Supporting New Teacher Development Through a Quality Beginning Teacher Mentor Program

David Kostopoulos

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Supporting New Teacher Development Through a Quality Beginning Teacher Mentor Program

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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Supporting New Teacher Development through a Quality Beginning Teacher Mentor Program

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to evaluate the perceptions of beginning teachers and mentors to improve the components and supports provided to mentees through Birch Lake School District (BLSD) induction and mentoring practices. Qualitative data was collected through transcripts of 5 separate focus group sessions that included 9 mentees and 7 mentors. Quantitative data was collected through a survey that included 10 mentees and 13 mentors. Study results indicated that impactful components revolved around seven key themes: program set-up, materials, collaborative session dates/locations, assignments, activities observational coaching, mentor/mentee meetings/interactions, content of the sessions. Study results indicated that impactful supports revolved around five key themes: stipends, professional development offerings, release time, interactions with mentor(s)/mentees, support from local administration and program coordinators. Overall three recommendations stemmed from these results. The first recommendation includes that survey data on assets and needs is collected from the mentees and mentors prior to the Beginning Teacher Mentor Program (BTMP). The second recommendation is that there is more collaboration between the BTMP coordinators and local building administrators for maximum program effectiveness. The third recommendation supports intentional release time for mentees and mentors to complete assignments and conduct/reflect on observations together. These three recommendations would develop quality components and supports that can maximize the impact that new teachers in the BLSD/BTMP experience.
PREFACE

This study brings about three key leadership lessons that relate to developing and maintaining a quality Beginning Teacher Mentor Program (BTMP). The first leadership lesson attends to having an open mind when approaching educational research and change initiatives. While it may be common to have pre-dispositions and thoughts on how programs may need to change, it is important for a researcher to keep an open mind when investigating a research question and remain receptive to the qualitative and quantitative data as it is gathered and processed. This will help to ensure results that are more reflective of actual participant responses, and less reflective of researcher pre-disposition and bias.

The second leadership lesson attends to the impact of support structures and communication within a mentoring program. Having clear support structures such as relevant components, release time, and access to multiple mentors increased the overall perceptions that staff had on the Beginning Teacher Mentor Program (BTMP). Additionally, it was discovered that one-way communication from the program to the participating schools was leaving a disconnect between the participating districts and the programs components and supports.

The third leadership lesson attends to the impact that school administrative support and recognition have within a mentoring program. Much of what was missing revolved around local school administrators not being as involved in the BTMP as they needed to. This left participants feeling like the program is not supported by the school district and seen more as a requirement to complete instead of a supportive program meant to grow the capacity of beginning teachers and mentors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank many individuals for making this process a successful one. I certainly would have been incapable of doing this on my own. I would like to thank my professors, participants, colleagues, and family for all of their guidance, participation, and support throughout this study.

Thank you to my National Louis University professors including my dissertation chair Renee Gugel and co-chair Elizabeth Minor for all of their support, guidance, and patience throughout the writing and leadership development process. The degree to which you both challenged me to shape my study, frame my argument, display my results, and communicate my policy recommendations increased my capacity as a researcher and educational leader.

I am grateful to all of the participants in the study for their honest and candid responses during the focus group sessions and survey responses. This allowed for honest feedback to ensure accurate representation of the impact of the various components and supports of their Beginning Teacher Mentor Program (BTMP) experience. Additionally, I am thankful for my colleagues throughout this study including my Superintendent and the BTMP coordinators for their collaboration in studying and developing quality refinement strategies and actions to improve the experience for the first-year teachers in our district.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for all of their understanding during the last 19 years of my professional experience as an educator seeking to make a substantial change in the field of educational research and practice while seeking to still be an active father and husband to my two wonderful children and fantastic wife.
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Birch Lake School District (BLSD) is a diverse community of Pre-K through grade 8 students and staff members. The district is located in the suburbs of the Chicagoland region. The village of Birch Lake has a population of 29,076 (Census, 2020).

According to the 2018 State Report Card, BLSD has a student population of 2,633. Students coming from low-income households represent 65% of the school population. The district’s student demographics are as follows (51.8% Black, 29.3% Hispanic, 13.9% White, 3.4% Two or More Races, 1% Asian, and 0.5% American Indian or Pacific Islander). The district’s 2017-18 state assessment data is as follows:

- 31% of students met or exceeded on the 2018 ELA PARCC Exam in comparison the state average of 37%
- 18% of the students met or exceeded on the 2018 Math PARCC Exam compared to the state average of 32%
- 43% of the students were considered proficient on the 2018 State Science Assessment compared to the state average of 51%

The mission of BLSD is to, “Cultivate the unique potential of each student by providing a challenging, supportive, and inclusive environment.” The district serves the constituents of the educational community with the following “Belief Statements:”

1. The unique potential of each child is cultivated when:
   - A safe, secure, and nurturing environment is provided for all.
   - Ethical decisions are made in the best interest of children.

2. A challenging curriculum is delivered through instructional practices that actively engage all children.
3. Our schools forge a strong partnership with parents and community stakeholders. Our resources are utilized in an effective and fiscally responsive manner. Although BLSD implements a new teacher mentor and induction program, the district currently does not have a policy statement on teacher induction and mentoring; however, induction and mentor program are described on page 17 in the current employee handbook under two sections: the New Teacher Orientation and Beginning Teacher Program.

The New Teacher Orientation, which is designed exclusively for an overview and induction into district specific policies, procedures, and practices, is described as, all new teachers will be scheduled for orientation session(s) with the district administrator. A variety of topics will be discussed. The new teacher will receive a stipend as outlined in the Professional Negotiations Agreement for the day.

Per the current Professional Negotiations Agreement, teachers new to the district receive a one-time stipend of $139 for attending the orientation which is currently held on two consecutive days in August prior to the beginning of the contractual year. The program provides teachers an overview of the district’s strategic plan and curriculum maps (English/Language Arts, math, science, and social science). Teachers and administrators also review district resources such as the district website tools, technology, textbooks, online teacher/student materials, teacher evaluation process/rubrics, school emergency procedures and crisis plans.

The Beginning Teacher Mentor Program (BTMP), which is intended to provide ongoing support for 2 years and was the focus of this study, is described as a newly hired certified staff members are referred to the 2-year program at the discretion of the building principal. The staff member is assigned a mentor by the building principal for the duration of the program. The program is facilitated in cooperation with a local university which is labeled as “State
University” within this study. Principals make the decision on which new hires are recommended for the 2-year program and as the mentor selection for the mentees. Principals will typically only enroll new teachers that have 2 years or less experience in the classroom. Principals will choose mentors within their building that are tenure and have a desire to mentor teachers. Mentors are required to have been trained through the university model to qualify as mentors for the program. The university lists the role of the mentor as someone to provide personal and professional support for beginning teachers. This may involve providing support to the new teacher in areas such as instruction, resources, classroom management, district information, and parent communication. Much like the mission of the district for students, by implementing a mentoring program, we are seeking to cultivate the unique potential of our new staff. This brings to light the importance of mentor selection. Mentor selection criteria for the BTMP include:

- demonstrated excellence in teaching
- demonstrated excellence in working with adults
- demonstrated sensitivity to the viewpoint of others
- demonstrated willingness to be an active and open learner
- demonstrated competence in social and public relations skills

All mentors are required to be trained by the university via a full day institute at the university. During the first year of the program, the mentor and the teacher meet formally with the university’s program coordinators on four occasions: either at the university or district location after school for 3 hours. The focus of these meetings is to familiarize the teachers with basic hurdles of the first week of school, setting expectations in their classrooms, communicating with parents, and an overview of the Charlotte Danielson Evaluation Framework.
The design of the experience for new teachers integrates professional development (PD) seminars for new teachers on topics such as “Engaging Ways to Teach Vocabulary,” “Guided Math Strategies,” Reading Engagement and Brain-breaks,” and “Connecting and Learning through Theater Games.” Additionally, new teachers are also required to observe a veteran teacher within the district at their grade level and choice of content as well as time to reflect on the lesson with their mentor.

The program is funded by the school district at rate of $1,000 for each new teacher and $500 for each mentor. The school district also funds the substitute teachers needed for release time to observe lessons, reflect with their mentors, provide reimbursement for mileage to and from trainings at the university, and a stipend for attending the new teacher orientation meetings. Mentors receive a $300 honorarium, and all participants receive a $30 stipend for each of the four after school training sessions attended.

Mentors of first year teachers will receive an additional $50 honorarium for attending a mentor training seminar. Mentors receive PD hours for the license renewal process and for the stipend. Mentors who are working with second year teachers receive a $250 honorarium and $30 for attending the September training session.

The current Illinois State policy regarding teacher induction and mentoring is that providing a teacher induction and mentor program is recommended but not mandated. This is a shift from the legislation that passed in October 2006 when the Illinois State Board of Education adopted New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Rules in Part 65 of the Illinois Administrative Code. In December 2006, the Illinois Induction Policy Team reconvened to move forward the agenda of state-funded induction and mentoring programs for all Illinois school districts.
Prior to this legislation, BLSD would assign a veteran teacher within the mentee’s grade or content level but did not provide any components or supports. Following the 2006 mandate, BLSD joined the BTMP and began offering components and supports. For the purpose of this study, components and supports are defined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Components and Supports for This Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Logistics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Processes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• program set-up and materials</td>
<td>• collaborative session dates/locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• assignments and activities</td>
<td>• observational coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mentor/mentee meetings/interactions</td>
<td>• content of the sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In August 2010, the state budget for induction and mentoring was reduced by 40%, yet some continuation funding for grant programs was still provided. In February 2012, the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative held its seventh statewide conference on mentoring and induction entitled Staying Committed to New Teacher Induction. On October 2012, the Illinois State Board of Education amended its New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Rules in Part 65 of the Illinois Administrative Code. This amendment relaxed the mandate on school districts provision of mentor programs; however, BLSD has continued a partnership with the university BTMP until present day.

**Purpose**

The program I chose to evaluate was the district’s implementation of the BTMP. The purpose was to improve the components and supports provided to mentees through BLSD induction and mentoring practices.
An additional consideration within this study includes the nine 2010 Illinois Induction Program Standards (IIPS). The standards in Figure 2 are described as broad and interdependent while describing a vision of a comprehensive and dynamic program for beginning teachers and those who support them.

**Figure 2**

2010 Illinois Induction Program Standards (IIPS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard One: Induction Program Leadership, Administration, and Support</th>
<th>The induction program has an administrative structure with specified leaders who plan, implement, evaluate, and refine the program.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Two: Program Goals and Design</td>
<td>Local program design is focused on beginning teacher development, support, retention, and improved student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Three: Resources</td>
<td>Program leadership allocates and monitors sufficient resources to meet all goals and deliver program components to participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Four: Site Administrator Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>Site administrators lead efforts and collaborate to create a positive climate for the delivery of all essential program components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Five: Mentor Selection and Assignment</td>
<td>Mentors are recruited, selected, and assigned using a comprehensive strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Six: Mentor PD</td>
<td>Mentor PD provides a formal orientation and foundational mentor training before they begin their work with beginning teachers and should continue over the course of the mentor’s work with beginning teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Seven: Development of Beginning Teacher Practice</td>
<td>Beginning teachers have regularly scheduled time, provided during the two-year program, to participate in ongoing PD that is focused on their professional growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Eight: Formative Assessment</td>
<td>Beginning teachers and mentors participate in formative assessment experiences, collaboratively collecting and analyzing measures of teaching progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Nine: Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Programs operate a comprehensive, ongoing system of program development and evaluation that involves all program participants and other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently, BLSD utilizes a 2-year outside program that is developed, facilitated, and evaluated by a local university. In June of 2017, the university began the 25th year of their BTMP and listed the following statement and statistic:
During this time, we have had the opportunity of working with more than 1566 mentor/beginning teacher pairs. The Beginning Teacher Program is a collaborative partnership involving the university and South Suburban school districts. We have seen how valuable this experience has been for both first- and second-year teachers and mentors. (cite)

I also chose to examine the district’s implementation of the program to analyze the amount of impact of its components and supports for both district mentors and mentees. From their perspectives, I correlated their qualitative statements in accordance with Wagner’s 4 Cs (2006), and Boleman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory. This enabled me to provide insight into policy components that will increase the capacity of the district to implement a powerful and productive BTMP.

Wagner and Keagan (2006) stated, “We offer an approach to thinking systemically about the challenges and goals of change in schools and districts, which we call the 4 Cs – competency, conditions, culture, and context” (p. 98). Bolman and Deal argued that leaders should look at and approach organizational issues from four perspectives, which they called “frames.” In their view, if a leader works with only one habitual frame of reference, they risk being ineffective. The four frames Bowman and Deal proposed were structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The interplay of these two frames appear in later sections of this study.

The effectiveness of classroom teachers has an obvious effect on student learning. Through appropriate teacher development and support strategies, we will have the ability to produce high quality teachers by giving them the time and the tools to succeed. If the current program we are using is not as effective as it could be, we are not maximizing our resources and
need to either improve the district implementation of the program or reallocate funds develop a new program.

The focus of this study was to improve the experiences of our mentors and mentees while increasing their skillset by creating a support system that is specific and on demand for mentees in an effort to increase teacher capacity and reduce attrition rates.

The purpose of this evaluation was to answer the overall question, “What are the most impactful components and supports of the mentor program?” Through research and data analysis, my intent was to persuade policy change regarding the implementation of the BLSD induction and mentor program.

**Rationale**

When I entered the teacher profession right out of college, I was hired as a fifth-grade teacher in BLSD. I was never assigned a “mentor” per say, but I was directed to ask a veteran teacher on my grade level team if I had any questions. This failed to recognize the existing knowledge of myself, the mentee, and encouraged the notion that the mentor has all of the answers without formal training and direction. This limited the development of new teaching strategies by passing down antiquated practices implemented by the mentor without consideration of specified components and supports such as checkpoints, PD, observation/reflection opportunities and release time.

Naturally, I asked a lot of questions, but they were more basic in nature such as, “Where are the materials, I am supposed to teach? How does the copy machine work? What should go in my substitute folder?” These were monumental questions for me at the time because I was in first year survival mode and was just grateful to have someone to answer my questions.
Over the course of the rest of my first year, I followed my mentor and looked up to her as if she had done it all, seen it all, and established “master teacher” status herself. After all, I figured that my principal must have assigned this person for a reason and put a lot of thought into his mentor selection process.

Over the course of my second year, the word “mentor” was only used jokingly because I was fully inducted into my grade level team. I had adapted to their style of teaching and helped with any initiatives they wanted me to take on such as organizing field trips. I was feeling experienced and beginning to formulate my own thoughts and opinions about the teaching profession and how my grade level team operated.

Over the course of the next few years, I began to try and transform the team as the teachers in my grade level retired and I took to the task of mentoring the new staff as best as I could without any training on what a mentor is supposed to be. Fast forward to 16 years later from my first year as a teacher in BLSD and I am now a principal in charge of the BLSD mentor program. Having seen and experienced this program from both sides gave me a unique lens to analyze the impact between not having and then having components and supports with the mentor/induction program.

We now have trained mentors and have coupled with a local university to implement a structured two-year mentor program that is accredited with the state. Additionally, we have added a 2-day district induction seminar where staff hear about the different curriculum maps and technology platforms that we utilize. Although this is a great leap from where the program was, teacher and mentor input are suggesting that the university program is too much additional work and losing relevance to what we are asking of them in the classroom. The district has adopted many new initiatives such as a professional learning community model,
close reading, number talks, guided math strategies, restorative practices, one-to-one computing, and various technology platforms to utilize in their instruction. Teachers are already feeling overwhelmed and in survival mode just like I was 16 years ago, but now their plate is bigger, heavier, and they are even more accountable for not dropping it.

The critical issues that revolve around the teacher mentor program pertain to hosting a program that supports teachers in their direct line of work and builds their capacity to implement their district’s vision of learning. That is to say, they need a program that is tailored to the district’s programs, initiatives, and curricular tools they are using.

