

YOU GOT ME, NOW HELP ME BEGIN MY TEACHING CAREER:
EXPLORING FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON
K-12 SYSTEMWIDE INDUCTION

by

KEENAN XAVIER LEE

(Under the Direction of Sally J. Zepeda)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District (pseudonym). The researcher sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.) mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program. This qualitative research selected a case study as the methodology, situated in a medium-sized K-12 public school system within a metropolitan city close to Atlanta inside the state of Georgia. The research relied on several data collection methods, including interviews, official records, and field notes. Six teachers were recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis and the constant comparative method. The findings from the teachers' interviews were summarized in four major themes: (1) Presence from the Division of Human Resources recognized first-year teachers; (2)

Departmental leadership shape workplace conditions; (3) The special relationship offset power dynamics between system mentors and first-year teachers; (4) System mentors contribute independent, versatile guidance. The findings from this study contribute to the literature when examining how professional learning in a formalized system program influences teacher attrition from the perspectives of first-year teachers, who spent an entire year with instructional supervisors functioning doubly as induction coaches and system mentors from the Division of Human Resources at the central office. This study can assist policymakers in informing system-wide coaching and mentorship efforts to support and retain new teachers.

INDEX WORDS: Attrition, Coaching, First-year teachers, Induction, Mentorship, New teachers, Retention, Systemwide induction programs, Teacher shortage

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation study to my parents. My mother made stories come alive by reading and writing letters to me when I was child. My father spent time training me how to read and write when I was child. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

America faces major challenges with decreasing teacher shortages inside K-12 public school systems. Unfortunately, education remains less popular as a major field among college students, especially when compared to earlier decades. Recent declines in the teacher labor market have been troublesome for policymakers to remedy. While attrition contributes significantly to today's teacher shortage, teacher turnover in school systems poses an urgent threat to improvement efforts and student outcomes as well (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Teachers leaving the profession or transferring to different schools undermines the occupation's prestige, status, and esteem (Klimek, 2019), and signals trouble for tomorrow's teacher supply. Staffing teacher positions has become a critical factor that needs to be addressed given teacher shortages. Additionally, figuring out ways to lower teacher attrition and turnover nationwide, especially in K-12 public schools with high enrollments of non-White and low-income students.

Because there remains serious concern for America's teacher shortages and poor retention rates in public-school systems, teacher induction has become a widespread system practice extended to new teachers in K-12 public education (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2015; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Issues related to attrition and teacher shortages have caused staffing problems in K-12 public schools necessitating an increased need for improving teacher induction,

especially since considerable studies demonstrate a strong link between quality implementation of induction programs and improving teacher retention rates (Gamborg et al., 2018; Glazerman et al., 2010; Ladd, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

Research does suggest teachers learn best, acquire skills, and improve through on-the-job experience (Jackson et al., 2014). But because teacher induction is mostly an unfunded state mandate, oftentimes new teachers entering the workforce receive very limited support while being assigned to teach the most challenging students in high-needs schools (Feng, 2010; Glazerman et al., 2010; Ladd, 2011). Moreover, the K-12 teaching field has not historically had the quality of induction support characteristic of other professional fields such as medicine and law (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Teacher effectiveness, retention, and leadership impact student learning and growth (Ford and Forsyth, 2020; Georgia Department of Education, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Since the 1966 Coleman Report was released, there has been interest in studying educational outcomes involving processes of teacher retention, turnover, and other areas associated with teacher effectiveness (Jackson et al., 2014). For decades, new teachers in K-12 public schools have demonstrated high attrition, with America's best and brightest (i.e., high scorers on Scholastic Assessment Test, etc.) being most likely to exit the profession long before retirement (Ladd, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Nationally, nearly a quarter of the new teachers leave K-12 education by the end of their second year, and approximately 50% of new teachers have left once their fifth-year has ended (Gamborg et al., 2018; Kelly & Northrop, 2015; Miller et al., 2020). Locally, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2015) forecasts that these high

attrition rates will more than likely force K-12 school systems to “devote valuable resources to the processes of recruitment, hiring, and induction resources that might otherwise be spent on support of student instruction” (p. 5).

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) presented descriptive data explaining how America has noticeably higher teacher attrition and turnover rates compared to other high-achieving countries. “Data show that teachers are more likely to leave schools where there are more students of color and more low-income students, where salaries are lower, and where working conditions are worse” (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019, p. 16). Additionally, the report discussed the significant damage high rates of teacher attrition and turnover produced in schools, which ultimately reduces student learning, and adds unnecessary personnel expenditures.

Since teacher attrition and turnover shows to be high nationwide, policymakers need to pursue a comprehensive, strategic approach by improving compensation, teacher preparation and support, and school leadership (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). The study identified teacher shortages as a major concern but argued teacher retention ought to be the primary focus of system and policy efforts.

A recommended policy option advocated by the U.S. Department of Education is to support new teachers with formal and comprehensive induction programming that is “intensive, structured, and sequentially delivered” and provided by a full-time mentor (Glazerman et al., 2010, p. xxiii). However, K-12 school systems have challenges implementing comprehensive teacher induction because policy implementation can be expensive (Glazerman et al., 2010; Ingersoll et al., 2018). Additionally, numerous

empirical studies present methodological limitations when researching effects related to teacher induction.

Methodological limitations include studying solely the outcomes of teachers, with little control over relevant differences in outcomes that may account for attrition; and focusing on particular school systems and their specific programs. These methodological limitations create a lack of generalizability of findings (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Fast forward from Smith and Ingersoll's (2004) work, Jackson et al. (2014) underscored that there are very limited and credible research methodologies that have been dedicated to empirically evaluating the strength of induction programs in K-12 public schools, with very thin evidence on how the work of high-intense mentoring embedded in them could be effective.

Historically, research about the relationships between induction, mentoring, and attrition have yielded mixed results (Jones & Youngs, 2012; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). While empirical studies related to teacher induction generally have not been very rigorous, more investigation is needed to understand "significant differences in effectiveness between induction programs" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 707). Furthermore, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) acknowledged more investigation is also needed to understand "the impact of the quantity and timing of contact between new teachers and their mentors," and the "optimum program length for induction and mentoring programs, between which additional time is of diminishing value" (p. 707).

Teacher induction that is comprehensive supports new teachers to gain more familiarity about processes, procedures, instructional methods, and the characteristics of children to improve student outcomes (Georgia Department of Education, 2017).

Moreover, new teachers reportedly feel more satisfied on the job when receiving comprehensive induction services (Glazerman et al., 2010; Kelly & Northrop, 2015). Despite lacking conclusive empirical findings for induction, federal interests (i.e., No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, etc.) have encouraged and incentivized K-12 school systems to implement teacher induction focused on supporting new teachers and at a level to improve teacher quality and effectiveness with grants for developing mentorship programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Geoffrey & Dowling, 2008; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Paufler & Clark, 2019; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

With growing urgency for reducing turnover, improving working conditions, and reforming new teacher experiences, there is strong demand to provide new teachers entering the profession with more comprehensive individualized and differentiated learning opportunities, data-based feedback, and opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective inquiry (Zepeda, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Nationwide the state of affairs concerning new teachers entering into K-12 public education needs urgent transformation. Since policymakers have not been able to make significant improvements in reducing teacher attrition and turnover, teaching as a career has declined in professional status and labor market stability. For example, more than 40% of newly hired teachers in 2010 were no longer teaching in 2015 (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). Working conditions (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Mirra & Rogers, 2020), poor administration and mentor support (Miller & Youngs, 2021; Tran & Smith, 2020), teaching assignments and reassignments (Ost & Schiman, 2015),

evaluation and accountability (Kraft et al., 2020), and tenure policies (Dabbs, 2020; Kraft, 2015) are some of the reasons why so many teachers leave the K-12 profession.

The Georgia Department of Education conducted a statewide survey in 2015 to better understand reasons why so many teachers leave the K-12 profession. The population included 53,000 educators, a majority with no more than 15 years of teaching experience (Owens, 2015). Findings from the 2015 Georgia Department of Education's statewide survey cited top tier causes for public school teacher attrition including: stress caused by standardized testing, a sense of injustice concerning teacher evaluation methods, low decision-making power, too many non-teaching responsibilities, and little pay and benefits. As one Georgian teacher frustratedly commented about state policymakers and decision makers:

I could continue for days about why this ... is absurd, but I'm sure nothing will be done, and none of you really care why teachers are so unhappy, or care that we quit, you are just putting on a show to make us think you want to get to the bottom of the problem. I will be extremely shocked if I see any positive changes that come from this survey. (Owens, 2015, p. 4)

Unfortunately, high turnover causes substantial financial costs and disruptions to school systems (Curry et al., 2016; Glazerman et al., 2010). Generally, when entering into American public schools, K-12 teachers fail or succeed (i.e., often referred to as "sink or swim," "trial by fire," etc.) in isolation from their colleagues (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 682).

Teachers, like any other professionals, base their decision to stay or leave K-12 education on factors such as the quality of the work environment (Ladd, 2011). School leadership appears to be a dominant factor related to working conditions that influence teachers whether to leave or remain at two levels – their particular school or in the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Geoffrey & Dowling, 2008; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Ladd, 2011; Simon & Johnson, 2015). Even the recent findings from the statewide survey conducted by the Georgia Department of Education corroborated how system- and building-level leadership strongly influence attrition, ultimately calling for future research to assist in understanding leaders' roles concerning their overall retention efforts in K-12 public schools (Owens, 2015).

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond's (2019) study reported descriptive and statistical data on national and regional state turnover trends. They examined such factors as school, teacher, subject area, and student characteristics. Overall, the national attrition rate was 8%; and the national turnover rate was 16%, with more than two-thirds of teachers voluntarily leaving the profession or transferring to different schools before retirement. Regionally, the south had the highest turnover rates, and the northeast had the lowest turnover rates. For example, Georgia had a higher percentage of teachers planning to leave the profession compared to the national average, while Massachusetts had a lower percentage of planning to leave the profession compared to the national average. Schools serving high percentages of low-income students have almost 50% higher turnover rates compared to non-Title I schools (Miller et al., 2020; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

Schools serving high percentages of non-White students have nearly 70% higher turnover rates compared to schools serving predominantly White students. Additionally, non-White teachers are most likely to work in schools with high turnover rates and move to different schools, when compared to White teachers. Also, high school subjects, particularly in mathematics, science, special education, and foreign languages have higher predictive turnover rates than other areas, especially in schools serving high percentages of low-income and non-White students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

The Georgia Department of Education (2017) and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2015) reported data on teacher experiences in K-12 public schools for the state of Georgia. From 2012 to 2017, an average rate of 13% of first-year teachers left the workforce after one school year. Nearly 50% of first-year teachers left the profession after 5 years of teaching. Approximately 70% of teachers left their current schools in less than 9 years, and approximately 70% of statewide teacher hiring was for replacing teachers who left the profession.

While between 25% to 30% of new teachers choose to leave and return to teaching at some point in Georgia, most teachers do not choose to return to K-12 public schools, signaling a permanent loss. These data also confirm that teacher attrition at the high school in particular sees higher percentages of teacher attrition, especially in teaching areas such as mathematics, special education, science, and foreign languages.

Teacher induction has shown possibilities in lowering turnover, but such programs are often reported to be poorly designed, to unsuccessfully meet retention

goals, and to vary considerably across states and systems (Jackson et al., 2014; Ladd, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Jackson et al. (2014) state:

unfortunately, most existing research on this type of formal, in-service, professional development is based on samples in which teachers and/or schools are self-selected into training, so it is unclear whether one can credibly compare the outcomes of teachers who undergo training to the outcomes of those who do not. (pp. 813-814)

In theory, teacher induction bridges the “student of teaching” into a “teacher of students,” by designing learning opportunities (i.e., workshops, opportunities to collaborate with other teachers, mentoring, etc.) to foster growth of newcomers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 683).

Often new teachers are paired with another full-time colleague, who more than likely does not receive critical mentorship training, supplemental materials, or release time to support mentees (Gamborg et al., 2018; Glazerman et al., 2010). While Glazerman et al. (2010) reported “there is little empirical evidence on whether investing additional resources in a more comprehensive, and hence more expensive, induction programs would help districts attract, develop, and retain [new] teachers” (pp. 1-2), the Georgia Department of Education (2017) has adopted the philosophy that “strong induction processes should ensure effective teachers stay in the classroom” (p. 1). Research strongly suggests for a positive and statistically significant impact to occur, comprehensive teacher induction support should last at least three years (Curry et al., 2016; Glazerman et al., 2010; Jones & Youngs, 2012).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District (pseudonym). The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

During the 2018-2020 school years, first-year teachers spent an entire year with a mentor, who worked inside the Division of Human Resources but who operated independently yet collaboratively with other building personnel when entering schools. Given the historically high rate of attrition of first-year teachers in the areas of mathematics, special education, science, and foreign languages, teachers in these areas were interviewed. Additionally, the mentors, program director, and a random sampling of select school administrators were interviewed.

Research Questions

Given that the purpose of study was to explore first-year teachers' perspectives on the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within the Beckett County School District, the research sought to investigate first-year teachers' perspectives on the types of coaching tools, mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to them by their system mentors and building-level leaders through the systemwide induction program. The overarching question is

how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experiences do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program?

The findings from such a study can hopefully inform system-wide efforts to support first-year teachers.

Background of the Study

Since the 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report commissioned by the Reagan Administration, concerns for national teacher quality have been targeted as a central issue plaguing K-12 public schools (Ingersoll, 2004). With the gradual decline of America's competitiveness in student academic achievement being blamed on teacher performance, there have been large-scale changes occurring in K-12 public education, especially since this occupation currently has at least 5 times as many teachers now than directly after World War II (Ingersoll & Collins, 2018; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017). Between 1987 to 2012, the number of new teachers increased by almost 50%, with non-White teachers increasing by more than 100% over the past 25 years (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017).

Despite far more first-year teachers entering K-12 public education, beginners are between 40% and 50% likely to leave teaching after 5 years (Ingersoll, 2012). Ingersoll (2004) affirmed "teaching is an occupation that has historically relied on recruitment, and

not retention, to solve its staffing needs and problems” (p. 27), and because of the downturn in America’s economy and increased teacher accountability policies, K-12 induction practices have gained attention and momentum nationwide (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Growing evidence from recent empirical studies has shown teacher turnover in K-12 education to be damaging for future student outcomes, with high turnover within schools having negative consequences on school performance, continuity, and coherence (Ingersoll, 2004; Harris et al., 2019; Miller & Youngs, 2021). To combat teacher turnover, most American states have turned to implementing policies related to induction programs for improving teacher retention and new teacher learning inside K-12 public schools (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Although the largest occupation in America is K-12 public education (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017), unlike other respected professions, induction in K-12 school systems unfortunately does not offer comprehensive and multi-year services that continuously attract, retain, and support beginners.

While induction activities vary considerably across American school systems without federal regulation, research remains unclear on the types of universal induction support all new teachers should receive to improve retention consistently and substantially (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Goldrick et al. (2012) declared “too many states that mandate induction do so in the absence of key policy elements like dedicated funding, strong program standards or mentor selection and training requirements” (p. vi). Nevertheless, American K-12 education is in dire need of strongly revising induction so new teachers can quickly adopt a steady and successful working routine, learn appropriate on-the-job management and coping strategies, feel comfortable and confident

teaching and supervising students, and begin recognizing their own potential to further develop and grow.

Research shows induction programs offering more comprehensive services does increase teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2012). Induction seeks to address problems involving performance for new teachers when entering in K-12 public school systems (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Ingersoll (2012) stated

[new] teachers who participated in some kind of induction performed better at various aspects of teaching, such as keeping students on task, developing workable lesson plans, using effective student questioning practices, adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, and demonstrating successful classroom management. (p. 51)

However, as Goldrick et al. (2012) reported, “no single U.S. state has perfected its induction policy to ensure the provision of high-impact, multi-year induction support for all [new] educators” (p. iv).

Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) offered an analysis on several recent studies concerning induction for first-year teachers by discussing methodological concerns. Considered the largest and most ambitious study, Glazerman et al. (2010) used a randomized control trial experimental design; but did not compare first-year teachers without induction supports to first-year teachers with induction supports. They found similar retention rates between control and treatment groups. However, Kang and Berliner (2012), who extended the work of Smith and Ingersoll (2004), contradicted findings from Glazerman et al. (2010), and reported that new teachers who participated in induction supports (i.e., seminars, common planning time, extra classroom assistance)

reduced the odds of moving to different schools.

Because of methodological concerns from prior empirical studies, Ronfeldt and McQueen (2017) contributed to the work of Smith and Ingersoll (2004) and Kang and Berliner (2012) with methodological advancements in their study by investigating three most recent survey cohorts (i.e., 2007-2012) using multilevel modeling approaches. Despite Ronfeldt and McQueen's (2017) study contributions, the report discussed on-going needs to find ways for objectively measuring the types of induction supports teachers receive in future research.

Now that the COVID-19 outbreak has shifted the way American educators teach students (i.e., either in-person, virtual, or hybrid), induction for new teachers is needed more than ever to support on-the-job new teacher learning. Annually, working conditions appear to increase in complexity for all teachers, and federal and state policymakers do not have promising solutions for moving the K-12 field forward in its understanding of induction and like supports for first-year teachers.

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative study was designed to understand the experiences of its participants, 15 first-year teachers who took part in a systemwide induction program within the Beckett County School District. Coming from an interpretative perspective, this study sought to accomplish what Prasad (2018) acknowledged as an investigation into the shared and common constructions, understandings, agreements, and interpretations of reality concerning first-year teachers in a single K-12 public school system. The qualitative process involves interpreting social interactions through discourse and reflection (Brinkmann et al., 2020).

O'Brien et al. (2014) confirmed, "the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the perspectives/experiences of individuals or groups and the contexts in which these perspectives or experiences are situated" (p. 1245). Because interpretative traditions subscribe to believing the world exists inside human consciousness (Parsad, 2018), the researcher desired comprehending what participants connected as meanings to events and social interactions that took place in their workplace related to making sense of the induction processes in their school system.

Using symbolic interactionism, a core stance in interpretative traditions, this study examined the beliefs of first-year teachers from their past experiences involving processes and supports offered through a systemwide induction program. As Carter and Fuller (2016) affirmed, "symbolic interactionists shift their attention to the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspective" (p. 932). Since induction is a type of socialization process (Hellsten et al., 2009), the conceptual framework for this qualitative study was predicated on the notion that first-year teachers gain knowledge through their interpretation of social experiences. Thus, a social constructionist theory of knowledge rooted in the interpretative tradition was applied to understand reality from first-year teachers' point of view and how participants construct meanings based on their experiences of being inductees in a systemwide program.

To comprehend the experiences of first-year teachers, Firestone (1987) advocated that the researcher become immersed in the reality of first-year teachers, because "reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation" (p. 5). Sigel (1978) described framework elements in social constructivism, which begins with

assumptions manufactured from their reality; then through their collective experiences, knowledge becomes built upon. The researcher sought to examine how first-year teachers make sense of external and internal factors such as institutional and cultural surroundings that could possibly affect beginners in their school system (Jensen, 1998).

The lens of sensemaking focuses on how agents make distinctions between their new learning experiences and previously held understandings (Spillane et al., 2016). Lee (1991) explained the importance of sensemaking stating,

the idea of sensemaking ... draws from the concept of knowledge as socially constructed. That is, the sense, meanings, or interpretations individuals attach to their experiences are developed in social contexts through social mechanisms, such as various forms of communication and interaction. (p. 85)

Considering this study sought to explore first-year teachers' perspectives on the practices they experienced through a systemwide induction program, McHenry-Sorber and Campbell (2019) recommended sensemaking as a suitable lens to understand both micro- and macro-contexts in large-scale policy implementation and practice.

Ellis (2016) asserted, "policy is only as good as its implementation," which makes clear the sensemaking process has an influence on how local agents define, understand, perceive, and carry out their roles during policy implementation (pp. 3-4). By employing interpretivist methods, sensemaking analysis supported the examination of the experiences of the participants involved in the systemwide induction program.

Piaget and Vygotsky developed perspectives in constructivism, emphasizing how knowledge becomes constructed (Ruey, 2010). The researcher recognized adults have an abundance of life experiences with wide-ranging philosophies and learn best through

insights gained from others (Spigner-Littles & Anderson, 1999; Ziegler & Wenfan, 2001; Zorga, 2002). Walker-Fraser's (2011) qualitative study, which aligns well to a social constructivism framework, investigated how executive leadership inside a system can support the construction of social experiences with their employees. The results of her study provided practitioners with guidance for advancing a coaching culture to enable system performance and development by using intentional dialogue in a supportive environment. Additionally, Ellis's (2016) qualitative study concerning a state-wide induction program, equipped researchers with a large-scale model to use for studying sensemaking as a policy implementation tool. This study sought to understand how first-year teachers make sense of their systemwide induction experiences, and the ways coaching and mentorship benefited them.

Significance of the Study

Sutcher et al. (2019) conducted a nationwide study using multiple national databases (i.e., Schools and Staffing Surveys; Common Core of Data; Digest of Education Statistics; Baccalaureate and Beyond; U.S. Department of Education Title II Data Collection) over a wide range of years (i.e., 1960-2025) to examine teacher supply and demand, attrition and turnover, and project workforce trends. Findings show attrition as a source for teacher shortages, representing between 66% to nearly 100% of demand. Since 2015, the national supply of fully certified teachers declined lower than demand, with approximately 109,000 uncertified teachers in teaching positions, and an estimated 112,000 more fully certified teachers needed to fill teaching positions. Even if an additional 260,000 more teachers entered K-12 public education in the future, approximately 40,000 teachers would still be needed, especially in areas such as

mathematics, science, foreign languages, and special education.

Based on trends and projections concerning teacher shortages, there is critical instability in America's teacher labor market, as national demand for qualified teachers outpaces the supply willing to enter teaching for a long-time career. A considerable hardship has been placed on K-12 public school systems to retain as many new teachers as possible, especially with previous policy reforms increasing workplace demands and occupational stress for all teachers (Barlett, 2004; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017). Because the average American teacher is now in their new years of the profession, and nearly all first-year teachers participate in some form of induction, there is a critical need to offer comprehensive and quality induction programs for new teachers into the profession (Ingersoll et al., 2018). However, American state policies vary widely on the content, character, duration, intensity, and funding of induction programs, which broadly influences how local school systems implement induction practices with new teachers (Goldrick et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Current teaching conditions have raised serious concerns for what types of national and state policies related to induction practices may support while simultaneously attracting new teachers into K-12 public schools and reducing attrition and turnover rates. For instance, new teachers often work in isolation, usually inherit the most challenging classroom environments, generally do not receive a workload reduction during their transition year, and cite inadequate support from school administrators as primary reasons for leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Unfortunately, some induction programs at most assign a colleague without much training in understanding how to facilitate adult learning opportunities, conduct

classroom observations, and lead reflective conversations, which drastically reduces impactful, instructionally-focused, and emotional support for new teachers (Goldrick et al., 2012). Additionally, while on the one hand K-12 public education has undergone a substantial growth in new teachers entering the teaching force over the past 25 years, while on the other hand there are fewer teachers available to provide mentorship and leadership, since veteran teachers are beginning to retire (Ingersoll et al., 2018; Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017).

Sutcher et al. (2019) concluded national teacher shortages most likely will worsen unless federal, comprehensive, and systematic policy interventions can be developed to improve stability for new teachers. Historically, K-12 induction programs have aimed to improve and enhance teacher retention and performance, but empirical research remains limited and unclear on the impact on teacher and student outcomes (Ingersoll, 2012). Induction practices in K-12 school systems appear unsatisfactory for new teachers since so many choose to leave the profession shortly after starting their careers.

Although studies concerning induction programs lack methodological rigor and form conclusions beyond data collected, there is empirical research supporting claims that induction has a positive impact on new teachers related to higher satisfaction, commitment, retention, performance, and management practices in the workplace (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Overall, comprehensive induction programs can accelerate new teachers' professional growth, reduce attrition, improve student learning, and demonstrate positive returns on investment (Goldrick et al., 2012).

American K-12 public education has not seen much improvement for decades, as serious issues (i.e., discipline, curriculum, instruction, compensation, etc.) critically

impacting the work conditions of teachers stand in the way of retaining professionals. The consistent and chronic avoidable teacher turnover existing especially in high-poverty and non-White schools (Williams et al., 2021), demonstrates failure in our nation's policies to work toward the best interest of our K-12 educational system (Kang and Berliner, 2012). Since teacher turnover harms student learning and institutional continuity within public schools, federal and state policymakers must act to issue better guidance on induction supports for improving retention. However, it is at the site and system levels that policy meet practice.

Subjectivity

As an employee with the Beckett County School District, I assumed a role of an instructional supervisor, which functioned doubly as a system mentor and as an induction coach in support of first-year teachers and their professional development. For more than a year, the induction team I was a part of operated within the Division of Human Resources, providing independent and external support to generally first-year teachers entering K-12 public education. My interest in this study was to investigate the effectiveness of a systemwide induction program provided to first-year teachers, along with identifying ways for making system policy improvements.

As a researcher, I was aware of some biases that may shape my study: I identify as a Christian American lower middle-class southern Black male, classify as Millennial, and received a private/military secondary education. Furthermore, my educational philosophy primarily speaks against unnecessary inequities historically disadvantaged learners fight against. These personal characteristics I share could shape my thoughts

related to system reform by considering alternative processes and policies in support of improving professional development, a diverse and young workforce, and retention.

Assumptions of the Study

Participants in this study were selected based on being a previous first-year teacher in the Beckett County School District during the 2018-2020 school years. Since participants agreed to being a part of this study, the assumption was that they had sincere interest in contributing to research, and were willing to share their perspectives and experiences concerning the support offered to them from the systemwide induction program. The study assumed every participant was assigned a system mentor from the system's Division of Human Resources, in addition to having other school personnel offer supportive provisions. A further assumption was that participants would be willing to share their perspective regarding systemwide induction because of the teacher retention crisis occurring in K-12 public schools across America.

Because the researcher developed pseudonyms for participants and locations throughout the study, the assumption was that concealing each participant's identity and school location would enable them to answer interview questions freely, in an honest and candid manner. The study assumed confidentiality for research purposes would encourage participants to share information. Additionally, since the researcher worked in a teacher employee during the study, a further assumption was that participants did not endure pressure by the researcher to answer questions inconsistent with their true perspectives and experiences.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined.

- New Teachers – defined as early career educators who are fully certified with up to 5 years of experience (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2020)
- Coaching – a professional practice involving inquiry-based reflective dialogue between learning facilitators and teachers (Knight, 2009); features regular and frequent sessions incorporating less adversarial conversations, goal-setting, data from classroom observations, motivation, and research-based considerations to explore (Zepeda, 2017); delivers on-going instructions and supportive feedback concerning classroom performance (Carr et al., 2017)
- Induction – a program designed to ease the transition for new teachers into K-12 public school systems (Kearney, 2017); critical professional development specifically offered to new teachers for improving retention in schools through orientation, training, coaching, and mentorship strategies (Carr et al., 2017; DeCesare et al., 2016; Kearney, 2017)
- Mentorship – a professional and trusting relationship where veteran teachers (mentors) collaborate, set goals, and solve problems with new teachers (mentees) in the workplace (Carr et al., 2017; DeCesare et al., 2016); consist of on-going and positive social interactions set to provide critical guidance and develop future on-the-job learning opportunities that cover broad topics in classroom management, professionalism, planning and preparation, and instruction (Hong & Matsko, 2019)

- Retention – strategic planning and prevention of teachers from voluntarily leaving the workplace or education profession due to dissatisfaction and inadequate support, training, and conditions within K-12 schools (Tran & Smith, 2020)
- Teacher Shortage – refers to instability in the annual teacher labor market where demand for teachers severely outpaces supply entering K-12 public education (Sutcher et al., 2019)

Overview of the Research Procedures

Because this research is based on examining 1 school system, a case study was selected as the methodology. Flyvbjerg (2006) described the case study as a detailed investigation of phenomena to explain complex issues such as how first-year teachers make sense of their induction experiences. For this qualitative study, the setting was a medium-sized K-12 public school system inside a metropolitan city close to Atlanta in the state of Georgia.

Case studies allow researchers to capture real-life situations from narrative reflections (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The philosophical underpinnings of this case study were based on a constructivist paradigm, because “constructivism is built upon the premise of a social construction of reality” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545).

For the purposes of this research, this type of case study could be classified as descriptive (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Tolson et al. (2002) explained, “the descriptive approach ... allows data to be collected from as many sources as are considered appropriate to provide in-depth information” (p. 515). The primary data collection method used was the audio-recorded semi-structured interviews of the 15 participants in the study. All interviews were professionally transcribed.

Criteria for sampling participants in this case study were the following: (1) participants worked as full-time first-year teachers in the Beckett County School District during either the 2018-2019 school year or 2019-2020 school year, (2) participants taught in the areas of mathematics, special education, science, or foreign language, (3) participants spent their year of induction with an assigned system mentor from the system's Division of Human Resources, (4) participants had their mentoring experiences documented by an assigned system mentor, and (5) participants were willing to be interviewed about the learning experiences extended to them through the systemwide induction program.

Systems exist almost entirely in and through documentation to create and sustain necessary sense and condition for organizational presence (Prior, 2003). Since documentation depicts a course of events and routines, in addition to the narratives, the researcher acquired records from the Beckett County School District concerning the participants to provide further insights and supplemental information for the data analysis process (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2003). Field notes were taken, and other electronic documents connected to the participants' mentoring and coaching experiences were collected. Afterwards, the researcher analyzed the data by following the phases of thematic analysis adapted from Nowell et al. (2017) to establish trustworthiness in the findings.

Organization of the Dissertation

There are six chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 1 introduces the background and rationale for the research by establishing the sections such as introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study.

Additionally, Chapter 1 examines the conceptual framework that influenced the researcher's perspective about the case study design, and details assumptions, definitions of terms, and an overview of the research procedures. Chapter 2 provides a review of the related literature. The literature significant to the study examines topics such as the issues related to first-year teachers, induction involving system-level and building-level supports, and other supports for new teachers.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology and conceptual framework, and describes the research site, data collection, data management, and data analysis used to explore the perspectives of first-year teachers who participated in the systemwide induction program of Beckett County School District. Chapter 4 states the context of the study and the participants. Chapter 5 includes the findings from the research. Chapter 6 provides a comprehensive analysis with specific themes from the data presented in Chapter 5. Lastly, Chapter 7 presents the summary, discussion, implications for current practices, suggestions for future research and policy-making efforts, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Numerous policy remedies have been implemented to solve America's issues related to teacher retention, yet none have produced significant success in resolving our chronic K-12 teaching attrition challenges (Harris et al., 2019). Barnatt et al. (2017) predicted, "the existing retention issues in the teaching profession are likely to become more complicated and require even more nuanced understandings to meaningfully support and retain high-quality teachers" (p. 1024). With a fierce urgency for reducing teacher retention, there is a critical need to understand how new teachers make sense of their induction experience, along with what influences their thinking about staying or leaving the profession.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District (pseudonym). The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

During the 2018-2020 school years, first-year teachers spent an entire year with a mentor, who worked inside the Division of Human Resources but who operated independently yet collaboratively with other building personnel when entering schools.

Given the historically high rate of attrition of first year teachers in the areas of mathematics, special education, science, and foreign languages, teachers in these areas were interviewed. Additionally, the mentors, program director, and a random sampling of select school administrators were interviewed.

Given that the purpose of study was to explore first-year teachers' perspectives on the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within the Beckett County School District, the research sought to investigate first-year teachers' perspectives on the types of coaching tools, mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to them by their mentors and building-level leaders through the systemwide induction program. The overarching question is how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experiences do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program?

This chapter presents an overview of the four areas of literature this study has drawn from: (1) teacher labor market, (2) issues related to first-year teachers, (3) induction, (4) supports for new teachers, and (5) law and policy issues concerning new teacher employment. Sections also include subsections that critique the literature and examine the methodology of the studies.

Teacher Labor Market

Federal and state governments have been increasingly concerned with the fragile state of America's teacher labor market. Even though Barth et al. (2016) projected student/teacher ratios to decline by 2022, challenges in K-12 teaching preparation enrollment and other areas such as recruiting the next generation continue plaguing the public education system. Yet, there are still prospects wanting to become K-12 teachers, who desire making a difference in the lives of American children. This section of the literature review focuses on the teacher shortage, K-12 teaching supply, alternative certified teachers, and the new generation of teachers: millennials.

The Teacher Shortage

Annually, more than 1 million teachers nationwide either enter, exit, or transition between schools and systems, with federal reports disclosing attrition rates regularly at approximately 17% (Aragon, 2018; Geiger & Pivovarov, 2018). Furthermore, while teacher attrition has been recognized as a prominent factor to today's shortage of teachers in America, when compared internationally, other top performing developed nations such as Singapore, Finland, and Canada benefit from much lower attrition rates ranging between 3% to 4% (Geiger & Pivovarov, 2018). Zhang and Zeller (2016) confirmed, "few issues in education threaten the nation as seriously as the present and growing shortage of teachers" (p. 73).

Teacher shortage describes the demand for teachers exceeding the current supply, which highlights the measure of unqualified teachers accepting vacant positions in K-12 public education (Donitsa-Schmidt & Zuzovsky, 2016). The recent Great Recession reversed the steady growth in teachers between 1988 and 2008, with a decline of

qualified teachers after 2008 (Barth et al., 2016). Moreover, the last two decades has seen a decline in job satisfaction within K-12 teaching. For instance, data shows job satisfaction declined from 62% in 2008 to 39% in 2012 (Croft et al., 2018). Now at least 40 states report challenges in filling vacant teaching positions within critical areas such as mathematics, science, special education, and foreign languages (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019; Mobra & Hamlin, 2020).

Nearly 90% of annual hiring accounts for teacher shortages (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019). Since the growth of teaching departures began in the 1990s, the challenge of teacher shortages has cost the education system more than \$7.3 billion each year (Barth et al., 2016; LoCascio et al., 2016). Additionally, because of being poorly understood, the teaching shortage constitutes an American crisis and an extreme threat to K-12 public schools (Aragon, 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). As LoCascio et. al. (2016) asserted, “a continual cycle of teachers being hired and then leaving before they gain the expertise to become effective provides an unstable, unproductive environment for schools and students” (p. 104).

