which mentors help mentees assimilate into their new culture as best they can. Allison substantiated that it is imperative for
mentor teachers “to understand their school culture, how school culture impacts both . . . students and . . . mentees.” What follows is a presentation and analysis of data with a delineation of findings for Guiding Research Question #3.

**Guiding Research Question Three: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring?**

The online survey and follow-up interviews addressed the third guiding research question. Fourteen online-survey statements, one open-response survey question, and seven follow-up interview questions were dedicated to answering this question. This section is divided into three subsections (a) presentation and analysis of data for the online survey statements, including one open-response question; (b) presentation and analysis of data for the interview questions; and (c) delineation of findings.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data for Online Survey**

This first subsection describes data collected from the online survey, including 14 closed-response questions and one open-response question. In addition to the presentation of data, this subsection also specifies how the online survey addressed the third guiding research question. Data from the closed-response portion of the online survey are presented in five tables. Tables 4.20 - 4.24 are formulated to help address the third guiding research question and aggregated according to five action areas: logistical supports, relationship congruence, cognitive domain, affective domain, and mentorship goals. Data from the one open-response question is presented in Table 4.25. Tables 4.20 - 4.25 display data in response to mentor beliefs. The results for the responses in all tables are presented using response frequencies, and a four-point Likert scale weighted mean rounded to the nearest hundredth.
Table 4.20 includes data for four online survey statements. The four statements were grouped and listed under one action area: Logistical Supports. Participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement in response to the online-survey statements. The sample size was 30.

**Table 4.20**
*Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Logistical Supports*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logistical Supports</td>
<td>The school where I teach provides mentoring resources</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>12(4)</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>3(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentorships are ongoing for at least one year</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>18(4)</td>
<td>11(3)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor training is ongoing for at least a year</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>11(4)</td>
<td>6(3)</td>
<td>9(2)</td>
<td>4(1)</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My mentee and I have enough time to accomplish all mentoring tasks</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>4(4)</td>
<td>11(3)</td>
<td>13(2)</td>
<td>2(1)</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20 indicates that most mentors strongly agreed or agreed that the school where they teach provides mentoring resources and that mentorships are ongoing for at least one year. The percentages of agreement are 86.6% and 96.6% respectively. There was less agreement with the last two logistical supports. Only 56.6% of survey-completers strongly agreed or agreed that mentor training is ongoing for at least one year. For the first time in the study, a question is equally divided: fifty percent of participants both strongly agreed or agreed and disagreed or
strongly disagreed that they have enough time with their mentee to accomplish all mentoring tasks.

Table 4.21 displays data for Relational Congruence. The three online-survey statements in this table detail similarities between mentors and their mentees. The sample size for these statements was either 29 or 30.

**Table 4.21**
*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Relational Congruence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational Congruence</td>
<td>My mentee and I share similar pedagogical beliefs</td>
<td>n = 29</td>
<td>7(4)</td>
<td>16(3)</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentee and I have a similar work ethic</td>
<td>n = 29</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>7(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mentee and I teach the same content area</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>6(4)</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>9(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When viewing this table holistically, more mentors agreed with rather than strongly agreed with the three online statements. The first two online statements also share the same mean- 3.03. Most survey completers strongly agreed or agreed with all three statements in Table 4.21. There is more of a discrepancy between agreement and disagreement in the third online survey statement, where two-thirds of survey takers strongly agreed, and one-third disagreed.

Table 4.22 presents data for the cognitive domain of self-reflection. The majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed that self-reflection is a part of their teaching and their role as a mentor. The sample size for this table is 30.
Table 4.22
*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for the Cognitive Domain*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Domain</td>
<td>Self-reflection is a part of my teaching practice</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>20(4)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14(4)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14(3)</td>
<td>2(2)</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.22 shows that 93% of respondents either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with each of the online-survey statements regarding self-reflection. This question did not ask survey completers to detail the type of reflection they engaged in – either formal or informal. It also did not inquire about the frequency of such self-reflection. Both of those issues are addressed in the follow-up interviews.

Table 4.23 details the online-survey statements for the affective domain. It lists two statements with similar means and sample sizes of 29 or 30.
In Table 4.23, 90% of online survey takers strongly agreed or agreed that their mentee is open to the mentoring process and that they feel competent in their role as a mentor. However, as is noted in the subsection Presentation and Analysis of Data for Interview Questions, most mentors receive little to no training, therefore setting up a discrepancy between the perceived level of competence and the lack of training.

Table 4.24 exhibits online-survey statements for mentorship goals. Data from three statements were tabulated for ease of comprehension. The sample size for each statement was either 29 or 30.
Table 4.24
*Response frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Mentorship Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Area</th>
<th>Online-survey Statement</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship Goals</td>
<td>There are clear goals/outcomes associated with the mentor program at the school where I teach</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15(3)</td>
<td>6(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentor teachers are aware of the program goals/outcomes</td>
<td>n = 30</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17(3)</td>
<td>4(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentees are aware of the program goals/outcomes</td>
<td>n = 29</td>
<td>8(4)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16(3)</td>
<td>4(2)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mentorship goals are the focus of Table 4.24. Most of the online-survey participants *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with all three of the statements in the table. Twenty-three respondents, or 76.6%, fell on the agreement side of the Likert Scale regarding the existence of clear goals associated with public high schools’ mentorship programs. In addition, mentor teachers’ and mentees’ awareness of mentorship goals was *strongly agreed* or *agreed* upon by 83.3% and 82.7% of participants, respectively. Next are the data for the one open-response survey question that pertains to the third guiding research question.

Open-response Question #51 invited survey participants to describe changes in mentorships that may make mentors more effective. Twenty-seven mentor teachers responded with eight different suggestions. Unfortunately, five respondents did not answer the question as it was asked; therefore, their answers could not be tabulated. Table 4.25 displays the analyzed data.
Table 4.25
*Participant Descriptions of Possible Changes to Increase Mentor Efficacy (n=27)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Incidences</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More Time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>“TIME. Mentors need more time with their mentees.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Mentor Training</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Emailed links and resource on how to be a strong mentor would be beneficial.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Area Matching</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“The mentor program should ensure that mentors are in the same subject area as the mentee.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Meeting Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Paid time to meet.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearer Goals/Objectives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“We have few objectives that are clear.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated Meeting Time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“Dedicated time in the school day designed for mentor/mentee meetings.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During School Day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Observations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>“More observational periods mentee to mentor and vice versa.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.25 illustrates that, according to the 25 mentors surveyed, the change they perceived as having the most significant impact on their efficacy is more time to meet with mentees. Thirty-seven percent of the 25 survey takers articulated that they do not have enough time to spend with their mentees. More specifically, there is little to no time set aside during the school day to meet. The lack of meeting time during the school day impacts the frequency with which mentors and mentees can observe one another and leaves the pair responsible for finding unpaid time to meet, either before or after school. Since observations of teachers' teaching cannot occur after school, not being provided with sufficient school-day time to accomplish all mentorship tasks, including observations negatively affects the efficacy of the mentorship. Insufficient time holistically impacts the relationship as it dictates what the mentor and mentee can do together, affecting the mentee's growth and the mentor's efficacy. Some of the information provided by mentees in Table 4.25 contradicts earlier responses. For instance, Table 4.11 displays that 96.7% of survey completers *strongly agreed or agreed* that mentors observe
their mentees. The same table demonstrates that 80.6% of survey takers strongly agreed or agreed that mentees observe their mentors.

Another significant issue is the lack of mentor training. The data in Table 4.2 indicates that 91% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that mentors have the skills needed to work one-on-one with beginning teachers. This belies the data gathered in Table 4.25, in which 18.5% of the sample population perceived the need for more mentor training. One participant underscored the need for additional mentor training and added that knowing how to teach children is not congruent with teaching adults. They articulated,

The biggest change would be to have more training to be a mentor. Most mentors go through a learning stage similar to a new teacher, their first time as a mentor. . . Most mentors are chosen due to their experience teaching but serving as a mentor for a teacher is a different experience.

Presentation and Analysis of Interview Data

The presentation and analysis of data procured from follow-up interviews with six participants follows. The data demonstrate participants’ perceived understanding of mentorship beliefs in three ways (a) the relational domain of mentorships, (b) outcomes/goals, and (c) mentorship improvements. The data extracted from participant interviews are detailed in Tables 4.26 - 4.28.

The data in Table 4.26 was culled from the question, “With what kind of mentee do you prefer to work?” The question garnered three categories, and six codes and is supported by exemplifying statements.
Table 4.26
*Participant Descriptions of Preferred Mentee Traits*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Traits</td>
<td>Willing Participant</td>
<td>“Just someone who is a willing participant.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>“… more open [to] new thinking, new ideas, even the pedagogy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>“Someone who . . . is more flexible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Context</td>
<td>Support Students</td>
<td>“Someone who is always on the side of the students.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content Area</td>
<td>“Someone who teaches the same content area that I do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsequential</td>
<td>No Preference</td>
<td>“I really don’t have a preference. . . I’m open-minded to whatever.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.26 presents data regarding the characteristics of mentees with whom mentors would prefer to work. The category that elicited the most responses was Behavioral Traits. Mentees would like to work with beginning teachers that are willing, open-minded, and flexible. From the descriptions provided by the interviewees, all three of these codes represent the same kind of mentee: someone who is willing to work with a mentor teacher cooperatively, try new instructional and pedagogical strategies, and do the work required of the mentorship.

As was already mentioned, the personality traits that mentors find most desirable are willing, open-minded, and flexible participants, with both their time and thinking. From a professional standpoint, mentors perceive they can be most effective if they and their mentees teach the same subject or content area. The third category is inconsequential. In his interview, mentor teacher Steven discussed his disinterest in talking and associating with other teachers personally. Due to his level of indifference to socializing with colleagues, he does not concern himself with his mentee. John punctuated that there may be difficulties between mentors and mentees that are insurmountable. He continued by stating that when mentors and mentees “have
different pedagogies. . . [that can make] it difficult for the two of them. . . then sometimes they would. . . just be reassigned another mentor.”

Table 4.27 presents interviewees’ perceived understanding of outcomes and/or goals for mentees, mentors, and the mentorship. In addition to the three categories, the table displays multiple codes and exemplifying statements for each code.

**Table 4.27**
*Participant Descriptions of Goals/Outcomes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Outcomes/Goals</td>
<td>Trust in others</td>
<td>“Learning to feel comfortable trusting someone else.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful Teacher</td>
<td>“Being a successful teacher. . . that to me, is the ultimate goal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Licensure</td>
<td>“. . . licensure. . . learning how to navigate the next steps of licensure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Evaluations</td>
<td>“Part of what our mentors do is. . . help out. . . with the evaluation process.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technological Competence</td>
<td>“Technology is always a challenge for a new teacher.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>“I think it’s the school culture.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills-Based Learning</td>
<td>“. . . skills students learn through doing.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Outcomes/Goals</td>
<td>New Content</td>
<td>“. . . new content.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adolescent Vernacular</td>
<td>“. . . the lingo.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>“. . . new teachers bring. . . their experiences in[to] the classroom.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technological Competence</td>
<td>“The technology piece is huge.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship Outcomes/Goals</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>“To my knowledge, none of the programs I’ve mentored for required that [goals].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful Teacher</td>
<td>“. . . to be a successful teacher.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Retention</td>
<td>“. . . the implied [goal] is that they keep their job.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.27 explores some of the goals that may be predetermined for mentees, mentors, and mentorships before the onset of a new mentorship. The goals may also be formulated
together, after the establishment of the mentorship, by the mentor and mentee. In an educational model, goals, and outcomes are different. Goals should be established before any work commences, while outcomes are the result of the work accomplished. After querying the six participants about goals for themselves as the mentor, the mentee, and the mentorship, it became apparent that neither the mentorships nor either of the individuals involved with the program established goals before initiating mentorship activities. It also appeared that, prior to our interviews, the interviewees may not have given much thought to the outcomes of mentorships for all stakeholders.

Most of the codes extrapolated from the interview data were only commented on by one participant. The two codes that were cited more than once are Technological Competence and Successful Teacher. Although each of the prior-named codes were voiced by two distinct interviewees, they were mentioned within two different contexts. First, technological Competence was identified as a goal and outcome for both mentees and mentors. Interviewees detailed that mentees need to learn about the district/school’s attendance and discipline systems, which are both technologically based. In a different situation, mentors may be able to learn about new educational platforms from mentees.