The BTMP is an outside program that works with multiple districts that have different curriculum and strategic planning initiatives. A challenge is to harness the components and supports of the BTMP to support the specific and evolving needs of the BLSD mentee’s year after year. Wagner (2008) stated:

Lack of adequate teacher preparation and support is considered the primary cause for the astounding public school teacher attrition rate. Studies show that nearly one in two teachers who start out in the classroom leave after just five years! The National Commission on Teaching and American’s Future (NCTAF) estimates that the national cost of this teacher dropout problem is over $7 billion dollars a year. (p. 146)

The financial costs are a big burden on districts in itself. However, one must also consider the educational and institutional impact this has on school systems as teacher turnover also results in a loss of the things you cannot necessarily put a price on such as staff morale, catching new staff up on past PD, and grade level/department level consistency for students.

A mentor program that is not tailored to a district’s needs and initiatives could not only cost the district financially but could also impact the ability to provide high-capacity
education as well as retain quality teachers. Districts who don’t provide the necessary support to teachers will ultimately lose good teachers to competing districts that provide their staff with an organized mentor program that includes high impact components and supports that develop a teacher’s capacity to implement the district’s curriculum and strategies effectively.

On a larger scale, an untailored mentor program can cause mobility of sub-par teachers within school districts and can even steer quality candidates away from profession entirely. An example of this would be a new teacher receiving poor mentoring resulting in a release from a school district after the second year. The same teacher now gets hired by another district and receives poor mentoring again with a 2-year release. In some cases, this cycle could repeat itself over and over again. In many cases this teacher may become jaded by the profession and leave it entirely or worse, continue to support students in a sub-par fashion. We need to reform our mentor programs so that they are customized to support teachers in the implementation of a district’s vision and initiatives. Cutting down on teacher mobility and creating a stronger and more stable system for students and communities.

**Goals**

Throughout my professional experience, I have been a participant as well as an administrator of teacher mentor programs. I was a mentee in a program that had no direction, substance, and follow through. I have administered programs that had direction, substance, and follow through, but they were not relevant to the teacher’s experiences. The intended goal of this program evaluation was to redesign and improve the mentor program at BLSD. The method provides options for the school district to tailor the activities, expectations, and outcomes that new teachers experience.
Overall, I hope to have accomplished what many school districts struggle with—
attracting new talent and developing new teachers effectively so they can thrive within the
profession. By developing a systematic approach that has the ability to be customized for
mentees and covers the complex process of teacher mentoring in a simplistic way, teachers
will experience support and success in the early stages of their professional career. This will
result in a higher rate of teacher retention, better developed teachers, and improved student
learning through quality instruction that is developed through the mentor program.

**Research Questions**

There were two overarching questions for my research. The first question was, “What
are the most/least impactful components (logistics/processes) of the teacher mentor program
from the mentor/mentee perspective?” Using selective coding, I identified five potential
themes with another category to leave the study open to the possibility of open coding. Some
potential themes were mentor selection, administrative role, time with mentor, providing an
evaluative role to mentor, mentor compensation, and other. Semi-structured interview and
focus group questions were:

1. What components of the mentor program had a positive impact on your
   experience? How so?
2. What components of the mentor program had a negative impact on your
   experience? How so?
3. Was there a particular component that was more impactful than others? Why?
4. Are there any components that you feel are missing from the program that would
   be beneficial?
The second research question for this study was, “What are the most/least impactful supports (interactions/activities) of the mentor program from the mentor/mentee perspective?” Semi-structured interview and focus group questions to answer this research question were the following:

1. What supports were you given through the mentor/mentee process?
2. Who were the individuals that provided the supports for you during the program?
3. What supports do you feel impacted your experience the most?
4. What supports do you feel impacted your experience the least?
5. What supports do you not have that you wish you did?

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, while it is important to have a teacher mentor program, it is possible to have one that is ineffective. The first year and second-year experience of a teacher can be overwhelming, and the aim of a teacher mentor program should be to support teacher development that is relative to their current position.

In my professional experience, I have seen many talented individuals leave the profession because they were not provided the appropriate components and supports. I have also observed staff that had potential get evaluated out of the system because they were not developed appropriately, provided relevant components, and provided enough supports. Teacher attrition affects schools and districts negatively in varying ways, including but not limited to being short staffed, increasing class sizes, and loss of cohesiveness around program training/implementation.
The following section will contain information gleaned from interviews about the inception of the BTMP utilized by BLSD along with the review of literature that pertains to components and supports of teacher mentor programs.
SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines mentoring in three frames: overall mentor program significance, program component significance, and program support significance. There is a variety of research about specific mentor programs that are taking place both locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. These studies describe the different types of components and supports that were noted by the participants.

The purpose of this study was to gauge the participating mentee and mentor perceptions on the components and supports they are receiving. The review of literature was chosen to help gauge and emphasize the importance of those components and supports across a wide variety of conditions.

The review of literature took place across various countries, including the United States, Turkey, Pakistan, and New Zealand. Research settings included urban, suburban, and rural. Study participants in the reviews ranged from elementary, middle, and high-school levels. The studies researched involved qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies.

The most significant literature to back up the need for quality mentoring programs came from articles such as Uncovering Perceptions of the Induction and Mentoring Experience: Developing a Measure that Works by Langdon, Alexander, Dinsmore, and Ryde; and Assessment of Induction to Teaching Program: Opinions of Novice Teachers, Mentors, School Administrators by Aktas. Authors included Joseph Murphy’s Creating Instructional Capacity, Learning for Leadership by Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, Asghar, and several titles from Tony Wagner, including Change Leadership and The Global Achievement Gap.

Before examining the literature within three separate frames, it is important to consider a brief historical overview of mentoring was described by Jimerson et al. (2015). In their
overview, they first acknowledged that mentoring has always existed in some form. For example, it could be assumed that long ago, the apprentice model was employed as a new teacher taking over a single classroom school-house may have learned under the old teacher. It can be assumed that the same apprentice method is used in some school’s still today. In relation to more recent history, the authors noted that formalized induction and mentoring programs emerge in waves. They happen in accordance to fluctuations in supply and demand of the teaching workforce.

The first wave appeared in the 1980s (Little, 1990; Olebe, 2001), followed by the second wave in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Wang & Odell, 2002; Yusko & Freiman-Nemser, 2008). Although these waves seemed to share the policy goal of reducing the number of early career teachers who leave the profession in the first few years, the most current wave also emphasizes improving student achievement vis-à-vis teacher quality. This points to the need as well as significance of quality mentor programs that are needed today.

New teachers are indoctrinated into an educational society of high accountability from day one. This brings added levels of stress to teachers as they are already trying to enculturate themselves into the local school and broader educational system. This comes at a time when funding for mentor programs varies by state and in some cases is not mandated at all.

Three frames of research are analyzed in the next section and show several significances for each frame. The first frame supports the significance of beginning teacher mentor programs. The second frame discusses the significance of mentee/mentor components. The third frame reviews the significance of mentee/mentor supports.

**Frame One: Overall Mentor Program Significance**

The first frame of research from various articles and authors support the significance of using beginning teacher mentor programs. Langdon et al. (2011) stated, “It is only on the job that
intellectual and emotional complexity of teaching becomes a reality, and it is only in context that certain understandings and skills can be developed” (p. 399). Yusko and Feiman-Nemser (2008) argued that serious on-site induction has the potential to help beginning teachers develop effective teaching practice when support is blended with educative mentoring, learning and assessment—"a comprehensive approach to early career learning” (pp. 399-400).

A first significance suggested is that mentor programs can be an effective model to support new teacher development, capacity, and performance. Sowell (2017), in her work from Texas A&M on Effective Practices for Mentoring Beginning Middle School Teachers: Mentor’s Perspectives, explained:

To provide the support needed to improve instructional practice and retain teachers through mentoring, the participants all agreed three elements were important: building a trusting relationship, coaching in classroom management skills, and improving instructional practices. (p. 4)

Connecting these elements with the components and supports of a mentoring program can have a profound impact on the development, capacity, and performance of teachers on both a classroom management and instructional delivery standpoint.

A second significance is that mentor programs can serve as a professional outlet to keep staff on track, focused, and motivated. “What collaboration is designed to focus on will have significant implications for what teachers can and can’t learn from work with colleagues” (Levine & Marcus, 2010, pp. 392-393, Murphy 2016 p. 76). This suggests that it is important to design your mentor program with appropriate collaborative tools to maximize the development and capacity of your mentors and mentees.
A third significance is that mentor programs can reduce attrition rates and retain quality workers within the education system. “Lack of adequate teacher preparation and support is considered the primary cause for the astounding public school teacher attrition rate. Studies show that nearly one in two teachers who start out in the classroom leave after just five years!” (Wagner, 2008 p. 146). A staggering thought of this is how much is lost in the overall pool of talent within the educational community. A big question that remains with this is how many of these teachers leaving the profession are of quality and/or could be of quality if provided adequate mentor components and supports? Hellsten et al. (2009) expressed:

Many beginning teachers report an inability to cope and describe feeling isolated (Stanulis et al., 2007) as well as frustrated, anxious, demoralized, and overwhelmed by the demands of the profession (O’Neill, 2004; Rogers & Babinski, 1999; Schlichte et al., 2005). Beginning teachers also report a lack of mentorship (Herbert & Worthy, 2001). (p. 705.

This leaves one wondering about the connection between teachers’ negative feelings and abilities to their mentor or lack of mentor experience. Further thoughts continue with the quality of the mentor components and supports as they relate to each teacher’s own personal experience.

A final fourth significance that supports the use of beginning teacher mentor programs is that it can help school districts maximize their fiscal and professional resources. “The National Commission on Teaching and American’s Future (NCTAF) estimates that the national cost of teacher dropout problem is over $7 billion dollars a year.” (Wagner, 2008 p. 146). There are many financial resources at stake. With that is also the loss of PD knowledge that is lost with high teacher turnover. It is the burden of the district to ensure that all staff are equally trained.
This can be compounding financial and consistency factor for districts to consider when weighing the cost of designing and implementing an effective mentor program.

In summary to this frame, the significance of beginning teacher mentor programs is well supported throughout the related literature and research studies. The evidence suggests that school districts pay close attention to frontloading their financial resources in the development of a beginning teacher mentor program. This would be a benefit to districts as it could allow for new teachers entering the educational field to have a more positive enculturation experience. Thus, creating more teacher retention, longevity, well-being, and excellence through the implementation of effective components and supports.

**Frame Two: Program Component Significance**

The second frame of research revolves around the types of as well as significance of effective mentor/mentee components. In this study, components were defined as logistics and processes, and include but are not limited to the following: program set-up, materials, collaborative session dates/locations/content, assignments, activities observational coaching, mentor/mentee meetings/interactions, content of the sessions.

The first significance noted was that they create a model for a teacher’s first impression into the educational system and can be a basis for how people perceive the profession. Langdon et al. (2011) stated:

While some evidence exists about what happens during beginning teacher induction and mentoring (e.g., time invested in mentoring and teacher retention rates), there is less evidence about how beginning teachers perceive the mentoring and induction program at the outset and how perceptions of learning and learners change over time. (p. 399)
This reinforces that it is imperative that we study and recognize how teacher’s perceptions are developed in respect to the components of the mentor program they participate in. Aktas (2018) said:

As in all professions, teachers seem to face many problems, especially in the first years, such as classroom management, motivating students, individual problems of students, incompatibility between theory and practice, cooperating with parents, and adapting to the profession and the school. Hence, start-up training is especially important. (p. 2101).

This reinforces the concept that teachers have a lot of hurdles to cross in their beginning years that are taught but not necessarily learned during their college induction programs. First impressions are not necessarily developed during the induction process. Rather, teachers may develop these lasting impressions during their first years of on-the-job experience and have an effect on their perceptions of staying within the educational field.

Ebanks et al. (2009) noted that overall, most beginning teachers are content with their first-year teaching experience in their first year yet faced challenges surrounding workload and feelings of isolation. There is also an overarching theme that emerged showing that there is diversity in the experiences reported with respect to mentorship. There were three major components displayed in Figure 3 that emerged from the authors interviews along with a dominant moderating factor that related to the compatibility of the mentor and beginning teacher.

**Figure 3**

*Compatibility of the Mentor and Beginning Teacher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Was a mentor assigned to the respondent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Component 2</td>
<td>Was the mentor involved in the process/assignments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component 3</td>
<td>Did the beginning teacher have single or multiple mentors?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This suggests that the components related to mentor selection do not just rest on finding a warm body that happens to have tenure. Much has to be considered such as mentor quality, recruitment, motivation, and case load.

The second significance noted in the literature and research studies support that components serve as mechanisms for teachers and mentors to interact and develop within their specific skill set as it relates to their specific teaching content, practices, classroom management, developing student/parent relationships, and professionalism. Wagner (2008) elaborated:

My view of the real problem with educator preparation programs as well as with the state licensure requirements for teaching and administration is that they focus on ensuring that future teachers and administrators have covered a broad range of required academic content, content that, in many cases, has little to do with the actual requirements of the job. (p. 147)

This suggested that not just components, but relevant components are crucial part of making a mentor program successful. This speaks to ensuring that your mentor selection process lines up with your mentees teaching assignments. For example, an elementary physical education teacher would benefit more from having another elementary physical education teacher as their mentor versus another teacher from a different content and/or grade span.

Rocha (2014) posited the following about what areas are demanding for new teachers and could be considered as potential effective components of a mentor program:

- Curricular knowledge about assessment, annual planning, education standards, individualization, and differentiation.
- Pedagogical knowledge about pupils displaying behavioral problems, implementing codes of conduct, missed-level classes, and classroom management.
• Organizational knowledge about local school administration and school laws.
• Social skills for parent-teacher meetings, relationships with colleagues, principals, and superintendents.
• Personal skills for time management, work-life balance and coping with individual expectations.

Rocha (2014) also remarked, “More than half of the mentors in the survey described various challenging situations during the process. They referred mainly to problems concerning time in various ways” (p. 112). This points to the importance of developing resources and opportunities for pre-committed collaborative times between mentors and mentees. It was noted throughout the review of literature that time to meet, plan, and reflect is a factor in the vast majority of the mentor program studies that have been analyzed.

The third and final significance of components is that they serve as the foundation of a new teacher’s educational career. Amin and Munir (2018) found that not one of the seven themes in view had a single practice that fell under the “most frequent” category. Only one practice regarding the preparation of a teacher diary fell under the “frequent” category. Twenty-three practices were noted as “infrequent,” including four of the seven themes (planning skills, teaching skills, communication skills, and classroom management). This supports the idea that just having components is not enough to develop an effective program. It is important that the components or “practices” in this case must be implemented with a duration that is frequent enough to have an impact. This could also speak to the importance of fidelity within the implementation of a mentor program.

In summary to the second frame, the literature and research points to significance of effective components as well as types of components to consider when developing a beginning
teacher mentor program. Overall, there is significant consideration that needs to be placed on components because they can have an effect on both mentor’s and mentee’s perceptions and attitudes toward the program. The literature indicates that there are a wide range of components to consider, which range from planning and staffing the program. Relevant components that were continuously noted in the literature and studies involved:

- the mentor selection and assignment process
- classroom management
- pedagogical knowledge and practice
- parent communication
- school program and facility orientation.

Frame Three: Program Support Significance

The third frame of research identifies different types of supports as well as addresses the significance of effective mentor/mentee supports. In this study, supports are defined as interactions and activities, which include but are not limited to stipends, PD offerings, release time, interactions with mentor(s)/mentees, support from local administration, and program coordinators.

The first significant factor found in the literature is that supports provide an opportunity for staff to be able to speak freely in a non-evaluative environment and receive feedback from both an outside and inside perspective. In the study by Goodwin et al. (2016) they asked mentor teachers to describe moments of effective mentoring. The researchers said, “A final major finding that emerged from an analysis of MT self-assessments was the importance of emotional support for new teachers from their mentors” (p. 1209). Overall, this helps describe the overall importance of what a mentor can provide in addition to the strategies and applications in the
classroom. This finding alone recognizes the significance of providing support through a mentor program.

Drago Severson et al. (2013) posited that, “… opportunities to deeply engage with trusted others around issues central to their work and leadership make a tremendous difference—both practically and psychologically.” (p. 211). This is a transferrable reference to a teacher mentor/mentee relationship where both can engage in trusted discussions central to their work in the classroom.

Hellsten et al. (2009) reported that Anderson and Shannon (1988) proposed an alternative model of educational mentorship. Their early model, based on the premise that mentoring in education was fundamentally a nurturing process and defined the functions of mentoring as teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counseling, and befriending. Maynard and Furlong (1995) conceptualized the role of teacher mentors as a three-stage developmental process: (a) working as a collaborative teacher, (b) acting as instructor through observation and feedback, and (c) positioning oneself as a co-enquirer, promoting critical reflection on teaching and learning” (p. 708). All of this reinforces the concept that mentors provide an array of supports that hold a significant amount of weight on a first- and second-year teachers emotional and professional perceptions.