Many university students tend to view K-12 teaching careers no longer as valuable, as interest in studying education continues to diminish (McFarland et al., 2018). According to Barth et al. (2016), “students may ... feel more pressure to choose careers where they can earn higher salaries” (p. 9). Although some blame can be placed on the economy, many choose not to enter K-12 teaching because the profession lacks career development and prestige (Barth et al., 2016; Croft et al., 2018). Owens’ (2015) statistical analysis from a statewide survey conducted by the Georgia Department of Education confirmed the likelihood of an overwhelming number of K-12 teachers discouraging

graduates to pursue teaching as a career. One Gwinnett County teacher in Georgia shared a reason for recommending another career choice stating, “teachers are often blamed and held accountable for things they have no control over... I love my time with students, but I would never choose this path again. Which makes me very sad” (p. 2).

Garcia and Weiss (2019) also acknowledged the lack of meaningful teacher development can play a significant role in the teacher shortage. Owens (2015) noted K-12 teachers must do more work with less support and development and have to pay for adequate resources and other support using their own money. As a Georgia high school teacher confessed, “I can’t pay my bills every month... I feel like I need a second job to support my teaching habit” (p. 5). Consequently, key indicators unfortunately point to a decrease in teacher preparation programs, as more than half of the annual K-12 teacher supply contains new teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016).

K-12 Teaching Supply

Despite national teacher attrition rates being constantly at 17%, the supply of teachers does not appear to be dramatically shrinking at present time (Barth et al., 2016). Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics reveals the K-12 public school teaching supply has grown to be approximately 3.8 million nationally (McFarland et al., 2018). In addition, McFarland et al. (2018) reported that White females represented the largest share in the K-12 teaching supply, while the overall male percentage represented roughly 23%. Also, in terms of race, Whites represented at least 80%, Hispanics represented 9%, Blacks represented 7%, Asians represented 2%, and American Indian/Alaska Native/Pacific Island represented 1% of all-American public-school teachers.

Because there is great interest to understand factors and improve teacher education policies and programs that attract and influence the choice for entering K-12 teaching as a career, Fray and Gore (2018) examined recent empirical studies between 2007-2016 to investigate reasons for choosing teaching as a career. In this structured overview, there were 70 peer reviewed articles chosen from numerous databases, with the majority being quantitative studies conducted in America, and focused primarily on motivations for selecting teaching as a career. Findings show altruism as a primary influence for entering the teaching profession. Other intrinsic motivation included intellectual stimulation and a passionate interest in a subject matter. Additionally, studies show many have interests in enhancing equity. Particularly in America, other teachers played a significant role in applicants choosing teaching as a career.

However, researchers cite millennials' reluctance to consider teaching as a career as one reason for imbalances in the teacher labor market (Barth et al., 2016). Recent data from American College Testing and the Department of Education illustrated that between 2010 to 2014 interest in pursuing teaching careers have diminished in high school and college students (Aragon, 2018). American College Testing also reported education to be in the bottom half of top 10 intended majors, even below declaring undecided as a major (Croft et al., 2018).

The teacher labor market is uniquely governed by state educational policies (Aragon, 2018). Now that state policies have increased demand for more teachers due to the desire for lowering student/teacher ratios in K-12 schools (Barth et al., 2016), Aragon (2018) projected the number of new teacher hires in American public schools will increase by 29%. However, there are critical challenges with filling teacher vacancies

such as higher turnover inside of high-poverty schools and a decline in selecting teaching as a career amongst high student students, despite actively searching for teachers to hire (Croft et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Between 2008-2016, education degree completion fell by 15.4%, and teacher preparation completion fell by 27.4% (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Furthermore, roughly 25% of teacher education program completers do not go into teaching after graduating (Barth et al., 2016). Since substantial shares of credentialed teachers are now quitting as well, states have countered with several common policy responses, which includes alternative routes to becoming certified (Aragon, 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Alternatively Certified Teachers

The 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report under the Reagan Administration instigated the development of alternative certification programs (LoCascio et al., 2016). Now every American state widely accepts nontraditional certification programs due to the growing need for teachers (Rose & Sughrue, 2020). Even though approximately 85% of new teachers acquire teaching licensure through traditional education programs, enrollment in teacher preparation programs have declined to roughly half a million between 2008 to 2014 (Aragon, 2018). Barth et al. (2016) also noted the total number of teacher preparation completers have declined from 232,707 to 192,459 between 2010 to 2014 as well.

Geography plays a role with teacher labor markets in America, since hiring and job searches for prospective teachers remain highly localized (Engel & Cannata, 2015). Empirical evidence indicates teacher labor markets are much smaller than the vast majority of other professions, with teachers most likely to choose teaching positions

either close by their hometown or inside locations similar in demographic composition (Engel et al., 2014; Engel & Cannata, 2015). Since fewer university students are entering into teacher education programs (Barth et al., 2016), Whitford et al. (2018) confirmed, “policymakers in many states ... created alternative certification as a means to meet the demand for more teachers” (p. 672).

Because of stronger preferences towards locations closer to teachers’ hometown impacting the labor market, more than 100,000 American teachers have entered K-12 teaching through the alternative certification process (Engel et al., 2014; Mobra & Hamlin, 2020). Out of teachers who completed an alternative route to certification, at least 30% worked in another industry prior to working in education (McFarland et al., 2018). Newton et al. (2020) revealed,

although alternative certification programs vary in design, they generally accelerate the teacher preparation process to produce qualified teachers, often with greater life and work experiences, who are committed to working in hard-to-staff-schools and subjects. However, this goal only comes to fruition if alternative certification programs are able to recruit highly qualified potential teachers, retain them through the program, and support them upon entering the teaching profession. (p. 2)

The alternative certification process does provide expediency when hiring unqualified teachers (Rose & Sughrue, 2020). With nearly 33% of America’s teacher preparation pathways classifying as non-traditional, some scholars argue alternative routes to teaching feature more relaxed standards than traditional university-based teacher certification programs (Rose & Sughrue, 2020; Superfine & De Voto, 2016).

To fill teaching vacancies, local systems use emergency certifications to urgently hire college degree holders as classroom teachers, with expectations of fulfilling alternative certification requirements by a future deadline (Mobra & Hamlin, 2020). As a consequence, Barth et al. (2016) reported, “schools reporting difficulty staffing at least one subject area were half what they were twelve years earlier, from 36[%] to the present 15%” (p. 5). Additionally, a higher-than-average percentage of teachers certified through an alternative route had science, foreign language, mathematics, and science teaching assignments (McFarland et al., 2018).

According to the Education Law Center, for instance, Georgia hired nearly a quarter of its new teachers with an alternative certification in 2019, which was more than a 10% increase from 2013 (McKillip & Farrie, 2019). Furthermore, being nicknamed a “teacher pipeline” bill, Governor Brian Kemp recently signed into Georgia law, Senate Bill 88, on May 4, 2021, in an effort to increase the K-12 teaching workforce primarily through an alternative certification path, as reported by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Tagami, 2021).

Georgia’s Senate Bill 88 enacted provisions to local school systems intended for veterans and members of the United States armed forces, with approval from the state’s Professional Standards Commission on the alternative certification programs (Ga. 2021). As Georgia growingly hires new teachers without standard teaching licensure (McKillip & Farrie, 2019), with Georgia’s Senate Bill 88, the Governor continued the focus on “recruiting, preparing, mentoring, and retaining the best and brightest in education” through this state legislative passage (Tagami, 2021, para. 3).

A well-known example of a national alternative certification program, called *Teach for America*, requires a commitment to work toward credentialing while actively being classroom teachers for at least two years (Mobra & Hamlin, 2020). In addition to *Teach for America*, teachers typically coming from elite universities and possessing desirable traits and talents, usually fill vacancies in undesirable locations such as low-income, non-White, and immigrant urban communities (Trujillo et al., 2017). With alternative pathways growing increasingly popular, research shows *Teach for America* arguably produces the same quality teachers as traditional university programs (Conn et al., 2020; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Barnes et al. (2016) asserted, “*Teach for America’s* meteoric rise is without a doubt one of the most notable developments within the education reform movement” (p. 4).

However, once alternative certified teachers enter the profession, there are usually gaps in teacher learning, which include pedagogical skills, student development and motivation, and lesson planning (Rose & Sughrue, 2020). Linek et al. (2012) confirmed, “uncertified teachers who have full responsibility struggle with classroom management, pedagogy, and a teacher’s daily responsibilities more than do fully trained teachers” (p. 69).

Nevertheless, *Teach for America* has become a leading private alternative provider and source for new teachers in the nation, with the primary applicant pool typically being high-achieving college seniors, who undergo a rigorous selection process (Barnes et al., 2016; Conn et al., 2020; Superfine & De Voto, 2016). While alternative certification typically appeals to older, more mature adults with non-education college degrees and industry experience, *Teach for America* mostly recruits talented and selective

college graduates a part of the millennial generation (Linek et al., 2012; Trujillo et al., 2017).

New Generation of Teachers: The Millennials

The arrival of millennials into the workforce recognizes Latinx as its fastest growing demographic (Blancero et al., 2018). Millennials classify as being from birth year 1982 through early 2000s (Zepeda, 2016), with non-Whites trending as its rapidly expanding cohort coming into the workforce (Blancero et al., 2018). With today's workforce consisting of at most four generations: the silent generation (prior to 1946), the baby boomer generation (1946-1964), generation X (1965-1979), and the millennial (1980-1993), research shows conflicts occurring in the workplace related to millennials because of stark generational differences such as learning expectations and media technology usage (Brown, 2018; Campione, 2014; Waljee et al., 2018).

Millennials hold low retention rates in the workplace partially because of misunderstandings concerning professional growth opportunities (Campione, 2014; Roberts, 2019). On the other hand, compared to prior generations, millennials embrace society uniquely with their independent nature and openness to various philosophies not otherwise accepted in the past (Brown, 2018; Waljee et al., 2018; Roberts, 2019). Currently, millennials in the field of education carry a strong presence in secondary classrooms, being the new shapers of tomorrow's American society (Roberts, 2019).

Dubbed as digital natives, millennials hold high dependence for technologies, along with means to understand its capabilities with limited instruction (Blancero et al., 2018). Since social media integrates aspects of teaching and learning, millennials blend their online persona and daily interactions with their workplace peers, while also using

technology to collaborate at work (Campion, 2014; Roberts, 2019). This new digital era changed world order ideals for millennials, who lack an appreciation of how prior generations think and operate in school systems closely aligned with industrial-age practices (Blancero et al., 2018; Walker, 2009).

Although the educational system acknowledges millennials will be the future of the profession, there are difficulties creating cultures that incorporate their strengths for overall organizational growth and planning (Roberts, 2019). Local systems can work best with millennials when engaging them through strategic programming grounded in collaboration and results (Waljee et al., 2018). Because millennials do have an expectation of constructivism in their learning opportunities (Brown, 2018; Carter, 2009; Walker, 2009). So, the reality is this: millennials are communicative, empowered, innovative, and engaged, and will most likely be the generation to re-tool olden models (Roberts, 2019; Waljee et al., 2018). But no matter the generation or experience of K-12 teachers, workplace conditions and retention represent a serious problem in American public schools (Kelchtermans, 2017).

In summary, because American teacher labor markets show critical challenges in filling vacant teaching positions, local systems have been concentrating their efforts on decreasing teaching shortages through alternative certification pathways for new teachers, no matter the age (Miller & Youngs, 2021; Mobra & Hamlin, 2020; Whitford et al., 2018). Although nationally new teachers still generally acquire their licensure from traditional university programs, the crucial need to sharpen the interests of younger generations such as millennials towards choosing a career in teaching remains a notable struggle (Barth et al., 2016; Croft et al., 2018).

Georgia in 2019 had approximately 115,440 K-12 teachers, with around 17,316 (19%) hires designated as new teachers who had no more than 5 years of experience (Education Law Center, 2019a). Almost 49,639 (43%) Georgian teachers within K-12 public schools had below 10 years teaching experience in 2019 (Georgia Department of Education, 2019). Additionally, the Education Law Center (2019a) reported teacher turnover in Georgia's K-12 public school systems being roughly 5%, as the state employed close to 81,000 (7%) teachers on a path towards obtaining alternative certification.

When considering the Beckett County School District in 2019 had approximately 259 (15%) new teachers having no more than 5 years of experience, where nearly 121 (7%) employees were working towards obtaining alternative certification (Education Law Center, 2019a; Education Law Center, 2019b), there presented an opportunity to explore first-year teachers' perspectives who classified as millennial, completed a nontraditional pathway, or assumed either a foreign language, mathematics, science, or special education teaching position within this teacher labor market location. With teacher turnover being around 7% inside the Beckett County School District in 2019, this study can hopefully improve an understanding of how system and school leaders' roles and supports affected new teachers' decision to stay or leave the teaching field. (Owens, 2015).

Issues Related to First-Year Teachers

For numerous stakeholders, teacher retention is a clear policy issue, with a lack of clarity and conclusive evidence concerning how federal and state policymakers should obviously act (Sun et al., 2017; Vagi & Pivovarova, 2016). The workplace environment

in K-12 public schools have become a less than ideal place to begin a professional career. System administration and teachers remain in disagreement about perceptions of trust and support delivered in local schools, creating an uncomfortable dissonance between the groups of educators. This section deals with literature concerning the workplace conditions and retention in the K-12 public school system.

Workplace Conditions

American public schools typically lack dependable coordination and management in the workplace, often functioning with inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Ingersoll, 1996). Ingersoll (2007) declared,

although the education system in the United States is relatively decentralized, schools themselves are not. Most public ... schools are highly centralized internally. Data from my research show that although school principals and governing boards often have substantial control over many key decisions in schools, teachers usually do not. (para. 7)

Unlike similar professionalized positions, such as university professors, which have considerable control over the affairs of their profession than their administration, K-12 teachers relate more to lower-status occupations usually having little decision-making power involved in their role and workplace context (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017).

When considering the professional model of organization perspective as described by Ingersoll (1994), K-12 schools categorize as highly centralized, since technical and production processes emerges almost exclusively from administration offices. Recent federal and state accountability reforms have impacted school culture in K-12 education by heightening the centralization of local systems' (i.e., central office) decision making

power and often denying teachers the control needed to complete their role more effectively (Ingersoll, 2007). In addition, there is a long-standing culture inside K-12 schools, where teachers have very limited power over organizational control, lack authority on tasks in which they assume responsibility for, and do not contribute much to the development of schools' social norms, policies, and other such decisions (Ingersoll, 1996; Ingersoll et al., 2017).

Inside K-12 public schools, teachers generally function as lower-level supervisors (i.e., foreperson, "in the middle," etc.) who operate within the workplace between the demands and needs of higher ranked educators (i.e., system and school administration), and being responsible for implementing decisions and supervising their classroom students, with limited input (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017). While workplace conditions in schools offer teachers little control and influence, which leads toward high turnover rates, Ingersoll et al. (2016) confirmed K-12 teachers with a strong degree of schoolwide influence have significantly lower likelihoods to leave their schools.

Nevertheless, new teachers experience workplace conditions that weaken their belief of teaching being a rewarding profession due to the unpredictable work environments and uncertainty about being able to be successful (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Many new teachers normally learn on a "catch-as-catch-can" basis, referencing them doing their best to catch colleagues for various types of support (Kardos et al., 2001, p. 267). Even more adverse, empirical studies report new teachers usually inherit the most challenging teaching assignments, encounter testing pressure from administration, and often spend more than \$500 of their own money buying classroom supplies (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Johnson et al., 2005; Ladd, 2011). Unfortunately,

local systems do not usually develop any special circumstances (i.e., less teaching duties, etc.) for new teachers during their first professional years (Kardos et al., 2001).

Generally, new teachers start off in high-poverty, non-White schools (Simon & Johnson, 2015). But schools comprised of historically disadvantaged students, for instance, experience vermin, very limited technology, filthy bathrooms, and inadequate textbooks, equipment, and other classroom resources and supplies (Johnson et al., 2005; Mirra & Rogers, 2020). Furthermore, with more than 50% of K-12 public schools reporting unsatisfactory instructional spaces prepared and ready for the 21st century, it is no surprise new teachers prefer Whiter, affluent, higher achieving schools (Johnson et al., 2005; Simon & Johnson, 2015).

In a report summarizing a study's results focused on the instructional spaces within K-12 public schools, Ingersoll et al. (2017) further added, "instructional leadership and areas of teacher leadership that are most strongly related to student achievement are least often implemented in schools" (p. 14). From 2011 to 2015, the New Teacher Center administered a large-scale survey to almost 900,000 teachers, with findings indicating teachers carry significantly less decision-making power beyond the classroom such as planning and professional learning programs (Ingersoll et al., 2017). Additionally, data from multiple sources showed America ranks toward the lower half of other countries for teachers having significantly less influence over key decisions compared to principals in areas such as deciding school budgets (3%), evaluations (3%), hiring teachers (5%), determining professional developments (12%), creating performance standards (22%), and establishing school curriculum (25%) (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017).

More importantly, even though K-12 public schools are required to offer professional learning communities, not all have strong cultures open to ongoing development opportunities for improving classroom practices (Bressman et al., 2018; Kardos et al., 2001). New teachers rely heavily on professional learning communities for guidance but have no certainty of competence from local system administration in creating forums showcasing collaborative and knowledgeable experienced teachers (Dillard, 2016; Hong & Matsko, 2019; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Working conditions matter most to all K-12 teachers, although new teachers happen to more than likely work longer hours, and depend a great deal more on their own knowledge and skill set for professional success (Bjork et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2012; Kardos et al., 2001).

Retention

Teacher retention is defined as the prevention of qualified teachers leaving the profession or transferring schools due to poor local system support (Tran & Smith, 2020). Unfortunately, teacher turnover plagues American public schools with approximately 500,000 teachers either transferring to another school or exiting the profession annually (Harris et al., 2019; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Vagi & Pivovarova, 2016). Nearly 20% of new teachers nationwide leave public education between their first three years of teaching, recording the highest attrition period in K-12 teaching (Barnatt et al., 2017; LoCascio et al., 2016; Tran & Smith, 2020). Resulting, as an educational issue, teacher retention is deemed both a problem and a challenge (Kelchtermans, 2017).

Job satisfaction in teaching has decreased by almost a quarter since 2008, being cited as a general factor influencing teacher retention in K-12 schools (Barth et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2019). Furthermore, since now less career-long teachers remain in the

profession, K-12 teaching has devolved into being a systemic issue because of the high rates of turnover (Glazer, 2018). Tran and Smith (2020) acknowledged, “there are many who no longer see teaching as a career-long occupation, as evident by the increase of short-term teachers relative to their career-long counterparts” (p. 85).

Even though policymakers have responded to America’s teacher retention problems with strategies to increase the teaching supply and offer more incentives, these recent efforts have shown little evidence of adequately solving problems concerning high attrition in K-12 teaching (Harris et al., 2019). High teacher turnover continues to be detrimental for educational continuity, costing state general assembly’s roughly \$1 billion annually (Harris et al., 2019; Tran & Smith, 2020). Geiger and Pivovarova (2018) confirmed,

teacher attrition is costly and includes administrative costs to process the leaving teacher; replacement costs of recruiting and hiring incentives; training costs of new employee orientation and professional development; and productivity costs, which are difficult to measure and occur when the incoming teacher is not as efficient or effective as the leaving teacher and thus needs to improve skill to reach the levels of knowledge and productivity of the leaving teacher. (pp. 609-610)

While replacing teachers adversely affects local systems and schools because of the differences in effectiveness between leavers and their replacements, chronic school composition changes exacerbate turnover over time (Harris et al., 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

Some local system financial costs on hiring teacher replacements accounts for the net difference in salary, after considering years of teaching experience, education, and licensure status (Papay et al., 2017). On average, beginners replace more experienced teachers, costing local systems up to approximately \$20,000 per teacher and other hidden expenses, which negatively affects the composition of schools' teaching force (Papay et al., 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Williams et al., 2021).

The most important factor associated with improving teacher retention has been identified as administrative support (Miller & Youngs, 2021; Tran & Smith, 2020). Two-thirds of teachers leave the profession or transfer into different schools due to being dissatisfied with their school administration (Barth et al., 2016). Teachers who leave describe administrators as sometimes arbitrary, abusive, neglectful, and ultimately detrimental to their success (Pogodzinski et al., 2013). Harris et al. (2019) reinforced that “interpersonal principal–teacher relationships are a primary driver of variations in teachers' satisfaction and commitment levels” (p. 2). Thus, local systems and their school administrators strongly shape the success of teachers, influencing future career decisions for whether or not to remain as teachers or in their schools (Kraft et al., 2016).

Induction

K-12 systemwide induction aims to orient new teachers into both the profession and local schools. The tools and resources extended through new teacher induction policy from local systems fundamentally respond to the challenges being incessantly experienced in K-12 public education (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Since local systems and schools work in tandem while implementing federal and state policies, the importance of providing critical support for new teachers in managing accountability

mandates must be a high priority when considering retention efforts. This section is dedicated to examining the literature of system- and building-level supports concerning induction.

System-Level Supports

Education policy on federal and state levels now embody ambitious efforts with more mandates and incentives for improving new teacher practice (Cohen et al., 2007). While American states vary on the minimum level of control and quality concerning the structure and components of induction programs, more than half have issued requirements for some form of induction to exist in their local school systems (Goldrick, 2016). Fueled by state-led efforts to increase quality in teacher development, local system policy has gradually shifted attention towards meeting the needs of new teachers (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009).

Generally, local systems organize their own induction programs that follow state guidelines and models by enacting independent policies which offer interpretations on practices and opportunities for new teachers (Goldrick, 2016; Grossman & Thomas, 2004; Smith, 2007). Induction policy in local systems assumes the responsibility of orienting new teachers concurrently into the profession and their system's school, while also directing how to teach state standards (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). In some cases, the process is formally initiated from the local system's office dealing with personnel by identifying new teachers for induction services to be provided (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Because much of what new teachers learn depends on their on-the-job experiences inside and outside the classroom, system policies function to construct their

practices by offering various opportunity structures (Grossman & Thomas, 2004). Key instruments useful in system induction policy implementation include standards frameworks, at least a year of mentoring, formative assessments and ratings, funding provisions, portfolio development, and various workshops and seminars (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Other policy design considerations in system policy implementation involve mentor selection, mentor assignment, mentor training, mentors' work conditions, professional development options, and specifics on teacher evaluation related to new teachers (Dayton, 2012; Tabak, 2020; Youngs, 2007).

The local system functions partially as teacher educator because of the powerful role policy implementation has on new teachers in molding their practices during the process of development (Grossman & Thomas, 2004). To meet this need, some local systems devote funds to release mentor teachers from their classroom duties and focus their responsibilities towards developing and problem-solving with new teachers full-time (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). As Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) explained, “through their interactions with [new] teachers, mentors bring induction policy to life, determining to a great extent whether and how the aims of the policy will be realized” (p. 315). Ultimately, the success of system induction policy will make building and maintaining teacher learning communities in schools easier (Smith, 2007).

Research suggests local systems that use high-intensity support strategies provide more effective services towards improving new teacher learning and performance (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). While induction defines the problem new teachers face, very little have empirically examined the relationships between system policy and

the experiences of new teachers, despite advancement in services (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Youngs 2007). Youngs (2003) concluded,

there is little understanding in the research literature, ... of 1) the relationship between [system] induction policy and the nature and quality of the support experienced by [new] teachers; or 2) the processes by which support for new teachers is shaped by the [system] and school contexts in which they are situated.

(p. 8)

Yet, local systems reportedly struggle with establishing an overall ethos of supportive professional cultures and communities inside their K-12 schools, by failing to advance rewarding values, beliefs, and norms necessary through stable social workplace conditions, notwithstanding research, guidance, and investments in new teacher induction (Birkeland & Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Past efforts have illustrated challenges in rigorous examination of the connections between local systems' policy and the enacted processes and practices in coaching, mentoring, and other induction experiences teachers find beneficial (Youngs, 2003). This study sought to make sense of the practices new teachers experienced through the Beckett County School District's induction program, and how systemwide policy can strengthen teacher support efforts, from the practitioners' perspective (Cohen et al., 2007; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Building-Level Supports

The leadership of principals is needed to develop a school culture that promotes professional relationships among new and experienced teachers (Wood, 2005). School culture led by school leadership offers varying degrees of building-level support in

monitoring the workload of new teachers, along with endorsing resilience practices when facing unavoidable adversity on-the-job (Hudson, 2012). Because mentoring has emerged as a preferred approach in teacher induction, collaboration between school administration and mentors should exist to construct a shared understanding for what good teaching looks like (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012; Lindgren, 2005).

Key supports at the building-level focus on managing classroom practices and behavior, while promoting work-life balance (Hudson, 2012). With elements of building-level induction including a committed school leadership who deliver opportunities to learn with and from work colleagues, mentors act as school building guides and companions when helping with immediate problems and moving teaching practices forward for new teachers (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012; Lindgren, 2005). A comprehensive package of building-level supports involves elements such as at least one mentor collaborating with administration, new teacher seminars, common planning time and networking with other teachers, a teacher's aide, and extra resources when necessary (Fletcher & Strong, 2009).

Additionally, new teachers and mentors participate in frequent mentor meetings to have discussions for at most one or two hours, so mentees can reflect on their classroom practices (Lindgren, 2005). Hudson (2012) stated, "the mentoring of [new] teachers ... should focus very clearly on the core business of education, that is, teaching and student learning" (p. 81). Mentors visit new teachers' classrooms on an ongoing basis, using observational tools to promote evidence-based discussions towards higher standards of performance (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). School-level mentoring tools that can be extended to new teachers include comfortable talking, attentive listening, assistance in

reflecting, written and oral feedback, planning support, and modeling (Hudson, 2012).

The importance of principals taking on a mentorship role with new teachers adds to career success and promotes trustful relationships as well (Campione, 2014). Wood (2005) believes, “as instructional leaders, principals need to give regular, systematic feedback to novice teachers on their pedagogical approaches, content knowledge, and classroom management strategies.” (p. 48). Because, as Youngs (2007) pointed out, when principals hold knowledge in induction, new teachers have a higher chance of moving away from the survival stage towards the mastery stage.

Supports for New Teachers

New teachers enter the profession with their own educational philosophies, desiring development that aligns their viewpoints alongside other evidenced-based solutions. Mentorship and coaching have been recognized as a means of supporting new teachers’ transition into local systems and schools, primarily built on models where experienced professionals support novice teaching practices through reflection and the transfer of institutional knowledge. In addition, the emergence of the coronavirus global pandemic has transformed much of K-12 schooling towards tremendous advancement of its technology infrastructure, now thrusting professional learning into virtual spaces, with other potential training implications, tools, and techniques to actively consider. The final section of this literature review explores the practices of coaching, mentorship, and virtual learning communities as critical supports for new teachers.

Coaching

The practice of coaching references experienced professionals engaging in inquiry-based dialogue driven by classroom observational data (Knight, 2009). Commonly linked to sports, coaching involves observers delivering on-going, detailed supportive feedback concerning the teachers being monitored (Carr et al., 2017). Successful coaching models support elements of knowledge flow, distributed expertise, and affirmative vulnerability, which includes approaches such as peer, cognitive, technical, problem-solving, and reform coaching (Kurz et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2020). The overall goal of coaching aims to empower new teachers through reflection and awareness for ultimately increasing best practices in future performances (Knight, 2009).

In education, the coaching process begins with coaches recognizing potential strengths and challenges within their coachees (Carr et al., 2017). Coaches gather initial information about new teachers by co-constructing partnership agreements, having light discussions, and observing classroom performance (Zepeda, 2017). Once talent becomes apparent, coaches provide structure supportive activities in hopes of improving classroom and instructional methods that align with system and school practices (Hong & Matsko, 2019).

Inherent in high-quality coaching exhibits features of social learning which recognizes equity in knowledge and experience between coaches and teachers (Robertson et al., 2020). Knight (2009) describes several characteristics in high-quality coaching for new teachers. Coaches ought to be: (1) focused on professional best practices, (2) facilitated within on-the-job learning, (3) grounded in teacher partnership, (4) practiced in

a non-evaluative and non-judgmental style, and (5) carried out through respectful, open-ended, honest, encouraging, practical, and thought-provoking communications. Because new teachers develop specific professional goals, they have charge over their coaching sessions, while coaches use questioning as guidance to focus the professional transformation (Carr et al., 2017; Hong & Matsko, 2019).

Mentorship

Appearing in the well-known classic *The Odyssey*, the mentor for Odysseus ultimately served as adviser throughout his life journey (Carr et al., 2017; Reitman & Karge, 2019). Regardless of demographic characteristics, loneliness can be common when beginning at a new workplace, and new teachers need differentiated guidance for becoming self-reliant when working (Carr et al., 2017; Hong & Matsko, 2019). Through broad range services, mentorship offers new teachers the opportunities to share their perspectives with an experienced professional, thus increasing knowledge in various areas within education (DeCearse et al., 2016; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017).

Mentoring as a practice guides new teachers slowly through navigating classroom life inside their local system and school by collaborating resources intended to enhance teaching and learning for students (Bressman et al., 2018). The process of mentoring involves transferring life knowledge in a fault-free work space, involving confidentiality and data-driven professional insights to continuously improve along the way (Carr et al., 2017). Additionally, a notable feature in mentorship involves frequent social interactions, so strong trust can be developed over time alongside various topics ranging from lesson planning, professionalism, methodology, classroom management, and other commitments inside the profession (Hong & Matsko, 2019).

Even though the primary objective of mentoring embeds opportunities for ongoing goal-setting and problem solving with mentees, nearly all mentors in America have at least partial teaching responsibilities, without any daily release time to offer new teachers comprehensive services (Carr et al., 2017; DeCearse et al., 2016). In addition, most cases show that school administrators act as mentors, compared to actual full-time mentors, for new teachers (DeCearse et al., 2016). Concerns for mentorship in induction programs include lacking essential structures, available mentors, and funding (Carr et al., 2017). In addition, other critical concerns that potentially damage experiences for new teachers involve inadequate mentor training, pay, supervision, or effective measures to evaluate mentorship's effectiveness (DeCearse et al., 2016).

Virtual Learning Communities

Because the 2020 coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic affected America and the globe as never seen before in modern society under the Trump administration, K-12 public education faced critical infrastructure challenges and wide sweeping changes concerning institutional behavior, development, and practice (Parker et al., 2021; Wyse et al., 2020). COVID-19 clearly further disrupted the state of affairs in education, forcing a transition to virtual services, and the sudden paradigm shift away from solely in-person pedagogy being the primary learning norm (Barton, 2020; Jeong et al., 2020).

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic caused Americans to traumatically worry about their personal health and self-care, the concept for community learning will now forever be changed because of this virus (Parker et al., 2021). Wyse et al. (2020) agreed, “not all changes are bad, ... COVID-19 has sparked ... greater availability of some educational technology products as some companies have made their tools freely

available” (p. 60). Additionally, the elimination of various educational field activities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic brought on remote learning substitutes for all teachers and their professional development (Barton, 2020).

Since media technology has conveniently expanded teacher development opportunities, new teachers can now participate in interactive web-based community learning predicated on social constructivism (Ruey, 2010; Zorga, 2002). The World Wide Web allows new teachers flexibility to self-manage activities, thereby leading their learning towards self-autonomy (Chu et al., 2012). Because social learning can be linked to constructivism, media technology delivers any time platforms which extends services involving intentional mindful thinking (Huang, 2002).

Media technology disregards traditional rules for communication, such that the reality constructed exists as a created invention (Buhl, 2008). Additionally, when referencing the methodology of virtual learning, the internet delivers a more democratic platform for teachers to view and present perspectives comfortably in their own space (Sinclair, 2003). Not only can virtual learning communities enable the sharing of teachers’ knowledge, methods, resources, reflection, and opportunities, but it also increases mentorship and coaching as a strategy to improve problem solving skills (Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, in terms of mentorship, Bierema and Hill (2005) reported, “the internet is being used as a mentoring venue where virtual mentoring has become increasingly useful as a knowledge age alternative to the traditional mentoring relationships” (p. 557).

Virtual mentoring has been defined as using a tele-conferencing system to support a face-to-face mentoring relationship (Bierema & Hill, 2005). Buhl (2008) confirmed,

recent technology has made it clear that communication takes place in ways that cannot solely be reflected in the familiar school metaphor, because technology is capable of establishing an educational setting in many different ways. By educational setting, I mean the circumstance that communication alone determines the extent to which what takes place has an educational function. (p. 5)

Online discussion boards, for instance, facilitates benefits for building higher-level cognitive knowledge through interactive, collaborative, authentic, shared, learner-centered, structured, experimental, self-directed, project based, reflective learning in cost-effective technological platforms by provoking questioning, ownership, motivation, and dialogue (Covelli, 2017; Huang, 2002; Zepeda, 2012).

As a communication tool and resource, virtual learning communities have become a convenient instrument to construct knowledge and learning, unrestricted by geographical conditions (Liu et al., 2020). There are benefits in being a part of virtual learning communities for all types of professionals (Stefanos et al., 2020). Virtual learning communities promote the seeking of help from others when needs arise, with a prominent feature championing user autonomy, where mentees can choose the knowledge they desire (Liu et al., 2020; Sinclair, 2003). Bierema and Hill (2005) asserted, “increased access and ease associated with virtual [communities] can make the process one that is more easily engaged by many, thus reinforcing the learning for all” (p. 562).

Virtual learning communities exists based on interest and knowledge sharing in an online social network (Liu et al., 2020). Although virtual learning can significantly

increase the workload of mentors, because mentees might expect quick responses, social interactions online could result in greater time delay compared to the immediacy of in-person communication (Sinclair, 2003). Ng (2017) stated, “despite decades of research there appears little consensus on how to shape the development of virtual learning [communities] to encourage participation and increase their effectiveness” (p. 46). But ultimately, for mentors and mentees to continue using virtual learning communities, key factors such as knowledge sharing, trust, and flow must exist as part of the online collaborative process (Liu et al., 2020).

Evidence shows effectiveness of mentorship and coaching through virtual interactive engagement, because mentors have more availability to facilitate learning experiences, troubleshoot problems faster, and even supplement community activities with experts—both locally and globally (Jeong et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Stefanos et al., 2020). However, Zhang et al. (2017) found in their study on involvement in virtual learning communities that teachers still need development of technological knowledge to help improve training efforts and effects for them.