Finally, most of the answers supplied by interviewees for Table 4.27 are unique and non-repetitive. For example, some of the mentor teachers interviewed preceded their answer with a caveat such as, “this is my favorite thing,” or “this is the most important thing,” which led me to conclude that the goals and outcomes participants shared are ones that they personally believe are the most important. An example of this comes from Allison, who stated, “Oh, and the new one, my favorite new thing is the lingo, the language. . .” Her answer indicates that learning new adolescent vernacular is personally and professionally important to her; however, is it necessary
for an efficacious mentorship? A second example is Steven’s answer to the same question. The focal point of his response is an individual experience.

By the new teachers bringing their experiences into the classroom, whether those experiences are life experiences, teaching experience from other places, or just what their own common sense/gut tells them, it's by having different people explain different things in different ways that allows mentors to build a better concept of best practices.

Steven’s reply caused me to question the importance he puts on teacher education programs. I asked him if he believed that mentees might have more recent or different pedagogical information and experiences to share after recently finishing a degree in teaching. He replied, “most of the ed schools I know are behind the curve, in my opinion, of pedagogy, so I'm going to say no.” The personal and professional experiences of the mentor teachers I interviewed played a prominent role in determining how they answered the question on outcomes and goals.

The last table pertaining to Guiding Research Question #3 is Table 4.28. The table presents changes mentors perceive would make a mentorship more effective.
Table 4.28
Participant Descriptions of Changes for More Efficacious Mentorships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Exemplifying Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling</td>
<td>More Time</td>
<td>“Time to meet with mentees that is not borrowed time…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced Teaching Load</td>
<td>“… if a new teacher was paid full-time but had one course less.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee Training</td>
<td>More Observation</td>
<td>“… allowed them [mentees] to actually observe more.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentee-Developed Goals</td>
<td>“they [mentees] write their own goals.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>Open-door Policy</td>
<td>“… to normalize that, that people are coming in and out and it’s an honor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentee-selected Mentor</td>
<td>“… if they could pick their mentor the second year.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.28 shows that the changes mentors perceive as making mentorships more efficacious for mentees can be classified into three categories (a) scheduling, (b) mentee training, and (c) school culture. Each group encompasses two codes. The first category is scheduling. Mentors described needing more time with their mentees, and Steven proposed reducing the number of courses beginning teachers teach. The result of a reduced teaching load is twofold: it could provide more common planning time for mentors and mentees, and the additional time may also be used by mentees to more frequently observe experienced teachers. More time spent observing experienced teachers, according to Steven, is a form of training. He continued to state that “you learn a practice by observing and doing it yourself.” Eleanor, after having realized that her district does not have any mentor, mentee, or mentorship goals, thinks that beginning teachers should write goals for their first year on the job; either things to learn, methodologies they would like to practice, or how they would like the mentorship to unfold.

The final category in Table 4.28 is school culture. Two interviewees each mentioned a change that can be classified under school culture. Catherine would like teachers to adopt a more
open-door policy with each other and the administration. Catherine believes there is not enough cooperation among educators and that many teachers serve as islands behind closed doors (Little, 1999). She also holds that educators should “normalize. . . people. . . coming in and out.” She regards that “all classes could benefit” from an open-door policy. She does understand, however, that for most educators to normalize an open-door policy, it would require getting “rid of that stigma of someone walk[ing] in a room.” Anne suggested that for the second year of mentoring, perhaps mentors could choose with whom they would like to work. Because learning is an active process (Richter, et al., 2013), beginning teachers may learn more if they know they played an active role in the selection of their mentor.

Delineation of Findings for Guiding Research Question #3: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit educational mentoring?

The three findings for Guiding Research Question #3 are gleaned from an analysis of the data from the online survey and the follow-up interviews. In addition, pertinent examples have been culled from each instrument and used to substantiate each finding.

Finding #3: Although Massachusetts mentor teachers believe in their capacity to train mentees, they report that lack of time and adequate training negatively impact the efficacy of mentorships.

Tables 4.23 and 4.25 display data that demonstrates mentor teachers’ beliefs in their capacity to prepare new teachers successfully. More specifically, Table 4.23 provides insight into mentors’ feelings of competency. Out of 29 online respondents, 27 mentors strongly agreed or agreed that they feel competent in their role as a mentor teacher. Conversely, in Table 4.25, 27 mentor teachers were asked to name one thing that could increase their efficacy; no choices were
given. Five out of 27 online-survey completers stated that more mentor training is necessary to increase mentor efficacy. The most common factor revealed about mentor training is the small amount of time dedicated to it and the lack of continuity.

One interview participant, Allison, shared that her district allows mentors “a one-day, six-hour training that is led. . . by the superintendent.” Additionally, if a mentor has already received this six-hour training, they are not eligible for future training. Scholars such as Feiman-Nemser (2003) purported that mentors need ongoing training to understand the cycles beginning teachers pass through and how educating children and adults differs. Feiman-Nemser also posited that “strong induction programs offer mentors more than a few days of initial training. They provide ongoing opportunities for study and problem solving (2003, p.27).”

The issues surrounding available time versus needed time are complex. There is little to no school-day time set aside for Massachusetts mentorships on average. The Code of Massachusetts Regulations (DESE, 2021), section 603 CMR 7.00, lists and regulates new teachers’ induction and mentoring requirements. The regulations provide a baseline for mentoring programs, and “DESE strongly encourages districts to go beyond the minimum requirements” (DESE, 2018, p. 13). The section of 603 CMR 7.00 that supports Finding #3 articulates that all Massachusetts school districts must ensure “release time for the mentor and beginning teacher to engage in regular observations and other mentoring activities” (DESE, 2021, para 2(d)). Most study participants who commented on insufficient time said they did not have any, or enough, time built into the regular school day. When mentors and mentees need to meet one-on-one, those meetings usually occur during lunch or after school. One survey taker articulated the complex issues that are involved with insufficient time. He reported that
having a mentee new to teaching. . . [made it] difficult to get time to observe his classroom and provide him feedback. Admin identified some issues in his teaching and recommended that he observe some model classes. The only follow-up was an informal discussion after school.

Little or no time available to de brief observations during the school day limits discourse on instructional methods, which can stunt the assistance a mentor can provide. Interview participant Eleanor shed more light on the issue of competing demands. Eleanor commented that finding time to observe a mentee’s classroom is difficult due to different schedules and a lack of coverage for mentor teachers’ classes. She stated that observation “doesn’t always happen as much as I . . . think it should.” Insufficient time was commented upon by both survey completers and interviewees. Tables 4.15, 4.16, 4.17, and 4.19 all list codes related to a lack of, or a needed increase in, available time.

Table 4.25 presented the data for survey open-ended question #51. Mentor teachers were asked how to increase mentor efficacy. Ten out of the 27 respondents named time as the primary factor. An anonymous participant supported this finding with their answer, “TIME. Mentors need more time with their mentees.”

In his interview, John relayed that “most of the time it [a mentorship meeting] would be after school.” I asked John how mentor teachers feel about utilizing after-school time in response to that answer. He replied, “the mentors receive a stipend from the district.” The mentees do not. John’s answer surprised me because I did not receive a stipend both times I served as a mentor teacher. Some of the interviewed mentor teachers said that they did not want to have to engage in mentorship responsibilities outside of school hours if they were not compensated for the time. Eleanor, one of the mentor teachers interviewed, reported that even if mentors were paid for out-
of-school mentoring time, she does not believe it should occur. Eleanor noted that beginning
teachers need downtime at the end of the school day to de-stress from the all-encompassing day.
Eleanor also admitted that she uses her after-school time to grade and plan future lessons. To
build more mentorship time into the school day, schools might have to rearrange their current
schedules to provide common-meeting times. Even if schedules were to change, there is no
guarantee that the shift would allow for more mentorship time during the school day.

Finding #4: According to Massachusetts mentor teachers, if mentorships are ineffective, an
“unopen” or “uncooperative” mentee is often the cause.

Table 4.16 exhibits the responses of ten mentor teachers who responded to the online
survey open-ended Question #36 (n=23). One of the mentors disclosed that the most challenging
facet of a mentor-mentee relationship is “trying to reach a teacher who doesn’t want to
participate” in a formal mentorship program. That statement was substantiated by nine other
online survey-completers and four out of six interviewed mentor teachers. Most mentors
perceived opposition to participating in a formal mentorship program as a false sense of
confidence on the mentee’s part. One survey taker described a situation in which their mentee
told them that “he already knew he was an effective teacher, so he wasn’t going to listen to
anything,” the mentor told him. Interviewee Catherine disclosed that some of her mentees have
“come in with a lot of confidence,” which leaves the mentee more closed-off to working with a
mentor. Four of the six mentor teachers interviewed stated that they preferred to work with a
mentee who is open to the process. Additionally, mentorships’ viability is negatively impacted
by differences in personalities. In the school where he works, John has witnessed “some pairings
between mentors and mentees that sometimes don't work out where they did have personality
differences.”
As was previously discussed, mentors see themselves as competent in their role. Within the analyzed data, there is no mention of mentor teachers or their roles contributing to an ineffective mentorship. Effective is defined as personal and professional growth on the mentee's part; anything that does not support that goal is ineffectual. When asked what kind of mentee mentors would prefer to work (Table 4.26), they responded with mostly personality traits: willing participant, open-minded, and flexible. None of the interviewed mentors mentioned professional characteristics or soft skills such as being cooperative, self-starter, diligent, multitasker, or someone with keen observational skills.

Furthermore, Table 4.28 displays data corresponding to Participant Descriptions of Changes for More Efficacious Mentorships. None of the six mentor teachers interviewed stated any changes concerning mentor training. All responses were factors out of the control of the mentor, such as time, mentee-reduced workload, more observation, mentee-developed goals, having an open-door policy, and mentee-selected mentors.

The lack of data directly connecting the mentor, their personality, or their role to an ineffectual mentorship is not surprising. A 2003 literature review by Hansford, Tennent, and Ehrich elucidated a rationale for the omission of data connecting mentors and/or their role to an ineffective mentorship. The authors analyzed 159 mentoring studies and deduced that when adverse mentorship outcomes were reported, “program success appeared to have been jeopardized by lack of funding, lack of time, or by matching of mentors and mentees” (p. 2). Additionally, the variability of mentoring programs leaves much of the success or failure of the program to the extent to which the program addresses the particular context of a particular school or district. Finally, for mentor teachers to recognize that they play a less than effective
mentorship role, they need to engage in deep self-reflection. Some mentors may not be in a developmental stage where they can deeply self-reflect.

**Finding #5: Massachusetts's individual mentorships and/or mentorship programs do not explicitly develop, state, or utilize goals.**

Experienced teachers know that high-quality unit planning involves backward design (Wiggins, Wiggins, & McTighe, 2005). After deciding upon unit essential questions and goals, teachers then develop the end of unit assessment. All other unit parts stem from the goals and the culminating summative assessment. The goals and the summative assessment facilitate the development of individual lessons that allow students to comprehend and practice new skills. Lessons provide a unit with structure and content. The same would be true of mentorships; high-quality mentoring also involves goals and tasks. Can mentorships function effectively if there are no goals attributed to the program or relationship?

According to Huling and Resta (2001), many educators have agreed that the principal purpose of mentoring programs is to “support and retain novice teachers” (p. 1). Schwille (2008) purported that a mentor’s role and the goal of the mentorship should be to help the mentee acquire “the skills and dispositions to continue learning in and from their practice” (p. 139). Richter, et al. (2013) posited that the goal of mentoring is two-fold: instructional and psychological competence. They declared that instructional support “fosters the development of the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the classroom” (p. 167). Richter et al. also proffered that psychological support (what I have termed “social-emotional support”) includes “building confidence, encouraging self-esteem, listening, and enhancing self-reliance” (p. 167).

The data concerning mentorship goals and outcomes are contradictory. The statistics from the online survey support mentor-perceived goals for mentorships. This is illustrated by
data displayed in Table 4.24 or Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Mentorship Goals. A total of thirty online-survey participants responded to the statement, “there are clear goals/outcomes associated with the mentor program at the school where I teach.” Twenty-three out of 30 survey takers either strongly agreed or agreed with that statement. Twenty-five out of thirty survey completers strongly agreed or agreed that mentor teachers are aware of program goals/outcomes. Finally, 24 out of 29 respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that mentees are aware of program goals/outcomes.

Interview data belies the online-survey data in Table 4.24. Table 4.27 displays follow-up interview data for Participant Descriptions of Goals/Outcomes. The data were disaggregated into three categories: goals and/or outcomes associated with (a) mentees, (b) mentors, and (c) mentorships. For mentee goals, only one out of six interviewees listed “successful teacher.” There were three mentorship goals uncovered: (a) none, (b) successful teacher, and (c) job retention. Both “successful teacher” and “job retention” were mentioned by the same interviewee, John. None of the remaining five mentors could recall goals or outcomes associated with the mentor programs in the schools where they teach.