In a mixed method study by Amin and Munir (2018), the authors concluded that that almost all (16 out of 17) district teacher educators are of the view that the lack of teachers’ interest is one of the major challenges faced by them in performing the duty of mentoring. This qualitative data speaks to the importance of providing desirable resources for mentors to participate such as monetary, professional credits, or evaluative recognition. Additionally, this
may also point to the importance of instilling a sense of pride and accomplishment about being a mentor.

A second significant factor is that proper supports provide professional resources and support for teachers during their most influential years. Drago Severson et al. (2013) stated, “Effective leadership involves carefully tailoring developmental supports and challenges to best help adults meet the many complexities demands and challenges they face as educators today” (p. 82). Providing a mentor program that can accurately identify and address the challenges of the various types of participants can provide optimum resources for mentees to help build capacity in their early years as an educator.

Desimone et al. (2015), in their findings, suggested that new teachers have positive feelings about mentor quality and their mentoring relationships. The authors asked, “How well matched do you think you are with your formal mentors?” They followed up with, “To what extent do you have compatible personalities?” Three policy features that stood out in the interviews were:

- location (in school versus not)
- time during the day to meet
- the extent of the mentor’s evaluative role

The importance of a mentor being located in the school versus in a different school can bring a difference in the level of support a mentor can provide. Having limited access to a mentor can diminish the amount of support a mentee may feel they have. Providing time during the day for the mentor and mentee to meet can be a costly support because you may have to pay for substitute teachers or pay after school stipends. However, it can open up a lot of effective supports for teachers such as lesson reflection, observational coaching, classroom data analysis,
Perceptions of a Teacher Mentor Program

etc. Lastly, the extent of the mentor’s evaluative role is strong consideration as it may have impacts on the relationship and trust level between the mentor and mentee.

Murphy (2016) cited many examples of literature such as Penuel and team (2009, 2010) who concluded that social structure support is highly valuable in school implementation efforts, in energizing instructional change, and in generating consistent forms of practice across a variety of settings. The author also stated, “Research helps us see that capacity building extends beyond recruitment and selection. For example, it shows us that capacity building addresses retention and that leadership, as it was in previous functions, is a critical element here” (p. 52). This emphasizes the importance of leadership as a support role in the mentor/mentee process.

A further thought on this includes the two frames that leadership could fall under. The obvious frame is building leadership such as building and district level administrators. The second frame could relate to leadership as it exists within the mentors. An assuming trait of a quality mentor could be that they have strong leadership skills.

A third significant factor discovered in the literature is that proper supports provide the staff access to PD. Researchers provide some specificity to these dimensions of time in their analyses. Supovitz and Turner (2000) concluded that the teachers in their study required 80 hours of PD before they began “using inquiry-based teaching practices significantly more frequently… than the average teacher” (p. 973). Significant change in the classroom culture occurs only after 160 hours of PD” (Murphy 2010 p. 68). This suggests that the foundation is not constructed overnight, and much is needed to provide quality supports and components to the structure of a mentor program. Important considerations include scaffolding of PD as a potential cornerstone of this foundation.
In summary to the third and final frame, the literature reviewed reinforces the significance of considering effective supports within a beginning teacher mentor program. It was noted that the supports do not only provide pedagogical guidance but a strong emotional and well-being component for participants. More importantly, it was noted in the literature and studies that the supports were provided over a longer period suggesting the duration of a successful mentor program to extend beyond just one calendar year. Relevant supports that continuously noted as mentioned in the literature and studies include:

- time to meet between the mentor and mentee
- emotional support provided
- the evaluative role of the mentor
- PD opportunities
- mentor and administrative program leadership
- financial compensation and professional recognition

The concluding summary of the literature and research is that it is imperative to have a quality mentor program for new teachers as this benefits students, teachers, and school districts overall. Designing effective components are a significant factor as they will be the foundation and scaffolding of your mentor program that your supports will be built into. Lastly, providing effective components and supports such as mentor selection, relevant assignments, administrator involvement, and relevant PD opportunities are crucial to keeping teachers in the profession as well as developing quality educators.

The next section provides a review the research design, participants, data gathering/analysis techniques, and ethical considerations from the mixed methods study.
SECTION THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

Many methods were considered for this study, including, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. For the purpose of this study, a mixed methods approach was utilized through a participant survey and focus group sessions with mentees and mentors. Patton (2008) discussed the value of a mixed methods design along with the varying ways in which you can combine both quantitative and qualitative data. “From a utilization-focused evaluation perspective, both qualitative and quantitative data can contribute to all aspects of evaluative inquiries” (p. 438). The author went on to say, “But in many cases, both qualitative and quantitative methods should be used together and there are no logical reasons why both kinds of data cannot be used together” (p. 438). The use of focus group statements combined with the quantitative results of the survey provided an opportunity to correlate the two data sets and gain detail into the perceptions of the mentees and mentors.

Using a mixed methods approach, a quantitative approach (2020 survey data from both mentors and mentees) was combined with a qualitative approach (conducting semi-structured interview style focus groups with mentors and mentees). The majority of the data gathered, analyzed, and reported was from the focus groups completed with mentees and mentors in the Winter of 2020 just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the quantitative data utilized was from the BTMP survey distributed by the university in the Spring of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Historical data from previous years was reviewed and considered but not specifically listed in the data reporting of this study.

For this study, I first gathered qualitative data and conducted focus groups with mentees and mentors from the 2019-2020 BTMP program, who were participants in this study, to gauge
the overall perception of effectiveness with regards to the current components and supports they were receiving. Second, quantitative data from 2020 was then gathered using the university BTMP survey.

The quantitative information was helpful in generalizing the perceptions of the mentees and mentors. The qualitative information gathered from the focus groups and interviews provided a rich understanding of the staff and program coordinators/developers perceptions as they related to the components and supports of the BTMP. In combination, the results worked to validate policy implications for the BLSD mentor program.

**Participants**

All program participants from all three participating school districts were given the option of completing the quantitative portion of the study through a survey link sent to their district email. They were encouraged but not required to participate in the online survey.

The qualitative data was gathered on a voluntary basis through focus group sessions. Participants were informed of the study through an in-person presentation from me and given the opportunity to provide consent to participate. The focus group sessions were held after the final PD offering in February so that the majority of the components had been experienced. This allowed for a fresh perspective because the participants were experiencing the program in real time and could provide a more accurate viewpoint of their feelings toward the components and supports of the BTMP.

The focus groups consisted of six separate sessions. Sessions were initially designed to separate the mentees from the mentors. This held true for five out of the six focus group sessions. The first session turned into an individual session with one mentor. The second session included three mentees. The third session turned into an individual session with one mentee. The fourth
session included four mentees. The fifth session included five mentors. The sixth session included one mentee and their mentor.

The demographics of the nine mentees included eight females and one male. Seven of the mentees were White, one was Black, and one was Hispanic. The demographics of the seven mentors included all females, with six of them White and one Black. All participants were from low-income schools that receive Title 1 funding. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of the focus group sessions.

**Figure 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Sessions</th>
<th>Number of Mentees and Mentors</th>
<th>Demographics of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group One</td>
<td>1 mentor</td>
<td>1 White Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Two</td>
<td>3 Mentees</td>
<td>2 White Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Hispanic Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Three</td>
<td>1 Mentee</td>
<td>1 White Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Four</td>
<td>4 Mentees</td>
<td>3 White Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Black Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Five</td>
<td>5 Mentors</td>
<td>4 White Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Black Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Six</td>
<td>1 Mentee 1 Mentor</td>
<td>2 White Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>9 Mentes 7 Mentors</td>
<td>12 White Females 1 White Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Hispanic Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Black Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Gathering Techniques

The quantitative data was provided by the university for the purposes of this study. I used their survey questions. The survey link was emailed to all participants and building administrators to complete at their discretion on a web-based platform. There were two separate quantitative surveys that were analyzed (mentee and mentor).

The quantitative data gathered was and is anonymous in the sense that it does not give any personal identifiers of the participants other than the school district they are from. Using a survey with anonymity was chosen because it gives the researcher a better chance of collecting more accurate data about the participants perceptions. It is important to note that the majority of the quantitative data gathered in this study was from BLSD Red District.

The qualitative data gathered was done through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. James et al. explained, “Semi-structured interviews allow the opportunity to digress from the primary question and probe a response to understand more clearly what is seen as a provocative remark on the part of the interviewer” (p. 73). Focus groups are, “more time effective than interviews but with slightly less flexibility. The group process may encourage results from shy or hesitant people when the group brings up topics with which they agree” (, p. 69). This data is meant to give a detailed perspective of the mentor/mentee and either support/refute or quasi support/refute the quantitative analysis.

Transcription software via the “Otter” transcription app was used to record the data. Participant identifiers such as names, school districts, grade levels, content levels, etc. were redacted from this study.

There were originally 32 mentees and mentors that showed interest in participating in the qualitative focus groups. Sixteen mentees and mentors ended up participating in the focus group
sessions. They were from three different k-8 elementary school districts participating in the BTMP during the 2019-2020 school year. Figure 5 indicates the participation from each district in the qualitative study, which was comprised of 16 participants.

**Figure 5**

*Participating Districts’ Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Districts</th>
<th>Participating Mentees</th>
<th>Participating Mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red District (BLSD)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green District</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue District</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quantitative results from the 2019-2020 school year survey involved the following participants from each school district as displayed in Figure 6. It is important to note that the administrative survey results were considered but not analyzed in this section because the study pertains to mentee and mentor perspectives.

**Figure 6**

*Participants By School District*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Districts</th>
<th>Participating Mentees</th>
<th>Participating Mentors</th>
<th>Participating Administrators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red District</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green District</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue District</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethical Considerations**

There were many ethical decisions to consider during the research and data collection. Some of these considerations include a few of the guiding principles for evaluators adopted by the American Evaluation Association (AEA) in 1995 and listed by Patton (2008). Three of these guiding principles include *Integrity/Honesty, Respect for People, and Responsibilities for*
General and Public Welfare. The wording and definitions of the principles were updated in 2018 and are described in further detail as well as how this related to the purpose of this study.

The current AEA website describes integrity as, “Evaluators behave with honesty and transparency in order to ensure the integrity of the evaluation” (p. 3). Through presenting the study to all participants ahead of time via a PowerPoint presentation, they were well aware of the content and intent of the study. This coincides with an ethical element discussed by James et al. (2008), “Obtain informed consent by requesting permission from students and their parents after completely outlining their data collection strategies, disclosing the intent of the research, its benefits and risks, and the parties who will have access to the information gathered” (p. 28). Although they were speaking in the context of students in that statement, the same applies for when working with adults.

To accomplish this, potential participants, about 55, received a full overview of the study, including its research questions, scope, sequence, procedures, data collection/analysis, reporting methods/parties, time commitment, and potential risks/benefits. Mentees and Mentors had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and then were provided the opportunity to show interest by putting their name and district email address on a provided form. They were then emailed the consent form along with a copy of the questions for the focus group session. Of the 32 individuals that showed interest, 16 ended up participating in the focus group sessions.

The current American Evaluation Association (AEA) website describes respect for people as “Evaluators honor the dignity, well-being, and self-worth of individuals and acknowledge the influence of culture within and across groups” (p. 3). Displaying professionalism throughout the study and being respectful of the participants’ opinions and dispositions played a key role in maintaining their dignity. It was imperative that their answers to
the questions were not judged or responded to in the sense that it questioned anyone’s character or professionalism. In addition, any cultural differences within the study were respected.

While the study took place within the United States, potential participants may have represented different cultural backgrounds both ethnically as well as related to the specific culture of their school. Any and all types of cultural differences among potential participants were accepted into the study. Cultural information was not requested or collected from the participants taking part in the study.

Participants were monitored during the study to ensure that their well-being was not in any jeopardy. If a participant seemed to be experiencing any medical or behaviorally ill effects, they were to be removed from the study. Participants had the opportunity to dismiss themselves from the study at any point with no questions asked. No participants expressed a need to be dismissed from the focus group sessions.

Lastly, bias was a strong factor that had to be considered in this case. “Researchers may do harm when they enter into their studies with a strong bias as to what they will find. Bias is created by influences that distort the results of a research study” (James et al., 2008, p. 29). Potential biases considered in this study included researcher bias toward any anticipated outcomes, and participant bias through any personal feelings they may be having about their current job or the BTMP. To combat bias, the qualitative results were reviewed with independent administrators and program coordinators to validate the data. Additionally, IRB approval was obtained for the study as well as approval from the district and university that hosts the mentoring program.
Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative analysis took place utilizing the universities’ BTMP survey data from 2020. The survey was offered to both participating mentees and mentors. The survey was emailed out to participants via a weblink. The university does not require that participants complete the survey. Mean reporting was utilized on certain questions within the survey to gain insight into how the participants perceived different aspects of the program. The results were then compared to the focus group data analysis.

Qualitative analysis took place through the examination of transcribed data from the surveys and semi-structured focus groups. Selective coding was used as a primary method, but open coding was also considered as new data presented itself during the data analysis. “Open codes are much like reading through student work. Single words or short phrases that capture the patterns of ideas begin to emerge as researchers read through qualitative data” (James et al., 2008, p. 89). Open coding was necessary as the data gathered started to drift outside the selective codes that were pre-determined. I began the process by listing out participant responses and then arranging them under two separate sections (Components and Supports) and then developing two overall codes for each section. The two codes for components were logistics and processes. The two codes for supports were interactions and activities. Figure 7 shows the themes that were developed throughout the coding process. Participant identifiers such as names, school districts, schools, grade levels, and content levels were redacted from the study.

Figure 7

Themes from the Coding Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>Interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• program set-up and materials</td>
<td>• stipends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

A mixed methods approach was used in this study with mentee and mentors as acting participants under informed consent. Quantitative techniques included using mean reporting from the BTMP voluntary online survey. Qualitative techniques included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, selective coding, and open coding of themes. This mixed methods approach allowed for a more comprehensive look at the data than using just one type of data collection and thus, the ability to look at the results through a bigger-picture lens. In the following section we will review the results of the study.

The Results Section begins with a review of the interview conducted with the creator of the BTMP, Dr. Aggie, and then it transitions into the qualitative data collected by the mentees, mentors, and program coordinators through the framework of Wagner’s “4 Cs” and Bolman and Deal’s frame theory.
SECTION FOUR: RESULTS

History of BTMP

To fully understand the results of this study, it is important to consider the history of the BTMP program and the reasoning behind its implementation. This chapter begins with providing a rich history on the foundation of the BTMP to gain the context of it. The information was gathered via interviews that were conducted with the original program creator and current program coordinators from State University. It is important to note for the current BTMP program coordinators that were interviewed were also involved in the BTMP at its inception in 1993.

State University is a public university in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. The university is a public university offering degree programs at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels. It has four colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business, the College of Education, and the College of Health and Human Services. One of the specific programs offered by the university is a 2-year BTMP for local school districts within the region. The focus of this study was the impact on the perceptions of the mentees and mentors from the supports and components provided by the program.

State University began offering the BTMP in 1993. Through dissertation work, Aggie developed this program. The researcher had previously analyzed mentor programs through the lens of the Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory. According to Deal, “… culture has a powerful influence throughout an organization; it affects practically everything. … because of this impact, we think that culture also has a major effect on the success of the business.” (p. 4). This helps to provide a theoretical framework for the systematic analysis of the organizational culture of the BTMP.
The four frames in this theory involve structural, human resource, political, and symbolic.