In closing, the COVID-19 pandemic brought conditions of unfamiliarity and uncertainty onto teachers, making this an ongoing and unsolved problem within American public education and society at-large (Berry, 2020). Future research should consider how the COVID-19 pandemic transitioned teaching to a combination of remote and in-person instruction (Wyse et al., 2020), and the impact on K-12 public school systems from the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act signed into law by President Biden. In addition, there needs to be an investigation into virtual learning communities across the course of the COVID-19 pandemic for supporting new teachers entering education

hereafter, along with targeted interviews on effective active learning strategies that can be extended when engaging in online professional development (Barton, 2020; Parker et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). This study can hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the coaching and mentorship strategies needed in fostering virtual learning communities (Jeong et al., 2020).

Law and Policy Issues Concerning New Teacher Employment

Since 2001, American public-school systems have seen increased accountability (DeBray & Blankenship, 2016), because of recent federal and state efforts to focus laws and policies on improving teacher effectiveness. As raising accountability inside local systems aims to improve performance reviews and restructure tenure and dismissal procedures, stricter reforms on employment for teachers have delayed improvement efforts regarding turnover and attrition. Additionally, one significant reason why new teachers decide to leave or stay in schools or the profession has been identified as poor school-based management and decisions such as teacher assignments by their school administration. The final section of this literature review examines recent empirical evidence regarding law and policy issues by referencing teaching assignments, evaluations, and tenure/dismissal concerning new teacher employment.

Teaching Assignments

Yearly, across America, at least 1 out of 5 teachers are reassigned to new teaching assignments (Blazar, 2015). While every American state and local system varies in their policies, practices, and provisions, local systems and their principals do generally hold unilateral power with determining teaching assignments inside their schools (Atteberry et al., 2017). The school administration may not necessarily issue teaching assignments

from an equitable lens, at times contributing negatively to school improvement efforts such as retaining new and effective teachers (Grissom et al., 2015). New teachers have a higher likelihood of receiving grade and course reassignments up to 3 times within their first 5 years of teaching, along with being assigned more low-achieving students (Rogers & Doan, 2019).

The descriptive statistical analysis written by Ost and Schiman (2015) strongly suggested a relationship between teaching reassignments and new teacher turnover. Using the North Carolina Education Research Data Center's longitudinal administrative database, Ost and Schiman (2015) followed every K-12 public school teacher between 1995 to 2007 for measuring voluntary and involuntary turnover from in the state. Teachers sampled on average had around 2.8 years of teaching experience, and 1.8 years of grade-specific experience. Overall, 17% of teachers were issued teaching reassignments, with average turnover for schools and districts being 21% and 14%, respectively.

Results from Ost's and Schiman's (2015) quantitative study showed evidence of a relationship between turnover and teaching assignments. Data suggested teaching reassignments is associated with higher levels of turnover because teachers could be unprepared to teach the reassigned area, which causes increases in their workload, and a disruption in their work environment. In addition, teachers reassigned are more likely to report having limited time for planning and be less satisfied at their school. Ultimately, the descriptive statistical analysis concluded that teachers with no more than 6 years of experience have the greatest likelihood of leaving schools or the profession after teaching reassignments occur.

In Ost's and Schiman's (2015) report, teachers with 1 year of professional experience and 1 year in their teaching assignment had an average turnover rate of 24% after being reassigned. Also, teachers reassigned with 3 years of professional experience and no teaching background related to their assignment had an average turnover rate of 26%. Likewise, teachers with 6 years of professional experience and no teaching background related to their assignment had an average turnover rate of 22%. However, after teachers had 6 years of total past experience, the higher turnover pattern became much less apparent.

Assignment practices in K-12 schools may conflict with ideals concerning employment fairness, as school administration at times use their unilateral power to incentivize higher status teachers (Rogers & Doan, 2019). Veteran teachers oftentimes secure favorable and attractive teaching assignments, while beginning teachers generally take on teaching assignments with high rates of challenging and disadvantaged students (Feng 2010; Grissom et al., 2015).

With the national increase in teacher accountability, school principals reportedly issue teaching reassignments strategically based on student testing results, especially in lower performing schools (Grissom et al., 2017). Empirical evidence according to Atteberry et al. (2017) confirmed school principals reassigned teachers to strategically achieve their goals, which does include higher student achievement results. But Rogers and Doan (2019) found no evidence that students will make equal progress with new teachers who were switched to another grade-level or subject. In contrast, Blazer (2015) mentioned teachers, who repeatedly teach their same course from year-to-year, have between one-third to one-half higher returns in student achievement growth.

Overall, given the past quantitative study by Ost and Schimann (2015), at present time there is not much empirical evidence concerning how much teacher reassignments have on turnover and attrition (Atteberry et al., 2017). Research concerning teaching assignments and reassignments has primarily explored whether teachers hold qualifications in taught subject areas compared to reassignments (Blazar, 2015). Future research is needed in determining the impact on turnover and attrition for new teachers reassigned after their first-year of teaching (Rogers & Doan, 2019). Blazar (2015) confirmed,

in light of the relationship between grade reassignment and teacher retention in schools, the small effort of keeping teachers in the same grade may save money while also potentially raising student achievement. Therefore, continued research in this area may prove quite valuable to schools. (p. 214)

Though not much is known about the effects on students or schools concerning reassignments of new teachers into low-stakes classrooms over the long-term, teacher retention could potentially improve if their teaching assignments contain fewer students to discipline or exhibit chronic academic issues (Feng, 2010; Grissom et al., 2017).

Teacher Evaluations

Local systems and leaders have the duty to supervise the work performance of K-12 public school teachers (Dayton, 2018). While state teacher evaluation systems reinforce the supervisor-subordinate roles between teachers and administration, the importance of supervisors assuming mentorship roles with new teachers adds to career longevity and promotes trustful relationships (Campione, 2014; Dayton, 2012; Tabak, 2020). But many new teachers leave schools and the profession well before retirement

age, asserting unfair evaluation methods from administration in assessing their teacher quality and classroom experience (Carothers et al., 2019; Warring, 2015).

Under the Bush and Obama administrations, federal passages of The No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, American Reinvestment and Recovery Act in 2009, and Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 unprecedentedly shifted how to assess teacher quality (Orfield, 2016; Paufler & Clark, 2019). Furthermore, national legislation has influenced state-adoption of high-stakes teacher evaluation systems nearly across states (DeBray & Blankenship, 2016; Kraft et al., 2020). Now state teacher evaluation systems provide models in effective teaching practices, offer opportunities for professional development, combine observations with value-added models (i.e., teacher growth; student testing outcomes), and better differentiate between poor, good, and high-quality teachers (Englund & Frostenson, 2017; Tabak, 2020; Paufler & Clark, 2019; Warring, 2015).

However, as Kraft et al. (2020) discussed, the supply of new teachers has decreased since the ushering in of teacher accountability reforms; and consequently, continues increasing the likelihood for local systems to have vacant teaching positions annually. Kraft et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative study from datasets maintained by the U.S. Department of Education, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the National Center for Education to examine the effects of teacher accountability reforms on the supply and quality of new teachers across states from 2002-2016.

Findings from Kraft et al.'s (2020) study show that since implementation of high-stakes evaluation reforms, there has been a 17% reduction on average in college graduates obtaining teacher licensures, with no prior evidence of the new teacher supply

trending downward before the recent legislative acts. Additionally, Kraft et al. (2020) estimated that “high-stakes evaluation reforms reduced licenses granted in a state by 2.69 per 10,000 18-to-65-year-olds, on average” (p. 7).

Along with the reduction of the supply of new teachers, Kraft et al.’s (2020) findings clearly suggest teacher accountability reforms have caused challenges for local systems related to filling teaching vacancies. Empirical evidence in this report estimated high-stakes evaluation reforms increased the likelihood by 2.6 percentage points for public schools to have at least one unfilled teaching vacancy. In addition, when examining the impact increased teacher accountability reforms had on low-income and non-White localities, consistent evidence found a more than twice as large likelihood to have at least one unfilled teaching vacancy.

Regarding the effects on new teacher quality, Kraft et al. (2020) found teacher evaluation reforms did increase the likelihood by 8.1 percentage points for new teachers to graduate from more selective universities. However, findings in Kraft et al.’s (2020) teacher perception analysis suggested teachers increasingly worry about their job security by an increase of more than 7 percentage points. Furthermore, empirical evidence showed a decrease of 14.6 percentage points related to being satisfied with being a teacher, a decrease of 5.7 percentage points concerning new teachers having control over the content and skills they teach, and a decrease of 8.9 percentage points regarding new teachers having control over their teaching techniques.

By leveraging a rich set of self-reported survey data, Kraft et al. (2020) strongly asserted that teacher accountability reforms have reduced the likelihood of college graduates wanting to teach in K-12 public education across American states. Because

workplace conditions pertaining to tenure and dismissal policies were integrated in the formation of high-states teacher evaluations, some job security and protection for teachers have been taken away, impacting the new teacher supply in various ways. As Kraft et al. (2020) concluded, “analyses suggest that evaluation reforms substantially decreased new teachers' ... job satisfaction [and] cooperative effort” (p. 10).

While Kraft et al. (2020) indicated new teachers entering K-12 public education come from more selective institutions since teacher accountability increased, there is no evidence supports that these reforms attract college graduates into K-12 teaching from higher-ranked undergraduate universities. In addition, even though Kraft et al.'s (2020) quantitative study mentioned the competitiveness inside the teacher labor market, they offered no perception data on supports new teachers would prefer to influence their thinking about staying within the profession, despite the increases in teacher accountability reforms.

Tenure and Dismissal

For over a century, tenure laws in K-12 public education have been enacted to protect teachers' employment across America (Kahlenberg, 2015). Tenure laws and policies extend due process protection rights for teachers, which follow fixed procedures of requiring local systems to issue dismissal notices on certain grounds in advance; and also includes the right of contesting termination with a formal hearing before an official and impartial governing body or hearing officer (Black, 2016a; Kahlenberg, 2015). With nearly half of American states incorporating teacher performance into tenure decisions, Georgia awards tenure automatically after new teachers finish their probationary period (Jacobs, 2016).

During new teachers' probationary period, administrators used the state's evaluation system to document ratings and commentary for the primary use of identifying and dismissing poor performers before the end of their third year (Lomascolo & Angelle, 2019). New teachers obtaining tenure is important to their career progression in K-12 public education, because as Black (2016a) explained,

procedurally, due process ensures that a tenured teacher cannot be terminated without the state making a case against the teacher and allowing the teacher a chance to respond. Substantively, due process limits the reasons why a school might remove a teacher and the reliability of the evidence on which a [system] might do so. (p. 102)

In great detail, Kahlenberg (2015) explained because high-stakes testing and evaluations have become commonplace in K-12 public education, tenure laws and policies to protect teachers' employment are still necessary even today.

Tenure policies embody aspects of community service and civic rights, protecting teachers from well-connected stakeholders (i.e., parents) who may try to push their own interests onto students. Additionally, with the burden being on local systems to provide a case for dismissal, tenured teachers cannot be dismissed for political activities, memberships in unions, academic freedom, and openly disagreeing with their school leadership on unproven, educational practices.

While new teachers during their probationary period must be considered at-will employees, and can be non-renewed without cause after proper notice of intent from their local systems once the contract year ends, local systems may dismiss new teachers based on seniority when layoffs occur as well (Knight & Struck, 2016; Nixon et al., 2016).

Because personnel costs range from 60 to 80% of local systems' total expenditures, new teacher layoffs can sometimes be unavoidable during budget shortfalls (Kraft, 2015).

Although many American states maintain seniority as a dominant factor in layoffs within public school systems, this issue remains unresolved and highly debated (Dabbs, 2020).

Kraft (2015) confirmed,

the implementation of these long-standing last-hired, first-fired layoff policies has generated considerable criticism among policy organizations and in the popular press because such policies eliminate the jobs of early-career teachers who may be more effective than some of their more experienced peers. (p. 468)

Tenure has shown to protect poorly performing teachers, because school administration can easily or unconsciously misclassify, manipulate, and distort teacher evaluations (Baker, 2018; Geiger & Amrein-Beardsley, 2017; Lomascolo & Angelle, 2019).

Evidence indicates local system's seniority-based policy removes as many new teachers as necessary in reaching the equivalent budget shortfall due to salary pay usually costing less than their veteran colleagues (Goldhaber et al., 2016). Consequently, many critics believe teacher tenure should be eliminated, for the policy protects the status quo, appears superficial, and offers very little insights into informing what requisite teaching skills teachers possess (Black, 2016a; Lomascolo & Angelle, 2019). Even when tenured teachers have been identified as poorly performing, the due process protection can be costly and time-consuming for local systems seeking to dismiss them (Lomascolo & Angelle, 2019). Furthermore, teacher tenure presents itself as a school finance and litigation issue, since reforms in this area incorporate compensation, accountability, and evaluation schemes (Black, 2016b).

The recent past has seen several legal challenges to tenure laws and policies concerning teachers' due process protections (Black, 2016a; Kahlenberg, 2015). Black (2016a) discussed the first constitutional challenge on teacher tenure, the 2012 *Vergara* case in California, with the plaintiffs alleging the policy perpetuates retention of ineffective teachers. Also, similar court cases challenging tenure are in the works within multiple other American states such as New York (Kahlenberg, 2015). While not much evidence shows that eliminating or delaying tenure will necessarily improve the quality of teachers, new challenges in tenure seek to narrow the policy towards at least removing poor performing teachers easier (Black, 2016a; Black, 2016b).

Chapter Summary

There have been efforts to solve America's teacher retention issues; yet, none have succeeded in resolving the high rates of turnover occurring in public school systems (Harris et al., 2019). As Barth et al. (2016) stated, "the headlines don't lie. School [systems] across the country are struggling to attract and keep good teachers" (p. 1). Current workplace conditions for new teachers do impact their job satisfaction. Thus, addressing the teacher shortage crisis needs to be more than increasing the teaching supply (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019).

Since achieving a sense of success with teaching abilities is among the highest reasons why new teachers decide whether to stay, leave, or transfer schools, beginners who participate in induction have a higher likelihood of remaining in the K-12 teaching force (Barnatt et al., 2017; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). When system- and building-level supports work together, they can provide comprehensive, high-intensity services to new teachers that aid in promoting work-life balance, managing classroom practices and

behavior, and delivering intentional learning opportunities through mentorship, coaching, and various learning communities (Bressman et al., 2018; Hudson, 2012; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

In summary, the success of new teachers is strongly guided by the local system and school leadership, which influences future career decisions related to staying or leaving K-12 public education (Harris et al., 2019; Kraft et al., 2016). This study contributes to understanding how system and school supports given to first-year teachers influence their thinking to stay or leave the profession. A literature gap exists concerning the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of first-year teachers, which uses qualitative methods to clarify and explain elements, supports, and assistance that work best in K-12 induction (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). The qualitative methods used for this study will be explained in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Comprehensive, high-intensity, and formal induction programs may be the most worthwhile system policy option to socialize new teachers into the profession and to improve teacher retention over time (Kearney, 2017). However, many issues related to first-year teachers such as workplace conditions make teacher retention a clear policy issue within local school systems (Ingersoll et al., 2017, Sun et al., 2017; Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Recent empirical studies within at least the past decade have documented the highest attrition period for new teachers to be between the first five years of teaching (Gamborg et al., 2018; Kelly & Northrop, 2015; Miller et al., 2020).

At present time, the primary response of policymakers concerning America's teacher attrition and retention problems has been to increase the teaching supply, while high turnover rates systemically persist in public school systems as state governments spend an estimated \$1 billion annually for tackling teacher shortages (Harris et al., 2019). As Owens (2015) confirmed through a statewide survey conducted by the Georgia Department of Education, numerous stakeholders call for future research to assist in understanding how system and school leaders' roles and supports affect overall retention efforts concerning new teachers within K-12 public schools.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District

(pseudonym). The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

The overarching question that this study addressed is how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experiences do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program?

This chapter discusses the research methodology and procedures used in the study by incorporating the following sections: conceptual and interpretative framework, qualitative research, the case study, the research site, data collection methods, data management, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethics, statement of reflexivity, assessment of benefits and risks, and limitations of the study. The study offered data for informing system-wide efforts to support first-year teachers.

Interpretative Framework

Given the historically high rate of attrition in mathematics, special education, science, and foreign languages within K-12 public education, this study sought to examine how system and school leaders' roles and supports affect overall retention

efforts concerning new teachers inside K-12 public schools. Fundamentally, the conceptual framework of this study cited theories in the fields of instructional supervision and employee socialization such as coaching (Kurz et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2017; Zepeda, 2017), mentorship (Bressman et al., 2018; Carr et al., 2017), learning communities (Bierema & Hill, 2005; Liu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2017), induction (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009; Grossman & Thompson, 2004; Youngs, 2007), and sensemaking (Kemper & Joshi, 2019).

This study's interpretative framework drew from a social constructivism paradigm, which Snow (2001) detailed as how humans make sense of situations based on their subscribed meanings, from information provided. The social constructionist point of view focuses on ways social interaction and activity contributes to the elaboration of processes, practices, and policies arising out of norms established by local systems (Cobb 1995). In constructivist research, the design aims to understand shared knowledge from a sociocultural perspective, considering language and other communication forms as integral within social activities for comprehending how meanings evolved from past experiences when interacting with system processes, practices, and policies (Cobb, 1995; Creswell 2007). As Creswell (2007) clarified, "often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through social interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms" (p. 20-21).

Rooted in the interpretative framework, epistemology, ontology, and axiology were considered to support the constructivism paradigm in this study (Lincoln et al., 2011). When referencing epistemology or how knowledge becomes acquired, this

research assumes our world develops knowledge from human social interpretations (Crotty, 1998; Prasad, 2018). Meaning the construction of our social reality begins with human intersubjectivity, where the researcher and participants assert meanings on past experiences from their personal bodies of knowledge (Snow, 2001; Prasad, 2018; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Ultimately, from an interpretative process, the meanings of social activities require interpretation of human activities (Dennis, 2011).

Ontology, an individual's view of reality from a constructivist perspective, in this research assumes human agency as a principle for looking into structural and cultural factors humans endure as agents, who independently take positions and perform actions (Snow, 2001; Prasad, 2018). The researcher focused on how participants interpreted the processes, practices, and policies as employee agents in their roles to understand the system's historical and cultural settings and expectations within socially interactive work situations (Creswell, 2007; Dennis 2011; Koopmans et al., 2006).

Lastly, as axiology deals with the worthiness of knowledge and research, this study explores individual participants' perspectives and experiences on workplace situations, issues, and conditions regarding induction through detailed storytelling (Creswell, 2007; Snow, 2001). The researcher's intent was to interpret and to make sense of individual participants' meanings attributed from their teacher experiences in a systemwide induction program (Creswell, 2007). From a constructivist perspective, as Kemper and Joshi (2019) pointed out, "teachers can develop different interpretations of the same reform idea based on their context, prior knowledge and beliefs, and opportunities to engage in collective sensemaking with their peers" (p. 157). Thus, the researcher acquired knowledge using constructivist methods to investigate participants'

comprehension of system induction frameworks (Allen & Penuel, 2015; Kemper & Joshi, 2019).

Qualitative Research

Because workplace conditions in K-12 public education follow collective human behavior and social movements of state and local system agents, a primary reason for conducting this qualitative study was to examine the complexities, which include induction supports, issues, resources, practices, sensemaking, opportunities, and experiences, of being a first-year teacher. Central to this study's probe on a systemwide induction program features clear elements of qualitative inquiry (Freeman, 2017). This study was essentially interpretative (Lincoln et al., 2011), specific to the context of one local public system within Georgia, and attributable to the individual stories of teachers and other leader employees as participants (Creswell, 2007; Snow, 2001).

As a broad research methodology, qualitative research applies a set of interactive data strategies meant to capture, explore, describe, and understand phenomena from mostly subjective, narrative forms (Quintao et al., 2020). The paradigm of qualitative research seeks to explain human nature from a naturalistic approach by detailing the natural developments concerning a specific phenomenon under investigation (Golafshani, 2003; Rosenthal, 2016). Within this interpretative social theory, the researcher situates himself in the universe of his participants, by using various methods to examine and to make sense of a system's natural order (Creswell, 2007).

Freeman (2017) acknowledged qualitative research embodies storytelling with elements such as dialogue, actions, and plots to not only provide coherence from various personal accounts, but also to uncover inherent conditions existent in human nature

concerning a particular phenomenon. Quintao et al. (2020) described a distinct feature of qualitative methodology as aiming to investigate questions from the standpoint of undefined variables being formulated after presenting pertinent information about a problem. However, Kvale (1999) illustrated a dilemma in completing qualitative research, where at times the researcher either can be carried away with entertaining personal narratives off topic and lacking validity, or on the other side, get caught up in statistical correlations and significance without securing enough anecdotes from individuals of interest.

Findings from qualitative research produces knowledge from methods which embrace the involvement and immersion of the researcher, who aims to document what, how, and why changes occurred over a time period (Golafshani, 2003).

Characteristically, qualitative research focuses on an inductive process for being able to understand and provide contextual meaning by collecting data and writing a richly descriptive analysis (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative inquiry discovers trends of thinking and opinions from participants willing to share their perspective on issues related to the subject under investigation from a typically small sample population (Quintao et al., 2020).

Qualitative research comes from the subject's own frame of reference to understand human nature through obtaining participants who have spent time in the settings under investigation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Rosenthal (2016) confirmed a traditional reason to conduct qualitative research characterizes the researcher as a scholar interested in surveying participants' perspectives for acquiring greater insights on a specific phenomenon. Through combining documents, field notes, and interviews, the

descriptive nature of qualitative research conveys what the researcher understood about a phenomenon from a careful investigation on flexible, relevant variables (Merriam, 2009).

The Case Study

For the purposes of the current research, a case study was selected as an investigative method. With the case study considered by Baskarada (2014) as an approach to provide an extensive report on exploratory findings over a specified time period, this method lined up with the purpose and objectives of this study. Quintao et al. (2020) defined a case study as a qualitative method “that generally consists of a way to deepen an individual unit. It serves to answer questions that the research does not have much control over the phenomenon studied” (p. 274).

Although there could be various ways to strategically conduct a case study, Marrelli (2007) advised basic conditions for consideration in properly implementing this research method: (1) the researcher acts as an ethical, cooperating guest at the research site throughout this study by establishing a clear participatory contract, defining limits of access, and soliciting risk examples for mutual protections, (2) the documentation of uncontrolled variables, context, personal characteristics, and events only occurring within the investigation’s time period, (3) the researcher needs to record both verbal and non-verbal direct interactions with exact language, and (4) the report should be organized in a manner that answers the research questions enough to ensure readers understand the relevant subject and context solely under the investigation’s scope. The researcher accepted these conditions to safeguard the relevancy and suitability of this case study (Yin, 2014).

A case study serves as an inquiry strategy with various favorable qualities, making this research method appropriate for this study (Creswell, 2007). Education research uses the case study as a widely acceptable investigative practice because the researcher socially interacts with participants to make sense of how prior workplace situations were experienced (Gibbert et al., 2008; Merriam, 2009). Marrelli (2007) added, case studies promote participation and buy-in opportunities from practitioners through interviews and observations for documenting deep and personal perspectives on broader issues in the field. Additionally, the way Creswell (2007) explained case studies involved practitioners empowering themselves through their storytelling, where they share detailed descriptions and analysis of a system's program and its previous events and activities.

Under a bounded system, a case study enables researchers to holistically treat data using triangulation protocols for interpretative and confirmation purposes as a unique way in capturing concrete, contextual experiences (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Gibbert et al. (2008) noted, "case studies as tools for generating and testing theory have provided the strategic management field with ground-breaking insights" (p. 1465). Baskarada (2014) further indicated the design of a case study can investigate program implementation and effects to examine operations in multiple places and causality at the research site.

Marrelli (2007) explained the case study as a popular method to evaluate programs aligned with legislative intent for helping decision makers understand complexities in its operations and their outcomes. Overall, considering the objective aimed to acquire a better understanding concerning induction supports, the intrinsic design in this study did not seek theory building, but rather a dedicated exploration into

rich, extensive descriptions on the social timeline of events and activities from the participants' perspectives and any recognized influences (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

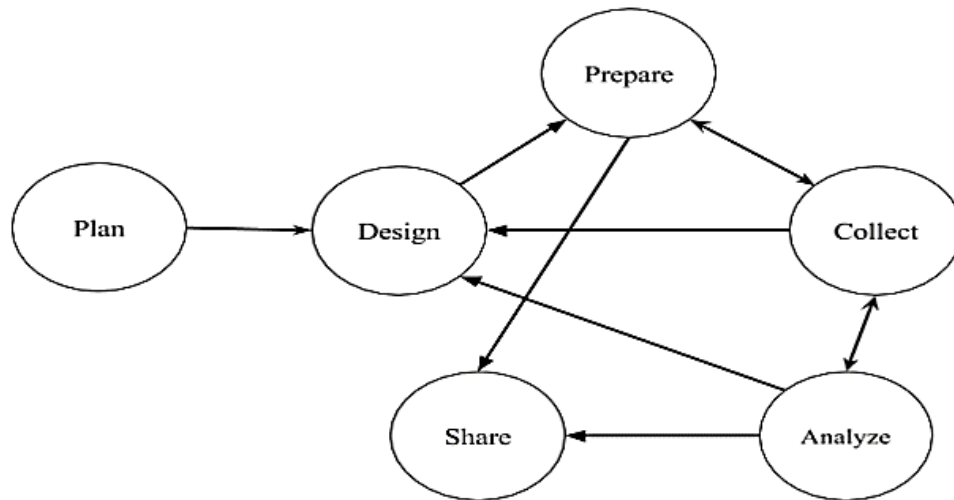
Marrelli (2007) advised the unit of analysis should be established as a dimension of the case study. To be more specific, this study's unit of analysis focused on the induction practices first-year teachers experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system.

After case and unit of analysis selection, Merriam (2009) prescribed a two-step analysis, within-case analysis and cross-case analysis, to examine data in this study. The within-case analysis for this study treated each individual case independently, comprehensively, and contextually. Later, the cross-case analysis sought to inductively construct themes across all cases in totality for general explanations formed from the varying specific cases. This study finally reported a summary of the main evaluations from both analyses in a cyclical procedure to illustrate the system-wide efforts affecting first-year teachers' decision to stay or leave teaching (Stenseth & Stromso, 2019).

Before conducting the case study, the researcher was granted permission by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Georgia. This research process is illustrated in Figure 3.1 to depict how this study took place at various stages. Adapted from *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Yin, 2014, p. 2).

Figure 3.1

Research Process Flowchart



Each phase is explained in more detail as follows:

- Plan
 - Identify research questions
 - Determine whether the research method (i.e., case study) is suitable compared to other research methods by examining the twofold definitions of case study
 - Evaluate strengths and weaknesses
- Design
 - Define the case and unit of analysis
 - Use theories to guide the study (i.e., developmental supervision, differentiated theory, and adult learning theories)
 - Identify the case study design

- Prepare
 - Develop case study protocol
 - Obtain IRB approval
- Collect and review data
 - Follow the established case study protocol
 - Use multiple data sources for data collection
 - ❖ Interviews
 - ❖ Document Analysis
 - ❖ Field notes
 - Collect data through a comprehensive case study to create a data base
 - Keep chain of evidence
- Analyze
 - Implement constant comparative method
 - Hunt for patterns and themes
 - Review
 - Participant review of interview transcription to ensure the accuracy of realities and perceptions of participants (member checks)
 - Peer debriefings to check for bias
 - Draw conclusion
 - Present evidence
 - Compose textual materials using themes across the data
- Share
 - Orient the study report to the audience's needs

- Review and recompose until done

This above process describes a step-by-step procedure to clearly guide the researcher through every research phase in the study. In addition, the flowchart illustrated a clear direction as the compass navigator within this study, supporting any peer-reviewers with the methods structure for purposes of any future audit.

The Research Site

Site Selection

The selection of the site was based on the researcher's desire for more particular in-depth research at this location (Merriam, 2009). Site selection for data collection purposes was chosen on the basis of convenience, with background information representative of suitable conditions for a local public-school system in Georgia. A site was selected following the research phase recognized as Beckett County School District, 17th out of 181 public-school systems within the state of Georgia. The Beckett County School District operates 20 elementary, 8 middle, and 5 traditional high schools, 4 non-traditional schools, and 1 charter school, with approximately 3,500 employees and serving 26,652 students as of the 2019-2020 school year.

The following criteria were key factors in selecting the research site: located in the state of Georgia, size, easy access to public schools 20 miles from a large metropolitan area, and possession of a sizable first-year teaching pool. A five member elected board governs the Beckett County School District, with the power of authority to maintain, finance, and make policies to govern the public schools within its jurisdiction.

Before the collection of data, initial contact was made with the Beckett County School District's Division of Human Resources to explain the research project; gain

possible background information about the Beckett County School District; receive official permission to easily enter public schools and meet with participants; obtain a signed letter of consent; and start forging participant rapport. The researcher assigned pseudonyms for ensuring protection of the participants, the local system, and its public schools.

Site Description

The Division of Human resources inside the Beckett County School District had a mission to provide excellence in service by taking a leadership role in promoting, recruiting, and retaining the best qualified people, and supporting work environments and school cultures that provide safe, healthy, and secure settings for teaching and learning to take place. While maintaining compliance with federal, state, school board, employment, and labor laws and policies, the Division of Human Resources believed in promoting the concept: employees are the most valuable resource and will be treated as such.

The Division of Human Resources established the systemwide induction program at the beginning of the 2018 school year. The director and five instructional supervisors (i.e., system mentors) operated in human resources to implement the system policy full-time. On average, each system mentor had a sizable caseload ranging from 20 to 35 first-year teachers to extend coaching, mentoring, personnel resources, and other types of learning opportunities. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the system mentors from the Division of Human Resources related to employee status inside the Beckett County School District, the school levels they provided induction services, and their teaching and leadership certification areas through the state of Georgia.

Table 3.1*Overview of System Mentors from the Division of Human Resources*

System Mentor	Employee Status	Elementary School Level	Middle School Level	High School Level	Certifications
System Mentor 1	Full Time	X	X	X	Reading (4-8) English (6-12) Leadership, Tier II
System Mentor 2	Full Time	X			Elementary Ed (P-5) Mathematics (K-5) Science (K-5) Instructional Tech. Leadership, Tier I
System Mentor 3	Full Time	X	X	X	Language Arts (4-8) Mathematics (4-8) Social Science (4-8)
System Mentor 4	Full Time	X	X	X	Mathematics (6-12) Gifted In-Field Leadership, Tier II
System Mentor 5	Part Time	X	X		Music (P-12)

At the end of the 2018 school year, human resources earned a state platinum award by the Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators for best-in-class in the areas of retention and recognition, primarily because of the work completed by the systemwide induction program.

Recruitment and Sample Size

When selecting participants, the researcher employed purposeful sampling procedures (Ishak et al., 2014). The central importance of purposeful sampling emphasizes deep learning of the subject under investigation from participants qualified based on their experience with the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002). Additionally, for the purposes of this research, Merriam (2009) indicated key factors for participant

selection criteria to consider such as availability, convenience, time, and most importantly, willingness of participation in the study. Creswell (2007) emphasized participants be given ample opportunity to share their lived experiences on the phenomenon's scope of interest through self-reflective practices in interviews.

The aim of this study's purposeful sampling was to assure credibility, along with the inclusion of a variety of perspectives as best as possible (Marrelli, 2007). Driving efforts in program evaluation (Hall et al., 2014), purposeful sampling serves as a strategy to target populations who have experience with the research questions for obtaining a rich set of information (Kleiber, 2004). This case study used criterion sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, by using a list of characteristics essential for selecting participants to be a part of the sample (Merriam, 2009). After undergoing a vetting process, each participant met the following criteria to be considered for this study:

1. Having experience with the systemwide induction program in the inaugural cohort during the 2018-2019 school year inside the Beckett County School District as a new teacher to the profession of K-12 public education;
2. Remained inside the Beckett County School District after receiving programming from the systemwide induction program;
3. Participated in the systemwide induction program on the high school level inside the Beckett County School District; and,
4. Strictly providing teaching instruction in the areas of either mathematics or science.

According to Patton (2002), sample size depends on factors such as usefulness, credibility, available time and resources, purpose, and the scope of the probe; thus,

having ambiguity pertaining to sample size. In this study, 15 potential participants were interviewed. Each interview took one-hour in length for participants to reconstruct, put in context, and reflect on their experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

The first-year teachers represented recent college graduates, traditional or alternatively certifiers, career changers, and millennials or preceding generationers. Data generated from first-year teachers and others associated would capture useful and distinctive perspectives on how differently professional learning in a formalized system program influences teacher attrition (Patton, 2002).

In the following section, data collection methods such as interviews, documents, and field notes were explored and discussed for detailing the application of the data collection process within this study.

Data Collection Methods

Accomplishing a high-quality case study pushed for the researcher to keep in mind Hay's (2004) and Merriam's (2009) best practices when proceeding into the data collection phase: (1) examine phenomenon using multiple sources and methods, (2) manage sources by creating a computer inventory database, and (3) keep track of threads and patterns of consistency within the study's scope from the collected evidence. In addition, Creswell (2007) and Marrelli (2014) recognized commonly and widely used sources of evidence as interviews, archival records, documents, field notes, physical artifacts, observations, and surveys.

Data collected throughout this study involved a complex process using bits of relevant sources, though not all sources may answer each research question, to corroborate lines of inquiry (Merriam, 2009). Selected data sources appropriate for the

purposes of this case study within the research setting were interviews, documents, and field notes. Each data source is summarized in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Data Sources

Data Sources	Description
Interviews	Three interview protocols were used for teacher's interview
Documents	Official records from the Division of Human Resources regarding new teachers and the systemwide induction program.
Field Notes	Written reflective memos by the researcher on data collection and analysis.

The methodological strength of the case study relies on employing strategies to maintain a chain of evidence from multiple data collection methods for capturing extensive and in-depth descriptions concerning the variables under investigation (Marrelli, 2014). This describes how triangulation connects to the saturation of information (Merriam, 2009).