**Chapter Summary**

The first section of Chapter Four begins with a review of the study's purpose, scope, and motivation, followed by a review of the major sections presented in the chapter. The five findings are delineated, and the summary closes with a framework for Chapter Five.

This study was developed to examine what Massachusetts public high school mentor teachers (a) understand about high-quality mentoring programs, (b) how they describe effective educational mentoring practices, as well as (c) what they identify as factors that contribute to and inhibit mentoring. Furthermore, this study sought to comprehend how experienced mentor
teachers mentor, what skills and practices they prioritize, and if any of them practice educative mentoring with its theoretical underpinnings in social constructivism. An explanatory mixed methods approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was utilized, and data were aggregated through an online survey and follow-up interviews with six respondents. Data analysis began with first cycle coding that produced a plethora of special codes. Individual codes were then clustered together based on uniform characteristics, which in turn led to the development of categories. Finally, major categories were extracted from the qualitative data and coupled with exemplifying statements.

Chapter Four began with a description of demographics for mentors’ school districts and study participants. After that, data were presented and analyzed, and findings were delineated for each of the three guiding research questions. Data presentation and analysis for each question consisted of three subsections: (1) presentation and analysis of online-survey data, (2) presentation and analysis of interview data, (3) and delineation of findings.

A synopsis of the findings was presented for each guiding research question. For example, guiding Research Question #1 produced one finding: (1) Massachusetts mentor teachers assist beginning teachers with varied supports, although they perceive that social-emotional needs are paramount. Guiding Research Question #2 furnished one finding: (2) Massachusetts mentor teachers consider the enculturation of mentees a critical component of learning to teach. Finally, guiding Research Question #3 supplied three findings: (3) Although Massachusetts mentor teachers believe in their capacity to train mentees, they report that lack of time and adequate training negatively impact the efficacy of the mentorship. (4) According to Massachusetts mentor teachers, if a mentorship is not effective an “unopen” or “uncooperative”
mentee is often the cause. (5) Many individual mentorships and/or mentorship programs in Massachusetts do not explicitly develop, state, or utilize goals.

The discussion of the five findings in Chapter Five is intended to produce a deeper understanding. The scope of those discussions includes exploring practical and theoretical implications and making recommendations for the field. Chapter Five is presented in five sections (a) an introduction, (b) a study summary, (c) a discussion of findings, (d) suggestions for future research, and (e) final reflections.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, FINAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

Chapter Five is divided into four sections (a) study summary, (b) discussion, (c) future research, and (d) final reflections. The study summary delineates the salient points presented in Chapters One through Four. The synopsis then leads to the discussion of the five study findings. There are three subsections for each finding (a) theoretical implications, (b) practical implications, and (c) recommendations. The future research section identifies potential studies that may provide deeper insight into mentoring as a high-quality practice. Final reflections present my concluding thoughts about conducting this study and personal comments about the findings.

Study Summary

The genesis of this study hearkens back to my experience as a mentee. As a first-year teacher, I was “unofficially” assigned a mentor, the only other modern language teacher at Parker Middle School: a veteran French teacher. I am curious by nature and possess a somewhat perfectionist personality. During my first days of teaching, I became overwhelmingly aware of how unprepared I was to teach five classes of eighth-grade Spanish. I did not know administrivia: how to set up a grade book, prepare seating charts, and where to go to photocopy lesson materials. I was equally unknowing of pedagogical and instructional concerns: do I call on students or let them volunteer; how often and when in a unit do I assess students; how much wait time do I provide my students; how do I create a supportive classroom environment; and how do I assess various types of learners and assignments? I was filled with more questions than
answers. I consulted my unofficial mentor numerous times a day until I observed her answers becoming brusque.

Luckily, the middle school was progressive, and they included language teachers on grade-level teams. My team became my support system, and one team member, an experienced, well-regarded, and skilled English teacher, filled the mentor-teacher void. Over the years, I have repeatedly questioned the capacity of new teachers and how well formal education preparatory programs equip their students of teaching to become teachers of students. After graduating from Harvard’s Graduate School of Education with a master’s degree in Teaching and Learning, I knew that I was not yet a teacher. Little did I know that it would take me approximately five years to begin to feel a sense of competence as a teacher. What would make the difference between a student of teaching and a competent teacher teaching students? This study has revealed that a compulsory, high-quality mentoring program may be a good place to start.

This study began with an introduction that included the statement of the problem – the need to reconceptualize Massachusetts secondary public high school mentoring programs -- to increase beginning teachers’ skills and competencies better. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2018), there is a lack of overall efficacy in existing programs. Although beginning teacher mentoring is required in Massachusetts, the duration, frequency of mentor-mentee meeting times, mentor training, resource materials, and goals/outcomes are variable. The following three research questions were used to guide the study:

1. What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring?
2. What do experienced public high school teachers report are effective educational mentoring practices?

3. What do experienced public high school teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit mentoring?

Chapter Two presented a literary review detailing the dearth of a common definition of the word “mentor,” from the 8th Century literary term used to refer to those who served as guides and aides (Drago-Severson, 2009) to its modern-day connotation as a practice used to indoctrinate and educate those new to a field. Chapter Two also explored the theoretical underpinnings of adult learning theory and social constructivism.

Chapter Three described the rationale for the explanatory sequential mixed-method study. The first part of the study was an online survey consisting of statements and open-ended questions. The second phase of the study was follow-up interviews with six participants.

Chapter Four presented and analyzed data aggregated from the online survey and follow-up interviews. All data were tabulated for ease of comprehension and five findings were uncovered, which are individually discussed in what follows.

**Discussion**

This section discusses each of the five findings. Findings were based on pertinent data from the online survey and the follow-up interviews. The discussion for each finding includes three subsections (a) theoretical implications, (b) practical implications, and (c) recommendations.

**Finding #1:** Massachusetts mentor teachers assist beginning teachers with varied supports, although they perceive that social-emotional needs are paramount.
Finding #1 is linked to Guiding Research Question One: What do experienced public high school mentor teachers understand about the practice of mentoring? What follows is a discussion of how this finding contributes to the extant literature.

The first finding is that although mentor teachers recognize the need to provide mentees with multiple and varied supports, they perceive social-emotional support as being paramount. The following theoretical discussion validates and expands upon the extant literature.

**Theoretical Implications**

Although there is not a commonly shared definition of an educational mentor, one rationale has been agreed upon: a mentorship is a “developmental relationship that is embedded within a career context” (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 213). Kram (1985) purported that the role of the mentor is two-fold: to support career and social-emotional growth. But how much of a mentor’s limited time should be devoted to providing social-emotional support to mentees? Scherff and Daria (2010) purported that a “significant” amount of time be devoted to supporting a beginning teacher’s emotional needs, although they did not define how much time constitutes “significant.” Contradicting Scherff and Daria’s assertion is the fact that DESE’s 2018 Mentoring Report did not mention the social-emotional needs of beginning teachers nor how and for what duration mentor teachers should attend to those issues. In 2008, Schwille defined a mentor’s role as specifically including “emotional support” (p. 139). The first finding of my study supports Sherff and Daria (2010) and Schwille (2008), providing further evidence that mentors view social-emotional support as a critical component of their work with beginning teachers. Additionally, the first finding and the data from the study’s in-depth interviews belie the omission of the social-emotion needs of beginning teachers by DESE in their 2018 Mentoring Report.
Although scholarship has demonstrated the necessity of attending to the social-emotional needs of mentees, that is only part of a mentor’s responsibilities and not the most remarkable obligation. Mentor teachers also need to advise their mentees on procedural and pedagogical requirements and provide appropriate supports and challenges for growth (Drago-Severson, 2009; Schwille, 2008; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Daloz, 1986). The mentors interviewed in this study revealed that the supports they perceived as most important are (a) social-emotional, (b) administrative, (c) curricular, (d) pedagogical, and (e) emergent needs. This revelation adds to the extant literature and sheds light on the kinds of supports mentor teachers perceive as necessary.

Daloz (1986) argued that providing a mentee with appropriate supports and challenges should be a mentor’s primary function. Daloz (1986) articulated that any exchange between a mentor and a mentee will include a combination of support and challenge working simultaneously. “The function of support is to bring boundaries together” (Daloz, 1986, p. 213). Support can come in many forms, such as active listening, providing structure, serving as an advocate, and sharing personal narratives. As support is intensified, the capacity for growth increases. Daloz (1986) defined challenge as an act that “peels boundaries apart” (p. 213). According to Daloz (1986), the function of challenge is to “open a gap” between the mentee and their environment. The formation of said gap creates tension between the mentee and their environment, forcing the mentee into a new environment. The tension exposes the mentee to new experiences that create cognitive dissonance, defined as an inconsistency between a mentee’s beliefs and their actions. The dissonance produces an innate need in the mentee to close the gap. Recognition of the dissonance does not occur without reflection. The presence of reflection on the mentee's part helps resolve the dissonance, leading to growth. Mentors can challenge their
mentees by giving them set tasks to accomplish, engaging in discussion, presenting their mentees with dichotomies, and setting high standards.

**Practical Implications**

Beginning teachers are often wrought with anxiety, trepidation, frustration, and a lack of self-confidence. This is evidenced by the fact that over 30% of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Sherff & Daria, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Also confounding the education of beginning teachers is the reality that educational mentoring is still not clearly defined (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2009; Dawson, 2014). The nonexistence of a concrete definition of the practice lends itself to extreme variability in mentoring processes.

The mentors interviewed for this study perceived that beginning teachers were most interested in finding solutions to emergent problems, many of which are social-emotional. The rationale behind this is that to learn how to teach, one must teach; it is an experiential process. As beginning teachers start to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, inept, and ineffective at juggling the varied responsibilities associated with teaching, they become more emotional, which tends to impede rationality and action. When an unsure mentee seeks out the guidance of their mentor, the mentor feels a sense of urgency to assist with the current problem to instill a better balance between emotionality and rationality. Surveyed mentor teachers cited that being understanding, open-minded, and having patience are some of the most effective mentor skills to diminish social-emotional angst. Mentors also detailed their desire to give mentees moral support and a place to vent. Interviewed mentor teacher Eleanor stated that her first inclination as a mentor is “listening to the frustrations and just . . . talk[ing] them off the ledge . . . try[ing] to calm them down.” Eleanor’s words give weight to the notion that the work of beginning teachers is often
emotional. When things become emotionally charged, who better to listen than a colleague who was once a beginning teacher?

**Recommendations**

Following the theoretical and practical implications sections for each finding, I present recommendations that can be implemented by schools and districts. Some findings have as many as six recommendations, others as few as three.

Finding #1 has led to recommendations for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), teacher preparatory programs, district and secondary school administrators, and mentor leaders. The remaining recommendations implore leaders in higher and secondary education to identify the main stressors of beginning teachers and possible coping mechanisms.

The first recommendation summons DESE and leaders of higher education teacher preparation programs to integrate a specific course into their programs that concern either social-emotional challenges of new teachers or self-care for beginning teachers. Both courses could diagnosticate social-emotional stressors and possible remedies to combat those pressures. Possible remedies include breathwork, meditation, mindfulness exercises, journaling, and self-reflection.

The remaining five recommendations fall under the umbrella of supports to be established by the school and district administrators and mentor teacher leaders. Each recommendation is suggested to help beginning teachers gain the necessary skills to work through some of their social-emotional problems so that mentor-mentee time can be focused on pedagogy.
The second recommendation is for assistant superintendents, secondary school administrators, and mentor teacher leaders. Before a system of social-emotional supports can be instituted, district and school administrators and teacher leaders must identify beginning teachers' most challenging stressors. Once the pressures have been recognized, the third recommendation can be enacted.

The third recommendation is for school administrators and mentor leaders to structure each mentor-mentee meeting (usually once a month) around a beginning teacher's concern. Meetings open with a brief time devoted to mentee concerns and questions. The mentor teachers interviewed for this study all indicated that mentee concerns and questions can derail meetings, especially when there is no formal agenda. The creation of a meeting protocol and agenda helps ensure that important topics are reviewed and discussed.

The fourth recommendation is for assistant superintendents and high school administrators. I propose that a district “beginning teacher network” be formed. Due to limited available time for beginning teachers, I suggest that this peer network be formed as an online community. It could be as simple as a group email exchange or could take the form of an online forum where beginning teachers can pose concerns and/or questions, and other beginning teachers could comment. This is an added support system that does not exist in many current mentoring programs.