Aggie’s 1993 study looked at program components such as mentoring, orientation for beginning teachers, handbooks, and stipends. The researcher did this by evaluating three identified exemplary sites from across the country. The three sites selected for the study were the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; and North Carolina State University, Raleigh. This study was completed as part of Aggie’s dissertation from Vanderbilt University and identified important variables as they relate to frame Theory. These key variables as they related to “Frame Theory” are included in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

*Frame Theory*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Structural framework</strong></th>
<th>formal tight/loose structure, research based practices, change built into the structure, and outcomes/impact.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human resource frame</strong></td>
<td>leadership people/task centered, feedback process, reflective process, teacher professionalization/job enlargement, and close to customer, personal/professional support, confidence building, and peer support component.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political frame</strong></td>
<td>interaction/fit of players.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic frame</strong></td>
<td>win-win, emphatic responses, and part of the larger management philosophy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These variables were all considered while the BTMP was developed at State University in 1993. In addition, four school district superintendents from suburban Chicagoland regions collaborated with Aggie on the development and implementation of the BTMP.
The program began by being housed at the regional office of education facility. After a couple of years, the program was transferred to State University where Aggie served as a professor and continues to be affiliated with the University. The BTMP ran under Aggie’s direction until 2009 when the researcher bequeathed it to two individuals that were a part of the original program. In this study they are identified as Program Coordinator one (PC1) and Program Coordinator two (PC2). It should be noted that during this time, Aggie was able to get the Teacher Quality Partnership Grant (TQP) and developed an Alternative Certification Program that would eventually run-in conjuction with the BTMP for the years throughout the grant. This was a multi-million-dollar grant that provided a platform for the BTMP to feed off of for various PD opportunities.

This program format of components and supports continues until present day (2021) and is the focal point of this study. It is important to note that the (TQP) grant ended after five years ago along with some of the PD opportunities that it provided for the BTMP. In June of 2017, the university began the 25th year of the BTMP and listed the following statement and statistic:

During this time, we have had the opportunity of working with more than 1566 mentor/beginning teacher pairs. The Beginning Teacher Program is a collaborative partnership involving the university and South Suburban school districts. We have seen how valuable this experience has been for both first- and second-year teachers and mentors. As we entered the 2019 -2020 school year 3, Chicagoland regional school districts signed-up to participate in the BTMP. Examining the history of the BTMP came to be is an important step in understanding where Birch Lake is today, and where we are headed as we consider the most meaningful and supportive ways to work with and retain our early career teachers.
Participating Districts

The three Suburban Chicagoland regional school districts that participated in the BTMP from BLSD and are labeled within this study as Red District, Green District, and Blue District. This study was completed with participants from the 2019-2020 school year and included participants from all three districts.

Red District is a Pre-K - 8 district and resides in a suburban Chicagoland town with a population of about 30,000. According to the 2019-2020 state report card, Red District has a student population of about 2,700 of which 58% of the students come from low-income households. The district’s student demographics are 57.3% Black, 20.7% Hispanic, 17.2% White, 3.9% Two or More Races, 0.6% Asian, and 0.2% American Indian or Pacific Islander. The district has a teacher retention rate of 88%. This is an upward trend from 2016 when the teacher retention rate was at 82% and higher than the current state average of 86%.

Green District is a Pre-K – 8 district with a population of about 30,000. According to the 2019-2020 state report card, Green District has a student population of about 1,000 students and 45% come from low-income households. The district’s student demographics are 75% Black, 15.9% Hispanic, 2.6% White, 5.7% Two or More Races, 0.7% Asian, and 0.1% American Indian or Pacific Islander. The district has a teacher retention rate of 75%. This is a downward trend from 2016 when the teacher retention rate was at 85%.

Blue District is a Pre-K – 8 district and resides in a suburban Chicagoland town with a population of about 11,000 residents. According to the 2019-2020 state report card, Blue District has a student population of 1,300 with 76% of them coming from low-income households. The district’s student demographics are 77.4% Black, 14.3% Hispanic, 3.8% White, 4.2% Two or More Races, 0% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian or Pacific Islander. The district has a teacher
retention rate of 82%. This is an upward trend from 2016 when the teacher retention rate was at 80%. The 2019-2020 state average is 86%, which has held steady from 2016 in which it was at 86% as well.

All three participating districts have similar demographics as it relates to their student populations. This supports a higher probability for congruence across all three districts needs when analyzing the most impactful components and supports needed for the BTMP participants.

Considering the participating district’s demographics, the next section looks at the qualitative and quantitative results from the mentee/mentor focus groups. This data was analyzed through a combination of Wagner’s 4 Cs (context, culture, conditions, and competencies) and Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory.

“As Is” Frame of the BTMP

An important element of examining the research results is considering where the BTMP is now and where we would like to be. As such, an as-is, to be visual comparison is a helpful lens when developing policies and strategies. The qualitative and quantitative results were used to compile the information in Figure 9, which highlights the “As Is” or current state of BTMP through the framework of Wagner’s 4 Cs of change. Each frame of the 4 Cs was looked at through four stakeholder groups (university, school districts, participating staff, and PD providers). Some of the key themes extracted from the data conclude that the BTMP is outdated with lack of district and administrative involvement along with assumed content that is not always relevant to the mentee’s experience. It was also noted that there is a lack of modeling regarding BTMP session content.
Figure 9

Current BTMP (“As Is”)  

The 4 Cs within the BTMP include four layers. The first layer is the university. The second layer involves the school districts. The third layer consists of the participating staff.
(meaning the mentors and mentees). The fourth layer consists of the PD providers. These layers are all deeply tied through web of connections that affect the outcome of the mentee and mentor experience.

**Context of the BTMP**

Within the context of the BTMP, there are four layers that speak to the cultural, political, and economic components and supports of the program. The first layer of the context is the university. With full control of the finances of the program, the university decides the stipend amounts paid to mentees and mentors, PD opportunities provided, and meeting session components. The second layer is defined as the school district, which pays the university at a rate of $1,000 per first year mentee and $500 per second year mentee to implement a program with components and supports for mentees and training for mentors. The third layer of participating staff includes the mentees and mentors that benefit through the reception of stipends and PD hours that can be used for recertification. The PD providers comprise the fourth layer of context and provide the same content to all year 1 and year 2 participants from year to year. Staff interests are not surveyed in anticipation of PD needs.

**Culture of the BTMP**

Within the culture of the program, the four layers speak to the interpretations of how the program runs and operates within the four layers of the stakeholder perspectives. As the first layer, the university operates the program utilizing a model that was developed in 2006. This was just around when the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were being introduced. The university contracts two adjunct faculty members to facilitate the pre-packaged program. The components of the model are contained within a set of binders that were created in 2006 and are given to participants at the beginning of the program to be used/referenced at their discretion.
The school district represents the second layer and does not have input or influence on the content of the model or materials presented to the mentees and mentors. The third layer of participating staff perceive that the programs components and supports do not always directly connect to their current experience and needs in the classroom. The vast majority of participating staff inferred that the program is developed and implemented entirely by the university program instructors using their expertise and intuition, when in fact, it was developed by a member of the university decades ago. The final fourth layer of program’s culture rests with the PD providers and their assumption of providing the same limited amount of annual PD opportunities each year.

**Conditions of the BTMP**

The conditions of the program are defined as the structural, symbolic, leadership, and human resource circumstances that are imbedded in the BTMP. As the first layer, the university proctors are not able to provide support or follow-up opportunities for the supports it suggests within its program such as classroom observations, mentee/mentor meeting sessions, and session discussion items. The supports are recommended by the instructors to participants present at sessions; however, there seems to be a lack of connection with what participants are told and what the participants’ administration is aware of, leaving a lack of connection between the university, school district, and participants.

The second layer represented by the school district does not have any direct influence on the components and supports of the program. Even though the instructors are willing to listen, there is not a platform that exists to facilitate the communication process between the university and school district. Criteria for choosing mentors rests within this layer and criteria and training is mandated and provided by the university.
The third layer of participating staff perceive the program as outdated and cumbersome with regards to the overall components of binders, sessions, and assignments and seek to consolidate the material to be more current, content specific, and adaptive to their needs.

The fourth layer of PD providers have an expectation of the BTMP program as being a constant and may be able to provide a more customized experience given the data provided by mentee/mentor surveys and/or district administrative input at the front end of the program.

**Competencies of the BTMP**

The competencies of the BTMP are described as the ability to carry out change and address the needs of current mentees and mentors. The first layer represented by the university is implemented by two experienced and competent instructors that facilitate a program that was developed and relatively unchanged since 2006. The instructors do not have the authority to necessarily change the program format.

The school district is the second layer and does not have a direct influence on the program’s components/supports with regards to the fluctuating needs of their mentees from year to year. Influence may be gained in a reactive manner through previous year’s survey data that is shared with the district. This would only serve to assess the needs of the following year’s second year mentee program, but would not help to facilitate the needs of first year mentees that are entering the program with potentially different needs.

Representing the third layer is the participating staff that do not have their immediate needs assessed before the program’s treatment. This results in presentations that are not viewed as congruent with their overall needs.
The PD providers sit as the fourth layer and seems to remain as a universal constant to the effect that second year mentees receive the same PD opportunities as they received the previous year.

**Results**

The participating staff is the layer of the BTMP that is most impacted by the program, and in order to get a fuller understanding of the impact of the program it is important to hear from the perspectives of the users (Patton, 2008). Using a mixed methods approach both qualitative data and quantitative data were gathered in this study. The qualitative statements were from the mentee and mentor focus groups. The quantitative data charts were gathered from the end of year survey provided by the BTMP. All of this data combined paints a picture of the current reality of the BTMP and hopefully assists in determining the best path for growing the program and supporting new teachers.

The current reality of the BTMP is displayed in Figure 10. This provides the year at a glance for BTMP implementation as it relates to meeting sessions, observations, and reflection assignments for mentors and mentees.
Figure 10

Current Status of the BTMP at BLSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Meeting Sessions / Observations / Reflection Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>• 2 full day meeting sessions with mentees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 1.5 full day meeting/training sessions with new mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.5 full day meeting session with mentors that were previously trained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No Assignments/Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>• 1.5-hour meeting session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflection Assignment One Danielson Framework 2A &amp; 2B and unpacking the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>• 1.5-hour meeting session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• PD Action Plan Development and Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• First Mentor Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>• Reflection Assignment Two – CCSS and Assessing Student Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>• Reflection Assignment Three – Danielson Framework 3B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>• 1.5-hour meeting session – PD Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Second Mentor Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>• Reflection Assignment Four – Danielson Framework 4E &amp; 4F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>• 1.5-hour meeting session – PD Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Completed folder with assignments and components due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>• Program Celebration Dinner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mentee results from the qualitative and quantitative data received were analyzed through the lens of Wagner’s 4 Cs. Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory was also considered and aligned with Wagner’s 4 Cs, since it was the original frame in which the BTMP was developed. Each one of the four identifiers of frame theory was correlated with one of Wagner’s 4Cs. They were combined in Figure 11 before the data analyzation. Looking at the 4 Cs and how they correspond with Bolman and Deal allows us to see which elements (in the case the components and supports) work, and which need modification as we move forward.
Perceptions of a Teacher Mentor Program

Figure 11

Comparison of Wagner’s 4Cs with Bowman and Deal’s Frame Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wagner’s Frame (4 Cs)</th>
<th>( \equiv )</th>
<th>Boleman &amp; Deal’s Frame Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context Frame</strong></td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td><strong>Political Frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultural, political, and economic components and supports of the program.</td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td>Interactions/fit of players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture Frame</strong></td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td><strong>Symbolic Frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the reality, patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that shape behavior within an organization</td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td>win-win, emphatic responses, and part of the larger management philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conditions Frame</strong></td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td><strong>Human Resource Frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structural, symbolic, leadership, and human resource elements</td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td>leadership and task centered people, feedback process, teacher professionalization, job enlargement, personal/professional support, confidence building, close to customer, and peer support component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies Frame</strong></td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td><strong>Structural Frame</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to carry out change and address the needs of current mentees and mentors</td>
<td>( \equiv )</td>
<td>research based practices, a formal tight/loose structure with change built in, and outcomes/impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frames were utilized in the analyzation of the components and supports of the BTMP from the data collected by participants in focus group, interview sessions, and survey data.

**Context**

Wagner’s first “C” is context. Within the context of this study, the following results speak to the mentees perceptions of the cultural, political, and economic components and supports of the program. When considering how Wagner’s interpretation of context is related to Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory, the selections from the qualitative statement generalizations include the Political Frame, which identifies the interaction/fit of players. The data gathered from the
focus group, interview sessions, and survey provided insight into two components and three supports from mentees and mentors on the context of the BTMP as listed in Figure 12.

**Figure 12**

*Context Components and Supports of BTMP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context Components</th>
<th>Context Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 1</strong>: Positive relationship with a mentor that is in the same building</td>
<td><strong>Support 1</strong>: Appreciation of a stipend for program participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and can relate to the same job description of the mentee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 2</strong>: More interaction needed from instructors with classroom observations,</td>
<td><strong>Support 2</strong>: Having seasoned veterans with job experience relatable to the mentee's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assignments, and meetings</td>
<td>position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Support 3</strong>: The importance that the local school support of the BTMP played for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the mentee and mentor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Context Component 1**

The first component included the desire to have a positive relationship with a mentor that is in the same building and can relate to the same job description of the mentee. Mentee 2 stated, “I think the most impactful component was just the really simple fact that our mentor has essentially the same job as us. So, for example, I work in special ed. so my mentor is a special education teacher” Mentee 5 explained:

I think my mentor, my relationship with my mentor is the most impactful component of the program to me. It is nice because he is right next door to my classroom so at any time if I’m feeling overwhelmed or having an issue or just need to go over and talk, I can knock on his door until he lets me in and then talk to him about whatever is upsetting me or get advice.

Mentor 5 elaborated:
I like that she was able to observe me and that I could go observe her, because we could both learn a lot from each other and it helped us to be able to see what our teaching styles were and bounce off ideas off of each other so I like that component. These three statements suggest that having a mentor that has a similar job title and is easily accessible are crucial to the development of the mentee.

**Context Component 2**

The second component described was the need for more interaction from instructors via classroom observations, assignments, and meetings. When asked the question, “Was there anything that had a negative impact?” Mentee 1 responded, “The assignments. I feel that they are just a little repetitive of things that I did for 4 years in college.” Mentor 1 replied, “I wish that people from the university would be able to go into the new staff members classrooms and like give them a little observation.” A potential reason for this is because the two instructors for the program are adjunct faculty members with a limited capacity role. Administrators at local school districts may need to fill these gaps the way the program is currently framed out.

**Context Support 1**

There were several themes within the supports noted in the qualitative data. The first support noted was the appreciation of a stipend for program participation. Mentor 4 commented, “I like being paid for the service; that's a nice perk.” Mentee 1 mentioned, “The financial part was a nice support.” It is important to note here that the current provision of a stipend may have limited the request for needing one. Evaluating a program that does not provide a stipend would have changed these results because the participants would likely desire to have a stipend attached.
Context Support 2

The second support related to the importance of having seasoned veterans with job experience relatable to the mentees position. Mentee 2 offered:

I think that the most impactful component was just the really simple fact that our mentor has essentially the same job as us. For example, I work in special ed, so my mentor is a special education teacher, but coming into the program I did not realize that that would be a fact, and the fact that they have done my job, and are me, just a few years later, is definitely helpful.

As impactful as this support can be, it can also pose an opposite effect when the mentor is not a seasoned veteran and/or has a different job experience than the mentee and cannot relate to their experience and needs.

Question 50 from the mentor survey supported specific reasons for having a seasoned veteran with a job experience relatable to the mentees position. The question was, “To what extent do you feel you helped your beginning teacher in the following areas?” The results are shown in Figure 13. The averages show that knowledge of resources for teaching, student discipline, and understanding school and district policies are noted as impactful areas by mentors at a weighted average of 3.50.
Figure 13

*Mentor Survey Question 50*

Q50 To what extent do you feel you helped your beginning teacher in the following areas?

Answered: 12  Skipped: 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>NONE</th>
<th>ALITTLE</th>
<th>SOME</th>
<th>A LOT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of subject matter</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of resources for teaching</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of teaching styles</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting instructional standards and objectives</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student assessment</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline/response to student behavior</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a culture for student learning</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating clearly with students</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with parents and families</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology to enhance classroom instruction</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to motivate students</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to engage students in learning</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a cultural relevant curriculum</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in school and district projects</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding school and district policies</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing professionalism</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>41.67%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Context Support 3**

The third support mentioned throughout the mentee interviews, which cannot be overlooked, is the importance that the local school support of the BTMP plays for the mentee and mentor. Mentee 2 stated, “My principal always held our meetings at his school and the school that I work at so it's very helpful for me.” Mentor 5 said, “I also would like to have more support from administrators. Just conversations on how it's going how it can be improved.”

Mentor six commented:

I wish the support came from the district or the schools because, and that's why I think having your own mentor program within your school I think would be a stronger mentor program, because you know the culture of each school and the culture of each community is different.