Interviews

This case study's primary method of data collection was interviews to thoroughly gather extensive information about coaching tools, mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities from first-year teachers about their system mentors and building-level leaders. As a way to construct knowledge between the researcher and the participants, interviewing promotes reflective understanding of past lived experiences and to make sense of information (Kvale, 1999; Seidman, 2006). Merriam (2009), in the same sense, explained the purpose of interviewing as an effort to obtain unique descriptions and meanings on the guiding themes under investigation from entering the participants' perspectives. Since the researcher has a greater stake in the

interview process because of his genuine interest on the subject, such a regard does influence fundamental decisions about the interviewing process (Hays, 2004; Seidman, 2006). Therefore, the researcher acknowledged his positionality as an integral action to diminishing the differences which influence the interviewer's conduct (Merriam, 2009).

Each teacher participated in an in-depth interview occurring in a virtual face-to-face setting for approximately two hours with the aim of obtaining data about first-year teachers' unique perspectives, particularly on their experiences in relation to local system supports and practices influencing attrition in its K-12 public schools. Participants had to be well-informed respondents with insights for contributing toward the researcher's understanding into the system induction program (Hays, 2004; Merriam, 2009). Learning about literature background on the topics of teacher retention challenges and support concerning K-12 public education before beginning the interview process was essential in the researcher's immersion within the induction process (Seidman, 2006).

The interviews conducted in the case study were semi-structured to enable a versatile, standard conversational environment focused on professional learning in a formalized system program influencing teacher attrition (Baskarada, 2014). Creswell (2007) described semi-structured interviews as a conversational strategy, where the researcher probe themes from a discretionary questioning approach, to pursue topics of interests in greater depth not initially anticipated from the interview guide. Table 3.3 presents a sample of interview questions used when interviewing teachers.

Table 3.3

Sample of Interview Questions

First Round of Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select which generation you most identify with: the millennial (1980-1993), generation X (1965-1979), the baby boomer (1946-1964), or the silent generation (prior to 1946)?• Tell me about your first-year teaching assignment.• Give 2 or 3 adjectives that described your 1st year teaching.• Discuss any other type of instructional experience before your full-time teacher position, including student teaching or any other.• Describe your top 2 motivations for becoming a K-12 public school teacher.• What has kept you motivated to come back? Has this motivation changed from the first to the second year? If so, how?
Second Round of Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe your perceptions of your department while being a first-year teacher.• Tell me about how you remember the relationship between you and your system mentor came to an end for the last two months (April – May) of the systemwide induction program.• Broadly, how did your system mentor support you mentally, cognitively, emotionally, and/or psychologically during your first-year as a teacher? What about your school administration?• Identify and explain any qualities about your system mentor that you found most (and least) beneficial for you as a learner while being a first-year teacher.• Discuss your experiences receiving classroom and instructional feedback after school administration conducted teacher observations.
Third Round of Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me about your experiences with participating in the Beckett County School District’s new-hire orientation before being officially employed.• Identify and explain any qualities about your school building’s induction workshops, seminars, and other related experiences throughout the school year as a first-year teacher that you found most (and least) beneficial as an employee and/or in your teaching subject area.• Broadly, describe any form of public communication from the Beckett County School District about the systemwide induction program which played a role in helping you comprehend and manage expectations as a new teacher?• From at least one past newsletter sent from the systemwide induction program, give 2 or 3 adjectives which highlight any professional learning helpful for you.• How were these 3 mentorship and coaching practices (classroom and observational feedback, reflective activities, and newsletters) from your system mentor similar to each other? Different from each other?• Discuss your perception of the role your school administration played in the systemwide induction program.

Nevertheless, the interview guide for this case study functioned as a protocol for empowering each participant to fully express his or her lived experiences by including a mixture of more and less structured interview questions in no predetermined order, at times (Merriam, 2009).

As suggested by Carspecken (1996) and deMarrais (2004), the complete interview guide used with teachers included protocols and instructions to manage the interviewing environment throughout the interview by having (a) lead off questions at the beginning for supporting participants with becoming comfortable, (b) specific, but broad open-ended questions related to the primary research questions as friendly discussion prompts, and (c) follow-up questions relevant in adding pertinent information when necessary, (d) next steps in the research process after concluding the interview, and (e) expressions of much gratitude being involved and spending time on this study.

The date and time for each interview was set around the individual participant's schedule, desires, and busy lives. Before each interview, the researcher established contact with participants via email to push out the study's consent forms, instructions for the paperwork, and notification of the interview being recorded. As a kind gesture, a friendly correspondence was sent to remind each participant: the interview was voluntary; of no requirement to answer any questions if ever undesired; and the right to end the interview at any time.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher briefly introduced himself, the purpose of the interview, and the goals for this study. All interviews were electronically recorded using the Zoom platform and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Lastly, during the transcription process, as a measure for maintaining confidentiality, any

identifying information concerning participants and the research site were provided pseudonyms.

Documents

Another data source in this case study, namely documents, contributed pertinent materials to contextualize, authenticate, and reinforce other sources throughout the investigative process (Merriam, 2009; Stenseth & Stromso, 2019). Official documentation can neither alter nor distort the record, but rather supplement stability for the purposes of research, such as constructing exact timelines of activities and events, interview questions, and participants' perspectives (Britt & Aglinskas, 2002; Merriam, 2009). Table 3.4 presents a sample of official records from inside the Beckett County School District.

Table 3.4

Sample of Official Records

Type of Document	Descriptions	Central Office
Induction Program Caseload 2018-2019 2019-2020	List of new teachers on system mentors' caseloads, which provides information such as their school, grade-level, subject area, building mentor, peer mentor, and degrees of urgency to direct how often visits should happen.	Human Resources
Induction Program System Mentor Log 2018-2019 2019-2020	Extensive details of induction activities, time spent, and practices in the systemwide induction program, along with system mentors' reflection notes about new teachers on their caseload.	Human Resources
Building Lead Mentors 2018-2019	List of building lead mentors for every school inside the Beckett County School District.	Human Resources

System Newsletters 2018-2019 2019-2020	Past issues of Beckett County's weekly newsletters pushed out to employees and other stakeholders every Friday.	Communications
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Bowen (2009) and Merriam (2009) confirmed documents as a sufficiently objective source with the greatest advantage of gathering available data no longer able to be observed from the public domain.

Field Notes

The third data source in this case study was field notes. Considered an essential element in qualitative research, Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) described field notes as a way to record the ongoing situational contexts throughout the case study from the researcher's experiences and reflective thoughts. Field notes by the researcher supplements the case study's record with notes from his fieldwork including short descriptive notes, rich contextual details on the project's transformation, critical reflective thoughts acknowledging how the investigative role may shape results and research plan, and other visual information not collected to illustrate vital nonverbal and inanimate representations (Tessier, 2012).

One type of field notes involved detailed notes from interviews of research participants in this case study. Often occurring shortly after tape recordings, this interpretative note taking strategy contained the researcher's impressions in real-time on participants related to their behaviors such as body language, gestures, assumptions, actions, and other non-linguistic data for supplementing the interview record (Tessier, 2012).

The field notes from each interview were transferred into a computer file to be used in tandem with interview transcriptions and other data sources. Additionally, the researcher had no particular way of organizing his descriptive notes.

The researcher's reflective journal diary represented the second type of field notes, as a way to further capture his personal reactions, assertions, assessments, and other subjectivities in this case study (Sanjek, 1990). This comprehensive note taking strategy forces the researcher to recreate events, recall details, and describe his perspective of what occurred during particular periods of time including errors, confusion, messiness, adjustments, improvements, and accomplishments (Wolfinger, 2002).

As a researcher-generated document, Merriam (2009) mentioned the reflective journal diary consisted of well worth insights to illuminate the various subjects during the course of the investigation. In the same way, Sanjek (1990) discussed the reflective journal as a place for the researcher to vent his contemplations regarding the conflicts and points of clarity on the research design, analysis, methods, and other ethical considerations. Table 3.5 presents a sample of the researcher's memos.

Table 3.5

Sample of Researcher's Memos

Memos	Purpose
Listening to Leroy's 2nd interview exposed how much he does not care for being a K-12 public-school teacher. There was multiple times Leroy voiced not caring for being a teacher. For example, in the interview, Leroy revealed that he would have called anyone stupid for thinking his future career would be a teacher.	Thematic Writing
System mentors may support new teachers more psychologically than instructionally. Because new teachers experience daily episodes of uncoordinated events in K-12 schools, system mentors support them with some expert perspectives and a safe place to vent. Additionally, new teachers come with a diverse set of perspectives ready to try out in the classroom. System mentors offering another way or an improved way to provide instruction to students can only go so far sometimes, because adults on occasion may reject factual information in favor of control over their own philosophies.	Working Theory

While the researcher completed a first round of cross-case analysis in ATLAS.ti, he compiled a new list of created codes to add into the already established codes from Ireland's first interview transcript within-case analysis. Before moving back into the next within-case analysis phase, the researcher defined the new list of created codes from the cross-case analysis. Then, using the first interview guide, the researcher completed both the line-by-line and open coding processes in the same manner as Ireland's first interview's within-case analysis, while reading through Yasmin's first interview transcript.

Coding

Then, after creating initial codes, the researcher completed another process of grouping the codes by staying close to the code names and using the first interview guide. As the researcher completed the process of grouping the codes, at the same time he defined each code group. The researcher also revisited the first research question for grouping codes connected with the decision to stay or leave teaching.

Categorization

The counter-narrative of why induction programs may not work for a few teachers might be because they lack "withitness" in the teaching profession. Some teachers have the "it" factor, while others may never be able to assume the role properly due to lacking natural ability in the art of teaching and managing the social life of children within the classroom. There's a possibility, no matter the kinds of supports provided from experienced professionals, some teachers may never grasp the perceptive capabilities needed to be successful as a teacher.

Dialectical
Thinking

Nathaniel's third interview was completed on March 24, 2022 starting around 5:09 p.m. Because of Nathaniel's afternoon responsibilities as the Golf Coach, this interview session was conducted in-person at a private golf club close to Essex High School. Throughout the entire interview, Nathaniel drove a golf cart around the golf course to supervise his student-athletics, while the researcher sat beside him in the golf cart to conduct and record the interview and take handwritten notes of the session for the record.

Events

This reflective practice has become keen on methodological approaches such as constructivist and interpretivist frameworks, which ultimately promotes achieving rigor and coherence in the research process (Ortlipp, 2008).

Data Management

To support this case study, the researcher used an online repository for storing, managing, accessing, and analyzing his fieldwork sources (Antonio et al., 2020; Paulus &

Lester, 2016). This study managed various forms of data such as audio files, interview transcriptions, and field notes through a password-encrypted software system named ATLAS.ti (i.e., computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software). To protect the confidentiality of the participants and research site, all identifying and related information remained classified by using pseudonyms as a code. In addition, for easy retrieval and usage of stored data, a labeling system was established with information including “name of file,” “name of interviewer,” “date of interview,” and the “time of interview.”

The process notes were formatted using codes to make auditing easier. Along with data storage and management, the researcher used ATLAS.ti to engage in rigorous and methodically examining unseen and underlying relationships from within this complex phenomenon (Paulus & Lester, 2016). This ATLAS.ti software served as the primary data storage and management method to study all basic components of the case study, featuring useful user functionalities for research purposes.

Data Analysis

The data in this case study followed an analysis structure, where sources were examined inductively, and then afterwards comparatively, for seeking recurrent thematic regularities from all the information (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis included a series of steps fundamentally set to detail, define, categorize, theorize, explain, explore, and map information, with the aim of drawing threads together for providing coherence and structure (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Ultimately, strategic, comprehensive procedures involved with this case study’s data analysis intended to make sense of information through a close examination of materials (Freeman, 2017; Merriam, 2009).

Freeman (2017) expressed her awareness of the analysis process when she explained, “strategy, to me, best describes analysis because it suggests a dynamic decision-making process in-the-midst of the particularities of a data set, situation, aims and desires” (p. 1). Taking this viewpoint, within the data analysis process, the researcher employed a coding scheme as he immersed himself in the data, starting after the first collection of data to find emerging themes from early interviews (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Consequently, the regular back-and-forth process of data collection and analysis captured the narratives beneficial to communicating the human experiences (Merriam, 2009).

Because the nature of the case study design investigates comparisons between cases (Bryman & Burgess, 1994), the researcher administered both within-case and cross-case analyses. Stenseth and Stromso (2019) described the within-case study as a stage in the analysis process to familiarize the researcher with each source independently. Cross-case analysis follows the within-case analysis with the researcher seeking to build unified generalizations of all the individual cases’ analyses (Merriam, 2009). To summarize the within-case and cross-case analyses, Creswell (2007) outlined,

when multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, ... followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, ... as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case. (p. 75)

Using this guidance, the researcher completed the analysis process by examining the data of each teacher participant, and afterwards ended the analysis process with a collective assessment across all the cases.

Constant Comparative Method

This case study implemented the constant comparative method in the data analysis process. Due to the benefit of constant comparative method with first using raw data, this analytic approach yielded applicable conditions for intensively sorting through the complexities related to understanding how system and school leaders' roles and supports affect overall retention efforts concerning new teachers within K-12 public schools inside the Beckett County School District (Kolb, 2012).

At the beginning of the analysis process, Glaser (1965) advised the researcher to start with coding cases one-by-one as he captured the data. In addition, while cases were being coded individually, the principle of constant comparison was applied by comparing data from previous coded analysis with one another. Such analysis work allowed the researcher to immerse himself in the data, and organize immense amounts of qualitative data into workable chunks (Boeije, 2002).

Freeman (2017) defined coding as “a means to identify units of data and sort them into categories...a common strategy for carrying out categorical thinking in practice” (p. 24). Open-coding and line-by-line coding techniques were applied to facilitate the breaking down of data into various units of meaning for a more complete account of the information throughout the collection and analysis process (Kolb, 2012). Open coding encompasses every source being studied to ultimately label text with appropriate code (Boeije, 2002). A part of the open coding process drove the researcher to develop categories of information after he became familiar with each data source (Creswell, 2007).

Additionally, as a rule, Creswell (2007) advised the researcher to examine full versions of interview transcripts, where he scanned for key properties such as words and phrases, linking participants' experiences to the central phenomenon under investigation. Each participant's interview generated multiple potential codes from unique narratives and experiences within the domains of instructional supervision and employee socialization, illustrating basic connections related to their similarities and differences in perspectives (Kolb, 2012).

Freeman (2017) also encouraged line-by-line coding within the analysis process for engaging in closely reading data sources to annotate, code, identify, chunk, and generate information into broader concepts or themes. Charmaz (2006) warned that while line-by-line coding could appear to be an arbitrary exercise because each sentence may not be important, Chenail (2012) asserted from this procedure many descriptions emerge until a pattern materializes.

During the process of line-by-line coding, the researcher implemented the following strategies as prescribed by Charmaz (2006): break down data into small properties; define the actions on which they rest; search for implicit assumptions; analyze implicit actions and meanings; shape the significance of each point; compare data with data; and identify gaps in the research.

Textual lines of every data source were read and assigned a phrase by the researcher (Williams & Moser, 2019). Coding developed from the researcher forming theoretical categories by grouping all similar segments of text together (Charmaz, 2006). The different meanings in each segment of text generated the properties of each respective code.

Kolb (2012) noted the final stage of coding in the constant comparative method was to identify and choose core categories from similarities and differences within the data, make connections across the data, and recognize major themes as they emerge throughout the data collection and analysis phase. Boeije (2002) depicted the idea of the constant comparative method as “the cycle of comparison and reflection on ‘old’ and ‘new’ material can be repeated several times. It is only when new cases do not bring any new information to light that categories can be described as saturated” (p. 393).

Accompanied by assertions and illustrations derived from participants’ quotations for corroboration and verification, the researcher carefully combined and grouped the codes into their respective categories. With the ultimate purpose of the constant comparative method being implemented to invest time in the analysis process by organizing, connecting, and categorizing data after using the initial coding strategies (Kolb, 2012), a cross-case, comparative analysis generated common themes systematically until achieving data saturation (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

As a way to supplement the analysis process, the researcher implemented memo-writing for a way to reflect on learning and make connections (Merriam, 2009). Memo-writing, similar to maintaining a research journal, allowed the researcher to discuss the codes, and articulate his insights on comparisons and other ideas about the case study’s participants, purpose, and processes under investigation from the data sources (Freeman, 2017). According to Creswell (2007), memos “document and enrich the analytic process, to make implicit thoughts explicit, and to expand the data corpus. Analytic memos consisted of questions, musings, and speculations about the data and emerging theory” (p. 290). Thus, the practice of memo-writing facilitated another interaction between data

collection and analysis after pondering over the data by extending the researcher an opportunity to offer conjectures from empirical evidence collected throughout the fieldwork (Charmaz, 2006).

As Freeman (2017) and Merriam (2009) explained in a similar manner, memo-writings function to promote reflexivity and awareness of the researcher's analytic role in maintaining easily retrievable internal records, where he demonstrated continuous efforts to make sense of data, answer questions encircling his mind, and confront and confess how particular decisions and conditions may have shaped this research. Overall, the researcher reflected on various topics throughout the analysis process such as personal events related to the participants, beliefs and assumptions about phenomena of interest, ethical considerations, potential directions for the study, and the final conclusion of the study (Charmaz, 2006).

Moreover, the memos written in the study discussed events, cases, categories, and their linkage to each other. Though, the primary purpose for memo-writing was used to continue stimulating the researcher's interest in the research topic and making connections to the data.

Trustworthiness

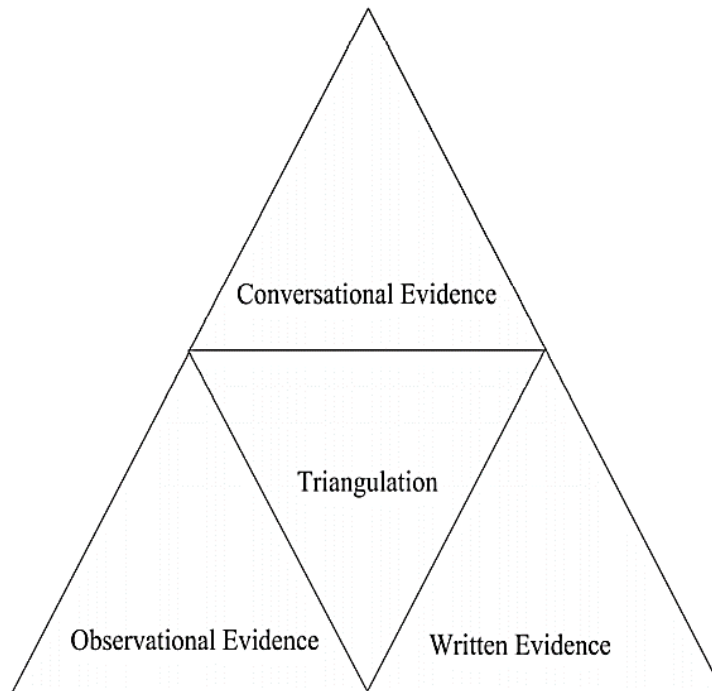
Due to the frequent criticisms associated with the dependability of qualitative research regarding suspicious data and findings, there was serious concern about conducting a highly reliable case study throughout the investigative process (Street & Ward, 2012; Quintao et al., 2020). To promote transparency, this case study implemented appropriate procedures when dealing with data sources related to credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, which established trustworthiness in the

findings (Gibbert et al., 2008; Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) underscored the use of conformity strategies such as internal validity, reliability, and external validity, whereby independent readers expect to authenticate the findings by following the data provided from the researcher.

Creswell and Miller (2000) confirmed, “there is a general consensus ... that qualitative [researchers] need to demonstrate that their studies are credible” (p. 124). Credibility, when associated with internal validity, seeks congruence with how the research findings connect to reality from numerous constructed perspectives who experienced a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). From a similar standpoint, Creswell (2007) highlighted “in internal validity, the key issue is to ensure the researcher can construct a plausible causal argument that is rigorous enough to support the research results” (p. 278). Merriam (2009) advised the researcher to use triangulation and member-checking strategies for achieving a credible case study. Hayashi et al. (2019) concluded triangulation as a strategy which grants the researcher opportunities to explore various angles of the phenomenon under investigation for strengthening credibility of the case study (see figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2

The Structure of Triangulation Process



Interviews, documents, and field notes collected in this study were triangulated and compared to examine by cross-checking information from different places, times, and perspectives for convergence and corroboration (Bowen, 2009; Hayashi et al., 2019; Street & Ward, 2012). Bowen (2009) summarized the use of triangulation in case studies as “less a case of checking a ‘fact’ collected by one method, using another method, than using one method and then justifying the results by means of another” (p. 70).

By using triangulation as a method in checking and establishing credibility of the study, the researcher was able to examine and analyze data from multiple perspectives, searching for recurrent regularities across data sources.

Another internal validity strategy implemented in the case study named member checks solicited feedback from participants as a tool to rule out misinterpretation of

meanings and misunderstanding from observations by the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Such a strategy, in this case, asked participants to judge the accuracy and credibility of preliminary analyses being depicted with veracity (Creswell, 2007). The researcher wrote an analysis of individual cases in this part of the process, and offered study participants the opportunity to give honest feedback for validation. All participants acknowledged the interpretations accurately represented their views, feelings, and experiences.

Reliability speaks to the dependability of the study by incorporating standardization into the investigative process for findings to ultimately be replicated if reproduced in the same fashion (Baskarada, 2014; Quintao et al., 2020). Merriam (2009) further discussed the underlying assumption of reliability as “a study is more valid if repeated observations in the same study or replications of the entire study produce the same results. This logic relies on repetition for the establishment of truth” (p. 221). To establish dependability, an auditing process as a part of the research looked for confirmability on the judgements of the data to achieve a consensus from verifying and examining data synthesis and analysis (Creswell, 2007; Golafshani, 2003).

In regard to transferability, a thorough description of the research context and assumptions was provided by the research to the degree that findings may apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the study. While some attributes of the findings from the case study cannot be generalized due to factors such as sample size, purposeful sampling technique, and complex-dependent knowledge, the results may potentially be transferable with other local systems similar in characteristics as described in this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, Creswell (2006) and Merriam (2009) highlighted the need of the researcher conducting the investigation to sufficiently describe data in detail

regarding the participants and setting for enabling the readers in deciding whether information could be transferred. By supporting validity, transferability influences dependability of the study for readers seeking to be prospective researchers can build on this research and improve solutions in the context of the phenomenon (Hayashi et al., 2019).

As for confirmability, which references the demonstration of how research findings directly came from the case study's data through an audit trail maintained by the researcher to ensure unbiased conclusions (Cope, 2014). In the context of qualitative research, confirmability as a naturalistic term shares aspects of neutrality, similar to objectivity from a scientific lens (Chowdhury, 2015). Adding to that, Korstjens and Moser (2018) defines confirmability as "the degree to which the findings of the research study could be confirmed by other researchers. Confirmability is concerned with establishing that ... interpretations of the findings are not figments of the [researcher's] imagination" (p. 121). With the researcher reporting findings with rich, thick descriptions to disclose every step and decision in the research process, an audit trail became established for other researchers to assess objectivity of this case study (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004). Overall, Chowdhury (2015) acknowledged triangulation be used to reduce the effect of the researcher's bias throughout the case study.

According to Cutcliffe and McKenna (2004), confirmability when being reported demands the following: that findings be grounded in the data; such inferences about cases come from judgements based on data; and of the researcher's bias, auditors assess the degree to which the incidence occurred. The reliance on other expert professionals to conduct confirmability audits supports a critical layer of transparency in the study,

enabling stimulating and thought-provoking forums set up for correcting and challenging unclear and biased interpretations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). With the researcher being aware of his position as a public-school teacher, and an instructional supervisor in the same context, he expressed personal bias and beliefs related to the experience of how system and school leaders' roles and supports affect new teachers' decision to stay or leave the teaching field in the same setting in which the study was conducted.

Ethics

When carefully engaging critical ethical concerns (i.e., interactions between the researcher and participants) throughout this qualitative study, Merriam (2009) prescribed 10 guidelines for the researcher to use in his decision making: (1) explain inquiry's purpose and use of methods, (2) express assurances on what will or will not be done, (3) complete risk assessment, (4) ensure confidentiality, (5) provide informed consent, (6) have ownership to data access, (7) maintain mental health, (8) seek advice and counsel, (9) make data collection boundaries, and (10) understand differences between ethical and legal conduct. Being American and scholarly, the researcher was aware of the previous century's crimes and concerns regarding the protection of rights for humans in research (i.e., *Nazi human experimentation*, "The U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee"). Seidman (2006) affirmed,

as expressed in the Nuremberg Code, the essential ethical principle of research with humans is that participants freely volunteer to participate in the research. In order to willingly consent in the truest sense, potential participants must know enough about the research to be able to gauge in a meaningful way whether they

want to proceed. Meeting this standard is the underlying logic of the informed consent form. (p. 61)

Before interviews, study participants signed an informed consent form. The informed consent form assured participation was entirely voluntary, provided notice of withdrawal from the study at any time, and explained the research's protocol.

The Belmont Report mandated three ethical principles for the researcher to comply with in this study: (1) respect for persons, (2) beneficence, and (3) justice (Seidman, 2006). Because the researcher strongly believes in professional and academic integrity, he acknowledged serving as a teacher employee at the research site where the participants worked (Merriam, 2009). To further avoid the disclosure of information which could potentially harm participants, the researcher used pseudonyms as a common anonymity strategy to conceal the identities of the participants and research site (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Each interview was electronically recorded to capture participants' perspectives. After interview sessions, the electronic audio recordings were stored on a password-protected computer for transcribing. Notes were taken during each interview session, and eventually converted into document files to be securely stored in the same password-protected computer.

The researcher submitted his research proposal and obtained approval from the local Institutional Review Board before conducting the study (Seidman, 2006). While reporting, sharing, and storing data, the researcher wanted to avoid the potential and perception of unethical practices regarding the suppressing, falsifying, and inventing

information, by corroborating the accuracy of data across different sources and employed other validation strategies (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Statement of Reflexivity

Because sourcing considers the researcher's position, motivation, and participation when selecting materials and data to use for research purposes, given this research site, I acknowledged representing both an insider and outsider (Britt & Aglinskas, 2002; Johnson-Bailey, 2004). In order to skillfully construct participants' stories from the chosen data, I recognized the problematized aspect of my representation and positionality (Johnson-Bailey, 2004).

As such, I subscribed to the perspective of Creswell (2007) who expressed, "we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between [the] researcher and the participants in a study" (p. 40). In an effort to be transparent about my representation and positionality, I wrote explicitly on my values, beliefs, and personal background in the field of education, which shaped interpretations formed during this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

I identify as a Christian American lower-middle class southern Black male. From birth to graduating high school, I was raised in central Georgia inside Baldwin County, named after a signer of the United States Constitution and founder of the University of Georgia. Both of my parents were former public-school teachers in my historic hometown, gaining experiences at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In addition, my mother taught on the post-secondary level, and she was elected to the local county school board.

As an adolescent, I attended public school primarily at three different elementary schools, and most of my secondary schooling was completed at a private military college. On the middle and high school levels at my prep school, every student and teaching faculty member wore military uniforms, reported for formation/inspection daily at 7:45am, participated in formal ceremonies, and committed to duty, honor, and country.

Students at my prep school were called cadets, issued army JROTC military rank, and given reasonable power to document peer infractions based on their rank authority. Additionally, school personnel were generally referenced by their military rank (i.e., Major), and given very broad powers to document student infractions whenever appropriate. An overwhelming majority who attended my prep school were White and appeared affluent. My divorced and single mother struggled annually to keep me enrolled at this historic institution.

In college, I attended a public four-year university studying mathematical sciences in the Coastal Georgia region. After obtaining my undergraduate degree and teacher licensure, I moved to metro Atlanta and became a mathematics teacher at a predominantly non-White high school inside the Beckett County School District. I taught mostly children labeled as gifted in advanced mathematics courses such as calculus. Additionally, I experienced teaching children receiving special education and related services, and who were mainly in the general population as well.

My experience as a first-year teacher was extremely painful. When first beginning, not once was I extended formal help or provided resources to support my transition into the professional environment. Oftentimes, I felt alone, isolated, neglected, and learned quickly to “sink or swim.” I received no substantial support from my chair,

evaluator, or principal. Luckily, not until the following school year, because of a school improvement grant from the Georgia Department of Education, did my school acquire full-time content coaches to offer and deliver comprehensive teaching support.

After five years of teaching, my workplace named me Teacher of the Year. Concurrently, one of my brightest students selected me to be the STAR Teacher for the county. The following year, the Beckett County School District promoted me into the Division of Human Resources, along with four other teachers from inside the county, to primarily implement the new systemwide induction policy as an induction team.

During my time as an instructional supervisor, I circulated between 16 different public schools, gaining experiences at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This experience granted me the opportunity to experience how various schools in my school system were run. I learned that each school functioned as its own community, took on distinct organizational personality traits, and were heavily influenced by the local system's policies and their school leadership's past rules, procedures, and policies.

To implement the systemwide induction policy, I experienced coaching and mentoring more than 60, K-12 teachers during their first year of teaching over the span of 2 years. While being on the induction team, I coached and mentored a variety of first-year teachers from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. Characteristics describing the first-year teachers I coached and mentored included some combination of being a recent college graduate, traditional or alternatively certified, career changer, millennial or preceding generationer, and American.

Because of the work from the induction team during our inaugural year of the systemwide program, the Division of Human Resources inside the Beckett County

School District was awarded a state platinum best-in-class award for retention and recognition practices by the Georgia Association of School Personnel Administrators.

Generally, I classify as a millennial. Being a product of this generation, I grew up using a great deal of technology very young, and value social media as a learning communication platform. Although 21st century students crave technology engagement, my belief is that K-12 public education chooses outdated technology primarily because of personnel's limited development and comfortability.

My educational philosophy believes barriers for many children are prevalent in American society and specifically within the field of education. A child's status (i.e., socioeconomic, color, type of disability, gender, etc.) can bring unnecessary challenges. Even though America has advanced culturally (i.e., *Individual with Disabilities Education Act*), obstacles still exist for many children to move past today.

Lastly, I clearly realized power does influence the learning and research process (Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Koopmans et al., 2006). At the time of conducting the study, I served as a teacher inside the Beckett County School District. This contributed to balancing power dynamics between the researcher and all study participants as best as possible.

Assessment of Benefits and Risks

Study participants, state and local system policymakers, and educators can benefit from this research, when considering the reflections, experiences, perspectives, resources, tools, and evidence acquired to make sense of a systemwide induction program practices from one Georgia school system. With this study, state policymakers can expand their knowledge of how local system and school leaders' roles and supports affect new

teachers' decisions to stay or leave the K-12 teaching profession. This research may guide local systems on the types of coaching and mentorship resources and tools that are most beneficial to new teachers during their first year of teaching.

While participants throughout the interview and validity process potentially gained greater insights into the coaching, mentorship, and other supports extended to them which influenced their decisions to leave or stay in the profession, none had any direct benefits from participating in this study. Findings may guide state and local system policymakers in making more informed decisions on essential induction components necessary to improve retention and attrition for new teachers. Furthermore, the risks for any negative impact on teacher retention and attrition at the research site is relatively low. No risks were anticipated for participants in this study due to confidentiality.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the site selection of one local system close to a metropolitan area within the state of Georgia. As a result, data gathered may not be generalizable about system and school leaders' roles and supports affecting new teachers' decision to stay or leave the teaching field in other local systems both state and nationwide inside small rural towns and much larger metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, while generalizability may not at times be possible, some transferability of findings and insights to other local systems could be extrapolated given the commonality of policies, practices, and processes in K-12 public schools across the state of Georgia.

To ensure accuracy and reduce limitations and bias in the study, data collection and analyses were examined in line with qualitative research guidelines. Throughout the study, trustworthiness was maintained by triangulating data sources, member-checks, a

journal of case study notes, and a reflexivity journal to bolster the reliability of the study (Merriam, 2009; Roulston, 2004).

The next chapter, Chapter Four, presents the findings of the within-case analysis, where each participant's perspectives were explored in-depth as an individual case study. Chapter Four is divided into three sections: sections one and two include contextual overviews of the local school system and the research participants, and section three includes the findings of the within-case analysis.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District. The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

The overarching question that this study addressed is how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experience do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program.

This chapter presents (1) an overview of the context, and (2) an overview of the study participants.

Overview of the Study Context

Since local systems and schools work in tandem while implementing federal and state policies, it is at the system level that policy meets practice to implement effective induction. Generally, local systems function to enact policies by exercising key instruments useful in policy implementation and other design considerations such as funding provisions, induction programming, orientation and workshops, and teacher evaluations. With the lion's share being placed on local systems to retain as many new teachers as possible, the types of system policies which may support and attract them calls for further scrutiny about their employer and everyday workplace conditions. This section of the findings focuses on data information from 2018-2019 about the Beckett County School District, including its Division of Human Resources, systemwide induction program, and local high schools.

Profiling the Beckett County School District

During the 2018-2019 school year, the vision of the Beckett County School District was to build a community of lifelong learners who become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens. One goal of the Beckett County School District was to provide appropriate instructional, human, technology, and fiscal resources. Some of the beliefs of the Beckett County School District were to understand how adults learn and continue learning, and maintain efficient and effective administrative processes for instruction, human resources, and sound fiscal management.

Being the 17th largest school system in Georgia, the Beckett County School District operated 20 elementary schools, 8 middle schools, 5 high schools, 1 charter school, and 3 non-traditional schools and programs. As of March 2019, the Beckett

County School District served 26,639 students, with 54.8% representing Black, 22.5% representing White, 17.8% representing Hispanic, 4.8% representing two or more races, 1.3% representing Asian, .2% representing Pacific Islander, and .1% representing American Indian. In addition, nearly 63% of students inside the Beckett County School District received free and reduced lunches.

Considered Beckett County's largest employer, for the 2018-2019 school year, the local system included 3,364 employees, with 2,117 being certified staff and 1,489 possessing advanced degrees. By race of employees, the Beckett County School District hired 56.7% representing White, 26.8% representing Black, 9.3% representing Hispanic, and 1.6% representing two or more races. Related to gender of employees, 78.2% represented female and 21.3% represented male. Concerning teacher licensure of employees, 23.4% possessed special education certification, 7.6% possessed secondary science certification, and 5% possessed secondary mathematics certification. Lastly, 22.6% of employees had no more than 5 years of teaching experience.