The fifth recommendation is for district superintendents and school administrators to provide complimentary, and perhaps required regular counseling services to beginning teachers. Counseling services could take the form of in-school group meetings or outside of school individual appointments.
The sixth and last recommendation is for district and school administrators. I contend that mentor teachers should be specifically trained in active listening and emotional coping strategies. As was articulated in Chapter Four, mentor training is limited at best. Scholarship recommends that mentor training be a continual process throughout the school year. Implementing more mentor training may allow schools and districts to train mentor teachers in coping strategies for emotional stressors. Although a mentor can be an emotional support to a mentee, their primary function should be to help beginning teachers learn to teach.

Finding #2: Massachusetts mentor teachers consider the enculturation of mentees a critical component of learning to teach.

Finding #2 is linked to Guiding Research Question Two: What do experienced public high school teachers report are effective educational mentoring practices?

The second finding highlights the perception of Massachusetts mentor teachers that becoming enculturated to a school is a necessary component of becoming a successful teacher. A theoretical discussion regarding how this study contradicts and validates the extant literature related to the second finding follows.

Theoretical Implications

Before determining how a beginning teacher can best assimilate into a school’s culture, I present a definition of school culture that I will be using in this section. Bryk and Driscoll (1988) defined school culture as “the distinctive blend of norms, values, and accepted modes of professional practice, both formal and informal, that prevails among colleagues” (p. 253). Peterson and Deal (2002) asserted that without a strong and positive culture, “schools flounder and die” (p. 7). They also attested that solid and positive cultures are built over time by a school’s faculty. I contend that assimilating into a school culture can be difficult because school culture is
often comprised of “unwritten rules and assumptions” (Peterson & Deal, 2002, p.18), which are often contextual. How do beginning teachers become enculturated?

Zeichner and Goe (1989) defined enculturation as the “process by which the individual becomes a participating member of the community of teachers” (p. 1592). Scholarship has detailed two contrasting processes regarding how beginning teachers become members of the school community: socialization or development. The first method of assimilation is through socialization. Socialization requires that mentors familiarize beginning teachers with school norms and procedures, help them assimilate into school culture, aid in instructional planning and classroom management, and provide feedback on lesson observations (Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

Berliner (1988), on the other hand, argued that all beginning teachers pass through five stages of development: novice, beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. A commonality in the novice and beginner stages is the inability of mentees to take responsibility for their decisions. At the start of their career, many beginning teachers are focused on facile and procedural tasks to keep their heads above water. Beginning teachers have little control over their actions and mainly follow the advice and recommendations of their mentors (Berliner, 1988). The last three stages are characterized by mentees who have the capacity to make their own choices. The first four developmental stages are where teachers rely on their rationality. Berliner (1988) called expert teachers “arational” (p. 5) because it is perceived that they act fluidly and effortlessly without needing to analyze situations before acting.

The interviews I conducted with six mentor teachers largely supported socialized enculturation; only one interviewed mentor alluded to the developmental stages of teachers when she said that mentor teachers have an obligation to “meet a mentee where they are” developmentally. Data culled from mentor interviews demonstrate that mentor teachers perceive
enculturation to be a critical component of learning to teach. Upon deeper analysis, the data show that mentor teachers believe in numerous enculturation supports, including (a) mentee summer orientation, (b) monthly meetings, (c) regular check-ins, (d) providing a resource document, (e) moral support, (f) close physical proximity, (g) establishing routines, and (h) bureaucratic navigation.

Some of the enculturation supports, such as mentee summer orientation and monthly meetings, overlap with mentee training. However, even amidst the overlap of the two supports, the enculturation supports listed above are social processes, which validate the socialization theory of enculturation and largely rebuff developmental enculturation.

Independent of beliefs that beginning teachers are either socialized or grow through the passage of developmental stages, becoming encultured to the school community is a priority. Mentor teachers have the capacity to make the transition to a new professional community smoother. When teachers become encultured, they learn procedural information such as grading programs and from whom to ask for supplies to the school's power structure: is it hierarchical, or is there a more balance of leadership? Once teachers begin to acclimate to a school community, they will have more time to focus on pedagogy.

**Practical Implications**

Overwhelmingly, study participants agreed that enculturation is a function of mentoring. Ninety-seven percent of all online survey completers either strongly agreed or agreed that mentors enculturate mentees to school procedures. It is my error that I did not draft additional questions pertaining to the enculturation of beginning teachers to gain information on the “unwritten rules of the school” and school community norms and values. If I were to conduct
this study again or engage in a similar study, I would include more specific questions about enculturation.

Table 4.17 is entitled “Participant Descriptions of Mentee Needs.” All six mentors discussed the importance of mentee enculturation; however, they did not always agree on how to enculturate beginning teachers. After aggregating and analyzing the interview data from the six participants, it was easy to see four main categories of mentee needs: enculturation, training, relational issues, and resources. The category with the most codes is enculturation. Within the category of enculturation, I disaggregated eight codes: summer orientation, monthly meetings, checking-in, moral support, physical proximity, established routines, bureaucratic navigations, and resource documents. Although there were differences of opinion on how to enculturate beginning teachers, all interviewed mentees believed that acculturation is an important component of learning to teach.

**Recommendations**

Finding #2 has generated a total of six recommendations for district and secondary school administrations, mentor leaders, and department chairs. The recommendations suggest investigating ways of bringing together faculty and utilizing school missions and values on a regular basis.

The first recommendation is for district and school leaders to agree upon a common definition of enculturation. As was evidenced by this study, mentor teachers’ understanding of enculturation is varied, which impacts the way a beginning teacher learns about a specific school’s culture.

The second recommendation urges mentor leaders to ensure that enculturation is a topic investigated by all mentor teachers. This could include brainstorming ways of enculturating
beginning teachers to the school, with a particular emphasis on the “unwritten rules of the school.” In addition to an in-person or online training, mentor leaders could develop a mentor handbook to include a section on mentee enculturation. This section of the handbook would include specific strategies for helping beginning teachers acclimate to their new professional community.

The third recommendation is for district and school administrators. Generally, at the beginning of every academic year, secondary school faculty are given a copy of the school’s mission statement and district and school goals. Teachers read through the documents, put them away, and rarely consult them again unless the school uses them for professional development activity. As a teacher of 24 years, I have worked at two different schools, and it has never been necessary to access those documents at any other point throughout the year. I assert that to have a strong and positive school culture for both faculty and students, the school mission statement, its goals, values, and norms must be referenced more than once a year. I suggest that the mission statement and the goals be placed throughout the school in common meeting spaces such as the library and cafeteria and each classroom. Teachers incorporate the mission statement, goals, values, and norms into lessons when applicable. I assert that those documents could seamlessly be integrated into a lesson in English, history, civics, wellness, and possibly other subject areas.

The fourth recommendation is for district administrators (assistant superintendents), principals, and mentor leaders. I contend that enculturation is not possible unless a school can identify the factors contributing to its culture. To this end, schools could create two separate surveys, one for faculty and one for students. Each survey would ask questions to ascertain what contributes to and inhibits the culture of the school. After the data have been analyzed, principals and mentor leaders can identify and record examples of tasks/activities that mentors can do to
help beginning teachers with the enculturation process. This might include a conversation about who to go to for certain needs or connecting the beginning teacher to other faculty members.

The fifth recommendation is for school principals and mentor leaders and proposes that they create a “network of support,” which differs from “beginning teacher networks.” The main difference is that “beginning teacher networks” are peer systems that allow beginning teachers to connect with each other mainly via a technology integration platform. Conversely, “Networks of support” are composed of teachers at different stages in their careers and are most effective if meetings occur in person. These networks can be as small as three faculty members or as large as five. I do not advocate more than five faculty members as the objective is for the beginning teacher to get to know other faculty members well and have other teachers serve as sources of support. The ideal network would be comprised of the beginning teacher, at least one mid-career teacher, and at least one veteran teacher. Ideally, these networks would meet regularly; however, that may not be doable with the time constraints of a teacher’s schedule and the other demands on their time. This support network could also function as an online group if the beginning teacher gets to know the other teachers in the network and feels comfortable approaching them for help. The function of the other members is to support the beginning teacher, however possible, but also to check in with the new teacher and have an open-door policy. Ideally, the beginning teacher can observe the other network members, and, inversely, the network participants observe the beginning teacher and offer constructive feedback.

The sixth and final recommendation is for school principals. To become enculturated, it is important for a beginning teacher to learn about the different departments in the school and how they function. To bring this to fruition, beginning teachers would occasionally sit in on other department meetings to understand how they operate, conduct their meetings, and what
curricular or instructional concerns they discuss. This would take the beginning teacher away from their own department meeting, so the mentee may only be able to attend another department meeting for a part, not all, of the meeting.

**Finding #3:** Although Massachusetts mentor teachers believe in their capacity to train mentees, they report that lack of time and adequate training negatively impacts the efficacy of the mentorship.

Finding #3 emerged from Guiding Research Question Three: What do experienced public high school teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit mentoring? The following theoretical and practical implications demonstrate how this study contributes to the extant literature.

The third finding revealed that although mentor teachers believe in their ability to work with beginning teachers efficaciously, they believe that they have not been trained sufficiently, nor that there is adequate time provided in the school day to attend to all requisite mentorship tasks.

**Theoretical Implications**

Sufficient training and adequate time to tend to all teaching and mentorship responsibilities are critical components of high-quality mentor programs. Before discussing a lack of mentor training and adequate time, I focus on adult developmental theory because a mentor can better assist a mentee if the mentor understands in which developmental state their mentee is located (Drago-Severson, 2009). Identifying where a beginning teacher is developmentally lets the mentor know how the mentee makes meaning of the world around them. There are multiple developmental theories in existence, but for the purposes of this study’s theoretical underpinnings, I chose Kegan’s (1982, 1994, 2009) constructive-developmental
theory. Kegan (1982, 1994, 2009) asserted that there are five orders of consciousness or developmental stages that individuals transition through as their knowledge about themselves and the world increases. If a mentor teacher is well-versed in Kegan’s or other developmental theorists’ stages of development, they may be better able to provide the most appropriate supports and challenges for their mentee.

To most effectively mentor a beginning teacher, it is helpful if mentors can “assess the direction novices are heading and . . . create opportunities and conditions that support meaningful teacher learning . . .” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 18). Knowing adult learning theory is advantageous to both mentors and mentees. For mentors, such knowledge allows them to provide educative experiences for their mentees, which in turn aids in their mentees’ learning. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1989) posited that adult education is based on a learner’s past and present experiences. “Adult education is a process through which learners become aware of significant experience” (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1989, p. 169). Learning how to comprehend experiences better leads to evaluation, which cannot be accomplished without reflection. In 1956, Gessner declared that “my conception of adult education is this: a cooperative venture in nonauthoritarian, informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience” (p. 160). Gessner continued to argue that the student’s experience is just as valuable as the teacher’s knowledge in adult education classes.

Two additional elements of high-quality mentoring programs are mentors sharing personal experiences with their mentees and participating in active listening, which can validate their mentee’s feelings. The validation creates feelings of being accepted and heard; validation, in turn, creates relational trust, which allows the mentee to attempt more risk-taking, leading to growth (Drago-Severson, 2009). In this study, those mentors who shared personal experiences
were asked direct questions by their mentees which prompted the sharing of personal experiences. Most of the mentors did not freely offer up prior personal experiences. At least one-half of the mentors interviewed eluded to mentorships being hierarchical relationships with the mentee receiving information and knowledge from the mentor consistent with transmission theory mentoring. Indications of this perception include quotes from interviewed mentors John and Lauren. When asked about a mentor’s responsibility, John replied, “to provide tough love. . . new teachers really make some mistakes…to put that parent voice down and say, “you really don’t want to do that” (2020). Another mentor teacher, Lauren, stated that mentors have to be at a mentee’s “beck-and-call…it’s 100% about supporting them [mentees]” and that mentees “monopolize conversation” (2020). Scholarship has demonstrated that to build trust and maintain an effective mentorship, mentors should be responsible for initiating conversations, asking critical-thinking questions, and being empathetic. This study has highlighted an important gap between theory and practice. Theoretically, mentors who willingly share personal experiences gain relational trust; however, not all mentors participate in this practice. Giving appropriate feedback is another way mentors can help increase mentees’ pedagogical competencies.

To initiate growth for their mentees and place an increased focus on learning, it is favorable for mentors to give their mentees appropriate feedback, which starts with active listening. I assert that knowing how to give an adult learner the most appropriate form of feedback is something that not all teachers well-versed in pedagogy can provide. This is where comprehensive and continuous mentor training is valuable. Mentors, who are teachers of children, need to be trained on what and how to supply appropriate feedback to adults (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Providing feedback to adults will be limited if mentors are not familiar with adult learning and development theories. Mentor teachers should also be able to
demonstrate high-quality teaching to their mentees and follow up the demonstration with a discussion regarding the theoretical and practical implications of their teaching moves, instruction, and interpersonal relationships with students. Inhibiting factors of building mentor capacity is more than just a lack of training; insufficient time can also restrict mentee growth.