These comments from mentees and mentors show that local school administrator advocacy and assistance for the program can be seen as a foundational contextual support for mentee success that is outside of the control of the BTMP.

In summary, the context of the BTMP is impacted by the job alignment, location, and the relationship built between the mentee and mentor. Receiving support from building administrators is viewed by the participants as a strong program support along with interaction from the BTMP instructors. Assignment relevance was also noted as an important factor in the overall perception of participants. The BTMP survey noted that impactful settings within the context included that mentors covered areas such as resources for teaching, student discipline, and understanding school and district policies with mentees during the BTMP and BLSD induction program.
Culture

Wagner’s second “C” is culture. Wagner defines culture as the reality, patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that shape behavior within an organization. Within the culture of the BTMP, the following results speak to the mentee and mentor perspectives on how the program runs and operates within the four layers of the stakeholders. When considering how Wagner’s interpretation of culture is related to Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory, the selections from the qualitative statement generalizations include the symbolic frame, which identifies with the win-win, emphatic responses, and part of the larger management philosophy. The interview statements from the focus group and interview sessions provided insight into two components and four supports from mentees and mentors on the culture of the BTMP as listed in Figure 14.

Figure 14
Culture Components and Supports of BTMP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture Components</th>
<th>Culture Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 1:</strong> Relatability of assignments and PD offered.</td>
<td><strong>Support 1:</strong> Having a mentor helped ease the anxiety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 2:</strong> Aligning meeting sessions to participant needs.</td>
<td><strong>Support 2:</strong> Collaborative environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Support 3:</strong> Involvement of local school administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Support 4:</strong> Positive feedback from all stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Culture Component 1**

The generalized interview statements from the focus group and interview sessions provided insight into the perceptions on the culture of the BTMP. The first component noted from the mentees and mentors included the lack of relatability to assignments and PD (PD)
offered. This was reinforced through the statements provided by mentees and mentors during the focus groups and interviews. For example, it was noted that a general PD on classroom management was applicable to a physical education teacher; however, it was also mentioned that not all components were reflective of their or other special teachers’ job assignments.

Mentor 7 stated, “It would have been nice for the classroom management, but the, the one part about the math had nothing to do with us, but I was hoping there could be more things for us to pick from.” Mentee 9 spoke about the assignments:

I really would like them to figure out how to make it more relatable because there’s a lot of stuff that was going on that I was clueless about because I mean everything from our content standards is all different, it’s two different worlds I feel.

However, the PD was noted as a positive for the BTMP culture when it applies to the mentee as expressed by mentor 1 who explained:

The first positive impact that I am pulling from for this year would be the professional development for the math meeting, we got that in our last meeting where we were able to have. Two teachers were able to give us something that we could use the very next day in the classroom, and I think that is important for mentees to have because they do not have extra time to kind of plan, and so when they get something that they could hit the ground running with and start experimenting right away, that’s super positive.

These statements suggest that when the assignments and PD align with the mentee’s role, program impact is increased. Developing a survey to anticipate needs for program development could help benefit the mentee experience.

Looking at individual questions is an important way to compare mentor and mentee perceptions. The first question analyzed from the mentor survey was, “How would you describe
“your experience completing the mentor observations?” The results are displayed in Figure 15. The results show that all mentors in this study agreed that the observations are helpful for their beginning teacher, and the majority felt it was a worthwhile discussion and non-judgmental. None of the mentors indicated that the required paperwork was helpful to the discussion.
Figure 15

*Mental Observations*

Q30 How would you describe your experience completing the mentor observations? (Check all that apply)

**ANSWER CHOICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helpful for beginning teacher</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-judgmental</td>
<td>75.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence was collected during observation</td>
<td>61.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation created worthwhile discussion</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations were a burden to complete</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I requested release time to complete the observations</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The paperwork is helpful to the discussion</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared protege for the principal evaluation</td>
<td>38.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 13

**OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Other, Please Specify</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We had more discussion driving back and forth together</td>
<td>5/27/2020 8:25 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Culture Component 2**

The second component on culture discussed with the participants was the need to adjust and improve the meeting sessions and assignments. This allowed for an approach that is relevant to each participant regardless of their job title within the district. It is important to note that this is an extremely difficult task when facilitating a program that encompasses three different school districts that are operating under separate school boards, political frameworks, and strategic plans.

A first approach to helping align the BTMP practices within the school district is to host a quarterly mentor/mentee check-in to assess needs related to the program. Mentor 3 shared:

I really benefit from our mentor program at school, led by Mentor 2. She's very helpful and has a nice schedule for what we're supposed to do every month, and it's really beneficial to be able to have a set thing or goal that we're working toward every month or something that we need to check in on with our protégé.

**Culture Support 1**

Some supports were mentioned that champion the culture of the BTMP. The first support noted that having a mentor helps to ease the anxiety of a first-year teacher, and they enjoy the ability to have conversations with other mentors and mentees both in their buildings and at BTMP sessions. Additionally, according to the participants, the program provides a culture that is supportive of teacher’s professional licensure responsibilities by providing PD hours that are applicable for their state license renewal. This was particularly noted and appreciated by a teacher that recently moved from out of state. Mentee 7 explained:

The one thing that no one had mentioned, yet the only, like, great thing about this program is the professional development hours. That is one thing we had commented on
last year that in that first year we have enough PD hours. I do not do anything to renew my license, and that was shocking to me coming from Texas because you pretty much have to pay for your PD, and you have to have so many here. We got in that first year based on what the district gave us in this mentor program, I'm set for 5 years. So, that was like a big plus.

It is clear through these statements that it benefits the culture to have opportunities to connect with multiple mentors/mentees as well as mechanisms that support new teachers in their license renewal process.

**Culture Support 2**

A second culture support noted was the appreciation for the collaborative environment that is offered by the program with a request for more opportunities to have follow up discussions with other mentors and mentees on their responses to session discussion items and relevant assignments and PD that are aligned with their district roles, programs, and initiatives.

Mentee 8 elaborated:

I agree with everything that Mentee 7 said to add on to the mentors. Yes, it's been great to have my mentor, but to repeat again, it's been great to have the other mentors in my school, but also the mentees because I don't think Mentee 7 and I would be as close if we didn't get to meet in the beginning, and we were new together, and she honestly has given me a lot of support and mentored me as well. So, I think that's a great thing that you get from other mentees in your building by meeting them on that first day as well.

Mentee 9 stated:

There was a lot of take 15 minutes and talk to your mentor, and then we wouldn't talk about it, and they would move on. So, they would ask us a question, they say, “Discuss
with your mentor … and then it was just over and done with. Take about 15 minutes, and then they're like, “All right, times up,” and then we moved on, and no one went back and talked about it, and I'm like, “I would have liked to hear other people, you know, different, you know, everybody's opinions.” So, there was a lot of just talking and then not answering.

These statements reinforce the need for relationship building through reflection time during activities and discussions with other mentees and mentors in the program.

**Culture Support 3**

A third culture support noted as important was the support and involvement of local school administration for the program. Mentee 2 shared, “The other individual would be my principal so my admin, because he is always opening his school for our meetings, and is a reminder for when those meetings are because sometimes, I forget which is kind of often.”

Mentee 4 explained:

I don't know if I'm asking too much of the principals but being that you know you're not biased here. Maybe out more, like, maybe we could have two more meetings, like, in different schools, I don't know if that's too much. I'm figuring out to do. But, like, maybe we could go to a different school and, or maybe we could just have it at the same place but have principals there. I feel comfortable with my principal, but maybe there are people that want that kind of support from the person they work for … It's like your big brother showing up at your game.

These statements speak to the impact that local administration can have on the mentee experience. More involvement speaks to a positive impact while less involvement speaks to a lack of support and opportunities for mentees.
It was also noted that a formal and consistent process for mentors observing mentees as well as mentees observing mentors and other veteran teachers would benefit the program.

Mentor 3 stated:

I like that she was able to observe me and that I could go observe her, because we could both learn a lot from each other and it helped us to be able to see what our teaching styles were and bounce ideas off of each other, so I like that component.

Looking for other teachers who have strengths in various areas of need for the mentee will allow them to get different perspectives other than just their mentor.

**Culture Support 4**

A fourth support noted on culture was the feeling of support and positive feedback from all stakeholders was important. Mentee 5 replied:

I don't know if [PC1 or PC2] could pop in and somehow observe. I mean, like, maybe check, maybe that's not really even that important but maybe he observed me teaching and almost kind of like, you know, a figure that could tell you “Hey, you know, that's what I like about what you did or did not do.”

Mentee 6 commented:

Having the mentor for one, and I think having the mentees, as well as the support, because I was able to communicate with Mentee 5 and Mentee 7 just gave me a wonderful resource, which I'm, like, super excited about that. Also, the supports of the team as a whole, the way the school that I work at is set up, having seasoned teachers around as support.

Mentee 7 stated:
I think most of the people that have been supported through the program aren't necessarily in the program if that makes sense. It's more of just the culture at the schools like. I like the whole … we have the planning period set for the team meetings to where you can actually get your team, and you can ask them questions, and then you also have, like, grade level meetings and curriculum meetings just within the district where everyone's willing to help.

These statements concur that it takes a village of educators to support a mentee, more than just one mentor to support a mentee. Relying on the mentor alone is not enough.

In summary, the culture of the BTMP is impacted by the simple fact that a mentor and collaborative environment is provided. Also, and relatability of the session activities, assignments, and PD offerings were noted by the participants as a strong factor in the perceptions of mentees and mentors. Considering a way to gain this information and tailor the program to participant needs was noted.

The BTMP mentor perceptions from the survey supported the impact of mentor observing mentees in a non-judgmental format. It was again noted that involvement of local school administrators within the program benefits the overall perceptions of the BTMP culture.

Conditions

Wagner’s third “C” is *conditions* and are defined in this study as the structural, symbolic, leadership, and human resource elements that are imbedded in the BTMP. Within the conditions of the program, the following results speak to the mentees’ perspectives on how the BTMP runs and operates within the four layers of the stakeholders.

When considering how Wagner’s interpretation of “conditions” is related to Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory, the selections from the qualitative statements from the participants
include the *human resource frame*, which identifies with leadership and task-centered people, feedback process, teacher professionalization, job enlargement, personal/professional support, confidence building, and peer support component. The interview statements from the focus group and interview sessions provided insight into two components and two supports from mentees and mentors on the conditions of the BTMP as listed in Figure 16.

**Figure 16**

*Conditions Components and Supports of BTMP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions Components</th>
<th>Conditions Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 1</strong>: PD offerings</td>
<td><strong>Support 1</strong>: Mentee/mentor interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 2</strong>: Content of assignments, information, and materials provided</td>
<td><strong>Support 2</strong>: PD Content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conditions Component 1**

The first conditions component that the mentee and mentor perceptions supported was the importance of having a PD component. Positive statements about the program highlighted the appreciation of broad-based PD such as classroom management. Mentee nine said:

I really enjoyed last week's meeting because we came in here, then it was a breakout session. As irritating as it was staying here in the snow, but it was nice because it was a little breakout session for classroom management, which I felt actually applied to, you know, teaching P.E. and stuff in the gym. So, I'm glad that we had that opportunity to learn about classroom management.

Providing PD opportunities that can relate to a wide range of job titles increases the conditions for positive impact with mentees. According to the mentees, additional broad-based PD opportunities could also include student engagement strategies, questioning techniques, and parent communication practices.
Conditions Component 2

The second component in conditions related to the content of teacher assignments, involves information binders and materials provided at sessions. Mentee 2 commented:

I feel like the questions and the prompts asked were asked too far in advance. There was a lot of things I was confused about, and my mentor would try, and you know, work with me with it but it was things that I haven't even gotten to. So, I feel like maybe if those specific questions and prompts were asked towards the end of the year, rather than in the beginning, it would have had a more positive impact.

Mentee 8 explained:

So, personally for me, because this is a program for first and second year [teachers], I just came out of college as well. A lot of the assignments or the PD with the two instructors were things that I did just learn in college or go over in college or where the paperwork I was doing in college assignments were just like what I just did student teaching. Also, it’s the same thing you did as a student teacher with your cooperating teacher. I think it's just more about adding stress because I'm already overwhelmed as a first year or second year teacher. And then I think, “Oh, I need to plan in this PD or you sit down do these assignments as well, or maybe just like giving a list of questions to like if you're feeling stressed, maybe you go over these questions together or what's overwhelming you and coming up with some pointers with your mentor would be more beneficial.”

Mentor 7 added, “The three-ring binder. It seems like busy work, some of that stuff in there could be condensed, shortened that we don't really need it.”

These statements suggest that while it is important to have a wide range of resources for mentees, it may be more impactful to break it into sections for distribution rather than giving it...
all at once. Additionally, modifying assignments to adjust to the evolving needs of mentees as college coursework, theoretical frameworks, and induction methods change over time, it will increase the perceptions of the program and impact it can have with mentees and mentors.

**Conditions Support 4**

The first support noted in the conditions related to the mentee/mentor interaction experience. Mentee 2 shared:

> The support that I felt impacted my experience the most is the person who was signed up to be my mentor, like Mentor 3 mentioned about hers. Not only are they helpful, you know, in the workplace, but we've gotten to be really close friends, our personalities, go well really well together.

Additionally, having a relationship with their mentor as well as having multiple mentors to talk to in the building was noted as important.

Mentee 5 expressed:

> The other mentees and the other mentors in school has been so helpful to me as well. I have Mentee 6 whom I'm very close to. One of my closest friends in the school is one that I met through the first few meetings of the, of the training today when I was having a breakdown. One of the other mentors was there comforting me and giving me advice and talking through the issues that I had been having. So, just the ability to mentor anyone or in the willingness to mentor any mentee that you see is struggling, and just the kindness, and you know just picking really good people to be mentors I think was a really, really good helpful thing.”
These statements reinforce the impact of positive relationships between mentees and mentors and how they can reach far beyond the classroom and develop into a broader and deeper range of support for the mentee.

Another element of conditions was evident in the data collected in the mentee survey. One of the questions asked, “How would you describe your experience completing the mentor observations?” The results are displayed in Figure 17 and show that over half of the participants reported that they collected evidence during the mentor observations and that they were non-judgmental. Less than half of the participants noted them as helpful overall. This is in contrast to the mentor perceptions where 100% considered their observations of mentees helpful to their development.
Conditions Support 2

The second support noted in the conditions related to the content of the PD offerings. Mentee 1 shared, “I would say that the assignments … I feel are just a little repetitive of things that I did for 4 years in college.” Mentee 6 stated:
I do enjoy the professional development. I think last year I attended the same professional development. However, I struggle with it being elementary and being in the middle school, so try to adapt it to like to make it age appropriate.

Mentee 5 responded:

I wasn't able to attend the professional development yesterday, but from what I'm hearing from the other mentees, it wouldn't have been relevant to me at all. Being a music teacher and having to have gone to a math professional development is completely out of my content area and completely irrelevant to my daily life as a teacher.

These statements suggest that both the assignments and PD offerings could be more tailored to these participants’ job titles and the grade levels served. Additionally, the conditions provided by the assignments could be revised to build on rather than revisit content learned at the college course level.

Suggestions provided by mentors in the focus group session highlighted ways to enhance the structural/professional components and supports of the program. Mentor 2 reported that they institute a program in their building in which, “they have to attend once a month with me, and we do mentor sessions with mentors and proteges.” Mentor 4 elaborated:

I really benefit from our mentor program at school, led by Mentor 2. She's very helpful and has a nice schedule for what we're supposed to do every month, and it's really beneficial to be able to have a set thing or goal that we're working towards every month or something that we need to check in on with our protégé.”

These statements reinforce the importance of having a strong support community within the local school in addition to the BTMP. This serves as a bridge to help connect the conditions of the BTMP with the conditions of the mentee’s local school context.
In summary, the conditions of the BTMP are impacted by the materials, assignments, and information provided within the program. It was noted that assignments could be better served if tailored to mentee needs as well as materials and information given out within each session instead of all in the beginning. Additionally, the content of the PD offerings combined with the interactions with other mentors and mentees was seen as a significant factor within the conditions of the BTMP. While the majority of the mentee’s perceived the mentor observations as non-judgmental, fewer perceived the as beneficial to their development.