In a 2019 letter to the stakeholders of Beckett County, the superintendent expressed the local system's mission to provide a world-class, 21st century education. Additionally, the superintendent announced the local system's journey of continuous improvement to prepare every learner for being a well-rounded productive citizen in the rapidly changing information age. Looking ahead, the superintendent discussed continuing investments in professional development for every employee to access resources and an exceptional learning experience. The superintendent ultimately indicated a commitment to exemplify the standard of excellence by providing the highest level of instruction.

The Beckett County School District's 2016-2019 strategic plan listed four areas of focus, which included resources to be targeted for improvement. Hiring and retaining a diverse, highly qualified, and high performing workforce, overseen by the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy, became a major priority for the Beckett County School District. Three goals written in the Beckett County School District's 2016-2019 strategic plan for the Division of Human Resources were to monitor and maintain 100% of its highly-qualified certified staff, actively recruit a diverse, highly qualified staff, and provide mixed method research to identify levels of job satisfaction among employees.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the Beckett County School District reported general fund revenues of \$84,827,610 in local taxes, \$164,495,306 in state taxes, \$796,000 in federal taxes, and \$3,836,131 in other funds. Overall, the Beckett County School District disclosed a total revenue of \$253,955,047. Of expenditures per category, the Beckett County School District allocated \$172,010,311.55 for instruction, \$5,527,621.51 for improvement of instructional services, and \$960,678.05 for instructional staff training. Moreover, in percentages of expenditures per category, the Beckett County School District allocated 67.73% for instruction, 2.18% for improvement of instructional services, and 0.38% for instructional staff training.

Compared to the 2017-2018 budget, provisions for the 2018-2019 school year increased by \$11.7 million in the instruction category, and by \$1.4 million in the improvement of instructional services category. Additionally, the Beckett County School District added the instructional staff training category as a new budget provision as well. More specifically, the Beckett County School District added 79 teacher employee positions, and 14.5 leader employee positions in other management and administration

personnel, such as system mentors, content specialists, and curriculum directors. In summary, the Beckett County School District allocated around \$206.3 million from its general fund on human capital expenditures.

Description of the Systemwide Induction Program

Starting in July of 2018, the Beckett County School District allocated critical time and resources for implementing the systemwide induction program inside the Division of Human Resources to bolster new teachers' classroom practices during their first year of teaching. Inside the Division of Human Resources, the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy collaborated with a director, who directly supervised implementation of the systemwide induction program, to envision an innovative approach for combating the persistently high teacher turnover occurring every year in the local schools inside of the Beckett County School District.

In the first year of policy implementation, the Division of Human Resources enacted the systemwide induction program mainly in five phases. The first phase promoted teachers into the Division of Human Resources to assume the position of an instructional supervisor, which functioned doubly as a system mentor and as an induction coach, for a sizeable caseload of mostly first-year teachers. The second phase began during pre-planning, where the system mentors sought to build trusting relationships with new teachers in the systemwide induction program.

Next, the third phase, which occurred within the first two weeks of the school year, had the system mentors independently assign degrees of urgency for each new teacher on their caseload from some initial data collection to direct how often visits should happen. The fourth phase scheduled quarterly meetings for the induction team to

collaborate on critical action steps such as reviewing data, anticipating imminent new teacher challenges, and determining key foci forthcoming within the subsequent 6-8 weeks.

Lastly, the fifth phase, which occurred around the last two weeks of the school year, tasked the system mentors to complete at least one closing reflective activity with each new teacher on their caseload. In general, the senior executives within the Division of Human Resources empowered the system mentors to individualize their approaches when working with new teachers, while supervising the documentation of the mentorship, coaching, and other related learning supports in real-time for tracking and monitoring resources.

Along with responsibilities in the systemwide induction program, the Division of Human Resources had the system mentors perform other tasks related to personnel training and recruitment. The system mentor trained newly-hired substitutes periodically throughout the school year at substitute orientations. In addition, the system mentors performed responsibilities as recruiters at university recruitment fairs on the behalf of the Beckett County School District around the state of Georgia. Mainly, the system mentors performed other supportive roles at new-hire orientations.

Throughout the first year of policy implementation, the Division of Human Resources conducted at least three surveys, where new teachers receiving employee services from the systemwide induction program provided feedback. Findings showed that 100% agreed with “I trust my [system mentor] and know that s/he has my best interest in mind,” and 97% agreed with “my [system mentor’s] ‘coaching style’ is a good fit for me so that we can work together collaboratively.” Additionally, 77% of first-year

teachers rated their “overall experience as a Beckett County School District teacher this year” between 7-10 on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest.

Furthermore, findings showed that system mentors scored higher than school administration in the categories of classroom management, planning standards-based lessons and units, facilitating differentiated learning activities to meet students’ learning needs, time management and organizational skills, and reflection practices. Lastly, findings showed that 83.33% of the first-year teachers felt helped and supported when working with their system mentors; and 83.33% felt helped and supported after receiving advice from their school administration and leadership such as principal, assistant principal, and department chairs.

In summary, at the start of the 2018-2019 school year, the Beckett County School District welcomed approximately 117 first-year teachers entering the K-12 teaching profession. After the new-hire orientation held in July of 2018, the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy described this inaugural cohort of the systemwide induction program as a “stellar and enthusiastic group, [who are] ready to be in the classroom with their students.” Throughout the school year, a director inside the Division of Human Resources supervised elements of policy implementation in the systemwide induction program, and collaborated with the system mentors as an induction team on its large-scale programming design.

Later on, toward the end of the school year, the Division of Human Resources conducted an internal review of signed contracts, transfers, non-renewals, and resignations of the 117 new teachers. The findings concluded a positive retention rate of 91%, which could be largely attributed to the types of coaching tools, mentorship

experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to new teachers by their system mentors and building-level leaders through the systemwide induction program. Indeed, the positive and collaborative relationships between the system mentors and school administrators had a favorable effect on the new teachers as well.

The participants in this study taught in four high schools. The profile of each of the high schools in which the participants taught is provided.

Alexandria High School

The mission of Alexandria High School was empowering students to be respectful and successful global citizens through educational excellence. Alexandria High School had a selective magnet program for students looking to accelerate their learning. With approximately 1400 students enrolled at Alexandria High School: 60% represented Black, 21% represented White, 12% represented Hispanic, 5% represented two or more races, 2% represented Asian, and less than 1% represented American Indian and Pacific Islander. Additionally, 43% of students at Alexandria High School received free and reduced lunch. For the 2018-2019 school year, Alexandria High School's Climate Star Rating was reported as 4 out of 5 from surveys by students, parents, and personnel.

In 2018, Alexandria High School had a school administration made up of one principal and four assistant principals. From the local system's authority, Alexandria High School contracted a total staff of 133 employees, with 98 being certified staff and 68 possessing advanced degrees. By race, Alexandria High School's teacher staff constituted 63.7% representing White and 20% representing Black. Related to the gender of teachers, 61.3% represented female and 38.8% represented male. Concerning teacher

licensure, 21.3% possessed special education certification and 13.8% possessed secondary mathematics certification. Lastly, 30% of teachers had no more than 5 years of teaching experience.

Essex High School

The mission of Essex High School was providing a quality education for all students in a safe, supportive environment. Essex High School had a selective magnet program because of high AP enrollment and test scores. With approximately 1800 students enrolled at Essex High School: 56.5% represented White, 27.6% represented Black, 9.6% represented Hispanic, 5% represented two or more races, 1.1% represented Asian, and less than 1% represented American Indian and Pacific Islander. Additionally, 38% of students at Essex High School received free and reduced lunch. For the 2018-2019 school year, Essex High School's Climate Star Rating was reported as 4 out of 5 from surveys by students, parents, and personnel.

In 2018, Essex High School had a school administration made up of one principal and four assistant principals. From the local system's authority, Essex High School contracted a total staff of 152 employees, with 119 being certified staff and 91 possessing advanced degrees. By race, Essex High School's teacher staff constituted 80.4% representing White, and no publicly reported data on Black and other races. Related to the gender of teachers, 55.9% represented female and 44.1% represented male. Concerning teacher licensure, 13.8% possessed secondary mathematics certification. Lastly, 11.8% of teachers had no more than 5 years of teaching experience.

Thomaston High School

The mission of Thomaston High School was providing a quality education for all students in a safe, supportive environment. Thomaston High School had a selective magnet program recognized nationally and by the Georgia Department of Education for its quality and value. With approximately 1400 students enrolled at Thomaston High School: 55.8% represented Black, 25.7% represented Hispanic, 14.8% represented White, 2.9% represented two or more races, and more than 1% represented American Indian and Pacific Islander. Additionally, 70.1% of students at Thomaston High School received free and reduced lunch. For the 2018-2019 school year, Thomaston High School's Climate Star Rating was reported as 2 out of 5 from surveys by students, parents, and personnel.

In 2018, Thomaston High School had a school administration made up of 1 principal and 4 assistant principals. From the local system's authority, Thomaston High School contracted a total staff of 141 employees, with 101 being certified staff and 104 possessing advanced degrees. By race, Thomaston High School's teacher staff constituted 43.5% representing White, 40% representing Black, and no publicly reported data on Hispanic and other races. Related to the gender of teachers, 60% represented female and 40% represented male. Concerning teacher licensure, 15.3% of teachers possessed secondary mathematics certification. Lastly, 15.3% of teachers had no more than 5 years of teaching experience.

West Napa High School

The mission of West Napa High School was providing meaningful learning experiences that develop the character, academic, and talent of all students for college and career preparation. West Napa High School had a selective magnet program to train

and prepare students for post-secondary collegiate or professional options. With approximately 1700 students enrolled at West Napa High School: 78.1% represented Black, 9.8% represented Hispanic, 8.4% represented White, 3.3% represented two or more races, and less than 1% represented American Indian and Pacific Islander. Additionally, 61.6% of students at West Napa High School received free and reduced lunch. For the 2018-2019 school year, West Napa High School's Climate Star Rating was reported as 3 out of 5 from surveys by students, parents, and personnel.

In 2018, West Napa High School had a school administration made up of one principal and four assistant principals. From the local system's authority, West Napa High School contracted a total staff of 153 employees, with 106 being certified staff and 108 possessing advanced degrees. By race, West Napa's teacher staff constituted 43.5% representing White, 40% representing Black, and no publicly reported data on Hispanic and other races. Related to the gender of teachers, 59.1% represented female and 39.8% represented male. Concerning teacher licensure, 31.2% of teachers possessed special education certification and 22.6% of teachers possessed secondary science certification. Lastly, 29% of teachers had no more than 5 years of teaching experience.

This case study used criterion sampling to include a variety of perspectives from new teachers who participated in the systemwide induction program. After undergoing a vetting process to be considered, each participant selected for this study came from either Alexandria High School, Essex High School, Thomaston High School, or West Napa High School inside of the Beckett County School District. In the following section, the study participants were explored and discussed in-depth for understanding their personal

and professional backgrounds, along with how they experienced entry into K-12 public education.

Overview of the Study Participants

Because first-year teachers enter the K-12 teaching profession with their own educational philosophies, there is a critical need to follow diverse representations of personal and professional backgrounds and experiences from where they could likely come from. The first-year teachers in this study represented different genders and races, recent and past college graduates, careers changers, and millennial and proceeding generations. In addition, the participants in this study met a set of criteria to be considered, which included having experience in the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District. Overall, all six study participants (see Table 4.1 for an overview of first-year teachers) completed three rounds of semi-structured interviews about their experiences in the mentoring program.

Table 4.1

Overview of the First-year Teachers

Participant	Gender	Race	Cohort	High School	Age Group	Certifications
Nathaniel Benedict	Male	White	2018	Essex	Gen X	Mathematics Special Education
Leroy Davis	Male	Black	2018	Thomaston	Millennial	Mathematics
Yohanna Newton	Female	White	2018	Alexandria	Millennial	Special Education and Mathematics
Ireland Roosevelt	Female	White	2018	West Napa	Millennial	Science
Ash Morgan	Male	White	2019	West Napa	Millennial	Special Education and Science

Yasmin Roberts	Female	Black	2019	Essex	Millennial	Mathematics
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This section of the findings presents a portrait on each study participant's personal and professional backgrounds, along with their entry into K-12 public education.

Nathaniel Benedict

At the time of this study, Nathaniel Benedict had been in his fourth year as a public-school teacher at Essex High School. Nathaniel participated in the 2018 cohort of the systemwide induction program as a first-year teacher. Concerning teacher licensure, Nathaniel obtained his secondary mathematics certification through the traditional university route. During Nathaniel's probationary period as a new teacher, he taught high school mathematics in Algebra II and Precalculus to junior and senior classes.

Demographically, Nathaniel identified himself as an American White male born in the Generation X age group. Nathaniel's family raised him in Beckett County, where he graduated from Essex High School as an adolescent. For undergraduate coursework, Nathaniel attended the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia. A semester before graduation, Nathaniel came by a flier from a construction company in the Civil Engineering Department looking for employees. Consequently, after interviewing, Nathaniel began working part-time at this construction company.

Once Nathaniel completed his undergraduate coursework, he was immediately hired full-time. Following a change in employment to another construction company, since 1997 Nathaniel worked for the same employer, ultimately being quickly promoted to the position of a Vice President in his early 30s. After more than 20 years in the construction industry at the same company, Nathaniel decided to change careers into a position within the K-12 teaching profession, where he took "a cut in pay...[and] a huge

leap of faith.” Nathaniel felt his career motivations shifting as he grew older with a solid family made up of a wife and multiple children.

Prior to Nathaniel becoming a full-time teacher, he spent more than two years being a substitute teacher and a paraprofessional at Essex High School. Additionally, Nathaniel served Essex High School by being a part of the school’s athletic program as a coach on the football, basketball, and golf teams for numerous years. Nathaniel finally made the decision to transition into a full-time teacher role, revealing “Essex is where I went to high school. This is my home...I didn’t inquire about anywhere else.” In the end, Nathaniel waited for an open mathematics position at Essex High School, and even took the state certification assessment in special education to strengthen his chances of being hired sooner.

Nathaniel began his teaching career in the Mathematics Department at Essex High School as a first-year teacher during the 2018-2019 school year. Without any formal teaching experience prior to becoming a first-year teacher, Nathaniel completed his student teaching experience from a nearby graduate program throughout his first two years of teaching. After two years of being on a provision certification, Nathaniel graduated from the University of West Georgia with a master’s level teaching degree in secondary mathematics, which changed his teacher licensure into renewable status.

Leroy Davis

At the time of this study, Leroy Davis had been in his fourth-year as a public-school teacher at Thomaston High School. Leroy participated in the 2018 cohort of the systemwide induction program as a third-year teacher. Concerning teacher licensure, Leroy obtained his secondary mathematics certification through the traditional university

route. During Leroy's probationary period as a new teacher, he taught high school mathematics in Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Advanced Mathematical Decision Making, and College Readiness Mathematics to freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. In addition, for a year, Leroy taught middle school mathematics to 6th and 8th graders.

Demographically, Leroy identified himself as an American Black male born in the millennial age group. Leroy's family raised him in a county south of Georgia, where he graduated from a local county high school there as an adolescent. For undergraduate coursework, Leroy first attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, and then later transferred to the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. While at the University of Georgia, Leroy reluctantly majored in mathematics, after having an initial desire to study sports management.

Nevertheless, Leroy graduated with his mathematics degree in December of 2015, without completing any collegiate coursework related to K-12 education. Directly after graduation, Leroy launched a non-profit organization centered around mentoring and helping young Black kids in education. However, because of no prospective work for Leroy's newly-formed non-profit organization, he unenthusiastically assumed a long-term substitute teacher position inside a local high school within his hometown in a county south of Georgia. Leroy felt becoming a teacher "fell into my lap," for the fact that he made efforts "to get the non-profit into a school system."

After the school term ended, Leroy transferred to another high school within the local system inside the same county south of Georgia assuming a full-time teacher role, his former alma mater. Later on, following Leroy's first year of being a full-time teacher,

he was not extended a teacher contract for the next school year. Leroy subsequently moved away to a county west of Georgia for a full-time teacher position in his second teaching year at a middle school, but was ultimately non-renewed by this local system as well once the contractual period ended. As Leroy pointed out, “they never gave me a reason (for the non-renewal) ..., [which] would have been nice considering the fact I went from 8th grade to 6th grade (in the same year) and did the best I could.” Since beginning in K-12 public education, Leroy firmly sensed he had not been placed in any successful position as a teacher.

Leroy transferred into the Beckett County School District to continue his teaching career in the Mathematics Department at Thomaston High School as a third-year teacher during the 2018-2019 school year. Without any formal teaching experience prior to becoming a first-year teacher, Leroy completed his student teaching experience from an online for-profit graduate program in his third year of teaching. Leroy graduated from Grand Canyon University with his master’s level teaching degree in secondary mathematics, which changed his teacher licensure into renewable status. Following the 2018-2019 school year, the Beckett County School District extended Leroy his first renewed contract as a new teacher.

Yohanna Newton

At the time of this study, Yohanna Newton had been in her fourth year as a public-school teacher at Alexandria High School. Yohanna participated in the 2018 cohort of the systemwide induction program as a first-year teacher. Concerning teacher licensure, Yohanna obtained her special education certification through the traditional university route. During Yohanna’s probationary period as a new teacher, she taught high

school mathematics inside either co-taught and or inside resource classrooms primarily extending special education and related services in Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and College Readiness Mathematics to freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior classes.

Demographically, Yohanna identified herself as an American White female born in the millennial age group, with some I-generation tendencies. Yohanna's family raised her in Beckett County, where she graduated from Alexandria High School as an adolescent. For undergraduate coursework, Yohanna attended Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia initially as an education major, completing some student teaching experiences in this county's local school system. Eventually, Yohanna settled on changing her major to business and marketing, because as she recalled, "I talked myself out of [education] for some reason, I don't know (why)."

Once Yohanna completed her undergraduate coursework, she began a professional career for a few years inside the sales industry. Yohanna practiced sales with a team of sale representatives, where she performed out in the field within a particular region by frequently selling cheer apparel to schools. While Yohanna worked in sales, she also coached cheerleading at Alexandria High School as well. As Yohanna explained, "coaching is what led me [back] to education." Thus, Yohanna made the decision to enroll into a graduate program for teaching special education at the University of West Georgia in 2018.

At the same time Yohanna began her graduate program, she became a special education teacher at Alexandria High School starting in November 2018 as a late hire. Yohanna's entry in K-12 public education was met with shock, citing numerous episodes of hardships and cruelty in her workplace conditions. Furthermore, with Yohanna

recognizing herself as a change-agent, she voiced heavy assertions about K-12 public education's resistance in making noteworthy changes to do what's best for children. There have also been moments of questioning her decision to enter the K-12 teaching profession, disclosing "I felt the most embarrassed by going into education because I do think teachers get a bad rap." Despite everything, Yohanna did remain enthusiastic about being a teacher because of her enjoyment in advocating for children.

Yohanna began her teaching career in the Special Education Department at Alexandria High School as a first-year teacher during the 2018-2019 school year. Without much formal teaching experience prior to becoming a first-year teacher, Yohanna completed her student teaching experience from a nearby graduate program throughout her first two years of teaching. After two years of being on a provision certification, Yohanna graduated from the University of West Georgia with a master's level teaching degree in special education, which changed her teacher licensure into renewable status.

Ireland Roosevelt

At the time of this study, Ireland Roosevelt had been in her fifth-year as a public-school teacher at West Napa High School. Ireland participated in the 2018 cohort of the systemwide induction program as a third-year teacher. Concerning teacher licensure, Ireland obtained her secondary science certification through the traditional university route. During Ireland's probationary period as a new teacher, she taught high school science in Biology, Physical Science, Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Earth Systems to freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior classes.

Demographically, Ireland identified herself as an American White female born in the millennial age group. Ireland's family raised her in a small town inside Alabama, where she graduated from a local high school there as an adolescent. For undergraduate coursework, Ireland started at a community college studying nursing. Later on, as Ireland remembered, once "I got to [the University of West Georgia], and I got into those first couple biology courses, I was just so into it. I was so eager to go to class." Accordingly, Ireland chose to major in biology with a concentration in secondary science education.

Within Ireland's undergraduate coursework, she accumulated a substantial amount of student teaching experiences from a program named UTeach through the University of West Georgia. Ireland graduated from the University of West Georgia in December 2015. Afterwards, Ireland began her first-year teacher position at a large predominantly Black high school inside a county south of Georgia. Then, because of Ireland's husband being a Ph.D. student, she relocated and was hired to teach in north Florida at a small predominantly Black high school for her second year of teaching.

In Ireland's second of year teaching, she characterized the experience as being in isolation, "feeling very much on an island alone." Ireland remained at the high school in north Florida for a total of two years, where she had some major hardships, encountering significant challenges related to student discipline, curriculum and instruction, special education, and administration, while receiving less than minimal support. "They hired me in the interview," Ireland recollected, "which probably should have been a red flag in hindsight." However, after Ireland left the school at the end of her third teaching year and moved back to Georgia, she fortunately found herself in more favorable experiences as a teacher.

Ireland transferred into the Beckett County School District to continue her teaching career in the Science Department at West Napa High School as a third-year teacher during the 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, Ireland voluntarily forwarded her own professional learning as a teacher by attending her college alma mater again in a graduate program. After two years of completing graduate coursework, Ireland graduated from the University of West Georgia with a master's level degree in instructional technology, which upgraded her teacher licensure one level up.

Ash Morgan

At the time of this study, Ash Morgan had been in his third year as a public-school teacher at West Napa High School. Ash participated in the 2019 cohort of the systemwide induction program as a first-year teacher. Concerning teacher licensure, Ash obtained his secondary special education certification through the traditional university route. During Ash's probationary period as a new teacher, he taught high school science and history inside co-taught classrooms primarily extending special education and related services in Environmental Science, Physical Science, Earth Science, and United States History to freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior classes.

Demographically, Ash identified himself as an American White male born in the millennial age group, with Generation X tendencies. Ash's family raised him in Beckett County, where he graduated from Essex High School as an adolescent. For undergraduate coursework, Ash attended Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida to study ministry in leadership. As a professional, Ash mainly worked as a manager in the mechanical department for an automotive business named Mercedes Benz. Ash also served as a youth

pastor at a local church inside Beckett County, where he taught bible study classes on discipleship and leadership to children.

After working for several years in the automotive industry, Ash felt a desire to change careers, where he recalled, “my wife suggested, try teaching. So, I first got accepted to the masters in teacher program, interviewed with West Napa, then they offered me the job.” Ash became a special education teacher at West Napa High School. On top of that, one of Ash’s co-teachers happened to be Ireland Ro, who participated in the systemwide induction program with the 2018 cohort. Working with Ireland, a new teacher with five years of teaching experience at the time, as Ash pointed out, she helped him “gain confidence in the classroom” because, “she really made space for me to have a voice and to have authority and teach.”

However, while Ash has taught at West Napa High School, he expressed hardships with his position and responsibilities as a special education teacher in writing Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) and other related duties. In addition, many times while being a new teacher, Ash believed he encountered microaggressions towards him because of being in the Special Education Department. Despite the fact Ash encountered subliminal subjugation as a special education teacher in the workplace, he upheld K-12 public education still as a rewarding profession.

Ash began his teaching career in the Special Education Department at West Napa High School as a first-year teacher during the 2019-2020 school year. Without any formal teaching experience prior to becoming a first-year teacher, Ash completed his student teaching experience from a nearby graduate program throughout his first two years of teaching. After two years of being on a provision certification, Ash graduated from the

University of West Georgia with a master's level teaching degree in special education with a history focus, which changed his teacher licensure into renewable status.

Yasmin Roberts

At the time of this study, Yasmin Roberts had been in her third year as a public-school teacher at Essex School. Yasmin participated in the 2019 cohort of the systemwide induction program as a first-year teacher. Concerning teacher licensure, Yasmin was extended a provisional certification for secondary mathematics through the Division of Human Resources inside the Beckett County School District. During Yasmin's probationary period as a new teacher, she taught high school mathematics in Algebra I and Algebra II to freshmen and junior classes.

Demographically, Yasmin identified herself as an American Black female born in the millennial age group. Yasmin's family raised her in Beckett County, where she recently graduated from West Napa High School as an adolescent. For undergraduate coursework, Yasmin attended Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida as a Spanish major. Once Yasmin entered the workforce, she worked for the power company in Beckett County as one of the youngest in her position there. Then, after a short time period, Yasmin started being hired as a substitute teacher in the Beckett County School District, working most of the time at her alma mater, West Napa High School.

In the summer of 2019, Yasmin received an interview by the school administration at Essex High School, and was shortly hired as a long-term substitute, with the agreement she would become a first-year teacher subsequent to passing the state certification assessment in mathematics. While Yasmin eventually assumed a full-time teacher role in November 2019, she struggled from the beginning to the end of the school

year with racialized incidents at a predominantly White high school as a non-White female. “It really caught me off guard,” Yasmin recounted, “I was like, I did not know we still behaved this way” when referencing how she felt going through a racist episode in the workplace.

Furthermore, in addition to being one of the only non-White teachers at Essex High School, she also represented a tiny share of millennials at the high school as well. Yasmin disclosed being one of the only millennials in the school’s Mathematics Department for multiple years. As Yasmin described,

I’m working with basically, and I don’t want to say like ‘old’ but it’s like working with people who are in my parents’ generation. And we’re all working together to teach people who are part of like my brother’s generation...Gen Zers.

Overall, although Yasmin endured much adversity as a young new teacher, she enjoyed being at Essex High School, ultimately creating the high school’s first dance team and becoming an athletic coach to the students.

Yasmin began her teaching career in the Mathematics Department at Essex High School as a first-year teacher during the 2019-2020 school year. Without any formal teaching experience prior to becoming a first-year teacher, Yasmin began completing her teacher certification coursework at a nearby graduate program after her first year of teaching. Since being a first-year teacher, Yasmin has been working towards completing her graduate coursework from Kennesaw State University with a master’s level teaching degree in secondary mathematics to change her teacher licensure into renewable status.

Chapter Summary

In summary, because this case study selected to investigate the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District, the site description presented extensive information about the local system's Division of Human Resources, financial budget, induction policy, and high schools. In the same way, the participants, who met criteria to be considered, had in-depth portraits written about them for the purposes of this case study. As a matter of fact, the participants depicted in this study represent diverse personal and professional backgrounds and experiences over a range of characteristics such as gender, race, cohort, age group, workplace, and certification areas. Chapter 5 presents findings from the three rounds of semi-structured interviews about the participants' experiences in the mentoring program.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

K-12 public-school teachers have become America's single largest workforce, but there continues to be serious concerns over teacher shortages and poor retention rates inside local school systems (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2017). With about 50% of new teachers leaving the profession before their fifth-year has ended, addressing teacher shortages cannot depend solely on increasing the teaching supply. School systems must explore ways to improve retention rates as well (Jacobs, 2021; Kelly & Northrop, 2015). Georgia might best illustrate America's teacher labor market instability, which consequently reported around 70% of statewide hiring dealt with replacing teachers who left the profession (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2015).

From the reasonable demand of substantially reducing new teacher turnover hastens the need for reform about the type of experiences for first-year teachers to receive comprehensive, individualized, and differentiated induction opportunities and supports (Zepeda, 2017). The tools and resources extended through a new teacher induction policy from local systems fundamentally respond to the challenges of teacher attrition being incessantly experienced in K-12 public education (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Accordingly, Jacobs (2021) advised policymakers to further examine new teachers' experiences while advancing towards their professional teaching licenses, and the length of time they remained inside local school systems.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District. The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

The overarching question that this study addressed is how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experience do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program.

This chapter presents key findings from the interviews conducted with six new teachers about their experiences in the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District. The sections in Chapter 5 provide (1) the findings from the first round of interviews, (2) the findings from the second round of interviews, and (3) the findings from the third round of interviews.

Findings from the First Round of Interviews

Well-documented, the lack of dependable coordination and management in American public-schools persists as a staple in the workplace conditions new teachers must find their way through. Even though teacher retention remains a clear policy issue, there are still prospects wanting to become K-12 teachers, who desire making a difference in the lives of American children. Given the onset of the recent global COVID-19 pandemic striking America, now more than ever signals the most advantageous time for understanding how professional learning in a formalized system program influences teacher attrition. The findings from the first round of interviews in this section explores the first two years of the study participants' teaching assignments, along with what brought them into K-12 public education, and continues motivating their decisions to come back as new teachers inside the Beckett County School District.

Motivations for Becoming a K-12 School Teacher

Responses from the participants suggested a top motivation for becoming a public-school teacher centered around being drawn to the K-12 profession by a capacity higher than themselves. Nathaniel repeatedly declared how strong the calling to the profession consumed his mind for years before making a career change into becoming a high school teacher. Evidently, as Nathaniel asserted, "it wasn't money. I felt called to choose [teaching]... I felt like I was called to work with youth." Similar to a man of God being called into the clergy, Nathaniel specified feeling a noble sensation which enraptured him until answering this call for teaching children.

Likewise, Ash alluded to a similar draw as Nathaniel with being directed into entering the K-12 teaching profession. Comparatively with Nathaniel, Ash expanded on

his conscious sense of passion for supporting children as a prime reason to enter into K-12 public education, proclaiming,

The biggest thing is I want to make a difference in young people's lives. It was probably my biggest draw. Just being able to be that teacher that a student will always remember, that was there for them to speak something into their life, to encourage them.

Equally important, Ash also brought up how he had a teacher who made a difference in his life, which supported him in changing his career to being a teacher.

With this in mind, Yasmin teared up with emotion after recalling the teachers, who made a difference in her life, with being the motivation she called on to become a high school teacher. As Yasmin described, “in almost every level, I've had a good teacher or a good guidance counselor or an assistant principal that became almost like family...It was those teachers who cared about students, which motivated me to be a teacher.” In addition, Yasmin spoke of being a teacher as her true purpose in life, by referencing the millennial cultural phrase, “teaching is my bag,” whereby she denoted the profession bring great pleasure. Particularly, Yasmin professed, “teaching is my gift,” noting how she wanted to be a teacher since the age of five years old.

Related to purpose in becoming a teacher, along with Yasmin, Ireland shared her motive to enter the K-12 teaching profession. Ireland remembered her past high school experience with not having much quality science teachers. Not until Ireland took college courses in science, did she realize her brightness within the discipline. Additionally, because Ireland became captivated with the hands-on learning of science while in college rather than in high school, she then decided, “I wanted to be the kind of high school

teacher I never had.” In essence, Ireland loathed “the idea of a kid with potential floating through and never unlocking that potential.” Thus, this yearning drew Ireland into becoming a teacher.

Meanwhile for Yohanna, corresponding with Ireland’s urge for unlocking student potential but more broadly, being a positive influence and role model in the lives of children supported her decision to become a high school teacher. Accordingly, Yohanna brought some clarity into her choice to change careers by saying,

They need adults that care about them, not adults that care about their agenda, or gossiping more than they teach in the classroom. I wanted to be there for kids, and whatever they needed at that specific moment to get them to their next step in life.

Yohanna ultimately asserted, “so I got in it for the kids, and I’m still here for the kids.” Being a positive role model, who children can consistently count on to be an example in showing strength and overcoming adversity through life, pushed Yohanna into K-12 public education.

Compared to Yohanna, Leroy specified a particular scope of kids as his motivation in becoming a high school teacher. Leroy discussed “African-American men, the youth, and their deep poor performance that I have observed and heard in math” as his pull into teaching. Although Leroy made clear he had no initial intent in becoming a teacher as a college student, his desire to be a role model within mathematics education and academia for students who look like him played a role in starting a K-12 public education teaching career. However, being candid, as a mathematics teacher, Leroy expressed, “I’ll be more dynamic outside the classrooms still impacting kids and helping

them achieve their goals and pursue their dreams, than inside the classroom,” labeling much of the teaching within this discipline as a losing battle to fight with his students.

In light of the participants testifying to how they became drawn into the profession, Yohanna and Nathaniel also spoke about how athletic coaching led them to become high school teachers for building strong relationships with children. In fact, Yohanna and Nathaniel attributed coaching and sports as their catalyst for them wanting to be a high school teacher.

Yohanna had been a part of cheer coaching at Alexandria High School since graduating from Georgia Southern in 2012. Although coaching cheerleading finally drew Yohanna into teaching, being an athletic coach afforded her opportunities to make a difference in the lives of children well before becoming a teacher. Yohanna remarked that she wished to be “somebody who could be like, I've been there, these are the decisions you need to make, and be trusted to guide them.” Furthermore, Yohanna desired being the big sister in age who could help her cheerleaders learn perseverance, grit, and ways to push through challenges.

Identical to Yohanna, Nathaniel coached for years at Essex High School before becoming a first-year teacher. However, different from Yohanna, Nathaniel acknowledged jealousy as a factor in propelling him into the K-12 teaching profession. First, Nathaniel recognized, “the relationships these coaches had with their position players was different from the relationships I had with my position.” Then, Nathaniel explained, “that's because they're in the building, they got to see them on a regular basis, I didn't. I wanted to further the relationships with my players.” Namely, Nathaniel got the

impression that in order to a build stronger rapport with his players, he must spend critical time seeing them during school hours as well.

Next, regarding Ash, Ireland, and Nathaniel, responses from these participants suggested church involvement prompted some of appeal in becoming teachers. In reference to being called into the profession, Nathaniel established, “I felt that calling 10 years prior when I started teaching Sunday school. The fire just kept building.” Another example came from Ireland, who linked her previous church involvement with some premonition about becoming a teacher. As Ireland explained,

I used to do a children's corner with the kids at church, which meant I would sit in front of the whole church with all the kids for about 10 minutes of the service. We would read Bible passages and talk about them in front of the whole church.

In addition to Ireland finding herself as a natural teacher at church, members of the congregation oftentimes spoke to her about becoming a teacher. Provided that, Ireland believed “from their lips to God’s ears” set in motion her choice to think of being in the K-12 teaching profession.

Further, with Ash being a youth pastor at a church inside of Beckett County, teaching discipleship to children who were also students within the local school system, supported his comfortability in becoming a high school teacher. “That’s what led me to teaching full time,” Ash affirmed, “because I was a youth pastor and preaching to children.” While Ash admitted to not having any formal teaching experiences, he gained multiple years of social interactions with high schoolers inside of a professional learning space.