The amount and kind of training a mentor receives partly determines the quality of a mentorship. Being trained in pedagogy does not make one an expert in andragogy because children and adults learn differently (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Mezirow, 2000, Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). Scholars such as Feiman-Nemser (2003) have purported that mentors need ongoing training to understand the cycles beginning teachers pass through and how educating children and adults differs. The amount and kind of training a mentor teacher receives directly correlates with the efficacy of the mentor. In addition to training, a lack of sufficient time to complete professional responsibilities can be detrimental to the mentor, the mentee, and the mentorship. While a subset (20%) of mentors in this study identified that more training would facilitate their roles, a vast majority (91%) identified a lack of sufficient dedicated time to work with their mentees during the day as a significant challenge.

There is little to no school-day time set aside for Massachusetts mentorships on average. The Code of Massachusetts Regulations (DESE, 2021), section 603 CMR 7.00, lists and regulates new teachers’ induction and mentoring requirements. The regulations provide a baseline for mentoring programs, and “DESE strongly encourages districts to go beyond the minimum requirements” (DESE, 2018, p. 13). The section of 603 CMR 7.00 that supports Finding #3 articulates that all Massachusetts school districts must ensure “release time for the mentor and beginning teacher to engage in regular observations and other mentoring activities” (DESE, 2021, para 2(d)). There is, however, no hourly requirement of release time which allows
schools to provide as much or as little release time as they want. None of the six mentors interviewed for this study identified the use of release time to meet with their mentees. Monthly meetings were all held after school, with some mentors receiving a stipend. Overall, mentors and mentees had to “find” time during the school day to meet.

According to Ganser (1994), mentor teachers cited insufficient time as their biggest concern in mentoring a beginning teacher. The lack of a universally-accepted definition of an educational mentor has led to an imbalance; some mentors have adequate time to mentor while others do not. Additionally, some mentors receive compensation, and others do not. A secondary teacher who both teaches their own classes and serves as a mentor may have to leave some tasks incomplete due to time insufficiency. When an individual mentors and teaches, they may not have any, or enough, common planning time available with their mentee. This means that many tasks such as co-planning and debriefing lessons as well as the required, regular meetings between mentors and mentees may occur after school. Performing mentorship responsibilities after school can be taxing on both the mentor and the mentee. Mentors may have to push off work for their own classes to stay after school with mentees. While working with a mentor is generally a rewarding and growth-inducing experience, conducting mentorship responsibilities can cause mentees to miss out on valuable after-school self-care time. Mentees may suffer when mentorship responsibilities go unfulfilled; if teaching duties go undone, students may suffer (Ganser, 1994; Jaspers, et al., 2014).

**Practical Implications**

The majority of both online-survey takers and interview participants believe that there is a lack of mentor training and time to sufficiently complete all mentor and teaching tasks appropriately. Most mentors stated that time is the single most factor that can improve the quality
of mentors, mentorships, and mentees’ capacity. Therefore, mentor training is discussed first, followed by insufficient time.

The data in Table 4.20 indicate that 91% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that mentors have the skills needed to work one-on-one with a beginning teacher. Conversely, the data in Table 4.25 demonstrate that five out of 25 people, or 20%, perceived the need for more mentor training. Interview participant Lauren noted that her district, Newburyport, provides one day of mentor training before school opening in the summer. Another interview participant, Allison, cited that her district, West Springfield, allows mentors “a one-day, six-hour training that is led. . . by the superintendent.” Additionally, if a mentor has already received this six-hour training once, they are not eligible for future training. Feiman-Nemser posited that “strong induction programs offer mentors more than a few days of initial training. They provide ongoing opportunities for study and problem solving (2003, p.27).” Feiman-Nemser’s ideals regarding mentor training are important because they illustrate the disparity that exists between mentor teachers’ perceived level of competence and adequate training.

The mentor teachers surveyed and interviewed for this study overwhelmingly indicated that more time is the one element that could have the greatest impact on mentorship efficacy. More specifically, there is little to no time set aside during the school day to meet. The lack of meeting time impacts the frequency with which mentors and mentees can observe one another and leaves the pair responsible for finding time to meet, either before or after school, to debrief. Mentor-mentee teacher observations cannot happen before or after school. If the mentorship does not provide sufficient school-day time to accomplish such tasks, they may not occur. Observation, mentees watching mentors teach and vice versa, is a lynchpin of an effective mentorship; without school-day time, observations may become obsolete.
Little to no available time to debrief observations during the school day limits discourse on instructional methods, which can stunt mentee growth. Interview participant Eleanor shed more light on the issue of competing demands. Eleanor commented that finding time to observe a mentee’s classroom is difficult due to different schedules and a lack of coverage for mentor teachers’ classes. She stated that observation “doesn’t always happen as much as I . . . think it should.” Tables 4.15, 4.16, 4.17, and 4.19 all list codes related to a lack of, or a needed increase in, available time.

**Recommendations**

Finding #3 has generated a total of three recommendations for state, district, and secondary school administrations, and school committees. The recommendations advocate a reallocation of school funds to decrease mentor and mentee teachers’ teaching loads or provide full-time mentor teachers, an addition to a current mentor program requirement by Massachusetts DEESE, and a reorganization of school schedules.

The first recommendation is for DESE and school committees to reallocate some state, district, and school funds. Funding could be appropriated to allow for full-time mentor teachers who would be assigned multiple mentees or to lessen the teaching loads of both mentors and mentees. Either option could free up time during the school day that is currently earmarked for teaching. A full-time mentor would have a blank schedule and could organize their day according to the available time of their mentees. If mentor and mentees’ teaching loads were reduced, they might be able to find more common meeting times during the school day. Either way, funds will need to be apportioned to pay for full-time mentors or additional staff to teach the courses that would be taken away from part-time mentors and mentees.
The second recommendation is for the Massachusetts DESE to amend the existing regulation on mentor training, 603 CMR 7.12(2) (b). As it stands, 603 CMR 7.12(2) (b) requires that mentors be trained as part of a district’s Induction and Mentoring Plan (DESE, 2015). DESE also encourages districts to look within when choosing educators to run mentor training. DESE offers a comprehensive list of mentor training elements such as (a) role of a mentor, (b) adult development and learning strategies, (c) analysis of teaching strategies, (d) observation skills, (e) effective use of observation tools for capturing and translating observation data strategies for conferencing and feedback, (f) designing portfolios and preparing for educator evaluation, (g) reflective practice, (h) using student work and feedback to evaluate and inform practice, (i) differentiating instruction to meet the needs of all students, including training on cultural differences, and focus on key initiatives, such as the MA Curriculum Frameworks, Educator Evaluation, Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) and Sheltered English Immersion (DESE, 2015, p. 22).

To strengthen Regulation 603 CMR 7.12(2) (b), I encourage DESE to include a minimum number of hours to be spent on the mentor training elements listed above. To augment the work that mentors do with their mentees and sustain continuous mentor training during the academic year, I advise DESE to require mentors to work together with other mentors in their district/school. Mentor teachers can receive professional development points for the hours spent communicating with other mentors. This could be done in person or perhaps, more easily, by online forum.

The third recommendation is for district and school administrators. I urge district and school leaders to manipulate the existing school schedule to see if a different schedule might lend itself to having time when all departmental faculty could be free with some regularity.
Interview participant John from Gardner High School indicated that ensuring common planning time is critical at Gardner High School. John (2020) stated that finding time to debrief observations or to do other mentorship tasks is easy because “we have a dedicated common planning time each week.” If mentees and mentors were matched by grade level and subject matter, they could have time built into the schedule to debrief observations, plan lessons, plan for future observations, and to ask questions.

**Finding #4: According to Massachusetts mentor teachers, if a mentorship is not effective an “unopen” or “uncooperative” mentee is often the cause.**

Finding #4 was linked to Guiding Research Question #3: What do experienced public high school teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit mentoring? This is where this study challenges current literature. The following discussion explores the theoretical implications associated with the fourth finding and how it contradicts and contributes to extant literature.

The fourth finding details the perception of mentor teachers that if a mentorship is difficult or strained it is most often due to a particular behavior or inactivity on the part of the mentee. Literature belies this perception, making this finding contradictory.

**Theoretical Implications**

There are times when mentorships do not function ideally. There are numerous reasons for the dysfunction, such as a poor match (personality conflicts, different subject matters, lack of physical proximity, distrust); or on the part of the mentee (feeling overwhelmed and/or not wanting to burden a mentor). Moreover, mentors may perceive mentees to be unwilling, unopen, or even difficult. There are various reasons for this perception. Often, resistance to change cannot be avoided and is “an integral part of any change process” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p.
There are also, however, attitudinal and behavioral reasons that may cause mentees to appear unopen. “Mentee resistance is known to occur when a mentee displays behavior and attitude that are contrary to the one that enhances the mentoring process” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p. 1298). The anecdote for an unopen mentee is often relational trust, which is cultivated by the mentor teacher.

As was previously stated, relational trust must be earned. Within mentorships, it is the responsibility of the mentor to help foster such trust. Pitton (2006) posited that trust between mentors and mentees grows when mentors share their own experiences. Gaining trust, however, is a process; it cannot happen overnight. To foster a relationship of mutual understanding, a mentor can “create an atmosphere of trust and openness to understand the mentee and acknowledge that they already do a wonderful job given the many aspects the mentee must juggle” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p. 1304). It is the responsibility of the mentor to increase the mentee’s capacity; in other words, the mentor is “calling for change” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p. 1304). A mentee may interpret that call for change as a call to change themselves, which can lead to resistance. Mentors should remember that “resistance is a normal way of dealing with change” (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020, p. 1304) and that sometimes refusing a task is a result of not having experience with something new and being afraid of failure. There is an innate desire to save face (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020).

The mentor teacher is the person primarily in charge of keeping the lines of communication open, resolving conflicts, and being responsive to the changing needs of the mentee (Danielson, 2002). Despite participants in this study validating that “mentors establish and maintain trusting relationships with their mentees,” those who identified problematic relationships entirely attributed the issues to the mentees. A mentee's capacity to regulate the
stress and ambiguity associated with being a beginning teacher impacts their ability to secure a familiar relationship with their mentor, a safe, trusting relationship conducive to growth (Ragins & Kram, 2007). This is where this study challenges the literature in that the mentors were less likely to identify their own contributions to the problematic relationships.

Implicit in mentoring is that it is a personal and professional relationship. Ragins and Kram (2007) argued that mentoring needs “to support adult development in the context of a personal relationship” (p. 215). To start a mentorship off on the right foot, it is helpful for mentors to understand that there is no one best way to mentor/support a mentee because every relationship is different and will have a unique starting point (Ragins & Kram, 2007). It is also beneficial for mentors to remember that a mentorship often takes on a hierarchical structure due to an inherent experienced/non-experienced teacher dichotomy. Accepting a position as a mentor teacher obligates the mentor to help a beginning teacher learn to teach. Due to the personal nature of the relationship, successful mentors possess a range of relational skills such as “vulnerability, empathetic and emotional competence. . . authenticity, and holistic thinking (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 665). Compassion helps mentors foster personal change and growth on the part of the mentee (Ragins & Kram, 2007). High-quality mentors also know how to engender trust, a necessary component of a successful mentorship.

Without relational trust, mentees may not feel comfortable sharing their true thoughts about teaching, lesson ideas, or being observed by their mentor. Without relational trust, a mentee may perceive that they are being judged or evaluated, increasing anxiety. When mentees are feeling overwhelmed and anxious, they may be “somewhat reluctant to receive guidance that pushes them beyond their zone of proximal development or what they can manage during this early state of a teaching career” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005, p. 859). There are, however,
mentees who think they know as much as they need to know, as well as beginning teachers who are not sufficiently dedicated to teaching (Ganser, 1994).

**Practical Implications**

Most of the online-survey takers and the interview participants disclosed that if a mentorship is ineffective, an “unopen” or “uncooperative” mentee is often the cause. This belief belies scholarship on the subject, some of which was presented in the preceding section on theoretical implications. It appears that mentors may not comprehend that it is mainly their responsibility to keep a mentorship running smoothly and efficaciously. When a mentorship encounters difficulties, the mentors consulted for this study blamed mentees. The mentors also failed to note any mentor accountability.