**Competencies**

Wagner’s fourth “C” is *competencies*. In this study, competencies are described as the ability to carry out change and address the needs of current mentees and mentors. Within the competencies of the program, the following results speak to the mentee’s perspectives on how the BTMP runs and operates within the four layers of the stakeholders. When considering how Wagner’s interpretation of “competencies” is related to Bolman and Deal’s (1984) frame theory, the selections from the qualitative statement generalizations by the participants in this study include the *structural frame*, which identifies with research-based practices, a formal tight/loose structure with change built in, and outcomes/impact.

The interview statements from the focus group and interview sessions provided insight into one component and three supports from mentees and mentors on the competencies of the BTMP as listed in Figure 18.
Figure 18

Competencies Components and Supports for BTMP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies Components</th>
<th>Competencies Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Component 1</strong>: Built in tight-loose structure for assignments and content of sessions and PD offerings</td>
<td><strong>Support 1</strong>: Connecting with multiple mentors and mentees from the same and different buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Support 2</strong>: Updated session information, activities, assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Support 3</strong>: Release Time for activities and assignments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competencies Component 1**

The first and only component that was identified as an area of consideration is related to the development of a more formal tight/loose structure with change built in to address the needs of the mentees. This suggests that mentees would like to be able to adjust assignments and submissions based upon their current roles and responsibilities and have input into the content of sessions and PD opportunities. Mentor six mentioned:

After doing this for many years and getting to know PC1 and PC2 a little bit better. I did reach out to them. I sent them a question about one of the reflections coming up, and I asked them if we could change it a little bit to make it more beneficial or authentic for what’s going on with me and my mentee.

Mentee 9, who was a fine arts specialist stated:

Of all the assignments, the content, it’s honestly really hard because I don’t know what a lot of it is talking about because it is hard to relate. There’s some stuff that, I, you know, besides the Danielson stuff, and I have no idea sometimes what’s going on in that packet because I teach P.E.
Mentor 7 explained the PD sessions: “It would have been nice for the classroom management, but the, the one part about the math had nothing to do with us, but I was hoping there could be more things for us to pick from.”

These statements suggest that the current assignments and PD opportunities are hit and miss. According to the participants, developing flexibility within the program for staff that may have outlying positions such as science, social studies, fine arts, reading specialist, and English language learners would increase the impact on mentees that serve schools in capacities outside of the regular classroom setting.

Another element of conditions mentees spoke to was regarding how they see their mentor support them in certain areas. The question was asked, “To what extent do you feel your mentor helped you in the following areas?” The results are displayed in Figure 19 and show that the majority of mentees reported that mentors helped them with student behavior, creating a culture for student learning, communicating/engaging with students, and professionalism. Several participants also noted that they did not feel like their mentor was able to help them with using technology to enhance instruction.
**Figure 19**

*Mentees' Perceptions Regarding Mentor Help in Specific Areas*

**Q47 To what extent do you feel your mentor helped you in the following areas?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>NONE</th>
<th>A LITTLE</th>
<th>SOME</th>
<th>A LOT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of subject matter</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of resources for teaching</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of teaching styles</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting instructional standards and objectives</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student assessment</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline/response to student behavior</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>77.79%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a culture for student learning</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>77.79%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating clearly with students</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>77.79%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with parents and families</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology to enhance classroom instruction</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to motivate students</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to engage students in learning</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>77.79%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a cultural relevant curriculum</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in school and district projects</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding school and district policies</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing professionalism</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>77.79%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Competencies Support 1

The first competencies support mentioned as impactful was having access to multiple mentees and/or mentors within a building and having the opportunity to connect with mentees and mentors from other buildings and school districts. Mentee 2 opined:

Another thing I would say was super impactful is again just scheduled meetings where we have to come together because it’s really easy to, you know, go days and weeks without talking about something specific, and every single mentor and mentee coming together to talk about one specific thing I think is really important.

Additionally, having administrative support was mentioned as having a positive impact. Here again we see the need for mentors and mentees having time set aside specifically for assignments and reflection.

Competencies Support 2

A second competencies support identified was the binder of information provided at the beginning of the program along with the assignments, activities, and session content presented at times. Mentee 3 said:

I found like some of the stories were a little bit dated. Like I felt, like, maybe there could be. I don’t know how to say it … up to … more up to date. Examples, or methods, as far as I’m thinking, specifically about classroom management.

Mentee 1 expressed:

I would say, some of the materials that we’ve been given, I know the binders have been helpful, but being given so much. I honestly have not read everything that I’ve been given. So, it would be. It’s not as impactful for me because I don’t have time to read it.

Mentor 6 commented:
I actually do like some of the reflection stuff because I think it’s good to read things and reflect on them, and I think it’s really positive for them to do that, although I don’t know that I understand the reason everything has to be written up. Sometimes, I wish we could just have the conversations and not always have to write it all.

There are a couple of points made within these statements. First, it appears that giving the entire binder of information in the beginning may lead to overload for mentees. Second, having reflection is noted as impactful; however, related to assignments and activities, discussion with others is seen as more impactful than reflecting by themselves through writing.

**Competencies Support 3**

The third competencies support that was mentioned as an area for consideration was allowing for release time for the activities suggested in the program such as observing another teacher and providing a more systematic approach to observations opportunities for mentees to observe additional staff. This brings up the potential for intentional observation opportunities for specific performance skills such as classroom management, Math/ELA standard delivery, and engagement/questioning techniques. Mentee 6 shared:

Having the mentor for one, and I think having the mentees, as well as the support, because I was able to, like, I’m able to communicate with Mentee 5, and Mentee 7 just gave me a wonderful resource, which I’m, like, super excited about that, and also, the supports of the team as a whole, the way the school that I work at is set up, having seasoned teachers around as support for, like, answers that I can’t. Maybe my mentor may not know about, or maybe she might not understand, like, what’s going on within like a particular discipline.

Mentee 8 stated:
I agree with everything that Mentee 7 said to add on to the mentors. Yes, it’s been great to have my mentor, but to repeat again it’s been great to have the other mentors in my school but also the mentees because I don’t think me and Mentee 7 would be as close if we didn’t get to meet in the beginning and we were new together, and she honestly has given me a lot of support and mentored me as well. So, I think that’s a great thing too is that support that you get from other mentees in your building meeting them on that first day as well.

These statements speak to the impact that other mentors and mentees have on the experience of a new teacher in the BTMP. Having access to multiple mentors within a building as well as having opportunities to converse and collaborate with other mentees and mentors from other buildings seems to increase the impact of the experience for beginning teachers in the program.

In summary, the competencies of the BTMP are impacted by the ability of mentees and mentors to collaborate with other mentees and mentors from multiple buildings. Providing release time to complete observations and reflections is also perceived by the participants in this study as a benefit for both mentees and mentors. Competencies that mentees mentioned as impacted within the BTMP included student behavior, creating a culture for student learning, communicating/engaging with students, and professionalism. Moreover, updating session information, activities, and assignments and allowing for modification when needed is perceived by the participants as a way to increase the perceptions of the BTMP competencies.

Mentee & Mentor Overview

Two additional questions from the mentee and mentor survey provided an overall view of how the experience with the university BTMP resonated with them. One question from the mentee survey that symbolized the overall impact of the program had on their future aspirations
in education asked, “What has been the impact of the Beginning Teacher Program on your wanting to continue to teach?” The results, displayed in Figure 20, show that 66.66% of the participants asserted that it was positive, while only 33.33% indicated that it had no affect or only somewhat of a negative impact.

**Figure 20**

*Participants’ Positions Regarding the Impact of the Beginning Teacher Program*

Q13 What has been the impact of the Beginning Teacher Program on your wanting to continue to teach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely positive</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat positive</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat negative</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely negative</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A question from the mentor survey that summarized their perception on the impact they had within the BTMP was, “To what extent do you feel you helped prepare your beginning teacher for the administrative evaluation?” The results displayed in Figure 21 show that 84.62%
of mentors feel that they have helped prepare beginning teachers for the administrative evaluation, with 15.38% indicating that they did not prepare them at all.

**Figure 21**

*Mentors’ Responses Regarding Their Impact on the Preparation of New Teachers*

Q32 To what extent do you feel you helped prepare your beginning teacher for the administrative evaluation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANSWER CHOICES</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not at all</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results Analysis**

An area of needed change within the BTMP relates to the overall relevance, practicality, and adaptability of the content provided during the program and related PD sessions. Changes made would revolve around gaining insight into the specific needs of staff as determined by their grade level, content area, and adaptive needs. Additionally, providing a survey of mentees at the
Beginning and mid-point of the program would help to determine areas of strengths and weaknesses in order to guide the content of the future sessions and PD offered.

Murphy (2016) cited in his section on *Talent Development*, “We also know that focus on content is an essential element of quality PD (Garet et al., 2001). Research helps us see that “an explicit focus on subject matter” (Borko, 2004, p. 5) rather than on more general instructional practices defines effective PD (Desimone, 2002). Indeed, Porter and associates (2003) conclude that “generic professional development that focuses on teaching techniques without a content focus does not appear to be effective” (p. 32).” (p. 69). The current program not only encompasses teachers of varying k-8 content levels, it also includes three separate school districts with varying initiatives and intentions. Creating a program that can utilize the diversity of the program in a proactive manner could be beneficial to mentee talent development.

Educators face challenges on varying levels that relate to professional capacity, relationship building, and output of student achievement. All of which are affected by the context of our local environment in which we are employed. Asghar et al. (2013) stated, “Moreover, there is consensus that we need mentors throughout our lives and that our needs for growth change as we develop and are influenced by context. These contextual variables include the increasingly complex adaptive challenges we face as educators” (p. 40). Utilizing a brief mid-point survey to adapt the program would benefit mentees as their new teaching experiences shape their needs. Moreover, additions to the survey given at the end of the school year could help shape the program for the mentees entering the second year of the program.
Interpretation

Judgements

The purpose of this study was to gauge the participating mentee and mentor perceptions on the components and supports they are receiving. Using the BTMP survey helped support the qualitative data from the focus group and allowed for several consistent component themes to be identified as most impactful. This included program set-up, assignments, and session locations/content. Consistent support themes identified as the most impactful were PD offerings, release time, interactions with mentor(s)/mentees, and support from local administration/program coordinators.

Regarding the program studied, ironically, it seems as if what was needed most was provided least. This included intentionality and support from building administrators for release time, program assignment recognition/support, and interaction time with multiple mentees and mentors at sessions. The large majority of participants indicated more attention should have been given to these particular components and supports would have improved their overall experience.

Conversely, what was needed least seemed to be provided most in the perceptions of the participants. This included the majority of the assignments and activities feeling like busy work rather than something connected to their local school setting. Participants indicated they would have preferred a stronger connection between assignments and their classroom experiences.

Revising the elements of the BTMP to address the most needed components and supports as indicated by the participants would create a much more positive and meaningful overall program experience for both mentors and mentees.
Recommendations

The BTMP should continue with the following recommendations that will be detailed in the following sections.

- Annual meetings with program coordinators and administrators to align program components and supports with district needs and capabilities.
- Survey staff prior to program implementation to gauge needs and focus supports and resources.
- Adjust assignments and activities to relate to a broader context of mentee job descriptions.

Conclusion

Overall, the analysis through the lens of Wagner’s four Cs indicated that that BTMP program appears to have an appropriate framework and the capability of providing a comprehensive model for beginning teacher development. However, in order to do so, the four layers of the university, school district, participating staff, and PD providers must adapt and change their ways of current operation within the BLSD/BTMP. The following section provides an overview showing a future vision for the Birch Lake School District Beginning Teacher Mentor Program.
SECTION FIVE: “TO BE,” A FRAMEWORK

The issues raised within each layer of the “4 Cs” impede on the school district’s ability to develop, monitor, and improve upon the content and quality of the BTMP participant experience. This section provides a view at what the program could look like if these issues were not present. Staying within the four layered context of the university, school district, participating staff, and PD providers, there are many potential outcomes that can be realized through action and program modifications. Some of these outcomes include an updated program with participant input, relevant assignments, activities, and PD per the participants educational role, district, and administrative involvement throughout the entire process, modeled best practices, and follow through on assignments and participation from building administration and program coordinators.

For the change plan to take root and develop, there must be collaboration through all four layers of stakeholders. This will be a key strategy detailed in the next section and will include specifics on the timing, purpose, and content of the collaboration meetings.

It is essential that each layer has all three of these aspects imbedded into the collaborative meetings as they are interrelated and connected. Collaboration methods may include in person or virtual meetings within the four layers of stakeholders and would include more of a qualitative form of data collection through stakeholder discussions.

To Be Context

In this “To Be” framework (see Figure 22) the context is such that all four layers operate with a clear understanding of their roles and boundaries within the BLSB as it pertains to the induction and mentoring process facilitated with the university. This will create the connections necessary between the layers so that they can operate in a more harmonious fashion.
Both the university and school district will work together to make decisions regarding program and format changes annually to coordinate efforts and maximize resources. Staff will feel increased value because they are compensated for their work. PD is provided organically as a result of data gathered from pre-program surveys. As such, PD providers will be much more in tune with the needs of mentees.
“To Be” Culture

The culture will represent purpose, intent, and pride within the BTMP as well as connect to culture of each participating district. The university and district will work together to modify the program on an annual basis to reflect current best practices as well as participating districts local programs and initiatives. Mentees and mentors will have a stronger connection to the program as they learn about the BTMP history, foundation, and relevance to their current job function. Participating staff would feel ownership because their voices were heard.

PD providers will have to be considered annually to maintain relevance to all participants. This will increase the perception of relevance and respect for the programs components and supports. The opportunities for pre-program survey results will help drive the purpose and intent while the reflective dialogue and collaboration among the four layers will help instill the sense of comradery and pride within the BTMP.

Cultural competence will play a key role within the change implementation process. As we begin to understand and interact with each of the four layers of stakeholders, there must be consideration of how both their personal and professional cultures perceive the context of the change initiatives. There perceptions will either turn into trust or distrust of our intent and actions.

A strong consideration as change plans are communicated will be what Bryk and Schneider (2002) explained as “relational trust.” They said, “Relational trust diminishes when individuals perceive that others are not behaving in ways that can be understood as consistent with their expectations about the other’s role obligations.” (p. 21). Different expectations from the four layers of stakeholders will need to be considered as the change plans get developed to
provide that there is trust. Without trust the roots of change can only exist skin deep. Having trust develops the depth that roots need to hold change firm.

“**To Be**” **Conditions**

The conditions of the BLSD induction and mentor program will display an increase in the perception of relevance within the school district and participating staff layers. BLSD will annually communicate it’s needed components and supports with the BTMP program coordinators to align with local visions, initiatives, methodologies. This will positively impact participating staff perceptions about the opportunities provided within the program and will increase their own efforts and capacity.

Analysis on the survey data will have to be completed in conjunction with the BLSD administrative team and BTMP program coordinators to seek out PD providers and program session content/assignments. PD providers will have to be made aware of the various staff classification groups they are presenting to and will need to be flexible and present content through multiple lenses of staff classifications such as music, art, physical education., social work, reading/math specialist and various other content specialists participating. As such, program session content and assignments should be flexible to accommodate the varied needs of mentees from year to year.

“**To Be**” **Competencies**

The competencies will be more aligned and focused on the needs of the mentees. Additionally, there will be a wider range of mentor and PD availability for mentees. The university and school district will work together to establish the components and supports of the program. Participating staff will see value and relevance in the program as needs are assessed prior to the PD sessions. PD providers will need to tailor their presentations to cover the various
classifications of staff such as music, art, P.E., social work, reading/math specialist and various other content specialists participating. The ability to connect the competencies of the participating school districts will increase the amount of support available to all participating staff.

Within the BLSD/BTMP, trust will need to be developed in the beginning through the communication and initiation of the change plan separately within all four layers (university, school districts, participating staff, and PD providers). Additionally, it will need to be developed between them once the change is enacted because there will be interplay between all of the layers. If each layer as well as how they interplay are not monitored and facilitated correctly, there could be a break in the links of trust chain and halt the depth at which the roots of change can grow. To make this all happen; I will be outlining the development of role obligations for each layer of the BLSD/BTMP in Section 6.

Part of the foundation of change needed within the BLSD/BTMP program is that change needs to occur annually and should never cease as your participants undoubtedly will change every year. It leaves several unanswered questions regarding the four layers and the layers ability to collaborate with each other within the framework of the BLSD/BTMP and provide a comprehensive, relevant, and adaptable program that can be appropriately monitored. By harnessing the potential of Wagner’s 4 Cs (context, culture, conditions, and competencies), sustainable systemic change can occur.