Lastly, Yasmin, Ireland, and Leroy indicated some type of public service as a consideration in their attraction into the profession. Yasmin and Ireland brought up their impulse to be in another profession as a public servant other than teaching. As Yasmin disclosed, “I also said I wanted to be a police officer, but I was too scared to be an officer,” Ireland revealed. “I wanted to be a nurse [in] community college.” In the same way, directly after graduating from the University of Georgia, Leroy finally launched a non-profit organization specifically for helping kids in the local school systems through mentoring. Leroy clarified his pull with serving children, arguing

Personally, I feel like we, as an African-American society, have a history of telling our kids that education is important. But how often do they see an African-American male in education, outside of coaching? If you didn’t grow up in a predominantly African-American area, at what age did you have your first African American male teacher?

Aside from Leroy having no initial desire to be a teacher, for the most part, he, Yasmin, and Ireland chose high school teaching after yielding to their affections for building relationships with students, along with being positive roles models.

In summary, participants shared their rationale for entering into K-12 public education. With exploring each participant’s motivation for becoming a high school teacher, moving forward the next sub-section explores their instructional experiences before teaching.

Instructional Experiences Before Teaching

Responses from the participants suggested a severe lack of instructional experiences among them in totality before entering the K-12 teaching profession.

Yohanna and Ireland were the only 2 participants who had any formal student teaching from a university as their instructional experiences before becoming first-year teachers. However, even between Yohanna and Ireland manifested a wide spectrum regarding their instructional experiences before teaching. While Yohanna revealed, “I did do a semester of student teaching when I was in college...That experience was a co-taught setting,” Ireland reported herself completing a considerable amount of student teaching experience.

Once Ireland declared a concentration in education for her science degree, she immediately began a program called UTeach with the University of West Georgia. “The one thing that makes UTeach really unique is that they get you in a classroom teaching your first semester,” Ireland confirmed. Descriptively, Ireland gave an explanation about her student teaching experiences, outlining “I observed an elementary school, and taught three lessons at an elementary school. The next semester, I did middle school, then graduated to high school. So, I got in the classroom every semester on some level.” Eventually Ireland gathered she best fit teaching high school based on her instructional experiences in the UTeach program.

Conversely, before becoming a full-time teacher, Leroy, Ash, Nathaniel, and Yasmin did not complete any formal student teaching experiences at a university program. Except for Yasmin, Leroy might have best illustrated Nathaniel’s, Ash’s, and his own instruction experiences, asserting “I didn’t get student teaching experience until I was teaching in my own classroom...I was student teaching in my classroom... that I was teaching in.” Furthermore, as a matter of fact, up to this study being conducted, Yasmin

had yet to be a part of any student teaching experiences or finish her graduated coursework from Kennesaw State University.

Another key point to make about the responses from participants, at Essex High School, Nathaniel and Yasmin both had some type of official and instructional teaching role with students at the school before being offered a full-time teacher position. In addition to being a coach, Nathaniel spent a year as a paraprofessional at Essex High School, mentioning “I’ve been in classrooms (at Essex High School), but I’ve never really taught before. I got to see it from the outside.” This instructional experience before teaching offered Nathaniel an observational opportunity into how teachers at Essex High School generally delivered content to its students.

In Yasmin’s case, she spent a year being a substitute inside the Beckett County School District. As Yasmin explained, “with being a substitute teacher, I actually stepped from behind the desk and was looking at the students’ lessons...I would explain a problem or two to them, so that was fun.” Yasmin was later hired on at Essex High School to be a long-term substitute teacher in the Mathematics Department for about four months until teaching full-time. Distinctively, while Yasmin worked as a long-term substitute teacher, she spoke about there being “a certain freedom” because “it wasn’t a lot of the lesson planning and the behind-the-scenes stuff.” Similar to Nathaniel, the instructional experience before teaching offered Yasmin a relational opportunity into how teachers at Essex High School built relationships with students at Essex High School.

Thirdly, from the responses pertaining to instructional experiences before teaching, for Nathaniel and Yohanna aspects of mentoring in a variety of professional spaces came up as a background in extending some educational practice. “I remember I

started coaching just a little junior varsity cheer team,” Yohanna recounted, “I really tried to mentor this girl who ended up being one of the best cheerleaders...I could tell she was a leader.” Yohanna emphasized athletic coaching as instrumental for being able to cultivate leadership qualities within students.

Likewise, outside of education, as a Vice President of Operations at a construction company, Nathaniel considered his senior executive role as educational to some extent. As Nathaniel theorized,

In the professional realm as Vice President, when I would hire somebody out of school, I had to teach them how to be successful within our company. I had to teach them how I wanted things done. I was a pain in their rear end. I'm very OCD, and when you're running a company, OCD can be very difficult to work for at times. So being able to teach somebody how to deal with me was a skill I had to develop or else I was going to be hiring people all the time.

Nathaniel discussed how being a leader inside a company in his previous role functioned partly as an educator of employees. Similar to being a teacher, Nathaniel equated managing employees on a high level with the actions of classroom management pertaining to students inside K-12 public education.

By the same token with being outside of education, along with Nathaniel, Ash's church involvement included many teaching aspects in their previous instructional experience before becoming a full-time teacher. Ash best illustrated how both he and Nathaniel extended instructions to children at their church by explaining in detail, “we did mostly lecture-based (instruction). I would say, just about all of it was lecture-based. They would watch a video; we would have small discussions. But the majority of it was

lecture based.” Ash and Nathaniel experienced preparing and teaching lessons to children through discussion and small group learning.

Finally, tutoring rose as some instructional experiences before teaching for Yasmin and Leroy. For the most part, Leroy indicated, “I tutored but it was like one-on-one tutoring. No leading studying groups or anything like that.” Moreover, identical to Leroy, Yasmin commented, “I did a bit of tutoring occasionally for some years... mostly in math. I did some Spanish tutoring while still in college, like helping out some of my friends with their work. But nothing set in stone.” However, from the perspective of Yasmin and Leroy, the tutoring experience carried an insignificant impact for them instructionally before becoming a teacher.

Given these points, most participants testified to not completing much student teaching before teaching, while considering other parts of their background key in shaping them instructionally as new teachers. The next sub-section portrays central issues discussed by the participants related to their first-year teaching assignment.

First-Year Teaching Assignment

Responses from the participants suggested placement with their teaching assignments as first-year teachers being somewhat disadvantageous for them when entering K-12 public education. Whereas Nathaniel got placed as a teacher in Precalculus and Algebra II at Essex High School, which became advantageous for him being a career changer, Yohanna, Ash, Leroy, Ireland, Yasmin did not acquire the same favor with their teaching assignment placements.

Starting in January 2016, Ireland in her first-year teaching assignment assumed responsibility for Biology classes of students who had multiple teacher changes since

beginning the school year outside the Beckett County School District. “I had these kids that had not learned half of the curriculum,” Ireland highlighted, “and they were still expected to take the state test either way. So, I did my best. But, as a first-year teacher, I think I was still learning.” Alongside having all inclusion classes, Ireland’s entry into the K-12 teaching profession immediately began with managing critical challenges related to the school’s chronic teacher retention problem.

Similar to Ireland, outside the Beckett County School District, Leroy began his first-year teaching assignment in the middle of the school year placed as a teacher for the Advanced Mathematical Decision-Making course. However, not only did Leroy assume responsibility mid-year over classes of students, but he also happened to be the lone teacher unpacking curriculum and extending instructions in the course. Leroy gave this depiction of his first-year teaching assignment, “imagine you’re having kids who have done stuff that you don’t do, like drink, smoke, hangout with people older than you, date people older than you, and you’re the only person teaching the class. It was not fun.” In short, Leroy’s entry in the K-12 teaching profession came with him not having been placed in a successful position.

As with Ireland and Leroy, Ash began later in the school year assuming his first-year teaching assignment at West Napa High School as a special education teacher for three different courses: Earth Science, Environmental Science, and Physical Science. Though before Ash’s entry into the K-12 teaching profession, he recalled, “I would have felt more comfortable in history for sure. The school administration in my interview, they asked me, ‘how do you feel about science?’ I was like, ‘I don’t know.’ They were like, ‘perfect!’” Even though Ash was grateful for employment, he alleged the school

administration outweighed his comfortability in placement with hiring him to fill a teaching vacancy.

Different from Ireland and Leroy, but in a similar way as Ash, despite Yasmin holding years of education in Spanish, at Essex High School she assumed her first-year teaching assignment for Algebra I and Algebra I Support courses. As a teacher, without any formal training within instructional methods in mathematics, Yasmin's teaching placement disadvantaged her collaboration with colleagues. As Yasmin detailed, "I got a call from the school saying we have an open math teaching position...which I found surprising because my degree is in Spanish. But I do like math." Similarly, with Ash, the school administration at Essex High School outweighed Yasmin's lack of formal training in mathematics with hiring her to fill a teaching vacancy.

Comparatively, with Yohanna's first-year teaching assignment being inside co-taught and resources classes for College Readiness Mathematics, Algebra I, and Geometry at Alexandria High School, similar to Ash and Yasmin, she had multiple mathematics courses, but less than minimal formal training within instructional methods in special education and mathematics. Also, in addition to limited professional experience, Yohanna's teaching placement disadvantaged her whenever she tried to collaborate with colleagues. Yohanna spoke in great detail about major tension with her colleague and co-teacher when attempting to collaborate on instruction. Overall, consequently, these disadvantages developed for Ash, Yasmin, and Yohanna in respect to power dynamics within their workplace conditions.

Another central issue discussed by participants during their first-year teaching assignment brought to the forefront aspects of "trial by fire" in the workplace conditions

they navigated through inside high schools. For instance, related to special education, Yohanna and Ash spoke extensively about finding their way through being a teacher who delivered services under federal law titled the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Yohanna and Ash emphasized their sense of being loss when having to complete students' paperwork related to special education services (IEPs).

Ash described in his first-year teaching assignment aspects of “sink or swim” while completing IEPs, which might best represent provisionally-certified special education teachers entering into K-12 public education, recalling “with coming in there having to write my first IEP, I had no clue what a legal defensible IEP was or how to write goals.” In addition, Ash underscored that “there wasn't a time when somebody sat down and said, ‘this is how you do this, this is how you do that.’ It was figuring stuff out on my own.” Then, Ash concluded his thoughts by noting, “the stories they told me about the special education side where school systems have been sued were scary... All of a sudden, I'm responsible, it's nerve wracking and definitely stressful.” Briefly, Ash highlighted the anxiety of realizing how unprepared for his special education duties he had been as a first-year teacher.

Meanwhile, during Yohanna's first-year teaching assignment, she discussed in great detail what special education teachers encounter in co-taught classrooms, which Ash also agreed with. Although Yohanna understood a co-taught classroom to be “2 equal [teachers] working (together) to help all the students in the class achieve the best grade possible and achieve their potential,” she reported not being afforded opportunities to collaborate on lesson plans, assessments, and other related aspects of student learning with her general education co-teacher. As Yohanna further explained,

The co-teacher I was teaching with, she made it very clear about her classroom. She made it very clear that it was her lesson plans that we were going to be following, that nothing would be added to it. That any accommodations would be done with her approval. That's not how the special ed world works.

Ash and Yohanna indicated their role in their co-taught classrooms as being assistants, with students not viewing them as actual teachers. Furthermore, Ash and Yohanna determined they never received much mentorship and coaching on specific duties related to special education responsibilities from the local system.

Opposite to Yohanna and Ash regarding the lack of support as special education teachers, Nathaniel, Ireland, and Leroy expressed receiving some helpful support from the subject-area colleagues they worked with in their first-year teaching assignment. While Nathaniel felt similar to “jumping in head first without a life jacket” when entering K-12 public education, his colleagues offered supports which he depicted by continuing the analogy,

I might have felt like I was without a life vest. But they had one of the life rafts thrown out to me, and they were holding that rope tight, and they got me man.

They helped make sure I had what I needed.

Along with Nathaniel, from Ireland’s viewpoint, she confirmed, “the Science Department was very much family oriented. When I started, I got a huge binder full of lesson plans.” Nathaniel, Ireland, and Leroy noticed the support they received from subject-area colleagues during their first-year teaching assignment.

In contrast, Yasmin, Yohanna, and Ash voiced not receiving such support from subject-area colleagues in their first-year teaching assignment. Actually, Yohanna and

Yasmin brought up aspects of being a millennial when expressing their challenges when working with subject-area colleagues. Whereas Yohanna believed her innovative ideas as a millennial were not accepted at all, Yasmin added she felt minimized in subject-area meetings due to being a younger voice, which adversely impacted their collaboration. Additionally, given Yasmin's racial status as non-White inside an overwhelmingly White school and department, she disclosed episodes of perceived micro-aggressions in her first-year teaching assignment. To sum up, Yasmin, Yohanna, and Ash did not speak of being critically supported by subject-area colleagues.

Equally important, aside from Ireland, Yasmin, and Nathaniel, all of the other participants discussed in some form not receiving much support from the school administration with their first-year teaching assignment. While Yohanna and Ash asserted their indifference about the school administration's support related to their first-year teaching assignment, Leroy shared his outrage with how his assistant principal supported him after observations by stating,

The assistant principal who was observing me, whenever we had meetings after the observations, I felt like it was all what I was doing wrong, and nothing of what I was doing right. So, I was like, you know what, maybe this teaching thing ain't for me... Let me go. What is teaching? Let me do something else. I'm overworked, underpaid.

The support or lack thereof from the school administration set in motion questions on whether Leroy would remain or stay at the school and inside the K-12 public education. In general, Ash stressed, "overall I don't think I felt supported by the administration," which also resonates some truth for at least Yohanna and Leroy as well.

The third major issue coming from participants' responses manifested as some highly unexpected experiences during their first-year teaching assignment. Yohanna referenced being shocked about the lack of professionalism inside Alexandria High School. Alluding to the school personnel, Yohanna explained, "I was shocked. What I have been taught in my classes with the expectations of a teacher, I didn't feel like I was surrounded by professionals who wanted to help kids improve, get better, further their education, or graduate." Instead, as Yohanna pointed out, "I felt like I was around colleagues that were in it for their own interests," which she clarified did not support the future of students who received special education services.

Further, to a degree, Ash described being surprised about issues of the professional practice concerning teachers' positions inside West Napa High School during his first-year teaching assignment. With being special education teachers, Ash along with Yohanna shared the perspective of having a lower professional status inside their schools. Ash expounded on this assertion, disclosing "there's not equal teaching in the classroom. One teacher is more dominant than the other, and oftentimes, the special education teacher is looked at as someone that's there just to pull kids out or add support here or there." In addition, Ash brought up how internal communications implicitly placed special education teachers in a subjugated position inside West Napa High School.

Because Yasmin and Ash began their first-year teaching assignment in the 2021-2022 school year, the global COVID-19 pandemic understandably inflicted some shock to them as teachers. Ash remembered, "when this COVID hit, and we went virtual, and

that was a whole different ball game... I only had less than a year under my belt.”

Likewise, Yasmin further remarked,

The pandemic changed everything. Honestly, it affected my full-blown desire to teach in somewhat of a negative way. Seeing as I just started off my job, and then switching so suddenly caused discomfort and unease. But I learned a lot within those couple of months too. I learned about how virtual learning would look, what a Google Classroom was, and using Google meet. All of that was brand new.

The forced and sudden transition to complete virtual services at the end of the school year caused not only uncertainty in teaching and managing students for Ash and Yasmin, but also some anxiety with finishing out their first-year teaching assignment.

Then, from Leroy’s perspective of recently graduating college, he found himself taken aback by the gaming in K-12 public education. As Leroy began his first-year teaching assignment, he acknowledged, “when I got there, I was shell-shocked at the proverbial game that teachers have to play. I didn’t understand how the game actually worked.” To point out, Leroy illustrated an example, revealing “this whole, you got to constantly work with them (students). Don’t give them homework because they are not doing it. I was like, ‘what is this?’ Then there was no textbook.” Yohanna echoed Leroy’s sentiments, noting the disconnect between research and the reality inside Alexandria High School, in respect to the learning she had received from college.

Ireland and Nathaniel, different from the other participants, indicated some highly unexpected experiences when referencing students during their first-year teaching assignment. Unexpectedly for Nathaniel, he learned “I’ve been living in a bubble of what I thought was normal.” Nathaniel realized he “lived sheltered from the trials and

tribulations that kids go through which I didn't see." With gaining more of an understanding about students and their backgrounds, Nathaniel mentioned his whole perception and outlook changed, stating, "I became more aware" of the issues contributing to behavioral and academic success and outcomes of students.

While Ireland had the most instructional experiences before teaching, she also accepted the surprising fact of needing more support and tools in classroom management with managing challenging students. In Ireland's first-year teaching assignment, she discovered, "my classroom management was absolutely terrible. But I think my heart was in the right place." Even though, as a matter of fact, Ireland inherited a great deal of challenging students in her first-year teaching assignment, she still admitted to needing some critical professional learning with understanding student discipline and their behavior needs within the classroom. Because the unexpected experiences of managing challenging students eluded Ireland, she relented by the end of the school year, admitting, "we just played with lab equipment," rather than her extend them formal instructions.

Lastly, Ash, Yasmin, Yohanna, and Nathaniel had some general discussion about meeting and working with a system mentor from the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District during their first-year teaching assignment. With all issues considered related to the first-year teaching assignment, the participants outlined in detail what they confronted and had to navigate through within their workplace conditions. To sum up, the third sub-section provides a brief on the top descriptions the participants used to represent their first-year teaching experiences.

Descriptions of First-Year Teaching Experiences

Responses from the participants who completed their first-year teaching assignment with a system mentor in the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District either directly stated or implied an overall rewarding experience. Yohanna, Ash, and Nathaniel used the term “rewarding” to describe their first-year teacher experiences. For Yohanna, she believed her first-year teaching experiences “felt right” in her heart, because she was “doing good.” Ultimately, Yohanna perceived her first-year teaching experiences as rewarding because she “made a difference” in the lives of children through advocacy.

Then, with Nathaniel, he voiced the rewards from his first-year teaching experiences by expressing, “it is knowing that you can have a positive impact on somebody's life, even if it's one person's life.” As Nathaniel became increasingly aware of his past and present sheltered life, becoming immersed at Essex High School offered him experiences to discern another side about living inside America.

Whereas Ash used “rewarding” to describe his first-year teaching experience for, because according to him, “I find it rewarding to be able to impact students, love on students, and so that's why I find it rewarding to do it. So that's why I think I keep swimming (referring to ‘sink or swim’).” Overall, Nathaniel, Ash, and Yasmin considered their first-year teaching experiences to be gratifying, even though the challenging times, because of the students they taught.

On a related note, while Yasmin did not use the word “rewarding,” she expressed a similar term, life-changing. As Yasmin described, her first-year teaching experiences were “life-changing because it's my first year in my career.” Because Yasmin suddenly

started her first-year teaching position, she felt grateful to be extended a contract of employment, and excited for a career with helping students learn.

In contrast, with Leroy and Ireland, who did not complete their first-year teaching assignment with a system mentor in the systemwide induction program, they specified having negative experiences. When Ireland described her first-year teaching experiences, she used the term “chaos,” because according to her,

I think I definitely had weeks when I was like, ‘maybe this isn't for me.’ Those kids were pretty rough. I think that questioning about being a teacher always popped back up because I had some really horrible days, especially not having administration back me up when kids acted up. I think there were just a lot of days that were really hard.

Similar to Ireland, Leroy shared his frustrations with the school administration, by saying “I felt attacked.” Furthermore, not only did Leroy believe his first-year experiences were “overwhelming” and “terrible,” but he also revealed “it was tiresome because I was trying to be here, trying to be there, trying to keep everybody happy.” Additionally, neither Ireland nor Leroy felt they had a fault-free space setup for learning about how to improve as teachers from the school administration.

Altogether, responses from the participants, who did or did not participate in the systemwide induction program with a system mentor inside the Beckett County School District, indicated a clear divide in how they described their overall first-year teaching experiences. The participants who did participate in the systemwide induction program with a system mentor inside the Beckett County School District gave more positive adjectives such as “pleasant” and “natural.” For the participants who did not participate in

the systemwide induction program with a system mentor inside the Beckett County School District, they gave more negative adjectives. Given these points, the fourth subsection fast-forwards into the participants' second-year teaching assignment for comparing issues related to their next year as new teachers in K-12 public education.

Second-Year Teaching Assignment

Responses from the participants indicated a range of being placed in the identical second-year teacher assignment and having their instructional schedule adjusted or completely changed. Notably, when compared to the other participants, Nathaniel remained in the exact same placement in terms of his second-year teaching assignment. Being the only participant who got assignment to an identical instructional placement as the year prior, namely Algebra II and Precalculus, Nathaniel enjoyed noticing the similarities and differences regarding his students over time. To mention, Nathaniel did not confront the stress and anxiety of teaching a state tested subject, which all the other participants encountered entering into K-12 public education.

In respect to the following school year, Nathaniel clarified that his second-year assignment went “a little bit smoother” because, as he reinforced, “I knew a little bit more about what to expect from the kids...I’d already been through the material once. It wasn’t like I was having to relearn anything.” Hence, Nathaniel confirmed having high-levels of confidence throughout his second-year teaching assignment, with “no nervousness,” compared to being a first-year teacher. Nathaniel’s colleague at Essex High School, Yasmin, had a similar experience with her second-year teaching assignment, except she got assigned an additional course, Algebra II, the following school year.

With the additional course being a part of Yasmin's instructional schedule, she pointed out, because of "teaching another math subject, I communicated more with other co-workers that I usually probably wouldn't have to." According to Yasmin, being placed in Algebra II introduced her to other colleagues within the Mathematics Department from another vantage point at Essex High School. In addition, similar to Nathaniel with teaching the same course twice, Yasmin expressed being able to "figure out" her own style, with the opportunity of "recognizing" and "coming into" herself as a teacher.

Meanwhile, at Alexandria High School, similar to Yasmin, Yohanna did not have an identical second-year teaching assignment. However, after Yohanna requested to be placed with the same co-teacher in College Readiness Mathematics, she connected her second-year teaching assignment with understanding the political dynamics within the workplace, mentioning, "so I knew that there was a point in the day when I could help my kids the most. It was kind of a game. Maybe a slightly different game, but I knew the players in the game." Yohanna expressed similarities with being a first-year teacher and her second-year teaching assignment when discussing struggles and the "games" she reacted to from the school's administration and teachers in the workplace.

In the same way as Yohanna, Ash at West Napa High School got placed during his second-year assignment with the one of the same co-teachers in Environment Science he worked alongside as a first-year teacher. But, different from Yohanna, Ash's second-year assignment included placement inside of a different department as a co-teacher for United States History. In Ash's words,

It was tough to be in three different departments. Because I was in the Special Education Department. I was in the Science Department, and then also a part of

the social studies department. So, there's only so many meetings that I could attend and actually be a part of. A lot of times, social studies fell by the wayside, just due to planning periods and time restrictions. That's probably why I didn't really have a voice in that class. We weren't collaborating together. I didn't even know what we're doing until I got to class.

Despite the complications of being in three different departments, Ash managed to highlight a positive about his second-year teaching assignment, recognizing the advantage of building relationships with the same students in the Environment Science and United States History courses.

On another note, because Leroy and Ireland transferred into different school systems for their second-year teaching assignment, they were presented with different circumstances compared to the other participants. Ireland and Leroy spoke of their second-year teaching assignment in entirely negative terms. Ireland recalled “going from a bright, shiny new school” where they handed her everything, “to a school (in Florida) where they're just like, figure it out.” Additionally, because of this school's smaller make-up, not only did Ireland get placed to teach the tested science course as a new teacher, but she also was assigned two other courses never taught before as well. As a result, this forced Ireland by herself to pull “pacing guides and instructions from other counties...[and] piece together” the curriculum and instruction for her students the best she could.

Likewise, with Leroy, after transferring to a school system west of Georgia for his second-year teaching assignment, Leroy received placement at a middle school. Unfortunately, Leroy's second-year teaching assignment got changed mid-year from 8th

grade math to 6th grade math, because as Leroy alleged, “the only reason why I was told I was chosen was because they needed another male in the hall. But it turned out the best friend of the principal took my 8th grade position, and threatened to leave if she was moved to 6th grade.” Then, Leroy again concluded, “I didn't feel like I was put in a successful position.” In the end, the school system nonrenewed Leroy’s contract for the next school year.

The second central issue from the participants suggested the COVID-19 shutdown caused them to capture new skills in extending instruction and managing hybrid classrooms during their second-year teaching assignment. Yasmin opened up how the global COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted her and the students she served, saying “with the full pandemic going on, I gained more of a concern for students’ safety versus trying to get through the curriculum and trying to move on at a certain time.” Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Yasmin defended the shifts in priorities for students, with safety climbing to the first priority, and then somewhere after that being instruction and learning.

Similar to the negative sentiments of Yasmin about not finishing her first-year teaching in-person, Ash expanded on how they both felt during their second-year assignment by remarking, “my second year, it was a year like none other because we went virtual. So now, I'm coming in. I only have like a year under my belt.” Ash further explained, “I would say I didn't even have a full beginning of the school year yet that looked normal because I came in late, I got hired in September, and the second year ended early because of COVID.” Up to this point, neither Ash nor Yasmin had gone through a normal school year in-person as new teachers

In contrast, Yohanna, Nathaniel, Ireland, and Leroy had gone through a normal school year in-person as new teachers. However, for Yohanna and Nathaniel, towards the end of their second-year teaching assignment in March 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic struck America. With Georgia in a shutdown, Yohanna and Nathaniel respectfully saw this time period as the best opportunity to finish graduate school coursework, while responsibly completing their teaching duties.

As Yohanna recalled, “yeah, during COVID, [finishing my graduate coursework] was a blast,” Nathaniel added by explaining, “all I can say is, COVID freed up a little bit of time for me to finish (my graduate coursework).” Furthermore, Nathaniel clarified, “the sports had stopped, going out to dinner had stopped, and the things you do with your family stopped. So, I mean, it allowed me more time.” The fortunate side of the global COVID-19 pandemic afforded Nathaniel and Yohanna time to complete coursework at home, which significantly reduced stress and struggle for them.

By comparison, because Ireland and Leroy began their second-year teaching assignment in 2017, they had a few years going through a normal school year in-person as new teachers. Also, Ireland and Leroy did not speak much about the global COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting the impact had been somewhat insignificant for them.

Lastly, from the participants, another central issue coming out of the responses implied they still needed more critical support in classroom management during their second-year teaching assignment. Ireland, Leroy, and Yasmin had concerns involving classroom management due to the social and structural concerns in the schools they serve at during their second-year teaching assignment. At Essex High School, Yasmin suffered from many episodes of racism, which usually appeared as micro-aggression, according to

her, from both faculty and staff. Yasmin highlighted one classroom incident which she indicated having to deal with alone, recalling,

We were doing an online game *Kahoot*, where students sign in with a username.

Because it's my Algebra II students, I trusted them to behave with a certain level of maturity. Someone put their username as 'knee-ger' like the body part, k-n-e-e (implying nigger). So, I tried to maintain composure, I just deleted the name.

Then, I heard a student say, watch this, and 'cotton picker' appeared as a username on the board. I deleted that one. I had to call an administrator down there to handle it, because I knew I could not speak to my class.

As a new teacher, Yasmin mentioned being alone dealing with issues of racism related to classroom management and the workplace at Essex High School. Meanwhile, Ireland and Leroy continued during their second-year teaching dealing with classroom management concerns because of structural problems in the schools they served in.

Ireland went through another challenging year with classroom management.

Along with Ireland disclosing "feeling very much on an island alone," she revealed students mostly came from disadvantaged backgrounds, as the lack of the school administration's presence actually harmed improvement efforts in student discipline as well. Accordingly, being alone, Ireland had to "figure out ways" to "control them (students)." In addition, Ireland commented on how her classroom should have most likely had a co-teacher as well due to majority of the students receiving an IEP. For the next two years, Ireland remembered having many days of depression being at the school.

Likewise, Leroy discussed, "I started out teaching 8th grade math. And after the first nine weeks, I was moved to 6th grade, and given a "hodgepodge" of kids from the

other two math teachers in the hall, who were in different spots.” As Leroy further explained, “I got the kids that both of them had the trouble with. They were not high functioning math kids. I had to go in and try to reestablish expectations because they were used to somebody else.” This massive adjustment during Leroy’s second-year teaching assignment caused some disruption for him, where he lacked any critical support in classroom management related to instruction for making such a transition as a new teacher.

On another note, Ash and Yohanna continued having critical issues with classroom management, given the co-taught concerns they had of feeling unequal to general education teachers at West Napa High School and Alexandria High School. When discussing classroom management, Ash responded, “I still didn’t really feel like I knew a lot... I just wasn’t confident in what I was doing with trying to find my voice in the classroom.” Yohanna and Ash indicated they would have enjoyed more critical support on tools to assert themselves in classroom management as equals alongside the co-teachers they served with during their second-year teaching assignment.

The only participant who indicated not needing much critical support in classroom management appeared to be Nathaniel, during his second-year teaching assignment. Because of Nathaniel’s senior executive experience, he never once mentioned anything in classroom management being an issue. As Nathaniel pointed, he received “support as I needed,” in regards to colleagues and the school administration at Essex High School.

Given all the participants’ experiences in their second-year teaching assignment, ranging from them changing instructional schedules to continuation of learning about

classroom management, in general they determined more critical support could still be offered as new teachers. Accordingly, the last sub-sections offer a discussion about why each participant chose to come back into teaching and return as an employee of the Beckett County School District.

Motivations to Come Back into Teaching and Beckett County

Responses from the participants strongly confirmed the youth as their highest motivations for coming back into teaching. Along this thread of the youth, Ireland shared the same sentiments as Ash, with her commenting “it is the kids. I just really enjoy working with kids. I think even from day one, that’s just really what I wanted to do.” Further, Nathaniel expanded on his motivations to come back into teaching by mentioning, “my motivation has been the same, to help youth in some way. If my motivation ever changes from that, then maybe it's time to retire. Because I don't know what else the motivation could be to do this.” Nathaniel and Ireland both agreed kids to be their primary motivator to enter into K-12 public education.

At the same time, Yasmin provided a specific motivation to come back into teaching involving the youth, mentioning “especially being in a school where I'm a minority, and where some students who look like me are the minority, I realized I have that obligation to be there for them, to be that familiar face they see.” Ultimately, with Yasmin, she desired to be the teacher who kids “could come to” because of feeling as if they “relate to” her.

Then, Yohanna and Leroy detailed a contrasting motivation to come back into teaching involving the youth. While Leroy upheld having no initial intent of being a teacher, he declared, “I don't mind the kids, I don't mind being in education. It’s just the

classroom. It's a headache." Yohanna offered more context to Leroy's explanation in her motivation to come back into teaching involving kids by asserting,

You know, I feel like we could help support these kids a lot better in classrooms. I came back because I feel like there was a spot for me here, and they would have a lot of messes on their hands if I wasn't helping them and helping the kids get through...I think the classroom brings up problems relating to kids. The kids that we teach, the technology, the vocabulary. But now it has trickled into our working environment with coworkers. And pretty soon it's going to go to leadership. How are the I-generation or Generation X going to interact with a millennial who's higher than them?... We got to adjust. We got to change with the times.

Aside from the classroom, Yohanna and Leroy described ambitions of helping students build skill sets in areas outside of the normal teaching curriculum. Additionally, as Leroy sought to build kids up through mentoring in his non-profit organization, Yohanna remarked on the necessary changes she would like to be a part of in K-12 public education for the sake of students.

Another commonality among the majority of the participants brought out them being past graduates of the Beckett County School District as their reason for coming back into the local school system. As a matter of fact, Nathaniel, Yasmin, Ash, and Yohanna graduate from inside the Beckett County School District at one of the high schools. For instance, Nathaniel and Ash graduated from Essex High School. Ash might best illustrate Nathaniel's perspective on coming back to teach in the Beckett County School District, asserting "because I live here, it's close by, and I'm invested. I think that's

probably the biggest reason why I haven't left Beckett County. I feel vested in it with the students.”

Furthermore, Ash added. “because I’ve invested in so many of their lives, I don't want to leave. There's something special about the first class you teach too.” In like manner, Yohanna and Yasmin gave similar motivations for coming back to the Beckett County School District. Yamin responded with how she “liked to stick to the familiar.” As Yasmin noted, “I think the county is great. It’s the county that I've spent most of my grade school education in. It feels comfortable coming back to basically the county that taught me.” With Yasmin being a graduate of West Napa High School, she had strong ties inside the Beckett County School District since her childhood.

Additionally, Yohanna also expanded on Yasmin’s perspective about coming back inside the Beckett County School District, sharing “What keeps me pushing forward is knowing that at the district level, they are rewarding things that align with my ideas, ideals, and values.” However, from Yohanna’s perspective, “I do feel like there's maybe a miscommunication to my building.” With being a millennial, Yohanna cannot understand why the beliefs at the central office level do not align with Alexandria High School’s workplace reality.

Finally, opposite from the other participants, Ireland and Leroy shared a conflicting perspective about coming back inside the Beckett County School District. While Leroy had been grateful of having his contract being renewed, he candidly proclaimed his motivation for coming back into Beckett County School District, acknowledging,

The only motivation that's kept me coming back is that another profession hasn't been offered. I know it sounds bad as a teacher saying that but I am overworked, underpaid, and feel the lack of respect that the teaching profession gets. If I could pay my bills and run my non-profit, I would be out of the classroom.

Equally important, Ireland also made a point to state her ambitions outside of teaching as well. Although Ireland positively remarked about West Napa High School, commenting "I just really enjoyed the school that I was placed in. It is a phenomenal school," she inserted, "I'm finally at a point where I'm looking at transitioning what I want to do. I really want to do coaching, because I feel like I could help reach more kids." Leroy and Ireland desired to transition outside of the K-12 teaching profession.

In conclusion, all of the participants agreed with how Ireland emphasized, "kids are always my motivation." Whether remaining a teacher or yearning to be in another profession, the participants found themselves avid in supporting and caring for students with an endearing frame of mind. However, markedly, there indicated some divide between the participants who had or had not been a part of the systemwide induction program with a system mentor inside the Beckett County School District as a first-year teacher related to staying within the local school system they started in, their first and second years of teaching, and coming back into teaching. The next section explores the coaching and mentorship experiences the participants found beneficial in the systemwide induction program with a system mentor inside the Beckett County School District.