To substantiate the mentor’s perception of mentee culpability, I selected one online-survey statement, one online-survey question, and one follow-up interview question that pertains to the overall health and efficacy of a mentorship. The online-survey statement is detailed in Table 4.12, which is entitled “Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Social-emotional Supports and Practices.” The statement is: mentors establish and maintain trusting relationships with their mentees. Thirty-one participants rated this statement, with 17 respondents *strongly agreeing* with the statement and 14 completers *agreeing*. With no disagreement, an astounding 100% of participants agreed with this statement. The level of concurrence with this statement is significant because it demonstrates that all 31 survey takers perceive themselves as mentors, trustworthy, and capable of establishing and maintaining trust. If all mentors are trustworthy and establish and maintain relational trust, then it would follow that mentorships experience minimal conflict since trust is one of the main components of an efficacious mentorship.
The responses to open-ended online-survey question #36 are presented in Table 4.16, “Participant Descriptions of Least Satisfying Experiences.” Question #36 asked online-survey participants to describe at least one mentorship experience that was least satisfying. Table 4.16 displays the responses of ten of the 26 mentor teachers who responded to the question. The reason for only presenting ten responses was two-fold. The first reason was because ten of the responses were easily disaggregated. Secondly, the other responses were inconsequential and did not add pertinent information to this issue.

Most mentors perceived opposition to participate in a formal mentorship program as a false sense of confidence on the part of the mentee, even though literature dictates that this is not the main reason for noncompliance. Catherine, one of the interviewed-mentor teachers, disclosed that the most difficult facet of a mentor-mentee relationship is “trying to reach a teacher who doesn’t want to participate” in a formal mentorship program. That statement was substantiated by nine other online survey completers. One survey-taker described a situation in which their mentee told them that “he already knew he was an effective teacher, so he wasn’t going to listen to anything.” Mentee noncompliance can cause a breakdown in the mentorship, and often the relationship cannot recover. Mentor teachers who participated in this study did not discuss possible mentor actions or discourse that may have altered the relationship’s trajectory.

The data in Table 4.26 was culled from a follow-up interview question that asked, “With what kind of mentee do you prefer to work?” Table 4.26 presents data that delineate some characteristics of mentees with whom the six interviewed mentors would prefer to work. The data were disaggregated into behavioral, professional context, and inconsequential categories. The category that elicited the most responses was behavioral traits which produced three codes. Mentors would like to work with beginning teachers who are willing, open-minded, and flexible.
From the descriptions provided by the interviewees, all three of these codes represent the same kind of mentee: someone who is willing to work with a mentor teacher cooperatively, try new instructional and pedagogical strategies, and do the work required of the mentorship.

Exemplifying statements from three interviewees validate this finding. Interviewee Catherine disclosed that some of her mentees have “come in with a lot of confidence,” which leaves the mentee more closed-off to working with a mentor. Interview respondent Eleanor explained that her ideal mentee is “open to feedback and wants the help.” Conversely, she described a situation that was less than ideal:

I had a couple of years where I was the only one showing up for mentor [mentee] meetings. . . my mentees weren’t showing up. . . and then they were upset at you at the end of the year when they were let go.

Interviewee Lauren also expressed a particularly frustrating and disappointing relationship with a former mentee:

I had one [mentee] teacher who. . . didn’t want to do the [mentorship] program and . . . it was very obvious to all parties involved. . . by his facial expressions and when. . . at meetings he sat on his phone the whole time. . . there were no conversations about anything; it was all logistics.

Mentor teachers prefer to work with mentees who are open to the process of mentoring. Mentors also believe that an ineffective mentorship can be attributed to mentee misconduct. Mentors failed to comprehend that an unopen mentee may not be trying to sabotage the relationship. There are other reasons why a mentee may appear unwilling to participate in a mentorship, which may also be an opportunity for training. A common reason for the appearance of an unwilling mentee a mentee is the concept of change. It is the responsibility of mentors to
increase a mentee’s capacity, which requires trying new pedagogies. Some mentees perceive suggested changes as a sign that what they know how to do is insufficient. The feeling of inadequacy can manifest in the mentee’s thinking that they are not good enough and are destined to fail. Stagnation is often a result of that rationale.

**Recommendations**

Finding #4 has propagated four recommendations for principals, mentor leaders, mentors, and mentees. All four recommendations could help create a more positive and effective relationship between mentors and mentees.

The first recommendation is for mentor leaders, mentors, and mentees. I propose the development of a short “Weekly Mentee Check-in Form.” It is the responsibility of mentor leaders and possibly mentor teachers to develop the check-in form (see Appendix # G). The mentee would fill out the check-in form every Friday and turn it into their mentor before the end of the school day. The mentor teacher would review the form, taking notes of anything substantial or in need of improvement. The mentor teacher reacts to the mentee check-in form by formulating questions based on the mentee’s answers to be discussed at their next meeting. I envision this check-in form to initiate truthful dialogue and keep the lines of communication open.

The second recommendation is for principals and mentor leaders. Conflict can arise when mentees do not attend required mentor-mentee meetings. When there is not anyone responsible for mentee attendance, it often falls on the shoulders of the mentors. The mentors have two choices: they can either discuss the lack of attendance with their mentee or not. Both options can lead to resentment and conflict in the mentorship. Having the mentors oversee mentee attendance puts them in an authoritative, judging, and evaluative position. Scholarship has indicated that
mentorships tend to become ineffectual when mentor teachers are asked to do evaluation tasks. I, therefore, suggest that principals and mentor leaders be responsible for mentee attendance. If a mentee does not attend a required meeting, it is the responsibility of the principal or mentor leader to follow-up with the mentee regarding the missed meeting.

The third recommendation is for mentor teachers. The importance of relational trust in mentorships has already been discussed. Cultivating a relationship and environment of trust is initially the role of the mentor. One approach to growing trust is for mentor teachers to share their own experiences with their mentees. When mentors can share anecdotes from their early years of teaching, it demonstrates empathy. It is important for mentors to share more recent experiences of a lesson that did not go well or as planned and what the mentor would do to improve the lesson. Finally, sharing a small amount of personal information goes a long way. By offering personal information, the mentor and mentee may discover commonalities that can increase relational trust.

My last recommendation is for mentors and mentees. If possible, I advocate that the mentor teacher and their mentee eat lunch together once a week. They can use this time to converse about how the mentee is progressing and any teaching or personal issues. Eating lunch together, even if it is just once a week, increases the chances of the mentor and mentee discovering common likes, dislikes, and interests that can increase relational trust.

Finding #5: Many mentor programs in Massachusetts do not explicitly develop, state, or utilize goals.

Finding #5 was linked to Guiding Research Question #3: What do experienced public high school teachers identify as factors and conditions that contribute to and inhibit mentoring? The next subsection is a discussion of the theoretical implications regarding Finding #5.
The fifth finding examines the importance of employing goals for mentor programs, mentors, and mentees. Most study survey completers reported that goals are a component of their schools’ mentor program. Antithetically, interviewees, had difficulty recalling goals associated with their mentoring programs. I assert that a possibility for unknown goals is a lack of explicitly stated objectives. Literature also posited that a high-quality mentoring program would possess goals for the program, mentor teachers, and mentee teachers. The data from this study both confirms and contradicts the extant literature on goal setting.

**Theoretical Implications**

Goal setting is an important practice in personal and professional realms of life. Goals are implemented as self-evaluation tools or as criteria “to assess, monitor, and guide cognition” (Pintrich, 2000, p. 457). Many organizations employ mentor programs to support professional and social-emotional growth (Kram, 1985). Within education, mentor programs serve as systems of support intended to increase career and personal competencies. Professional competencies are anything associated with teaching and pedagogy. Personal capacity refers to social-emotional supports such as “building confidence, encouraging self-esteem, listening, and enhancing self-reliance” (Richter et al., 2013, p. 167). Huling-Austin (1988) identified five commonly accepted goals of teacher induction/mentoring programs (a) to improve teaching performance, (b) to increase the retention of promising beginning teachers, (c) to promote the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers, (d) to transmit the culture of the system to beginning teachers, and (e) to satisfy mandated requirements related to induction and certification. (pp. 4-5)
Other conceivable outcomes are increasing student growth and providing professional development and leadership opportunities to experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Huling & Resta, 2001).

According to the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring Programs*, the goal of mentoring in Massachusetts “is to provide teachers with a systematic structure of support that helps them to be efficacious, become familiar with their school and district, refine their practice, and to better understand their professional responsibilities” (DESE, 2015, p. 12).

Once mentor program goals have been identified, principals and mentor leaders should identify goals for mentor teachers that will assist them in becoming as efficacious as possible. Scholars have disagreed about a mentor teacher's leading roles and responsibilities (Haggard, et al., 201; Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010). This leads to inconsistencies in support and uneven mentee experiences. In developing mentor goals, the school context, mission statement, improvement plan, and mentor program outcomes should guide the determination of the goals.

Within the business world, the role of the mentor has been to support the personal and professional development of the protégé (Higgins & Kram, 2001). There has been disagreement regarding the role of the mentor in the field of education. The one thing that has been agreed upon is that a mentor’s primary responsibility relates to a "developmental relationship that is embedded within a career context" (Drago-Severson, 2009, p. 213). The roles and responsibilities of the mentor must be clarified to avoid confusion and to create perhaps a flexible conceptual framework for mentoring in education. The broadest mentor goals include providing “emotional support, occupational socialization, and pedagogical guidance” (Schwille, 2008, p. 139). Other micro-goals can be added when the mentor is provided with the developmental stage and specific needs of the individual mentee.
There is a dearth of information regarding goal setting for teachers (Camp, 2017). The one study I could locate is Camp’s (2017) two-year study of twelve graduate teaching assistants. Over the course of the two years, Camp (2017) interviewed and observed the graduate teaching assistants regularly. The study uncovered four goal areas that appeared significantly more than others. The study revealed that beginning teachers want to employ goals related to (1) organization: being more prepared for class, (2) use of class time: eliminating “busy work,” creating worthwhile class activities, (3) engagement: increasing student interest and investment in the material/course, (4) class discussion: facilitating more productive, active conversations. (p. 63)

Although one cannot strictly utilize the goals of Camp’s (2017) study for the objectives of secondary school beginning teacher mentoring programs, they may provide a useful framework. In this study, only one mentor teacher was able to identify the goals or outcomes associated with their mentoring program, which highlights an important gap between theory and practice.

Organization, use of class time, and student engagement are all goals that beginning teachers should aspire to. Other useful goals for beginning teachers include becoming acclimated to the school and its professional culture, increasing curricular and instructional competence, and learning how to cope with social-emotional difficulties.

Practical Implications

The data collected regarding mentor program goals are conflicting. Survey respondents overwhelmingly reported that there are goals associated with their mentoring programs. The data procured from interviewees revealed only two program goals that were reported by the same interviewees.
The data from the online survey are presented in Table 4.24 or “Response Frequencies and Likert Scale Weighted Averages for Mentorship Goals.” Thirty online-survey participants rated the first statement, “there are clear goals/outcomes associated with the mentor program at the school where I teach.” Twenty-three survey takers either strongly agreed or agreed with that comment. Secondly, participants were asked to rate the statement, “mentor teachers are aware of the program goals/outcomes.” Twenty-five out of thirty survey completers strongly agreed or agreed. The last statement in Table 4.24 asked mentors to assess the remark, “mentees are aware of the program goals/outcomes.” Twenty-four out of 29 survey takers either strongly agreed or agreed with the last statement.

Interviewees were asked to respond to the question, “what are the goals/outcomes associated with your mentorship?” Table 4.27 or “Participant Descriptions of Goals/Outcomes” displays interview data. The data were disaggregated into three categories: goals and/or outcomes associated with (a) mentees, (b) mentors, and (c) mentor programs. Three mentor program goals were disclosed (a) none, (b) successful teacher, and (c) job retention. The same interviewee, John, mentioned “successful teacher” and “job retention.” None of the remaining five mentors could recall goals or outcomes associated with the mentor programs in the schools where they teach.

**Recommendations**

There are five recommendations cultivated from Finding #5. The five recommendations assist schools in developing thoughtful and evidence-based mentoring programs. The recommendations also allow for regular check-ins with program and mentee goals.

The first recommendation is for school principals. I advise principals to implement a mentoring program committee. The committee would be headed by the principal and include
veteran and mid-career teachers as well as possibly departmental heads and members of the special education department. The committee is responsible for the creation of a program vision statement and one or two overarching program goals. The committee would also oversee the development of all mentoring program components, mentor selection, and matching mentors with mentees.

The second recommendation is for school principals and mentoring program committee members and involves the creation of a needs assessment form to be administered to all beginning teachers. The needs assessment form is to be implemented before the beginning of the academic year, ideally at beginning teacher orientation. The form is a survey composed of statements related to pedagogy as well as teaching requirements. Beginning teachers rate each statement with their level of proficiency: little to none, some, moderate, or high. The items which are rated with little to no proficiency will form the basis of the beginning teacher goal and action plan.