The university is able to allow modification of the program beyond the original form to meet the needs of the current participants. The original creator of the program left the university years ago, leaving behind a vibrant and thriving program at the time that has not been modified since. As the university sits as the top layer, it provides the overall components and supports of
the program through the provision of materials, content, sessions, mentor training, and PD.

Additionally, the University sets the expectations for the program within the three subsequent layers of school districts, participating staff, and PD providers.

By collaborating with the university annually to establish the components and supports, the school districts will ensure a relevant experience for the mentees. This is a comprehensive and complicated issue because the program is currently structured in a way that relieves the school district of responsibilities and allows them to distance themselves from the program. However, much like what would happen if you had someone else raise your children without your input, your “children” or (staff) may not mature in a way that reflects the culture of your “family” or (school district). With the school district sitting as the second layer, this creates an ultimate disconnect with the first layer (university) and the third layer, (participating staff).

Participating staff will see relevance to a program that is monitored more at the school district level and reflective of their current needs and trends. Currently, their assignments and reflections are submitted to the university for review and recording purposes. Additionally, the assignments and prompts were created over a decade ago by someone that is no longer affiliated with the program.

PD providers and corresponding training programs will be selected and provided based on current staff survey data. The current model is more prescriptive in nature serving k-5 math content and classroom management only. Providing training opportunities for the various k-8 needs served by the program will be a challenge. Connecting this with the layer of the school district’s local resources may prove to be an untapped resource that can benefit the program.
Conclusion

When considering Wagner’s 4Cs and implementing strategies that compliment across the 4 Cs, you have an opportunity to provide optimal effect amongst beginning teachers. Following the analyzation from the focus group and survey data, the next steps will be to use the information from the “As Is” document and develop a change proposal along with strategies and actions that identify with existing themes within the data provided. This is described in detail in the next section.
SECTION SIX: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The “As Is” document and the “To Be” document from Sections four and five can be viewed as a beginning and end document. This section serves as the bridge that connects the two to bring about lasting change within the BLSD/BTMP. Frames of reference for this section will include Bryk and Schneider’s work on relational trust, Collins work on confronting the brutal facts, and Wagner and Kegan’s work on the ecology of change. Figure 23 shows the overall breakdown of strategies and actions.

**Figure 23**

*Breakdown of Strategies and Actions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish trust and accountability</td>
<td>Contract reviews on each stakeholders role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the balance of accountability</td>
<td>Re-development, distribution, and collection of BLSD/BTMP assignments with involvement from all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual re-creation of the PD opportunities offered to participants</td>
<td>Annual inventory of mentee and mentor roles and needs PD expansion of offerings and requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of the BLSD/BTMP sessions</td>
<td>Closer proximity to local schools and rotation of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-structure the mentor role within the program</td>
<td>Allocate for a minimum of two mentors for each building Allow mentees to have access to multiple mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of community partners for decision making that includes the university, school districts, and participating staff</td>
<td>Formally meet at least three times annually to plan, reflect, and celebrate the BLSD/BTMP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bryk and Schneider (2002) explained that there is, “interplay among four considerations: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity.” (p. 23). Through all four of these lenses, each layer of the BLSD/BTMP continuously analyzes the behaviors of the other layers. If a critical behavior is perceived by another layer as breaking one of the four considerations, it
could break trust and derail the integrity and impact of the program. The following strategies and actions will build the trust within and across all layers of stakeholders within the BLSD/BTMP.

**Strategies**

**Strategy 1**

A first simple strategy is establishing trust and accountability. To do this, we will have to consider how all four layers of stakeholders in the BLSD/BTMP will interplay to develop the relational trust needed for lasting change. This will begin with a basic outline of each of the stakeholders’ responsibilities as they relate to the BLSD/BTMP along with a strong communication plan. This communication plan will include contracts for each of the four layers (university, school districts, participating staff, and PD providers) and detail their roles and responsibilities for the BLSD/BTMP.

Wagner and Kegan (2006) described in their work on the ecology of change that, “Developing a system of who is accountable to whom and for what—and having a means to track progress—are critical elements of improving any system’s performance.” (p. 135). The system of the BLSD/BTMP currently places much of the accountability on the layer of the university and relinquishes much of the responsibility on the participating school districts. By creating a more balanced approach for accountability, more fidelity can take place within the framework of the BLSD/BTMP.

Actions and procedures for this strategy include that each participant be made aware of their role and the role of the other stakeholders. These role descriptions are presented and discussed at the first formal meeting with all participants that would take place following the initial trainings and introductions. To develop this in a way that allows participants to get to
know all of the stakeholders, they should all be represented for each participating school, introduce themselves, and participate in the presentation portion of their roles.

**Strategy 2**

A second strategy to increase the balance of accountability includes the re-development, distribution, and collection of BLSD/BTMP assignments. By ensuring that the administration is included more on the local level could coordinate the assignments to be more reflective of each school’s individual programs, goals, and initiatives. A good example of this is the current state of remote, hybrid, and in-person instruction being implemented across the nation. A program that can allow for flexibility within the assignments could benefit BLSD/BTMP participants to grow within their own garden of experience through the current school system in which they teach. Additionally, being able to relate assignments to practical local school applications would provide a more supporting environment for new teachers and increase the amount of relevance and appreciation for the program.

Policies and procedures for this strategy would include the development of a BLSD/BTMP assignment guideline document that lists potential activities for participants to engage that can be flexed within each local school environment context. The assignments will stay concurrent with current standards embedded within the current BLSD/BTMP and provide local control over the application of those standards. Participants would complete the document via school administrator signatures and provide the document to university program supervisors for verification of completion.

**Strategy 3**

A third strategy includes the annual re-creation of the PD opportunities offered to participants. Through annual analyzation of mentee and mentor teaching roles and qualifications,
the BLSD/BMTP could potentially benefit by using the mentors in an expanded role to provide PD on a more diverse scale. Current mentor roles from the 2019-2020 school year included elementary teachers, junior high content teachers, special education teachers, fine arts teachers, and reading specialists. To develop a PD strategy to harness this collective experience could only benefit the mentee experience.

By leveraging the talent within the participating local school districts a wide variety of PD topics and networking opportunities could develop for mentees. A strong consideration for this to develop would be the consideration of any monetary compensation for mentors to provide this increased responsibility. Policies and procedures for this strategy include first taking an annual inventory of mentee and mentor roles and needs, then using the data gathered to develop a coordinated PD plan in addition to harnessing the mentor’s qualifications to address the mentees needs. Once this has been done, mentors will need to be selected to provide various PD opportunities for mentees to attend.

Mentees will be required to attend three PD sessions provided within the program. They can substitute one of the three sessions with an outside PD if provided by their school district. Forms for this will be managed by the university and submitted to local building administration upon completion.

**Strategy 4**

A fourth strategy involves the location of the BLSD/BTMP sessions. Providing sessions that are closer in proximity to the participants school-based locations would benefit in the accommodation of the participants personal and professional needs. Additionally, a rotation of locations could benefit in the overall scope of the participants experience through the opportunity to view various school settings. It is the overall recommendation that all sessions are held in a
location that is more central to the location of the participating school districts along with the ability to be held virtually in needed situations.

Policies and procedures for this strategy would include the collection and analysis of data from the BLSD/BTMP registration documents. Once participating districts are accounted for annually, a development of locations for the sessions would be created and inserted within the BLSD/BTMP schedule. The schedule will be finalized by July 31 of each calendar year.

**Strategy 5**

A fifth strategy for improving the BLSD/BTMP is to re-structure the mentor role within the program so that mentees have direct access to multiple mentors within their own buildings. Youngs and King (2002) stated, “At the macro level, reviewers discuss both linking teachers to external assistance and creating internal conditions that support teacher development” (as cited in Murphy, 2016). By providing multiple mentors for all mentees within the same building, it could increase the rate at which the mentee capacity grows. Additionally, it would provide more availability and the provision of multiple perspectives for mentees’ growth.

Policies and procedures for this strategy would be to host a minimum of two mentors in every building. The role of each building’s mentors would be to support all mentees allowing for a more collaborative experience that allows for mentees to gain insight from multiple perspectives. This could run much like a local PLC in the sense that they could develop their own norms and SMART Goals along with monitoring data and completion of BLSD/BTMP assignments.

Blasé and Blasé (1999) developed six PD strategies linking leadership and PD. The strategies coincide with this study in that they reinforce the overall concepts that collaboration,
relationships, and redesign are imperative PD success (as cited in Murphy, 2016). Figure 24 lists the six strategies noted by Blasé and Blasé (1999).

**Figure 24**

*Blasé and Blasé Six Strategies of Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1</th>
<th>Emphasizing the study of teaching and learning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 2</td>
<td>Supporting collaboration efforts among educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3</td>
<td>Developing coaching relationships among educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 4</td>
<td>Encouraging and supporting redesign of programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 5</td>
<td>Applying the principals of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 6</td>
<td>Implementing action research to inform instructional decision making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first four strategies are addressed within this restructured framework of mentor roles. This would also directly tie in with the second strategy as it would relate to the activities, assignments, and relevance of the mentees experience.

Through the increase in mentors available you can begin to narrow in on the first strategy, “emphasize the study of teaching and learning,” within the context of the mentee’s current position. This potential could be multiplied as you add other participating school mentors to your network. As the structure of the BLSD/BTMP develops under this umbrella, you can then potentially develop a more focused and spread out PD plan that emphasizes selected staff that display high capacity in select areas for select assignments. The program could potentially then run more like a scavenger hunt/scramble where mentees have to visit certain buildings to gain insight on various components of the program. The supports could potentially be spread out in a way that allows staff to visit other buildings to gain additional perspectives.
The second strategy is supporting collaboration efforts among educators. With multiple mentors within each building all working with the same staff, you create a PLC leadership group essentially and can operate your mentor program in a more collaborative manner versus in isolation via one mentor and one mentee. Mentors can collaborate on their various strengths that can be strategically set up by design by local building administrators to provide a vast and rich experience for mentees.

The third strategy is developing coaching relationships among educators. Through the utilization of a PLC process via a School Mentor Leadership Team (SMLT) you could increase the capacity of your mentors through collaboration and coordination of their efforts as they pertain to their strengths. This would provide additional relevance to the varying needs of mentees as certain mentor strengths may identify with mentee weaknesses. Under a model of one mentor for one mentee, you miss the potential of being able to adapt to the needs of mentees along with the opportunity to provide variety to their experience.

The fourth strategy, encouraging and supporting redesign of programs, means that an instrumental part will be to continuously re-evaluate the program and it’s options either within the local district or within the BLSD/BTMP participating districts. A collaborative effort with other participating districts would provide a wider variety of options for mentees.

The fifth and sixth strategies of applying the principals of adult learning, growth, and development to all phases of staff development; and implementing action research to inform instructional decision making relate directly to the application of current educational best practices within the BLSD/BTMP sessions along with the implementation of mentee surveys to inform BLSD/BTMP instructional decision making.
Strategy 6

The final and sixth strategy for improving the BLSD/BTMP is the development of community partners for decision making that includes members from three of the four layers of stakeholders (university, school districts, participating staff). More specifically, within these layers are key members that will need to formally meet at least three times annually in order to plan, reflect, and celebrate the BLSD/BTMP. Drago-Seversen et al. (2013) explained, “Thinking and reflecting with trusted others is a powerful strategy for improving practice and growth” (p. 214). By collaborating together, these three stakeholder groups could develop a more comprehensive and beneficial program for mentees. Applying this thought, the BLSD/BTMP would need to develop a committee with key members. These key members include, selected mentors, program directors from the University, an administrator from each participating school as well as a district level administrator from each participating district such as a Curriculum Director or Human Resource Director. For the sake of this discussion, we will call the committee the CPC (Central Planning Committee).

The first meeting should take place in August and will focus on the planning of initial content sessions and PD offerings. This should take place after all members have been selected, trained, and surveyed. The survey results along with the input from building level and district level administrators will give the program coordinators the opportunity to develop the content focus for the upcoming sessions and PD offerings. Additionally, it would behoove the CPC to combine local resources such as staff talent and local PD offerings for this endeavor. For example, a participating district may already be planning an in-service on the topic of ELA strategies which may be a focus for a particular mentees SMART Goal from another district. The ability to allow that mentee to attend that PD could prove beneficial as well as cost effective.
Another example could be leveraging the wide range of talents possessed by the various mentors throughout the BLSD/BTMP. Allowing mentees to observe mentors that have strengths in areas that can be put into local context could be more impactful than bringing in outside providers in many circumstances. Through the analyzation of the survey documents you may see that a particular mentee notes a weakness that is a particular strength of a mentor from another building or district. The mentees experience could then be modified to support them via opportunities to meet with, observe, or be observed by that particular mentor. The second meeting should take place in November/December and will have the purpose of reflection in case there is a need to pivot and adapt to any changing needs, supports, or components of the BLSD/BTMP.

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of the strategies and actions, the third and final meeting will take place in May for the purposes of celebrating the BLSD/BTMP with all stakeholders as well as review of the BLSD/BTMP End of Year (EOY) survey results. Drago-Severson et al. (2013) stated, “Remaining open to—and even seeking out—feedback from key stakeholders in their schools and organizations, for example, is another way a number of these leaders sought to grow their own capacities and leadership.” (p. 215). The BLSD/BTMP EOY survey will play a crucial role in the ability of the BTP to sustain relevance within the ever-shifting winds of change.

Recognition and merit opportunities should be imbedded into the celebration. It is at this meeting that a crucial and final step should take place. A review and professional discussion of the survey results. This will serve as a great opportunity to model the professional reflective practice and provide a platform for dialogue so that the results can be interpreted with an
opportunity for follow-up questions and discussions. Providing transparency is a crucial step in developing long term trust across stakeholder groups.

**Conclusion**

To attain “To Be” status within the BLSD/BTMP there are six key strategies to undertake. These strategies and actions will be developed through policies and procedures that involve all four layers of stakeholders and will include a solid platform that harnesses structure, organization, collaboration, and reflection for sustainable improvement of the BTP.

1. Establishing Trust and Accountability
2. Increase the Balance of Accountability
3. Annual re-creation of the PD Opportunities Offered to Staff
4. Location of BTP Sessions
5. Re-structure the Mentor Role within the Program
6. Development of Community Partners for Decision Making
SECTION SEVEN: IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the current policy that teachers new to the profession undergo the BLSD/BTMP. It is also policy that building administrators have discretion on any new hires with regards to participation in the state university’s BTMP. Positive components of this policy noted by participants included the provision of a stipend, providing PD hours for license renewal, close proximity to session locations, and accountability features. Positive supports of the current policy noted by participants included the Danielson Framework discussions, a positive culture, and broad-based PD sessions such as classroom management that could be related to the various capacities of participating mentees.

While the current mentee induction policy is sound, there are components and supports to effective mentor programs that are suggested but not explicitly enforced through the BLSD/BTMP. These specific policy components relate to the program’s administrative communication/development plan, meeting sessions, and assignment/activity requirements. Specific supports relate to multiple mentors for mentees, local administrative involvement/oversight, information provided at the beginning and throughout the program, and structured release time with mentors during the school day for observations, reflection, and assignment completion.

Odden (2012) posited that as a result of his 2007 research with Milanowski that the study of teacher turnover identified about $2,600 as the cost of replacing one teacher in a Midwestern urban district. It also found that induction/training costs another approximately $4,500 a teacher, for a total cost of $7,100 to recruit and induct a new teacher. Currently, the cost of the 2-year BTMP is $1,000 for the first year and $500 for the second year. This leaves a $3,000 gap from what Odden and Milanowski (2007) reported. Some of this gap can be argued is soaked up by
contractual stipends paid out for things like new teacher orientation and providing a substitute for release time. However, without a specific way to track and ensure you are being fiscally responsive to new teacher induction needs, along with lack of state policy mandates and funding, this can easily become underfunded and seen as more of a luxury than a necessity. There are three main recommendations for policy change listed in Figure 25.