Findings from the Second Round of Interviews

Generally speaking, as first-year teachers enter the K-12 workforce, they crave development that bridges their own educational philosophies with other evidence-based

methods. The practices of mentorship and coaching, primarily built on experienced professionals transferring perspectives, have been a means to enable new teachers' learning from an inquiry-based, social learning stance. Furthermore, though virtual services became abruptly commonplace within education because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, these present-time conditions loom benignly in respect to pursuing how online mentorship and coaching strategies can foster induction opportunities for new teachers as well. The findings from the second round of interviews in this section examines the study participants' mentorship and coaching experiences in the systemwide induction program and their perspectives about the infrastructure inside the Beckett County School District.

Coaching and Mentorship Before Teaching

Responses from the participants suggested the majority of their coaching and mentorship before entering the K-12 teaching profession came from other professionals working in various industries. Prior to being a first-year teacher, Yohanna depicted the mentorship and coaching experiences she received from being a sales representative as comprehensive and supportive for her. Before Yohanna started her sales representative position, she detailed,

We had a full training that lasted two weeks long. It was a very in-depth training. They flew us to Memphis. After that, we went back to Georgia, and had more training digitally. Then, there was also a mentor-mentee program that lasted the entire year.

Along with the one-on-one mentoring, Yohanna also revealed how her supervisor periodically completed ride-alongs for more critical support in the field that first year as

well. Plus, Yohanna expressed, “our supervisor was always there for support. But also, we were part of a team that was supportive.” As Yohanna pointed out, team collaboration provided a great deal of her support with critical tools as well.

Yohanna further explained, “throughout the full sales cycle, the team that I was working on, we worked very closely together...we [also] had a sales support representative, who could give me support when I was out in the field.” The extensive training and support Yohanna referenced drove her to feel positive about beginning in sales, accepted within the workplace, and motivated towards accomplishing team goals and objectives. Similar to Yohanna, Nathaniel received his first mentorship and coaching experience from industry. However, Nathaniel spoke of being groomed for a senior executive position as soon as he entered his first position after graduating from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

As Nathaniel affirmed, “the former Vice President of Operations took me under his wing, guided me, and showed me how to do things within that organization and how they did business.” Different from Yohanna, Nathaniel shared a contrast in the mentorship and coaching he received. “Failure costs so much money in the construction industry,” Nathaniel clarified. “Because it just cost so much money, my previous mentors would always be checking things to make sure I did everything just right.” Nathaniel remembered his mentorship and coaching experiences in industry being less about exploring as a learning professional, and more around following a given script without input.

In contrast to Nathaniel and Yohanna, three of the participants, Ash, Yasmin, and Leroy received critical mentorship and coaching experiences from their church

organizations. While Yasmin mentioned some mentorship and coaching from industry to navigate as a millennial in a mature, professional environment, she believed her most effective support came from church friends. “[With] my godfather (from church),” Yasmin disclosed, “we'd meet weekly, and I learned a lot about professionalism and how to carry myself as a Black professional in a system that may not be predominantly Black.” Yasmin dealt with mentorship and coaching as a teenager to prepare her for being in professional spaces when she got older.

Likewise, Ash encountered much of his mentorship and coaching experiences in the church organization since being a teenager. Ash remarked, “as a young person aspiring to be a pastor, I had an elder youth pastor that really mentored me and coached me. It was good, he was very caring.” With being Ash’s mentor and coach, he described his elder youth pastor as fatherly, who took on a more personal relationship with him. “He was literally a part of my baptism, my marriage, my life, everything,” Ash conveyed. Rather than being solely about how to operate within professional spaces, Ash emphasized how his mentorship and coaching experience embodied aspects of him developing personally.

Identically, Leroy affirmed, “outside of academics, I had pastors that kind of served as spiritual and personal mentors. They helped (me) out a lot, especially after losing my dad at an early age.” Additionally, in undergrad, Leroy acknowledged receiving some necessary mentorship and coaching at the University of Georgia after transferring from Morehouse College. In Leroy’s words, “there was a math professor, who kind of served as a jolt of inspiration. He challenged me to meet my potential as a

math major by being very candid, honest, and fair.” Leroy recognized this math professor as a mentor and coach who supported him through completing his degree requirements.

Aside from Leroy, unlike every other participant, Ireland identified all of her mentorship and coaching experiences coming from the education sector. However, instead of receiving mentorship and coaching experiences on studying content as Leroy did, Ireland acquired support as a student teacher from licensed professionals in the field. As a student teacher in the UTeach program at the University of West Georgia, Ireland recalled, “the mentors were just really focused on teaching us how to write lessons, how to make engaging lessons, and how to incorporate inquiry-based lessons.” In addition, Ireland described her most significant mentor and coach by revealing,

My mentor as a student-teacher was the one that led me to choose high school. She was very much ‘into the fire’ with it. She was like, you’re going to take over the class, you’re going to be in charge of grading, you’re going to do it all. I’m just going to step in, if you need assistance, or if you need classroom management help. She pretty much just handed me her class and let me do what I wanted to do with it, which was a really interesting experience.

Ireland secured daily feedback through mentorship and coaching in her immersive student-teacher experience before teaching from several professionals in K-12 public education. Compared to all the other participants, because Ireland obtained her teacher licensure after graduating from an undergraduate program, she received traditional mentorship and coaching experiences before teaching as a student teacher.

Overall, participants shared a variety of mentorship and coaching experiences from mostly outside of the education field. Only one participant received mentorship and

coaching experiences from being a student-teacher before teaching. The second subsection lists the supportive professionals to the participants while teaching, who provided some sort of mentorship and coaching experiences.

Supportive Professionals While Teaching

Responses from the participants, given the system mentors in the systemwide induction program, marked their subject-area colleagues as a primary source of supportive professionals while teaching, with not very much being attributed to the school administration at all. For Leroy, as a new teacher outside and inside the Beckett County School District, he listed supportive professionals while teaching coming from some of his subject-area colleagues in mathematics. The mentorship experiences Leroy received at Thomaston High School from two of his colleagues emerged as beneficial and supportive for him. Leroy recognized a close colleague in particular within his Geometry professional learning community who worked with him one-on-one at times to provide curriculum and instructional support.

Concerning whether the school administration from either outside or inside the Beckett County School District provided any mentorship and coaching experiences, Leroy specified, “not saying that some of the administrators didn't try to help, it just wasn't a relationship there.” Meanwhile, Yasmin at Essex High School, on the other hand, she acknowledged the supportive professionals while teaching as being a school administrator and one of her colleagues. Being at a predominantly White school, Yasmin acknowledged her mentorship coming from Black professionals at Essex High School. The only Black administrator at Essex High School, who also happened to be a male, assumed a mentorship role with Yasmin.

Yasmin detailed the support from the school administrator as a first-year teacher sharing, “the 9th grade assistant principal made sure that I could communicate effectively with parents, and that I was communicating frequently enough. I think the biggest lesson I learned from him was to record everything.” Additionally, Yasmin discussed a colleague, who happened to be outside her subject-area, Black, and male, pointing out, “my colleague gave me advice when it came to dealing with some differences in my department, whether it be demographical or just some other differences especially with communication with the math chair,” since being in the same school leadership role himself.

Then, with Nathaniel, at Essex High School, he “could list every single math teacher in the hallway” who provided him with some support. Furthermore, Nathaniel admitted to the Mathematics Department chair being a supportive professional while teaching for him, along with a colleague from his Algebra II professional learning community. As Nathaniel recalled, “the Mathematics Department chair gave me all the material I needed. But she didn't give it to me all at once.” Nathaniel cited the Mathematics Department chair for sitting down on a weekly basis with him to provide counsel on upcoming teaching lesson. At the same time, Nathaniel remembered being given space to consider ways of extending pedagogy in teaching as well.

In addition, Nathaniel listed a colleague from the Algebra II professional learning community, who would “do stuff like, alright it's your turn to create this test, and I want you to create it using that program... Afterwards, he would give me feedback.” Nathaniel referenced this mentorship as being “thrown out there” and told to “go for it” with

feedback support in the process from his colleague. Nathaniel also connected how his system mentor collaborated in the learning process by noting,

My system mentor came in and meshed with [the department chair and one of my colleagues], perfectly. Because, well, they gave a lot of ‘this is what it needs to look like.’ But they're busy. They're got their own classes going on. They're not coming in and observing how I'm actually doing. So, my system mentor came in and observed me.

The mentorship and coaching Nathaniel referred to from supportive professionals while teaching highlighted some self-exploration within his experiences as a first-year teacher.

Comparatively, Ireland had substantial support from the Science Department chair at West Napa High School as a new teacher. When Ireland first entered into the K-12 workforce as a teacher outside the Beckett County School District, she mentioned neither receiving mentorship and coaching, nor having a supportive professional while teaching to call on for guidance. Although Ireland received a compilation of resources from the Science Department as some support when needed, she believed the mentorship and coaching to be insufficient and too indirect for her as a first-year teacher. “In my first position, I think (South Georgia’s) way of mentoring me was handing me a binder full of the pacing guides and all the curriculum stuff that they had,” Ireland related. However, ultimately Ireland felt the Science Department simply pronounced “here's all the stuff, go for it,” without being coupled with any mentorship as a first-year teacher to help her through managing students, curriculum, and instruction.

Aside from the UTeach program at the University of West Georgia, the next encounter Ireland had with solid supportive professionals while teaching occurred during

her 3rd year as a teacher at West Napa High School inside the Beckett County School District. Identical to one of Nathaniel's supportive professionals while teaching, the Science Department chair supported Ireland with assistance and guidance as a new teacher. In addition to the content support, Ireland noted,

My department chair had been really good since the beginning (at West Napa High School) with figuring out what my goals are. She knew I wanted to go into some sort of leadership role. My first year, she made me a PLC leader and helped me manage that. So, I could kind of get an idea of what it was like to be a leader, or have a leadership role in a school system. She's always been very mindful of where I'm at, what my goals are, and how she can help me with that. I've always thought that was great.

Because of the Science Department chair's willingness to support Ireland's professional goals, she had been enriched in her mentorship experiences, opposite from outside the Beckett County School District.

Regarding Ash, when identifying mentorship and coaching experiences as a first-year teacher at West Napa High School, he listed two of his co-teachers, with one being Ireland, as supportive professionals while teaching. Ash further explained, "my 2 co-teachers really helped me in classroom management, not so much on the special education side because they didn't know. But they were always there to listen or help guide me as much as they could." Additionally, Ash emphasized his wife, who taught inside the Beckett County School District, as a critical support for him to lean on at home. However, unfortunately, Ash mentioned not receiving support from his assigned school mentor coming from the Special Education Department, mostly due to time

conflicts and a lack of relationship. There was no connection between Ash and his assigned mentor.

In like manner, Yohanna received less than minimal mentorship as a first-year teacher from the Special Education Department or colleagues at Alexandria High School. Admittedly, Yohanna confessed to being embarrassed at Alexandria High School by the lack of supportive professionals from coworkers. Luckily, as Yohanna asserted, “my mom, she’s the executive director of special education, and also colleagues of hers, would help me with answering questions. They were supervisors for special education.” Additionally, Yohanna commented on her mother being a former teacher at Alexandria High School, so she became helpful with “how to navigate” the culture and climate of the school.

In summary, participants shared how mostly subject-area colleagues supported them as new teachers. Inside the Beckett County School District, the department chairs delivered some critical support to teachers, while responses showed the school administrators had little significance related to direct mentorship and coaching experiences. Moving forward, the next sub-section looks into the participants’ perceptions of high school departments inside the Beckett County School District.

Perceptions of High School Departments

Responses from the participants indicated more stable conditions within subject-area departments compared with the departmental state of affairs related to special education. As a matter of fact, special education teachers generally co-exist in multiple departments inside of high schools within K-12 public education. With Yohanna at Alexandria High School, she referred to the Special Education Department as being

“nuts.” Yohanna expressed major discrepancies between reality and the written expectations of the position’s description for being a special education teacher.

Furthermore, best practices, along with the federal and state policies taught inside university teacher programs, according to Yohanna, had not been depicted in the workplace at Alexandria High School. Yohanna testified to the conditions of being in the Special Education Department by explaining,

So, I think the Special Education Department was a ‘clusterfuck.’ There were just special education teachers moving in all different directions. We’re guided and mandated by the law, right? So, there's things that should be very clear, and duties that should be very clear that were not given to us. It was like we were paraprofessionals. It was just really weird.

Meanwhile, in the Mathematics Department, for Yohanna “it was like a dictatorship” because of the department chair. In Yohanna’s words, “I didn't really know what I was going to get myself into. I thought I was going in, doing my job, and helping us be lawful. But, to my surprise, I was not greeted with kindness.”

At West Napa High School, Ash reported similar perceptions as Yohanna, sharing his grave concerns about the Special Education Department. Ash criticized the lack of leadership inside the Special Education Department, along with portraying departmental members as highly-stressed and overworked mostly throughout the entire school year. However, different from Yohanna, in respect to a subject-area department, Ash spoke of science being “very welcoming” and “very supportive.” Ash answered what made the Science Department supportive by clarifying, “the chair checked in, reached out, and even had conversations with me.” In short, Ash confirmed encountering critical

challenges in the Special Education Department. Regardless, Ash represented his experiences in a subject-area department as pleasant and stable workplace conditions for him.

Nathaniel, Leroy, and Ireland gave similar perceptions of their subject-area departments inside the Beckett County School District. Ireland confirmed Ash's perception of the Science Department at the West Napa High School by affirming, "they were welcoming me into this family with them" when beginning employment inside the Beckett County School District. Additionally, Ireland disclosed, "the Science Department was willing to be proactive about being helpful to the new teachers... making sure we had everything we needed. It was a nice change." Ireland felt security in her position as a new teacher from a departmental level.

Also, similar to Ash, Ireland spoke highly of the chair's capabilities as a teacher leader through shaping the strong collaboration existing within the Science Department. In the same way, at Thomaston High School, Leroy characterized the Mathematics Department as "strong" because of the leadership being neither overbearing nor pushy. As Leroy noted, "the chair passed down information in a clear and concise manner," while doing her best to not be intrusive as much as possible.

Even though Leroy represented the mathematics department in positive terms, he shared criticism about departmental members by pointing out, they "may have lacked listening skills" when referring to teamwork, collaboration, and learning from one another. Similarly, Nathaniel referenced the Mathematics Department at Essex High School as "amazing" and "a good place for a new teacher." Unlike Leroy, Nathaniel offered no criticism about the Mathematics Department at Essex High School in terms of

working together by commenting, “I was lucky. Everybody was willing to share anything that they had: any technique, any resource.” From Nathaniel’s perspective, the chair managed day-to-day operations of the department, setting a departmental tone towards sharing with one another.

However, Yasmin offered a contrasting perception about the Mathematics Department at Essex High School. From Yasmin’s millennial and Black stance, she perceived the Mathematics Department as generally “White,” noticing “a lot of the teachers had some very close relationships with (one another) and behaved like a family. A bit of a dysfunctional family, but a family nonetheless.” Also, Yasmin characterized the Mathematics Department as being “very headstrong and set in their ways,” with a departmental motto, “if it is not broken, do not fix it.” Equally important, Yasmin felt this saying within the department “got in the way of effective communication,” ultimately hindering any form of innovation.

Furthermore, in some opposite and similar ways to Nathaniel’s perception about departmental leadership, Yasmin sensed the chair as being “micromanaging,” who was very involved in her first-year teaching experience. In general, since the beginning, Yasmin felt some disconnection with department members seemingly due to differences in generational cohort and race, which she believed filtered into the professional learning community aspect of her workplace conditions as well.

Given all these responses from participants, much of what they revealed spoke in some way about how their local system’s leadership set workplace conditions toward or away from favorable circumstances for them through its school-level chairs’ inability to manage departmental operations, norms, and expectations. While clearly special

education departments passed on painful workplace conditions to first-year teachers, the subject-area departments exhibited much more measures of common sense, with some improvements still necessary in its infrastructure. The fourth subsection delves deeper into high school departments by probing the participants' perceptions of professional learning communities inside the Beckett County School District.

Perceptions of Professional Learning Communities

Responses from the participants suggested mixed perceptions about professional learning communities in high school departments inside the Beckett County School District, which ranged from not understanding its concept to being a meaningless formality, with somewhere in this space accepting that collaborative meetings brought forth teamwork. For example, with Yasmin's perception of professional learning communities as a first-year teacher, she had no understanding of its concept. In the Algebra I professional learning community at Essex High School, Yasmin mentioned witnessing little to no collaboration. Instead, Yasmin discussed solely using one team member's instructional methods for meeting all of the students' needs in the entire course.

When looking back, Yasmin criticized the lack of team collaboration, which she coined as a "cookie cutter" approach not beneficial or appropriate for all students' learning styles, particularly children receiving special education and related services. Yasmin clarified,

One of the teachers in our PLC had a system and she had worked at the school for so long. So, it seemed like the system was working. It was kind of implied that we should all work with that working system, which is how I came to use the term

‘cookie cutter.’ (The understanding was) since we believed that this teacher’s system is effective, everyone should be on this teacher’s system, even if that requires a little extra work. So, the PLC was mainly based on that one teacher’s instructional methods.

Additionally, in the Algebra I professional learning community, Yasmin recalled the demographics as having five collaborative members, of which three were Black, including a special education teacher. Yet, Yasmin remembered the Algebra I professional learning community being run exclusively by White teachers because of the chair’s influence and direction.

Likewise, compared to Yasmin, Leroy shared some similar perceptions about professional learning communities, and further expanded how his collaborative team in geometry at Thomaston High School exhibited collective behaviors such as tense, rigid, uncompromising, useless, and at times, uncomfortable for him professionally. In general, Leroy characterized the geometry professional learning community as being “teacher politics,” which turned him off from any desire to participate in the collaborative meetings. “Before going into the meeting,” as Leroy detailed, “my (mentor) colleague and I would sit down and map out the unit for the direction we thought it should go in.”

Even though Leroy prepped for the geometry professional learning community regularly with his mentor colleague, the collaborative team never accepted ideas from him. Leroy clarified his perception of being in the geometry professional learning community by illustrating,

So, say unit one in geometry is transformations, and unit two is like similarities.

Instead of going into constructions or similarities at the unit one, I would go into

dilations, because dilation is another form of a transformation. Objects get bigger and get smaller. That's the similarity. While somebody else in the PLC may go and do constructions first. That doesn't make logical sense to me. I'd tell them where I was going, but why can't we follow where I'm going?

Participation in the geometry professional learning community seemed to hinder Leroy's agency towards being innovative and taking opportunities with his teaching abilities. Moreover, "issues would arise" within the collaborative meetings when Leroy believed he found a "better transition for (his) students" between units.

On the contrary, Ireland reported herself having an opposite perception of professional learning communities at West Napa High School. One feature Ireland discussed about the biology professional learning community responded to it being open toward different teaching styles, where team members did not force a particular lesson order. But rather, according to Ireland, "when we met, we did data dives. We would actually pull up past assessments, and talk." For instance, Ireland conveyed how the collaborative team would answer: "why did students miss these questions? How can we address this? What do we need to do next semester? What do we need to do to remediate?" Strategic planning appeared to be a priority after data collection and review in the biology professional learning community for Ireland.

Another key point Ireland asserted as a priority in the biology professional learning community was the sharing of resources. "We'd created a Google Drive," Ireland elaborated, "so that we're constantly dumping our lesson plans, the activities that we did, worksheets, and everything we used in our class for everyone to have the option to use the same resources." In the same way, Nathaniel witnessed the sharing of resources in

professional learning communities at Essex High School. With being a part of the precalculus and algebra II professional learning communities, Nathaniel expressed enjoyment in different styles of the collaborative teams, conveying how much he appreciated the space to make mistakes, discover his teaching style, and explore other colleagues' ideas and perspectives.

However, Nathaniel established a contrasting perception from Ireland about the professional learning communities at Essex High School. From Nathaniel's perception, "I really don't think we did anything other than talking (in professional learning communities). Every now and then we do a little bit of work. But mostly I've got more out of meeting individually (with colleagues)." Admittedly, Nathaniel confessed he would much rather receive team support from the professional learning communities one-on-one than during collaborative meetings. Similarly, Yohanna and Ash corroborated Nathaniel's perception of professional learning communities as being a formality. Furthermore, apart from the professional learning communities being a formal requirement, Yohanna and Ash communicated negative thoughts about collaborative meetings.

Being special education teachers, Ash and Yohanna perceived professional learning communities as an appearance of collaboration. In fact, Ash and Yohanna had no knowledge or grasp of professional learning communities as first-year teachers. At West Napa High School, Ash shared, "there were times of conflict between teachers that made things tense, because all the PLCs met in the same space. So, the biology team was next to us (environment science)." Furthermore, as Ash recounted, "then, one of their special education teachers was also in our PLC, and there was some conflict going on

with that PLC, which kind of bled over into ours...So, it was kinda a hot mess, honestly.” Ash indicated negative aspects of professional learning communities adversely impacted collaboration altogether in the Science Department.

Then, at Alexandria High School, Yohanna testified, “I wasn't invited to PLCs for collaborating. There were just meetings that when the department chair got upset, I'd get emails, and we'd have to meet with the administration.” Yohanna revealed not being allowed in to collaborate on planning, pacing, and other related aspects of instructional preparation. In time, Yohanna confessed her feelings by mentioning, “I felt like my [professional learning community] did not like me. I wasn't trying to outsmart them. But, I was just trying to get equal footing in their minds.” Although Yohanna and Ash faced separate experiences, they related to one another on not being offered collaborative environments inside professional learning communities as first-year teachers in special education.

In short, inside the Beckett County School District, perceptions of professional learning communities in high school departments, the participants held some conflicting impressions about collaborative meetings being supportive for them as new teachers. Not to mention, participants gave inconsistent accounts on what evidence-based models of professional learning communities ought to be in terms of active teacher development, curriculum programming, shared collective values and responsibilities, common goals and strategies, and other related features shaping a collegial inclusive learning environment. Next, the fifth subsection scrutinizes the relationship participants experienced with their mentors in the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District.

The Relationship with System Mentors

Responses from the participants declared the relationship with system mentors, who operated in the Division of Human Resources, as conclusively productive throughout their first-year teaching in the systemwide induction program. According to participants, the beginning relationships with their system mentors developed swiftly into a positive experience for them. Nathaniel confirmed, “my system mentor made me feel at home, because his warm personality just made me instantly feel comfortable.” Additionally, while Yohanna reportedly described the relationship with her system mentor as “good and positive,” she recalled how their connection established by detailing, “we met, we had introductions, and my system mentor was trying to get the ‘lay of the land’ (at Alexandria High School),” regarding the workplace dynamics, frequent coworkers, and teaching schedule.

To point out, similar to all the participants, even though Ash had no expectations on the relationship with his system mentor, he made clear, “when we met, it was definitely good..., especially as someone with no experience, I had an [experienced professional] to talk with.” In the beginning couple months of Ash and his system mentor’s relationship, he detailed how much their conversations touched on numerous topics centered around K-12 public education. Expressively, on the same note, Yasmin offered some insights into the conversations with her system mentor by adding, “I think at the beginning my system mentor was more so focused on me being a new teacher and adjusting to instruction and classroom management” with students.

From the beginning, Yasmin also mentioned how her system mentor’s role called for observation and not evaluation, which she thought was “a good change of pace” in

employee development. Comparatively, Ireland affirmed, “the first couple months of the relationship between me and my system mentor was very professional, very warm, and friendly.” Parallel to Yasmin, Ireland emphasized, “when my system mentor came into my classroom, I never felt like I was under a microscope.” As Ireland underscored, the relationship with her system mentor began as non-judgmental. Moreover, as with Nathaniel, Yohanna, Ash, and Yasmin, Ireland described the beginning interactions with her system mentor by saying,

It was [an experienced professional] looking into my school, and so it felt like I had a safe space to talk when I needed it, which was really handy. That was really great to get the support consistently throughout the school year. It really felt like someone had my back from someone who knew the county, because I didn't.

Coupled with instantly kind interactions in the beginning, Nathaniel spoke of his system mentor providing “valuable tools to use in the classroom” while, at the same time, being “very positive.” In Nathaniel’s words, “the value that my system mentor gave me was amazing” in the early development of their relationship.

Meanwhile, when Yohanna met with her system mentor, he also immediately supplied multiple useful resources such as a website full of notes, videos, and practice for support in curriculum and instructional development. Yohanna connected how her system mentor’s support resembled “previous work experiences” where she had an experienced professional “who helped me, and could pull from what he already had going on.” Then, with Yasmin, she recalled the “affirmations” from her system mentor, where he specifically confirmed at times the generational and racial dynamics at play in the workplace at Essex High School as a first-year teacher. Equally important, Nathaniel,

Yohanna, Yasmin, and Ash shared similar perspectives as Ireland about the results of classroom visits.

Ireland might have best illustrated how Nathaniel, Yohanna, Yasmin, and Ash felt after their system mentors' observational role. As Ireland explained, "after every visit, I got a really nice, very aesthetically-pleasing write up, with what he saw in my classroom and what he thought I was doing well." Ireland further commented, "it was all very supportive. Like I should do more of this, because it's going well. I liked that aspect, that it highlighted (my) strengths, so I could keep working on those strengths." Similar to Ash, Ireland reported her system mentor being much more helpful than critical in the beginning with navigating classroom management and instruction.

Unfortunately, for Leroy, he did not share any of the same relationship experiences in the beginning with his system mentor as Ireland, Ash, Yasmin, Yohanna, and Nathaniel. When Leroy initially described the relationship with his system mentor, he responded with "crickets (implying silence)" because of little to no memory from their short interaction. "I met with my system mentor once," Leroy remembered. "We met in an impromptu type meeting once at lunch in the teacher workroom. She was kind of like 'hey, how are you?' and I was like, 'who are you?'" Then, Leroy further detailed, "we talked as the food warmed up, and when the food got done, I was out."

Leroy clarified, prior to that conversation, "I was probably like I'm done teaching for the year, like this teaching thing is 'for the birds,'" implying not worth consideration. All things considered, from Leroy's recollection, his system mentor had one brief conversation with him. After the initial interaction, according to Leroy, his mentor did not follow back up with him about moving forward in the systemwide

induction program. In addition, Leroy did not receive any general information about expectations of being in the systemwide induction program. Records from the Division of Human Resources corroborated Leroy's claim of only having one brief conversations from his system mentor.

Again, toward the end of the systemwide induction program, because Leroy had no more interactions with his mentor, as he pointed out, "the relationship was nothing that started, so it was nothing that ended." Inopportune, Leroy had not been extended any supports by his mentor from the systemwide induction program, without explanation or being explicitly addressed about a switch in service from the Division of Human Resources or the school administrators at Thomaston High School. On the other hand, for Ash, Ireland, Nathaniel, Yasmin, and Yohanna, they discussed how the relationship with their system mentor continued to transition throughout the school year.

Fast-forwarding, as the school year transitioned into April and May, Ireland revealed the relationship with her system mentor developed more, and grew into an open, honest, safe, and reflective connection. Ireland commented, "I think by the end of the program, I think we were having a lot more honest talk. I was able to feel like I had more of a sounding board from an unbiased party." Nathaniel, Yohanna, Ash, and Yasmin agreed with Ireland with their system mentors being a sounding board for pushing ideas and building awareness about themselves as a professional.

To add, Nathaniel and Yohanna voiced heartbreak when realizing time with their system mentors would be coming to a close. Nathaniel asserted, "I felt a little disappointed because I enjoyed having my system mentor come in to see me... Our relationship turned into welcoming and exciting. So, I knew I was going to miss that." In

the same way, Yohanna disclosed, “I didn't really want it to end. I was like, ‘hey, where's my friend.’ But, it didn't feel like something I had to graduate from.” Because “we ended on great terms,” Yohanna added, “I still ask for help.” Whereas Ireland, Yohanna, and Nathaniel had a conventional ending to the school year with their system mentor, Yasmin and Ash abruptly transitioned into online mentorship and coaching services in the systemwide induction program.

“Well, when COVID hit,” as Ash detailed, “my mentor and I went virtual. I remember we all (other induction teachers) kind of jumped on the same Google Meets. It's still good. But, COVID changed everything.” Yasmin further explained, “around the time when we were dealing with the global COVID-19 pandemic, I think my system mentor still communicated effectively. We still kept in touch and reflected on my teaching experience with going through that transition to virtual learning.” Though, unlike Yasmin, Ash understandably realized how much he appreciated in-person mentorship and coaching meetings.

Because of mentorship and coaching being shifted onto an online platform, Ash's systemwide induction program experience became more group-oriented alongside other new teachers at West Napa High. Ash clarified, “going virtual did change the dynamic I felt like a little bit. Although it was good, being virtual is completely different from talking face-to-face, having that in-person interaction.” For Ash, “I think I liked meeting in-person better...because I just think meeting individually is more personal and personable.” However, Yasmin felt differently, noting “my system mentor helped me with my application process for grad school. So, we spent a lot of our time in those last

couple months communicating about what exactly was required for me to start a grad school program.”

Nevertheless, whether ending in a conventional manner or alongside the global COVID-19 pandemic as first-year teachers inside the Beckett County School District, Ash, Ireland, Nathaniel, Yasmin, and Yohanna concurred that they had a strong sense of trust with their system mentors. Nathaniel illustrated the strong sense of trust with his system mentor when he commented,

My system mentor taught me what I needed to know without letting me know that's what he was doing. That's pretty amazing. When you can teach a lesson without somebody knowing that you're actually teaching them a lesson, that's an art.

Because, as Ireland pointed out, “there was a lot more reflection in our meetings” towards the end of the school year, through conversational strategies, system mentors took opportunities with the participants to assess learning needs and implement multiple supports, without them knowing, in the way Nathaniel depicted.

Overall, in the systemwide induction program, Yasmin offered a characterization of how the relationship with her system mentor developed from beginning to end throughout the school year by reporting, “I would say in the beginning my system mentor was Ms. Roberts-focused versus in the end, he was Yasmin-focused.” Just as important, Yohanna supplemented Yasmin’s thoughts by asserting, “there was a huge gain of trust with my system mentor throughout the school year. So, I felt like I had an ally when I felt really isolated.” Equally important, Yohanna closed with, “it was good to know, as the year unfolded, I was with someone who I could trust.” Aside from Leroy, the sense of

trust and its advancement in the relationship supported active development within a safe, fault-free learning community for new teachers throughout the school year

Amid the beginning and ending of the systemwide induction program, participants offered additional descriptors important to point out about the relationship with their system mentors. With Ash, he highlighted his system mentor as “always being a good listener and easy to talk with,” who was “always willing to support and offer advice.” Correspondingly, Ireland confirmed Ash’s sentiments by expressing, “communication and support were the constant themes” with her system mentor as well. Alongside Ash and Ireland, Yohanna mentioned her system mentor had abilities to “disarm,” because of his “genuine,” “trustworthy,” “transparent,” and “positive” approaches.

While Nathaniel declared the relationship with his system mentor to be “rewarding” and “comforting,” Yasmin expanded on a reason why by explaining, “there's some sort of familiarity, and I knew that this person was a professional who's capable and actually cared about me and my success in the school system.” Likewise, with Nathaniel and Yasmin, Ash added, “I always knew I had a lifeline to reach out to my system mentor,” which offered him comfort as a first-year teacher. Furthermore, “just the overall warmth,” Ireland informed, “it created a situation where I was willing to learn (from my system mentor).” Yasmin summed up the thoughts of Nathaniel, Ash, and Ireland by indicating the constant, positive assurance from her system mentor, which reinforced conscious and appropriate decision making as a first-year teacher.

To this end, Yohanna concluded, “I never felt like I was having to prove myself, which was a breath of fresh air,” when having conversations with her system mentor.

Furthermore, regarding conversations, Ash viewed them with his system mentor as “very fluid and comfortable, ... a dialogue of us talking back and forth,” as Nathaniel connected how “smiling” from his system mentor was an irresistible feature in the conversational relationship, which made him “feel welcomed, at home, and comfortable.” Additionally, Nathaniel pointed out his system mentor as being “soft spoken.” To clarify, because Nathaniel had been used to his “previous mentors yelling,” being “loud,” and being argumentative, the “whole non-confrontational aspect” helped him feel at ease.

Finally, in the same way as Nathaniel, Yasmin identified “sense of humor” as a rapturing feature from her system mentor in the conversational relationship, which she believed to have yielded some “relief, release, and support... for the whole-self, as a teacher and individual.” Of equal importance, Ireland further explained another reason why she and her system mentor had “good” conversations by asserting, “my system mentor was knowledgeable, and as a teacher, it's always nice learning from [an experienced professional] who I felt had more knowledge in teaching than I do.” In fact, although Leroy had no relationship with his system mentor, he corroborated Ireland’s point of view by sharing, “if I had a system mentor I could talk to, that could give me advice” rather than “just checking off a box and not forming a relationship,” then mentorship and coaching would have been beneficial for him as well.

Another prominent feature participants considered in the relationship with their system mentors included the aspect of having presence from the Division of Human Resources from the central office in the local schools. From Yasmin’s perspective,

I think it was different having my system mentor come visit from the central office and state from the beginning that his intentions were to observe and not to

judge. So, it was a good difference to be observed, and know that it wouldn't jeopardize my job. It was affirming having an experienced professional who understood and at least empathized with my feelings and nervousness as a new teacher. And who could also notice, it's more than just being a new teacher. It's being new, a millennial, and a Black teacher at a school predominantly White, with a Gen X to Boomer faculty. So, it was nice having someone who understood all the nuances that came with being a first-year teacher at Essex High School.

Together with Yasmin, Yohanna attested to a similar sentiment by revealing, “it felt like, I knew my system mentor was in the building to be supportive, and it felt like he was there from human resources on my team. I didn't have that at Alexandria High School.” Comparatively, Yohanna and Yasmin manifested a perception of their system mentor breaking up workplace isolation.

In the same way, Ireland and Ash shared an equally important perspective concerning their system mentors being outsiders of the local schools inside the Beckett County School District. With Ash, he connected how “it was good to be able to talk with somebody outside my circle and outside my school.” Ash further admitted, “although my system mentor was a part of the district, he was [an experienced professional] that had an outside perspective, and we would talk through things.”