The third recommendation is for principals and the mentoring plan committee and advises developing and implementing a beginning teacher goal and action plan. The mentee lists two SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for the upcoming academic year, one professional and one social-emotional. In addition to indicating two SMART goals, the beginning teacher will devise an action plan to serve as a roadmap to track goal progression and achievement. Once a goal has been achieved, the mentee records a new goal with the assistance of their mentor. This should be an iterative process.

The fourth recommendation is for the generation of a list of monthly teaching and school-related topics to be addressed in all group mentor-mentee and regularly scheduled meetings between the mentor and mentee. When possible, the calendar of topics should coincide with the
timing of significant school occurrences such as progress reports, mid-term and final exams, and the disbursement of IEPs and 504 programs at the beginning of the academic year. Sample topics include teacher and student schedules, parental communication, district policies and procedures, and teacher evaluations.

The fifth recommendation is for school principals and the mentoring committee and encourages the formation and implementation of quarterly formative and yearly summative evaluations of the mentoring program. Quarterly formative assessments promote minor changes in the mentoring program and are meant to encourage a continuous cycle of improvement. Yearly summative evaluations support major program changes. The theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for each of the six findings and study limitations and delimitations have led to suggestions for future research.

**Areas for Future Research**

The theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for the five findings of this study have led to future research proposals based on the study's limitations and delimitations. A delineation of five areas for future research are (1) use a larger sample size, (2) conduct the study with beginning teachers, (3) examine mentor training, (4) explore other research methods, and (5) re-do the study during a time of non-school closure.

1. **Use a larger sample size.**

   This study yielded 38 online survey participants and six follow-up interviewees. Originally, a total of eight mentor teachers agreed to be interviewed, and however, due to the closure of Massachusetts schools on March 13, 2020, from the Coronavirus pandemic, I lost contact with two prospective interviewees. Therefore, my final sample size was six. Future studies conducted during a typical academic year may increase the sample size. Additionally, the
study was delimited to Massachusetts secondary schools. Future research could examine the mentoring programs in primary schools, schools in other New England states, all New England states, or even the nation. A larger sample size from distinct regions of the country may yield more generalizable data, including means.

2. Conduct study with beginning teachers (mentees).

How would the results of this study change if the focus were to shift to mentees’ perspectives of mentoring programs? Future studies that center on the perspectives of beginning teachers could uncover new information about mentees’ needs, characteristics of high-quality mentors and mentoring programs, mentor training needs, and mentee supports. Beginning teachers may also possess different perspectives on the role school principals, and mentor leaders play/should play in the mentoring process. What do beginning teachers regard as the most important supports to help them grow personally and professionally? Surveying and interviewing beginning teachers could answer that question.

3. Examine mentor training.

Online survey data revealed that mentor teachers believe they are trained adequately to serve as mentors. Contradicting this information are the results from follow-up interviews. Interviewees reported that training consisted of one mentor teacher orientation/training session. Scholarship has reported that mentor training should be an iterative process occurring continuously over the course of the academic year, every year (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). How would the quality of mentoring programs change if mentor teachers received continuous training? What would this training be composed of? Adult learning and development is one area that necessitates more training. Most mentors are well-versed in pedagogy but possess little knowledge about teaching adults. This study's literature review outlined that educating children
and adults are two different processes that require different methodologies. Increasing mentor teachers’ andragogical knowledge and skills may aid mentoring programs in more accurately supporting beginning teachers and expanding their growth.

4. Explore other research methods.

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, which entailed two data collection and analysis phases. The first phase involved collecting and analyzing quantitative data, while the second phase was qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data collected and analyzed during the quantitative phase produced a smaller sample population to interview during the qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Exploring other qualitative research methods could garner different insights into how to reconceptualize best mentoring programs to support beginning teachers more effectively. A longitudinal case study would allow for the in-depth study of mentors over time. Instead of relying on mentor descriptions of their practices, the researcher could observe both mentors and beginning teachers while they teach and during mentorship meetings. The researcher would have first-hand accounts to draw on, which may change the outcome of this survey.

5. Re-do this study during a time of non-school closure.

I assert that collecting data while schools were closed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020 limited the number of online survey and interview participants. Teachers were working from home, trying to learn to teach in new ways. Teachers also may not have been accessing email as often as they would have if they had been teaching at school. Additionally, learning new teaching methodologies and creating remote lessons increased the number of time teachers spent in their professional lives, limiting what they could do in other arenas.
Final Reflections

As a beginning eighth grade teacher, I remember all too well the lack of support I received from my mentor teacher. The kindness, collegiality, and goodwill of other teachers helped guide me through my first years of teaching. I taught eighth grade for four years but did not experience the level of professional fulfillment I was yearning for. For me, what was missing was a chance to see students grow over the course of consecutive years. I decided that working at a high school would better serve my professional aspirations. I started working at Newburyport High School in 2002 and have been there ever since. It has been my primary training ground, professional community, and the place I have grown into a more knowledgeable teacher.

For my first seven or eight years at Newburyport, I worked on learning how to make positive, personal connections with the students, becoming familiar with a curriculum that changed almost yearly, and learning to teach every Spanish class from I to IV. Once the World Language Department finalized a curriculum, I was able to shift my focus to teacher leadership opportunities. My first foray into teacher leadership was serving as a mentor teacher to a mid-career teacher. I expected to mentor a beginning teacher, but that was not my mentee. I was introduced to a mentee with little to no training and wished good luck. The experience was a disaster. She did not want my support, help, or opinions. She was a solitary teacher who closed her door and never became a professional community member. I tried to disseminate information to this mentee regarding procedural issues and to help her assimilate into the school culture. Unfortunately, she made it clear that she did not want my assistance. At the end of her first year, she left the school.

There was a joke among the Newburyport High School faculty and staff that the World Language Department was a revolving door for its faculty; the department could not keep a
teacher for longer than a couple of years. Every time the school hired a new Spanish teacher, I served as an informal mentor. Some of the tasks I engaged in as an informal mentor were to provide support with procedural practices, help the new teacher navigate the school culture, and collaborate on curriculum and instruction. During my time as an informal mentor, I learned varied tenets of effective teaching. Working with other teachers allowed me the reflective space to review my practice and grow into a better teacher. If afforded the time, mentors can learn a plethora of information about their teaching practice by working with a mentee. Ideally, it is a reciprocal relationship. Through reflection, I formed my teaching philosophy: getting to know one’s students by making personal connections helps inspire students to work to their potential. This philosophy has served me well, and I still practice it today.

Around the year 2014, I contemplated going back to school to earn a doctorate in educational leadership. I had been teaching for almost fifteen years and was looking for different ways to grow professionally. I wanted to learn more about educational leadership in hopes of one day serving as a curriculum director or possibly parlaying my degree and experience into a higher education professorship.

The end of the dissertation process is bittersweet. The past five years have been the most personally and professionally satisfying of my life. My self-confidence has grown because of this journey; I know that I can persevere in any circumstance. This process has also confirmed for me that my professional passion resides in academia. Where do I go from here?

I am dedicated to improving the mentoring system in Massachusetts and possibly on a larger scale. I would be honored to share my work with DESE and other Massachusetts high schools. I also envision myself presenting my work in other states, as well.
My own experience, the literature review, and the online survey and interview data informed the kind of mentor program and mentorship structure that I believe lends itself to enhancing the capacity of both mentors and mentees. I am strongly committed to advancing not only a dyadic form of mentoring but also networks of support. Through this study, I learned that being mentored by one person can be a fulfilling and effective relationship; however, there are also times when it does not function well. Networks of support minimize the possibility of failure or a breakdown in the dyadic relationship. A network of support allows a beginning teacher to interact with teachers of other disciplines, which helps the enculturation process, provides more opportunities to observe and be observed, and expands a beginning teacher’s network of support. These networks of support can also serve as powerful mechanisms of professional development for experienced teachers.

Another source of teacher growth is taking on teacher leadership roles. Since embarking on my doctorate degree in 2017, I have taken on more teacher leadership roles. In addition to mentoring, I serve as a member of our faculty council and will be a member, perhaps the co-chair, of our next re-accreditation team. Over the next couple of years, I envision growing my leadership skills, parlaying my dissertation into a series of articles, presenting at conferences, and connecting with Massachusetts mentoring agencies and DESE.

This study aspired to examine how a reconceptualization of mentoring could positively impact Massachusetts high school mentor programs. The literature presented older conceptualizations of mentoring programs, but there is a dearth of more recent information on the topic. Key study findings led to specific, actionable recommendations. Some of the resulting recommendations include: (a) the integration of a teacher self-care course into teacher preparatory programs. (b) having schools develop a yearly calendar of monthly meeting topics,
(c) formation of a beginning teacher network, (d) providing counseling services to all teachers, but especially beginning teachers, (e) continuous mentor training throughout each academic year with a focus on andragogy, (f) focus on the enculturation process and how to improve school culture, (g) dedicated, regular release time for mentors and mentees, (h) development of key mentorship documents such as a needs assessment form and a beginning teacher goal and action plan.

In summary, I recommend that district leaders and high school principals of Massachusetts’ schools reconsider their existing mentor programs' goals, structure, and functions. It is paramount that mentor teachers receive adequate training and that it is continuous throughout the year. Mentees should stay open to the mentoring process by realizing that teaching is a developmental skill and that it takes years of practice to become proficient. Another consideration is the environment in which mentoring occurs. It is the mentor's responsibility to establish an atmosphere of trust and nonjudgment, essential components of any mentorship. Beginning teachers will not feel comfortable pushing themselves and making mistakes, both of which increase a teacher’s capacity unless a foundation of trust has been built. Investing in the development and growth of beginning teachers is beneficial to the entire school community. It staves teacher attrition, saves districts money, increases beginning and mentor teachers’ capacity, and ultimately leads to improved learning for students.
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RECONCEPTUALIZING MA MENTORING PROGRAMS


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Appendix A

Letter of Introduction

Dear Colleague,

I am a graduate student at Lesley University working on my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. I am writing to ask for your assistance with a study that could have a great impact in the field of Education.

I am conducting a research project titled “Reconceptualizing Massachusetts’ Public High School Mentoring Programs.” This research study will explore the nuanced relationship between mentor and beginning high school teachers. This study will examine the attitudes, strengths, and limitations of such mentorships to identify implications for training, research, and practice.

I have sent you this email and the attached “Letter of Informed Consent for Survey Participation” in hopes that you will forward the email and attachment to the teachers that work in your high school to invite them to participate in my research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions via phone at 781-504-5878 or via email at maddario@lesley.edu. In addition, you may contact my faculty advisor, John Ciesluk at jciesluk@lesley.edu. There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu.

Thank you for your support,

Michelle Addario
Ph.D. Candidate, Lesley University
Appendix B
Letter of Informed Consent for Survey Participation

Dear Colleague,

I am a graduate student at Lesley University working on my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. I am writing to ask for your assistance with a study that could have a great impact in the field of Education.

As a current or former Massachusetts high school mentor teacher, you are invited to participate in a research project titled “Reconceptualizing Massachusetts’ Public High School Mentoring Programs.” This research study will explore the nuanced relationship between mentor and beginning high school teachers. This study will examine the attitudes, strengths, and limitations of such mentorships to identify implications for training, research, and practice. Your participation will entail taking an online survey consisting of 53 statements to rate, which should take no longer than 20 minutes.

Confidentiality is a priority to me, and participation is strictly anonymous. You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time by quitting the survey. No identifying details will be collected by the researchers.

If you would like a summary of the study findings when completed, please include your email address at the end of the survey. All information will be kept securely, and your responses will not be linked to your email address. At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview with me to hear more about your role in expanding your school’s multicultural understanding. You are given options in terms of format.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions via phone at 781-504-5878 or via email at maddario@lesley.edu. In addition, you may contact my faculty advisor, John Ciesluk at jciesluk@lesley.edu. There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu.

Survey link: https://lesley.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2iCtRNz6FiZ0kMl

Thank you for your support,

Michelle Addario
Ph.D. Candidate, Lesley University
Appendix C

Letter of Informed Consent for Interview Participation

Dear Colleague,

You are about to participate in an interview that is based on the questions you answered previously in an online survey. On the survey, you stated that you would be willing to participate in an interview and communicated your preference of interview format (video-conferencing, in-person or phone).

Participating is your choice and you may stop participating in this study at any time and can choose not to answer any question that you are not comfortable answering. Your answers will be recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Confidentiality is a priority to me, and I will make every effort to keep your participation anonymous. Your identity will be given a random participant identification number, so no reader could identify you. All information will be kept securely. After data has been collected and analyzed, if you would like, findings will be communicated with you.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions via phone at 781-504-5878 or via email at maddario@lesley.edu. In addition, you may contact my faculty advisor, John Ciesluk at jciesluk@lesley.edu. There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

I hereby agree to participate in an interview and choose to stop and/or not respond to any question at any time.