**Figure 25**

*Policy Recommendations for the BLSD/BTMP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy 1</td>
<td>Each mentee participating in the BLSD/BTMP complete a survey upon hire that gathers data on their educational beliefs, strengths, weaknesses, and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 2</td>
<td>School district administrators in the Birch Lake School District should meet twice annually to review/revise the programs content, assignments, activities, and collaborate on ways to support the PD opportunities provided to mentees collectively through release time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy 3</td>
<td>BLSD mentees are provided and complete 3 days of release time for observations, assignment completions, and PD. BLSD mentors are provided 2 full days of release time to participate in observations and consult with each mentee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Policy Components**

**Policy Component 1**

The first policy component will be effective in providing insight into the needs of the mentees participating in the BLSD/BTMP. This will give the BTMP instructors and the BLSD administration vital information for the capacity of their new teachers as it relates to the four domains of Charlotte Danielson’s framework. BLSD/BTMP activities and assignments can be developed with this information to inform program sessions and PD opportunities. Additionally, this will serve to determine a best fit during the mentor selection process.
Policy Component 2

The second policy component will be effective in the development of a program that is current with the mentee’s experiences in an ever-changing academic environment that is specific to the strategic plan of that teacher’s current school district. The importance of meeting twice is first to meet over the summer to discuss upcoming strategic plans, mentee survey results, and ways to maximize PD offerings.

The second administrative meeting should take place in the winter to discuss the “Glows and Grows” of the current program to adapt if necessary and support the mentee experience with alternative PD opportunities such as classroom visits to other school districts along with allowing release time for mentees to attend PD sessions offered at other school districts.

This was ever present during the implementation of the BLSD/BTMP 2020-2021 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic when the instructors were able to pivot and shift the program to a remote setting and adapt meeting platforms, activities, and session content to relate to both remote and hybrid learning formats. Although this was done without a formal meeting with participating district administrators due to the abrupt and continuously changing landscape of state level tiers and mitigations, it showed the importance and success of adapting the program. In any other given year that does not involve a health pandemic, the adaptations needed may not be as dramatic, but can accumulate over time if not addressed on an annual basis can lead to a lesser impact on the capacity building of mentees and their overall experience in the educational induction process.

Policy Component 3

The third policy component is the three scheduled days of release time for mentees. This would allow them to complete the assignments in a coordinated way that would support their
overall development at critical stages within their first year. Each mentee would be required to schedule a total of three PD days in which a substitute would cover their class so that they could complete the required BLSD/BTMP assignments that were decided between the district administration and university program directors. These days would be added to their benefit days and recorded via the district teacher absence management system.

Thus, I recommend the following District Policy that will ensure an effective quality induction experience that serves as a fiscally sound investment as educators are hired in our district: All new hires and beginning teachers in the School District will be inducted into the district through a Beginning Teacher Mentor Program (BTMP). The policy recommendation comes with the inclusion of the three previously mentioned components.

The following is an analysis of the educational, economic, social, political, legal, and moral/ethical considerations as they relate to the inclusion of the three policy components. This analysis helps to validate the policy recommendation by taking into context the various factors that come into play when implementing new policies and procedures.

**Educational Analysis**

The educational analysis of the policy relates directly to teaching and learning. An impactful beginning teacher mentor program has a strong influence on a school’s current and future ability to impact student learning and achievement.

The first policy component will develop a baseline of information that could be utilized to first inform on the mentees current capacity along with mentor selection process, session development, and PD offerings. The survey development will focus on the mentee’s pedagogical and content strengths and weaknesses. This has the potential to effect particular BLSD/BTMP assignments as well as support all potential facets of the mentees experience through guided
assignments, activities, observations, and PD offerings. Based upon a building’s mentee survey results for any given year, building mentor selection should be reviewed annually.

The second policy component will involve a collaborative process between the administration and university that works to develop the programs assignments and activities for mentees on an annual basis. This will bring relevance to the mentee’s experience and support their current district practices and initiatives. The implications for this include less stress on the mentees and a better connection between the BLSD/BTMP and their current district/school programs.

The third policy component will have a direct impact on the educational capacity of mentees. Having three PD benefit days will allow mentees the ability to absorb the experience and have the time to step back from their classroom to view and reflect on exemplary models within their own school, district, or region.

**Economic Analysis**

The economic analysis of the program relates to the cost of the policy components and the impact they will have on the mentee’s, mentors, and district. All three policy components will carry a cost that is in addition to the current $1,500 currently spent by the district. Some of the costs will be direct and some will be indirect.

The first policy component will have more of an indirect economic impact. The cost would relate to the PD plans created as a result of the survey results analysis by the building administration. The development of the survey could be run through a pre-existing district program such as Microsoft Forms. The analysis could take place via a collaborative building administration meeting. The implications of providing valuable mentee information to
administrators, program coordinators, and mentors would provide a clear direction for increasing the positive impact on the mentee’s experience.

The second policy component will also have more of an indirect economic impact. Through the collaboration process between the district and university, the completion of assignments for the program would be connected to the use of PD days.

The third policy component will have a direct economic impact of approximately $400 per mentee. This is considering the average cost of a substitute teacher at a rate of $125 per day. This would be to accommodate three PD days for teachers to observe classrooms and attend outside PD in order to satisfy the requirements of the BLSD/BTMP. These costs are small when considering that a more successful mentoring program can help reduce the costs absorbed by districts due to teacher turnover rates.

**Social Analysis**

The social analysis of the policy components is critical at a time when the BLSD/BTMP assignments are being viewed as extra work and lacking a connection to their current classroom responsibilities. Aschheim et al. (2007) stated, “Induction is commonly thought of as one-on-one mentoring of a new teacher by a veteran. However, to be effective, mentoring must be surrounded by a constellation of activities for all of the stakeholders involved” (p. 17). While the BLSD/BTMP serves as a great resource for new teachers, the support for them needs to come from the whole of the stakeholder community. All three policy components serve to move past the one-on-one concept and improve the culture and capacity of the district mentee experience.

The first policy component supports the mentee’s experience through informing the administration, program coordinators, and mentors on the state of the mentee’s capacity. The use of a survey at time of hire will allow the mentee to give a baseline on not only their strengths and
weaknesses, but also their emotional state and knowledge about the district’s current practices. This will directly impact the BLSD/BTMP process by gearing the assignments toward mentees that reinforce their stated weaknesses. This has the capability to impact the BLSD/BTMP culture overall as it will increase the leadership capacity within each school building, provide a structured and effective way of completing the assignments, and diversify the mentee’s experience based on their specific needs. Recommended categories for the survey development include:

- classroom management
- instructional delivery
- student engagement
- parent communication

The second policy component supports the overall potential impact of the BLSD/BTMP and the district mentee experience. An annual collaborative process between the BLSD administration and BTMP coordinators will provide an opportunity to re-shape and support the program at a time when several program components need re-development.

The third policy component provides PD time in an intentional way that encourages and enables mentees to have the time to process and complete the activities and assignments. Giving mentees and mentors control over the days used for PD and activity/assignment completion will maximize the impact of the program by giving the mentee’s the ability to modify the timeline of assignments according to their specific needs.

**Political Analysis**

The political analysis of the policy leaves pros and cons to be contemplated. The first policy component of a mentee survey will provide a voice for mentee’s to express their interests
as they enter the educational profession. Often, mentee’s feel that they are spoken to and not always listened to. A survey will not only give them a voice for their needs, it will give them a voice for their strengths. Using mentee strengths to reinforce a program could provide an opportunity for leadership abilities to present themselves for mentees. While this could be beneficial to the overall educational program, one would have to taper any situations where the opportunity for voice turned into discourse and disrespect. For example, with the various needs of mentees the district might experience, not all specific needs may be able to be met through the survey information gathered. It would be imperative to inform the mentees ahead of time of the potential limitations of the survey analysis.

The second policy component of collaborative efforts between the district administration and program coordinators carries great political potential and ramifications. The potential for this is the ability to communicate district needs and initiatives to correlate with the development of BLSD/BTMP assignments, activities, session content, and PD opportunities. Ramifications could be opportunities for conflict of interest or discourse between administration, program coordinators, and the teacher’s union.

The third policy component rollout has the potential to increase the awareness of staff in either a positive or negative light depending on their experience with the ability to flex the three PD days. Given the support provided by the building administration and the overall impact of their experience could prove to be counterproductive if negative. This gives more credence to the importance of intentionality by the building administration when orchestrating the three days of release time for observations, assignment completions, and PD opportunities for mentees.
Legal Analysis

The legal analysis relates to potential state policy mandates. While there is no current state mandate that a school district provide a mentoring program, there was at one point. Having a program already in place would be advantageous if the recommendations turn back into a mandate at any point. The current BLSD/BTMP covered the previous mandates required in state policy back in the early 2000s. Any modifications needed to cover a reinstatement and potential revision of the policy would be minimal.

The three policy components relate to traditions and contractual obligations of mentees, mentors, and building administrators. The traditions impacted include the use of a pre-program survey to gain insight into mentees current capacities and needs. Not only will this be an additional activity for the administration to administer and evaluate, it will cause a shift in the planning process between program coordinators and building administrators. This will impact the assignments, activities, session content, and PD opportunities in a way that can support both the mentees and the schools in which they serve.

The contractual obligations that will need to be met relate to the third component of allowing three structured PD days for mentees and two structured PD days for mentors. Contractual obligations to be aware of relate to scheduled duty-free release time and class coverage for mentees and mentors when applicable. Benefit days would need to be added intentionally for mentees and mentors accordingly. Building administrators will need to ensure that they are both used as well as used in a way that is relevant to both theirs and the school’s needs.
Moral & Ethical Analysis

The moral and ethical analysis relates to high staff turnover and teacher attrition in area schools with high poverty and minority rates. Aschheim et al. (2007) explained, “Numerous researchers report that at a disproportional rate, teachers are transferring out of schools with poor, minority, and low-achieving students. The district currently serves students of various economic situations including poverty. Additionally, the district serves a diverse community of students and families including minority groups, English language learners, and students with disabilities. A BLSD/BTMP that can be shaped to accommodate such a diverse set of mentee needs as they relate to their students’ needs and their particular staff role is a moral and ethical obligation for educators in general.

Additionally, teacher attrition rates can great affect a school’s ability to retain high quality staff. Wagner (2008) expressed:

A lack of adequate teacher preparation and support is considered the primary cause for the astounding public school teacher attrition rate. Studies show that nearly one in two teachers who start out in the classroom leave after just 5 years. (p. 146)

This statistic speaks to the need for a policy that develops a strong BLSD/BTMP.

Implications

There are several implications for staff and community relationships that stem from the BLSD/BTMP policy and components. Initial implications relate to the collaborative efforts between the building administration and the program coordinators. A positive and productive environment in this realm will be a key factor in the program’s success through an increase in the intent and relevance of the BLSD/BTMP components and supports. A lack of positivity and initiative to meet annually with the intent of reviewing the mentee survey results and shaping the
program would lead to a program with blind intent and a less impactful experience for the mentees.

Additional implications include a benefit to staff and the overall improvement of teaching and learning that takes place with mentees and results in a positive experience. This has the ability to not only affect the capacity of building staff, it also can greatly affect student achievement over time as a consistent staff with low turnover will increase the continuity of educational programming in the district. These implications have the potential to affect more staff as the BLSD/BTMP gains credibility and support. Through the current use of the district professional community learning model, staff regularly share impactful content they experience when it comes to PD opportunities.

**Conclusion**

The implementation of a policy for implementing the BLSD/BTMP with the components of a mentee survey, intentional collaboration between district and university staff, and the intentional use of three PD days for mentees would benefit the impact of new teachers entering the district. In the next section, I revisit the issue at hand and conclude by reviewing the overall purpose of the student and implications of the results and policy components.
SECTION EIGHT: CONCLUSION

New teacher mentor programs are a necessity to the field of education. University induction coursework, observation hours, practicums, and student teaching experience are key elements that only begin to address the needs of teachers in these demanding and ever shifting times. Having a strong base as well as an understanding of the basic components and supports of a mentor program will pay dividends over time as teacher attrition drops and teacher collaboration and capacity rises. The impact on student learning can be exponential as quality novice and veteran teachers that experience a quality mentor program become mentors themselves and remain within BLSD.

The program evaluation was a 2-year process. It gathered survey and focus group data from a variety of stakeholders, including mentees, mentors, district/building administrators, program instructors, and the original program designer. A review of literature and research of various teacher mentor programs within the United States and across the globe was also included.

The survey data was gathered from 2020 via the universities end of year survey for mentees, mentors, and district/school administration. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic was right in the middle of the survey and undoubtably had an effect on the results. This is seen as a beneficial factor considering how the pandemic has impacted teachers awareness of future school district policies, procedures, and practices. The state of mind of participants at the time of the survey in May of 2019 cannot be understated because it was a potential change in basic assumptions within the overall context of the educational world to be.

The original organizational plan of this study shifted due to COVID-19. The unanticipated inclusion of the pandemic brought about needs and capacities that previously went
unnoticed such as virtual instruction, meetings, PD. This has caused the policy advocacy component to include additional mechanisms such as virtual meeting components to support mentees when necessary and applicable.

The purpose of this study was to gauge the participating mentee and mentor perceptions on the components and supports they are receiving. This process has brought to light that some of the current programs and supports have become antiquated and outdated along with a lack of relevance for staff that are not core content classroom teachers. (ELA, math, science, social science). This created a shift in my goals so that we can develop an overarching program for all new teachers in the district that is relatable to their specific content area of general and special education ELA, math, science, and social science, fine arts, reading/math specialist, ELL, and social work positions.

The goals of this study were initially to impact change within the overall policy and structure of the university BTMP. These goals shifted once qualitative data began to suggest that an overall policy and structural change could not be supported through the current cost analysis of the BTMP alone. There was simply too large of a range of mentee staff classifications to provide a comprehensive program of components and supports that would reflect and benefit the nature and demands of their specified educational role.

While it has been beneficial that most new teachers have had a mentor that was within their educational role, it was noted that certain activities and assignments did not relate and therefore were not beneficial. The new goal became focused on district policy with adaptations to assignments. District policy would now advocate for provided release time for mentees and mentors, along with a communication plan to increase administrative program understanding and input.
The organizational change plan and policy recommendations addressed primarily the development and implementation of surveys to inform the BLSD/BTMP of mentee’s incoming backgrounds, strengths, and needs. Through survey development and implementation, the district administrator in charge of the program will be responsible for creating/administering surveys and communicating results to the university coordinators and district/building administrators before the August training sessions.

The organizational change plan and policy recommendations addressed the lack of administrative understanding of the program and resulting in a lack of administrative involvement at the building level. Key elements such as release time and assignment requirements were often missed and not utilized to the potential of their intent. The lack of understanding also resulted in the misconception by building administrators that any new hire regardless of their role in the school would benefit from the current program session and PD offerings. Assignment revisions have been proposed and approved by the program coordinators and a meeting between BTMP coordinators and BLSD building administrators took place over the summer of 2021.

Leadership lessons from this study reinforce the concept that cookie cutter concepts do not exist in education. This is an individualized industry that requires constant communication and adaptations to each specific scenario that might exist. Teachers must deal with the potential of a variety of scenarios depending on their content focus. To attempt a one-size-fits-all program for mentoring new staff is not ideal given a small to medium size program such as the university BTMP. However, a program like this can still be beneficial to the majority of incoming staff with individualized options being offered for categorical staff such as fine arts, English language specialists, reading specialists, math specialists, speech/language, instructional coaches, etc.
This study exemplifies challenges that occur when instilling change in a current long-standing program. Key leadership concepts utilized in this study include framing the change concept around Wagner’s 4 Cs, collecting real time data to inform change through focus groups and surveys, and building relational trust between all stakeholders through a strong communication platform, and support network for staff.

In conclusion, this study has brought to light that some fundamental pieces are missing in the components and supports of the BLSD/BTMP. Including a communication and assignment piece that serves as a key link to participants trusting and respecting the program. Thus, limiting the program’s effectiveness and impact on all stakeholders involved. Bryk and Schneider (2002) said:

Relational trust, so conceived, is appropriately viewed as an organizational property in that its constitutive elements are socially defined in the reciprocal exchanges among participants in a school community, and its presence (or absence) has important consequences for the functioning of the school and its capacity to engage in fundamental change. (p. 22)

Teachers are trustworthy by nature; however, they are also quick to understand when a program isn’t effective for them. It is up to the district and building leadership to support and develop a program that is relevant to their experiences and demonstrates the same best practices that are expected in the classroom such as data collection, differentiation, engagement, and reflection.
References