____________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature                                                  Date

Thank you for your support,

Michelle Addario
Ph.D. Candidate, Lesley University
Appendix D

Participant Online Survey

Dear Colleague,

Your participation is important to better understand how public Massachusetts high school mentoring programs can be reenvisioned to better support beginning teachers. This survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please take your time in answering the questions. If you want/need to leave the survey and come back later, your responses will save for one week. You can withdraw at any point. By continuing, you are giving your informed consent to participate. Your identity will only be matched to your responses if you state they you would like to be interviewed, but it will be kept confidential and not included in the written study.

Thank you for your time!

Michelle Addario
Ph.D. Candidate, Lesley University
Mentor Understandings

Please indicate if you: strongly agree; agree; disagree; or strongly disagree with the following statements.

1. Mentors are well-respected by other teachers.
2. Mentors have the skills needed to work one-on-one with a beginning teacher.
3. Mentors provide the opportunity for mentees to problem-solve.
4. Mentors increase the instructional efficacy of mentees.
5. Mentoring is a confidential relationship.
6. Mentoring is a non-evaluative relationship.
7. Mentoring is a supportive relationship.
8. Mentoring increases student engagement.
9. Mentoring increases student growth.
10. Mentoring advances school reform.
11. Mentoring is a form of professional development.
12. Mentors address the specific needs of their mentees.
13. Mentoring is aligned to state standards.
14. Mentoring is aligned to school/district curricula.
15. Mentoring is aligned to school/district assessments.
16. Mentoring provides opportunities to celebrate growth.
17. In the space below, describe in detail one or two satisfying experiences in which you felt most effective as a mentor.
Mentor Supports/Mentor Practices

Please indicate if you: strongly agree; agree; disagree; or strongly disagree with the following statements.

1. Mentors provide instructional support.
2. Mentors provide social-emotional support.
3. Mentors provide content area support.
4. Mentees observe their mentors teaching.
5. Mentors observe their mentees teaching.
6. Mentors and mentees plan lessons together.
7. Mentors and mentees co-teach lessons.
8. Mentors and mentees debrief mentee-taught lessons together.
9. Mentors give mentees feedback on the quality of his or her teaching.
10. Mentors give mentees advice on managing stress.
11. Mentors validate mentee’s feelings and thoughts.
12. Mentors teach mentees how to be self-reflective learners.
14. Mentoring promotes a sense of caring.
15. Mentoring increases student learning (achievement).
17. Mentors establish and maintain trusting relationships with their mentees.
18. Mentors enculturate mentees to school procedures.
19. In the space provided, please describe your perceptions of your effectiveness as a mentor teacher.
20. In the space provided, please describe in detail one or two least satisfying experiences in which you did not feel as effective as a mentor as you would have liked to have been.
Mentor Beliefs

Please indicate if you: strongly agree; agree; disagree; or strongly disagree with the following statements.

1. The school where I teach provides mentoring resources.
2. Mentorships are on-going, for at least one year.
3. Mentor training is on-going, for at least one year.
4. Self-reflection is a part of my teaching practice.
5. Self-reflection is a part of my mentoring practice.
6. My mentee and I have enough meeting time to accomplish all mentoring tasks.
7. My mentee and I share similar pedagogical beliefs.
8. My mentee and I have a similar work ethic.
9. My mentee and I teach the same content area.
10. My mentee is open to the mentoring process and my advice.
11. I feel comfortable and competent in my role as a mentor.
12. There are clear goals/outcomes associated with my mentor program.
13. Mentor are aware of program goals/outcomes.
14. Beginning teachers (mentees) are aware of program goals/outcomes.
15. In the space below, please describe the changes that should be made so that you may become more effective as a mentor.
16. Would you be willing to participate in an in-depth interview to last approximately 30 minutes? YES_____ NO_____ 
17. If so, please indicate your preferred format:
   a. _____in-person, _____video-conference, _____ phone, _____ in writing
18. If interested in being interviewed, please provide your name, email address and phone number
Appendix E

Participant Interview Protocol

Interviewer begins by giving the letter of informed consent (Appendix C) to the interviewee and shares the measures taken to reduce bias and ensure confidentiality. Verbally reminds participants that he or she can choose to not respond to any question or stop participating in the interview at any time and that their responses are recorded for analysis purposes.

Interviewer begins: Thank you for taking the time to share more about your role as a high school mentor teacher. I have divided your questions into three categories, based on what the literature describes as effective practices for mentoring. I will summarize your responses for the corresponding survey questions for each section before asking you question to elaborate on your experiences and perspective.

Mentor Understandings

We will first discuss your expansion of your own mentorship understandings. You supplied the following information about what you believe/do not believe mentoring entails (researcher summarizes survey responses supplied).

1. What do you and your mentee do during the time that is set aside for mentoring?

2. What are the most important skills mentors need to possess?
   a. Do you utilize these skills in your own practice as a mentor?

3. How can mentor teachers best help/assist mentees?

4. Do you provide developmentally appropriate challenges for your mentee?
   a. If so, what?

Mentor Supports/Mentor Practices

Now, we will discuss what you believe are effective mentoring practices. On the survey, you gave the following responses to the following factors of effective mentoring practices (researcher summarizes survey response supplied).
1. Generally speaking, how do beginning teachers become enculturated?

2. What is the most important leadership lesson you’ve learned and how has it proven invaluable?

3. What do you see as your strengths?

4. What do you see as your weaknesses?

5. What are the most prominent/pressing mentee needs?

6. What do you and your mentee do during the time that is set aside for mentoring?

7. What kinds of mentoring resources does the school provide?

8. How are mentors and mentees matched at the school where you teach?

9. Describe what you do to self-reflect on your role as a mentor teacher.

**Mentor Beliefs**

Our final discussion area is about what kinds of beliefs you hold regarding the practice of mentoring. On the survey, you gave the following responses to questions about this area (researcher summarizes survey responses that the interviewee supplied).

1. What kind of mentee do you prefer to work with?

2. What things can a mentee learn from a mentorship?

3. What things can a mentor learn from a mentorship?

4. How does mentoring make you feel personally and professionally?

5. If you are currently serving as a mentor teacher, what are the goals/outcomes associated with your mentorship?

6. How are mentors and mentees matched at the school where you teach?
Appendix F

Research Identity Memo

“The grain of truth in the traditional view is that your personal (and often unexamined) motives as researcher have important consequences for the validity of your conclusions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 26).

Throughout the course of my life, I have never felt that I quite “fit” in. I did not fit into the amorphous shape I was supposed to reside in within my nuclear family. With friends, I shifted form so that I would appear to “fit” in. I have never really known who I am. If I had to describe myself to someone, what would I say? I am a person of integrity, someone who cares and feels deeply, who lives in a world of glasses half-empty, who is passionate, curious, kind, unwell, misunderstood, forthright, diligent, and unsure. I could go on describing myself, but the most attributive words have already found their rightful place on the page. Ranking my self-descriptors, misunderstood, diligent, passionate, and unsure seem to resonate slightly more than the others. Misunderstood, diligent, passionate, and unsure categorize most of my life’s experiences. Misunderstood and unsure typify the feeling of never quite fitting in with the crowd. Diligent and passionate describe me at my best, usually taking over my persona when I am in a classroom or partaking in some form of academia. The one place I have always felt at home is within the confines of a classroom. Perhaps my life’s trajectory was set in motion many years ago when I first entered a classroom at the mere age of four.

I remember knowing that my father was a high school Spanish teacher, but not really understanding what that meant. He left our house early every morning, returned briefly in the
afternoon and left again shortly, off to his second job. Early one winter morning, it was my turn to accompany my father to work as my mother was home resting with my recently born sister.

I loved school the very first time I entered the building. That day I received lots of attention from the other teachers, secretaries, and the students. Perhaps the optimism I felt on that first day set my life’s path. Perhaps it was coincidental. Whatever the reason, I have always felt most comfortable in the world of academics. I am inquisitive by nature, and that always boded well for me in the classroom. My thirst for knowledge has rarely been quenched and I feel the happiest and most alive when in a classroom or working towards an academic goal.

As an elementary and secondary student, I thrived. I always worked diligently which was easily recognized by my teachers, with whom I consistently formed close relationships. Even though school was where I thrived, not everything came easy to me. Math falls into that category. The first time that math proved difficult for me was in the fifth grade. After struggling and not understanding the concepts, my parents hired a tutor; he quickly made sure that I got back on track. In high school math proved challenging, but I was relentless with the subject and always did well. That was my passion and diligence at its best.

I quickly ascertained that no two teachers are the same. Some were very enthusiastic, others more caring, some were stern, and others witty. Thankfully, most were a combination of those attributes although most teachers could be characterized as possessing one quality more than the others. I learned how to “read” my teachers. Each had a different way of viewing and perceiving the world which caused them to want their students to produce work according to their worldview. I played school as if it were a game. Most likely, due to my ability to change form to fit in, I ascertained how my teachers wanted their students to present their work, and that was what I did. In doing so, I found success in every classroom.
Relatively early into my schooling I also became cognizant of the fact that some teachers are better than others at presenting new information to their students and choosing activities to reinforce the newly-acquired knowledge. Why were some better than others? I chalked it up to differences in personalities and didn’t give it another thought until I entered a classroom as the teacher.

I earned my Master of Education at the age of 28 and started teaching 8th grade Spanish the following August. Eighth graders were highly inquisitive, energetic, talkative, and extremely social. It was difficult for me to engage all 25 at once to present a lesson or get them started on an activity. My intuition, not my teaching degree, told me that I needed to engage with the students one-on-one; get to know them as people, not just as students. Once I started showing genuine interest in who my students were, the academic portion of class fell into place. Twenty-two years later, I still use the same strategy, and always establish personal relationships with my students.

I hold the assumption that some people innately possess the qualities necessary to be an effective and inspirational teacher, and others do not. My bias tells me that no matter how hard some people work nor the level of academics they achieve, they may never be a high-quality teacher. This is a bias I must learn to temper during my research study. I also feel, however, that every beginning teacher deserves to be supported during their first few fledgling years. I was not supported by a formal mentor, and I am certain the lack of assistance slowed down the rate at which I improved as a teacher.

Another assumption I bring to this study is that all mentors are not created equal. Just because someone knows how to teach young people does not mean they know how to teach adults. Teaching young people and teaching adults are very different processes, and if a mentor
teacher is unaware of this, he or she will not be able to support his or her mentee to the best of their ability.

My third assumption is that teaching is not a 7 a.m. to 2:20 p.m. job. To be a quality teacher one must work beyond the hours they are at school. There is not enough time in the teaching day to plan effective and engaging lessons, correct assignments, and tend to administrative requests. Two days ago, I overheard a special education teacher telling another teacher how much more difficult teaching special education is than regular education. I do not know if that statement is true or not because I have never been a special education teacher, but his rationale made me see red. The special education teacher explained that teaching regular education is so much easier because once you create a lesson, you can use it over and over, for the rest of your teaching career. What? Did I hear that correctly? I wish that particular special education teacher would do my job for just a few weeks He would quickly learn that any high-quality teacher does not simply recycle assignments from year to year.

My fourth assumption is that a mentor teacher needs to feel compelled to help new teachers and desire to work to the best of their ability. Most mentor teachers do not teach a reduced class load while serving as a mentor. This tells me that a mentor teacher essentially does two jobs within the time allotted to do one job. I believe this is why some mentors do not put their all into mentoring. To do both jobs effectively means that a mentor teacher would have to work around the clock.

I have always recognized my assumptions and biases regarding teaching and the job of a mentor but never committed them to paper until now. Seeing them in black and white is going to give me a resource to utilize during the data collection and analysis phase of my study as well as during the writing of chapters 4 and 5. I am confident that I will be able to focus on the lived
experiences of the study participants and not let my biases interfere in a negative way after completing this exercise.
Appendix G

Sample Weekly Check-in Form

Weekly Check-in Form

Name of mentee____________________________________         Date ________________  
Name of mentor_____________________________________

1. How are you feeling? Place a checkmark next to the most appropriate response.
   o Confident
   o somewhat confident
   o adequate
   o overwhelmed
   other ________________________________________________

2. How effective is the mentorship? Place a checkmark next to the most appropriate response.
   o Very Effective
   o Effective
   o Adequate
   o Somewhat ineffectual
   o Ineffectual
   Other ________________________________________________

3. What went well this week?

4. What needs improvement?