Ireland illustrated the way her system mentor lent outsider support as a first-year teacher at West Napa High, recounting, “I felt like my system mentor came to observe me a lot in my rough class. Being a viewer, he was never critical.” Ireland confessed, “I was being more critical of myself. I remembered having conversations like ‘this is horrible.’ And he’d be like ‘it’s not that bad. It’s really not as bad as you think it is. It’s

okay.” Because Ireland’s system mentor entered other local schools daily, he helped insert some perspective with the severity of what she encountered regarding student behavior inside her classroom. For Ireland, she believed the experience of having an outsider with a solid background in observing other local schools’ and classrooms’ operations inside the Beckett County School, delivered “affirming” thoughts for her in the first teaching year.

On another note, Nathaniel and Leroy relayed a caution about having central office personnel coming into their local schools. Even though Leroy met with his system mentor from the Division of Human Resources, he maintained, “I didn't know I was supposed to have a system mentor. So, I can't feel one way or any way about it. Because like I truly didn't know I was supposed to have one.” With the Division of Human Resources’ mission being “to provide excellence in service by taking a leadership role in ... retaining the best qualified people” and “promoting the concept: employees are the most valuable resource and will be treated as such,” Leroy conveyed he had not received such an experience from human resources inside the Beckett County School District.

In addition, Nathaniel shared some insights about an impression he had when first meeting his system mentor. “So, when I first met my system mentor, I was nervous,” Nathaniel recalled. “I was terrified of having someone from the central office come in to watch me teach...I was intimidated, and I was nervous.” However, Nathaniel confirmed Yohanna’s viewpoint, sharing, “my system mentor really made me feel at home with his warm personality which made me instantly feel comfortable.” Nathaniel might have best illustrated how his system mentor immediately disarmed him about being from the central office’s Division of Human Resources during their first meeting together.

For the most part, the participants represented having a system mentor coming from the central office as supportive in “work environments and school cultures for teaching and learning to take place.” Additionally, participants testified to their system mentors from the Division of Human Resources being helpful in “maintaining compliance in federal, state, school board, employment, and labor laws and policies” within the local schools inside the Beckett County School District. However, the presence of a central office employee regularly going into local schools must be offset with building strong relationships among school personnel.

Lastly, participants indicated some least beneficial aspects of the relationship with their system mentors. As Leroy revealed, the relationship with his system mentor could have been more beneficial, if this experienced professional had subject-area experience in mathematics. In Leroy’s words: “like being a math teacher has its own unique challenges that other content areas cannot fathom.” Since Leroy's system mentor did not have any experience related to mathematics instruction, this could have been a factor for him concerning some resistance in developing a mentorship and coaching relationship with her. Additionally, for the record, the induction team within the Division of Human Resources acquired a system mentor with strong background in secondary mathematics.

Ash and Yohanna echoed what Leroy pointed out about his system mentor not having expert background in a critical subject-area. However, Ash and Yohanna spoke about their system mentors not having expert background in special education. Candidly, Ash explained,

I think the least beneficial thing was my system mentor not having that special education experience, because there were a lot of things I didn't even know how

to do. Coming in without experience and not being in any university programs, I didn't even know what an IEP even meant, honestly. Although my system mentor was familiar with processes, and with the vernacular, the 'the details' of how to do certain things, he just never had to do it. So, he wasn't familiar with that part of it. My system mentor wasn't able to sit down with me and say, 'okay, you need this, this, and this on your IEP' or 'okay this is what you need to change, you need to word it this way.' Which was no fault of his own.

Therefore, Ash reinforced Leroy's perception about having a system mentor with expert background within critical areas. Leroy and Ash connected how some technical skills within critical areas inside K-12 public education can improve mentorship and coaching with them completing necessary and daily workplace activities.

On a similar note, Yohanna exposed weaknesses with her system mentor as well. "I just know that one time, when that kid laid down in my class, and he was talking to himself," as Yohanna detailed, "my system mentor was like, 'whoa.' But he got assigned to me. My system mentor didn't have any special education experience, so how could he have been prepared for a student who is autistic." As a matter of fact, the induction team within the Division of Human Resources had no system mentors with any experience pertaining to special education.

Given these points, Yohanna and Ash highlighted how their system mentors could not offer much hands-on support to them as special education teachers with completing paperwork and other related services concerning the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Altogether, Yohanna, Ash, and Leroy brought up their system mentors' shortfalls with not having background in some technical skills necessary for on-the-job

learning. The testimony from Ash, Leroy, and Yohanna on the least beneficial qualities about their system mentors documented some critically missed learning opportunities in mentorship and coaching.

In another case, Nathaniel and Yasmin confessed their system mentors did not interact with them enough. With Yasmin, she concluded, “there was limited meeting time. I think as a first-year teacher, there's almost this constant need for affirmations or just confirmation that I am doing some things correctly. So, maybe more frequent meetings would have helped.” Nathaniel confirmed Yasmin’s perception by commenting, “my system mentor didn’t come by enough, but I know he had others that needed him more than I did.” Nevertheless, Yasmin and Nathaniel craved more mentorship and coaching experiences from their system mentors.

At the same time, Ireland identified a less beneficial quality about her system mentor as well. From Ireland’s perspective, she desired more critiques from her system mentor in the areas of teaching. “I'm not always doing things perfectly,” Ireland admitted, “so, sometimes I probably did need to hear ‘hey, that wasn’t so great what you did there.’ Especially in those days when I was still figuring out classroom management a little then, too.” In contrast to the other participants, Ireland wished her system mentor had been more critical about aspects of extending instruction and classroom management.

To summarize, the participants enjoyed relationships with their system mentors embodying aspects of sensing “trust,” alongside elements between them related to being “genuine,” transparent,” and “positive.” Above all, from the participants, they used descriptions about their system mentors such as “innovative,” “fluid,” “driven,” “open-minded,” “objective,” “motivated,” “purposeful,” “creative,” and “growth mindset” to

explain qualities most beneficial in learning for them. However, on balance, the participants also uncovered some rationale about features to be watchful for in the relationship with their system mentors, which included having some understanding the nuances of mathematics instruction and background concerning technical activities within special education.

Moving forward, the sixth subsection detailed how participants made sense of the classroom and observation feedback from their system mentors, who worked inside the Division of Human Resources.

Classroom and Observational Feedback from System Mentors

Responses from the participants about classroom and observational feedback from system mentors specified a systematic procedure for them to receive valued assessments on aspects of classroom management and instruction from experienced professionals. First, Ash introduced how his system mentor began the systematic procedure by recalling, “I think my system mentor would just come into our classroom and observe,” oftentimes without being scheduled or a heads up about conducting observation.

“The first time my system mentor walked into the classroom, while I was teaching, I freaked out a little bit,” Nathaniel mentioned. On a positive note, as Yasmin clarified, after a while, “I was used to being observed in a way that was actually going to be beneficial to me as a teacher and that didn't feel so critical.” Ash, Nathaniel, Yasmin, Ireland, and Yohanna indicated how their system mentors would visit the local schools and classrooms without giving notice. Then, after each classroom visit, Ireland remarked how her system mentor would communicate classroom and instructional feedback either in-person, on stationary, or virtually.

Additionally, Ireland offered insights into the manner in which she received classroom and instructional feedback from her system mentor by noting, “the feedback was presented in chunks of information. It was very organized, visually appealing, and it didn’t feel overwhelming to look at.” Following Ireland’s perception on the presentation of feedback from her system mentor, Yohanna added, “I liked the feedback that I got from my system mentor because it was feedback without judgment. It felt like it was true help in ways that we could help students achieve a goal.” In sum, Ireland and Yohanna mentioned the value of classroom and instructional feedback from their system mentors.

In the same way as Yohanna and Ireland, Nathaniel further explained with more detail another approach of the classroom and observation feedback from his system mentor by revealing,

My system mentor gave instant feedback. He would leave notes when he didn't have time to stick around and talk. Or the times, when he came to the last part of my second period, he would stick around, and we would talk during my third period planning. My system mentor gave me that extra time by sticking around to have that conversation to give me that instant feedback directly. So, I was also able to ask questions, and that was awesome.

While Ireland and Yohanna spoke of classroom and instructional feedback as “virtual aids,” along with Nathaniel, they altogether remarked on the strong relationship with their system mentors, whether virtually or in-person, within the observation and feedback process.

Even though Leroy opened up about having no relationship with his system mentor, he confirmed the perspectives of Nathaniel, Yohanna, and Ireland by

acknowledging, “I got to get past if I could trust my system mentor enough to tell me some stuff that was seen, and then I can tell my system mentor what I saw and felt.” Leroy continued, “as long as that wall was up” his system mentor’s classroom and instructional feedback would have been useless. As Leroy brought up, “the moment I could feel trust from my system mentor, ‘Leroy’ would have come out, and ‘Leroy’ will let you know everything that he feels and sees.” No matter the value of classroom and instructional feedback, Leroy believed the relational aspect with his system mentor must be present.

Aside from Leroy, all the participants spoke about debriefing with their system mentors and in the processes associated with classroom and instructional feedback. For instance, Ash gave a depiction on how his system mentor debriefed with him after conducting classroom observations sharing, “my system mentor would have follow-ups with me, and we would talk through things that he saw and did not see.” Ireland emphasized “there were no one-sided conversations” with her system mentor, Nathaniel’s system mentor helped him “feel at ease” during the debriefing session. As Nathaniel added, “my system mentor helped me feel confident. And the more confidence that grew, the less nervous I got” in the process of receiving classroom and observational feedback throughout the school year.

Comparatively, Ash confirmed having a similar experience with his system mentor by revealing during follow-up discussion, “I could see his perspective on it. My system mentor was always very encouraging, even if I felt discouraged or if I felt like I wasn’t doing a good job. He was very affirmative.” Ireland and Nathaniel acknowledged “strategizing” as an approach their system mentors used when debriefing after conducting

classroom observations. From Ireland's perspective, "I think we really touched on strategy" in conversations. "Having a partner to bounce ideas off of and get constant feedback was really good." Ultimately, Ireland accepted an analogy of strategizing alongside her system mentor with being in "the War Room," because of the strategic planning they worked through together for improving classroom and instructional experiences.

Nathaniel explained how strategizing with his system mentor in the classroom and observational feedback process helped him as a new teacher by admitting, "it's just been a subconscious impact. We used to talk about particular student profiles and cases, how to deal with them, and what different things to try." Because of strategizing, Yasmin validated Nathaniel's accounts, where she voiced leveraging her system mentor's insights to "strategize the grouping" of students for improving the classroom instructional experience.

For Ireland in particular, strategizing with "my system mentor talked me 'off the ledge a couple of times'" because "I valued conversations after his observations. I liked being able to talk through the feedback, because then he gave me the opportunity to pick his brain. I felt like he always had good insights." In short, Nathaniel, Ireland, and Yasmin strongly indicated the debriefing about classroom and observational feedback with their system mentors helped them "hone in on individual students" to meet classroom needs.

Overall, the participants attached the process of classroom and observational feedback to trustful relationships with their system mentors. Testimony from the participants represented the classroom and observational feedback from system mentors

as a systematic procedure, which entailed coming into local schools to observe classrooms with or without notice, sharing valued commentary concerning their teaching abilities in-person, on stationary, and virtually, and following up with debriefing sessions together. Equally important to mention, the participants strongly suggested the classroom and observational feedback from system mentors manifested a learning community through a partnership between them, which bound leeway and keenness for pursuing strategic planning and improvements moving forward.

Accordingly, the next subsection detailed how participants made sense of the classroom and observation feedback from school administrators inside the Beckett County School District.

Classroom and Observational Feedback from School Administrators

Responses from the participants suggested neutral assessments about instructional teaching abilities in their classroom and observation feedback from school administrators. At West Napa High School, Ireland confessed, “I didn't see my evaluating administrator as my instructional leader.” Before coming inside the Beckett County School District, Ireland recalled the school administrators in South Georgia as being more proactive and involved with the observation and evaluation process, and that they conducted classroom and observations and gave feedback multiple times in addition to completing her state evaluations.

Accordingly, Ireland made clear, “I do think [the school administrator who evaluated me] in South Georgia did very well in quickly updating the state evaluation platform. He also sat down with me, and just kind of walked me through things, which was nice as a new teacher.” With Ireland, she believed, “it was just nice to have that

constant feedback (from a school administrator).” Additionally, Ireland recognized, “the school administrator who evaluated me didn't just do the mandatory evaluations. He checked in often, came in to do pop-in observations often, which was really beneficial as a new teacher.” However, Ireland admitted to not receiving any other classroom and observational feedback from school administrators at West Napa High besides the assessments placed in her state evaluations throughout the school year.

Correspondingly, when referencing the classroom and observational feedback from school administrators being solely in state evaluations inside the Beckett County School District, Ireland recounted,

When I looked at my evaluations, like there's really no ‘you need to work on this,’ ‘you need to work on that.’ It's like I can get threes and still need to work on things. And I don't feel like there's any conversation about that. It just felt like a generic checklist. Like we checked you off, you're good. I think it always seems like evaluators are more focused on the problem teachers than your average or golden teachers.”

As Ireland noted, “I felt like unless I’m doing a horrible job, it's just checking through threes and putting basic, minimal comments.” In other words, unfortunately, Ireland felt she had “no opportunity for growth” as a new teacher when reading the classroom and observational feedback from school administrators.

Then, Yohanna at Alexandria High School expanded on Ireland’s viewpoint about the classroom and observational feedback from school administrators being solely in state evaluations. “I feel like they are lazy,” Yohanna pointed out,

“not one of the school administrators gave me instructional advice. Not one of them gave me any suggestions for the classroom setup instruction. Not one of them has ever seen a test of mine. Not one has seen a lesson plan.”

Likewise, Yohanna corroborated Ireland’s perception about having “no opportunity for growth,” describing her classroom and observational feedback experience from school administrators as “checking off a box” for Georgia’s teacher evaluation system.

Meanwhile, at Essex High School, Nathaniel and Yasmin shared some related viewpoints about the classroom and observational feedback from the school administrators. For instance, while Nathaniel characterized his classroom and observational feedback from the school administrators as “odd,” Yasmin branded them “generic.” Yasmin further explained, “I don't think I've seen anything (in my evaluation) that provokes any sort of negative or positive emotions. It just looks more like paperwork.” Similarly, from Nathaniel’s standpoint, “I didn't get that instant feedback. I didn't get the note left down. I didn't get the conversation.” Yasmin and Nathaniel expressed no relational experiences with school administrators when receiving classroom and observational feedback.

Given these points, Nathaniel clarified, “the school administrators would come in, they made me really nervous, and then I had to wait (days) for my computer to light up to say that I got evaluation feedback. Like, oh, God.” But, admittedly for Yasmin, “I don't know why but I just can't picture the school administrators faces in my classroom. I think they were somewhat involved with department meetings, but I don't even remember us meeting at all individually.” Adding to the statements of Yasmin, Yohanna, and Ireland, Nathaniel established, “whereas with my system mentor I felt like I got immediate

feedback, school administrators really only gave me feedback through the evaluation platform, and it was mostly ratings.” Nathaniel substantiated Yohanna’s portrayal of school administrators with not offering any classroom and instructional feedback outside of formal evaluations.

Alongside Yohanna’s representation, back at West Napa High School, Ash asserted, “the school administrators were doing observations because they have to. I felt like they found evaluations as a burden, versus being something actually constructive and beneficial for us as teachers.” Because as Ash recognized, “to give me all two’s would put more work on the school administrators, so obviously, they’re not going to do that.” Ash concluded, “the feedback was very much generic, and the school administrators just put the feedback in there to say, they did the observation.” As a result, Ash could not think of an instance where he received classroom and instructional feedback from school administrators towards improvement as a new teacher, which corroborates the perceptions of Nathaniel, Yohanna, Ireland, and Yasmin.

Ultimately, for Ash, his mid-year conference as a first-year teacher with the school’s principal counted as the only instance of classroom and instructional feedback being supportive. But, as Ireland disclosed, “when I had my mid-year evaluation, it was not by myself. The school administrator did three teachers at the same time on a Google Meet.” Ireland further explained, “so, there wasn’t any one-on-one conversation about how I was feeling. As someone who craves feedback, that’s just sometimes hard for me.” Similar to Nathaniel, Ireland categorized the classroom and observational feedback from school administrators as a “bizarre” experience.

On another note, Leroy at Thomaston High School recounted a somewhat different experience regarding classroom and observational feedback from school administrators. Looking back at his experience in South Georgia as a first-year teacher, he stated, “I felt like the feedback was so negative from the school administrator. It seemed like every time she came in, I would freeze up because I was not used to having somebody observe me in the classroom.” Leroy continued, “nobody told me that evaluations were supposed to be a help-type thing.” In general, Leroy characterized himself as being discouraged with teaching due to the classroom and observational feedback from school administrators in South Georgia.

In contrast, when Leroy transferred to Thomaston High School inside the Beckett County School District, he explained a one-on-one experience with a school administrator related to classroom and observational feedback,

I felt like it was a mix between what I did right and what I did wrong. The school administrator who did my evaluations was kind of like ‘you’re better than what you’re given me, so suck it up.’ Like, ‘we’re going to give you a chance.’ But she was more like, ‘what was you going to do’?

Even though Leroy purported having a better experience with classroom and observational feedback from school administrators at Thomaston High School, he shared that he did not make any improvements with his teaching abilities based on the state teacher evaluation system.

Instead of helping Leroy improve from classroom and observational feedback, school administrators at Thomaston High School encouraged him “to go back to college.” As Leroy recalled, “I remember telling the principal at the same time, like, are you

committed to me for another year? If you are, I will go back to college.” Candidly, Leroy spoke about the “power struggle” with the principal at Thomaston High School due to “getting student loans for a profession” which did not pay enough and could not guarantee his own success.

For the most part, the participants illustrated less than minimal instructional support related to receiving classroom and observational feedback from school administrators inside the Beckett County School District. Every participant emphasized only receiving classroom and observational feedback from school administrators through the platform of Georgia’s teacher evaluation system, with 1 to 4 ratings, and some vague, blanket commentary about their teaching abilities. On the whole, all the participants spoke of no ongoing relationship, if any, throughout the classroom and observational feedback process from school administrators, comparative to their system mentors inside the Beckett County School District.

Changing gears, in the eighth subsection, the participants discussed the overall top supports from mentors in the systemwide induction program.

Top Supports from System Mentors

Responses from the participants revealed they secured a full range of services as top supports from mentors in the systemwide induction program. Yohanna and Yasmin highlighted a top support from their system mentors, where they emphasized provisions in curriculum and instructional assistance. For Yohanna at Alexandria High School, she pinpointed models in curriculum and instructional development as the highest support from her system mentor. “The lessons,” Yohanna asserted, “and the way my system mentor showed me how to break content down, the ordering of material that’s important

for kids, and showing me the connection between one thing to the next and how math grows” supported development.

In a manner similar to Yohanna, Yasmin at Essex High School believed a favorite support from her system mentor dealt with instructional support. Yasmin confirmed Yohanna’s perception of active development in “instructional strategy” from her system mentor as well. Additionally, Yasmin illustrated another way her system mentor provided critical hands-on instructional support as a first-year teacher. In Yasmin’s words,

I recall one specific day where luckily my system mentor came right during my planning period. I found out something went wrong with the lesson order from my PLC meeting, and there needed to be a sudden change. My system mentor helped me research some actual content for the lesson I was supposed to be doing. He helped me out with that and also helped me just stay level-headed with getting that together, and with not getting too frazzled. Especially because, even though I already had a full lesson prepared, my department head ended up checking it and tried to tell me that I was wrong because I didn’t have the “right” lesson together for the day. So, I felt unprepared.

As with Yasmin and Yohanna, Nathaniel at Essex High School substantiated how his system mentor provided him with instructional support by noting “it was a ticket out the door my system mentor got me to try after feedback. I still like to use that because I still want a quick assessment, and I don’t like to grade an entire homework set.”

Furthermore, Nathaniel added strategizing with his system mentor about aspects of managing the classroom as a top support for him. Ireland affirmed Nathaniel’s perception about strategizing with her system mentor, believing “strategic talks” in a

“safe space,” where she could be “open and honest ... was always helpful.” In agreement with Nathaniel and Ireland, even though Leroy at Thomaston High School voiced no supports from his system mentor, he still maintained a relationship in mentorship and coaching required elements of “friendship, leadership, and an accountability partner.” Altogether, a “conversationalist,” Leroy corroborated, offers a “relatable” aspect in mentorship and coaching, which enables the exchange of perspectives on “a variety of topics,” including strategic thinking.

Then, at West Napa High School, Ash and Ireland pointed to virtual aids as a top support from their system mentors. As Ash relayed, “I liked the newsletters that my system mentor used to do. It always had good information in it. I’d always read them. My system mentor usually had good articles and would put podcasts in them, too.” Ash furthered explained, “because my system mentor was resourcing. There were some good resources in the newsletters... which is something I remember that caught my eye.” Expressively, Ash revealed excitement with anticipating the newsletters coming in his email inbox regularly, which offered him some professional considerations to explore.

In addition, Ireland validated Ash’s recollection, “I did get my system mentor’s newsletters, and they were helpful, because he always linked good resources in there. I love that kind of stuff.” Along with the newsletters, Ireland also connected the classroom and observational feedback data forms from her system mentor as a virtual aid, because of chunking information and visually appealing aesthetics to facilitate readability. Ireland noted, “the virtual aids didn’t feel overwhelming to look at...I like that I could focus on different sections at a time.” In brief, aesthetics in organization and draw presented to be equally important as the content for Ireland.

Also, aligned with Ash and Ireland, Yohanna spoke about another type of virtual aid, which came to be a top support from her system mentor. For Yohanna, her system mentor's website supported instructional development. As Yohanna recalled, "my system mentor was helpful in instruction with his notes online. I remember us pulling that for my own instruction." The website being a virtual aid, according to Yohanna, functioned as an anytime, anyplace professional development for her as a first-year teacher in the classroom. With high school mathematics, Leroy firmly backed up Yohanna's sense of virtual aids in instruction as being important for a first-year teacher.

Lastly, aside from Leroy, all of the participants in some way concluded one-on-one meetings as a top support from their system mentors. In the one-on-one meetings, Ireland described provisions of "general support" from her system mentor. In like manner, Ash underscored the importance of debriefing with his system mentor by explaining,

I feel like my system mentor produced felt effects for me... It was productive in a sense that it helped me become a better teacher. It was always good to have somebody to bounce ideas off of or talk through different issues.

Because of the one-on-one meetings, Ash highlighted, "my system mentor helped me put my role as a special education teacher in perspective. We would talk about the root of the relationship with my co-teachers in co-teaching, and how to navigate that." On a related note, Nathaniel, Yasmin, Yohanna, and Ireland highlighted the "emotional support" provided in the one-on-one meetings by their system mentors as a top support as well.

Briefly, the participants discussed all-around services as top supports from their system mentors, ranging from emotional support to the development of curriculum,

instructional, and classroom practices. Also, the top supports from system mentors, considered by the participants, connected aspects of in-person and online approaches. Notable to mention, none of the participants specified teacher modeling as an instructional practice, where they saw an in-person demonstration of teaching strategies in the classroom, to be a top support from system mentors. In general, the participants implied enjoyment in choice within a full-range of learning opportunities from their system mentors.

Respectively, in the ninth subsection, the participants discussed the overall top supports from school administrators in the systemwide induction program.

Top Supports from School Administrators

Responses from the participants demonstrated some challenges in identifying top supports from school administrators related to their entry into K-12 public education. At Essex High School, Nathaniel and Yasmin indicated conflict in how to differentiate between loyalty for and support from school administrators. For example, Yasmin explained, “it was like I felt supported, but at the same time I didn’t.” Then, with Nathaniel, he mentioned, “I love my school administrators, but I really don’t feel like the school administrators played a role with who I am in the classroom.” While Yasmin and Nathaniel described school administrators in some positive terms, they specified nothing about teacher support in the classroom.

With this in mind, Nathaniel conveyed, “I had such great support staff outside of them, I didn’t need them.” Yasmin further added, “I think some support was specifically from my principal, who was kind of behind the scenes. I would hear from other people who may have spoken to him about me, say good things that my principal said about

me.” Whereas Nathaniel voiced inclusive supports from the Mathematics Department, Yasmin spoke about some sense of belief with receiving out of public view affirmations from the school principal, though there was “never a time where he would speak in-person” to her directly.

Meanwhile, Leroy at Thomaston High School shared some similar perceptions as Nathaniel about top supports from school administration by commenting, “they gave me two mentors” in the Mathematics Department. However, Leroy also considered another top support by adding, “the other one was really just taking the chance and renewing my contract for that second year, considering that first year was not smooth sailing.” As Leroy emphasized, “the fact that [the school administrators] gave me that second year to kind of prove myself, it was like, ‘oh, y'all believe in a brother.’ I can actually do this teaching thing.” For Leroy, he identified the powerful influence school administrators have in the school building as a top support.

Shifting to Alexandria High School, Yohanna portrayed a contrasting perspective than Nathaniel, Yasmin, and Leroy about top supports from school administrators. With Yohanna, she could not recall any top supports from school administrators which carried a positive quality. To be specific, Yohanna informed,

The school administrators incited spite...it kept me going. At some point it became predictable because once I figured out how they worked and what motivated them, which was saving their own butt and doing the least amount possible. But this still clashed with what is best for kids. So, we still had differences.

Of equal importance and similar to Nathaniel, Yohanna could not attribute any development as a top support from school administrators. From Yohanna's perspective, "the school administrators commended mediocrity when I was learning, so there really wasn't a high standard of achievement for me to attain" as a first-year teacher.

Lastly, Ash and Ireland at West Napa High School confirmed some perceptions of Yohanna, Nathaniel, and Yasmin related to top supports from school administrators. Likewise, with Nathaniel, but more similar to Yohanna, Ash confessed, "I will just be honest, I wasn't supported by the school administrators." Moreover, Ireland connected some with what Ash expressed, "I don't even think any of them really checked in on me." From Ash's perception, the school administrators were not visible for him to receive top supports as a first-year teacher. Furthermore, anytime Ash encountered school administrators, he became immediately "stressed out." because they generally came for completing mandatory state teacher evaluations.

Although this may be, Ireland asserted another key point, "I know the school administrators had always been really good at making sure we got any of the supplies we needed. Like I haven't wanted for anything while I have been at West Napa High School." Additionally, on the positive side, Ireland remarked, "the school administrators were also always quick to defend me. I've had instances where parents try to come back and tried to pull nonsense with me. They were quick to stand by my side, which was nice." From Ireland's perception, while the school administrators "might not be the best at giving feedback," they could be counted on "to help solve a problem" when seeking them out.

The participants spoke of the top supports from school administrators from a range between less than minimal to basic while being a first-year teacher in the systemwide induction program. Surprisingly, regardless of being ranked as the “instructional leaders” inside the Beckett County School District, none of the participants testified to any top supports from school administrators which improved their development in the classroom and instruction.

To further add, on a different note, the participants accepted top supports from school administrators to be executive administration functions such as employee contracts and directing provisions (i.e., coworker mentorship). Overall, the supports from school administrators manifested ambiguity as a whole across the high schools inside the Beckett County School District.

Looking into the next subsection, the participants delved into the mental supports from mentors in the systemwide induction program.

Mental Supports from System Mentors

Responses from the participants substantially backed up a critical necessity for mental supports from system mentors in the areas of cognition, emotional intelligence, and other psychological processes while being new teachers. To Leroy and Yasmin, mental supports remained a critical need as first-year teachers. For Yasmin, she needed the mental supports from her system mentor to acknowledge how she existed as not only a teacher, but also as a human being throughout the first year of teaching. Yasmin defined the manner in which she received mental supports from her system mentor by describing,

My system mentor supported me by speaking to me as a person and speaking to me as a teacher. We talked about life, and how that has an effect on everything

that goes on in the classroom. My system mentor helped me a lot with my grad school application process, like researching programs that I could be accepted into while teaching. He also took into account my abilities before we began the grad school process.

As noted, Yasmin felt her system mentor assessed what talents she possessed as a teacher and as a person to offer critical mental supports. Leroy confirmed Yasmin's sentiments, remarking "I should be able to call on this experienced professional for different things that I may need as a teacher or as a person." Clearly, Yasmin and Leroy desired professional and personal features in mental supports from their system mentors.

Broadly speaking, Leroy further illustrated, "if I have a bad day, I can call my system mentor and be like, 'alright, this is what's going on.' Because on days it's draining, we'll pour into each other to know we are in this together." To clarify, Leroy specified, "now I ain't saying I got to be like your kids' Godfather. But what I am saying is I want to be able to call you beyond being a teacher." Ultimately, Leroy desired mental supports from his system, where they can have conversations to get things "off (his) chest" from a teacher standpoint.

Ireland and Yohanna indicated their system mentors shaped a therapeutic community for them. As Yohanna confirmed, "my system mentor gave me emotional support, because I felt like it was honestly the hardest to navigate (at Alexandria High School)." Yohanna depicted the therapeutic community her system mentor brought as "a soft place to land" because of the "trust" between them and "working towards the same goals" together. Since Yohanna's system mentor "understood (her) everyday struggles,"

she received some necessary mental supports to aid her in navigating as a first-year teacher throughout the school year.

With Ireland, she validated Yohanna's perception by commenting, "my system mentor was kind of like my school therapist." Since Ireland's conversations with her system mentor remained confidential between them, she opened up with him about frustrations, challenges, and claimed to have some improvements in "emotional health" from the experience within the systemwide induction program. Accordingly, Ireland also affirmed, "it's always just nice as a teacher to feel like I'm not alone. I definitely felt like I wasn't alone, and I looked forward to my system mentor's visits." For Yohanna and Ireland, they connected the therapeutic community implemented by their system mentors with counseling support from a psychologist, which offered them opportunities to get out internal feelings on aspects of the workplace and their positions as new teachers.

Comparatively, Ash and Nathaniel shared similar thoughts about mental supports from their system mentors. Similar to Yohanna and Ireland, Ash confirmed his system mentor offered him conversations parallel with "counseling sessions." From Ash's perspective, he talked with his system mentor about "everything," because the conversations did not appear "one-sided." In the same way as Ash, Nathaniel expanded on what mental supports from his system mentor did for him as a first-year teacher by asserting,

The emotional, mental, and psychological supports I received dealt with my confidence and the loss of my anxiety, which I would attribute all to my system mentor. Because, I felt comfortable and confident in what I was doing was right, good, and sound in the classroom. My system mentor built my confidence up,

which caused my anxiety to go down. I had anxiety. Then, cognitively, my system mentor helped me think about different techniques to try, become more astute to what's going on in the classroom, and be more observant with various aspects of my students.

The “partnership” Ash and Nathaniel sensed with their system mentors empowered them to accept the mental supports. In fact, Nathaniel’s boost in confidence and loss of anxiety as mental supports from his system mentor substantiated Ash’s belief of the systemwide induction program producing “felt effects” as a first-year teacher.

Altogether, participants accounted for the mental supports from system mentors to embody qualities of cognitive, emotional, and psychological reinforcements. Even though each participant yielded different comforts and outputs for them related to the mental supports from system mentors, they all affirmed counseling in their mentorship and coaching as significantly important inside the workplace. Specifically, participants believed the mental supports from system mentors improved their emotional health, confidence, and understanding of professional-self.

Finally, in the last subsection, the participants delved into the mental supports from school administrators in the systemwide induction program.

Mental Supports from School Administrators

Responses from the participants revealed trivial mental supports from school administrators in the systemwide induction program. First off, Leroy sarcastically remarked, “emotional, mental, and cognitive, come on now,” when speaking about the mental supports from school administrators. Provided that, Ash placed Leroy’s thoughts into context by underscoring, “psychologically and emotionally, I don't think they ever

really supported us.” Even Yasmin added, “I didn't see a lot of supports from an emotional and psychological aspect.” Furthermore, with Ash, Leroy, and Yasmin introducing a shared perspective on mental supports from school administrators, Nathaniel agreed with them, and could not list any mental supports from school administrators as well.

Equally important as Nathaniel, Leroy, and Ash, Yohanna took the conversation related to mental supports from school administrators a step further by disclosing, “I hate to say it, but I was driven out of spite by the school administrators. If I am presented with a challenge, I will show up.” In addition, Yohanna reported how she felt the mental supports from school administrators came with them “throwing up roadblocks.” Ultimately, as Yohanna narrated, “I had to figure out how to hop over the roadblocks by getting creative and going around them.” Similar to Leroy, Yohanna sarcastically proclaimed, “that was always fun.” In some contrast to Ash, Leroy, and Nathaniel, for Yohanna, she detailed the mental supports from school administrators hindered her learning and advancement as a professional.

On the contrary, Ireland, along with Yasmin, Leroy, and Ash, mustered up the only mental supports from school administrators they could think of. From Ireland's recollection, she recalled, “the school administrator who evaluated me was very good at checking in just to make sure that I was okay.” For instance, Ireland detailed, “the school administrator was quick to help me out one time when I had almost 40 kids in my classroom, because I was about to lose my mind. She was quick to be like ‘we'll remove them right now.’” Also, Yasmin followed up with a similar retrospection as Ireland by

mentioning, “maybe being able to have a couple of candid conversations with one of the assistant principals” could demonstrate mental supports from school administrators.

Correspondingly, Ash noted, “I think maybe faculty meetings helped, I guess professionally, because in faculty meetings they would show us different AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) strategies and stuff like that... so I guess that was cognitive support.” Then, Leroy did bring up a psychological support by revealing, “that renewed contract probably kept me in education as a teacher. And that contract kept me in the realm of ‘I can teach,’ literally.” Regarding mental supports from school administrators, while Yasmin and Ireland included one-on-one accounts, Leroy and Ash hinted at more executive administration functions.

However, in general Ash’s perception best depicted the impression of Yohanna, when he said, “I don't feel like the school administrators were supportive at all.” Ash pointed out,

Literally, I don't even remember seeing the school administrators most of the time besides like when doing teacher evaluations here and there. They never came in and asked me how I was doing, or how I was adjusting to being a teacher, or anything like that. There's none of that.

Conclusively, Yohanna and Ash could not think of any mental supports from school administrators which improved their workplace experiences.

For the most part, the participants identified minor, if any, mental supports from school administrators, when compared to system mentors, who operated in the Division of Human Resources. While a faction of the participants disclosed not receiving any mental supports from school administrators at all, the others specified being gifted one-

on-one conversation to request assistance on some executive administration functions.

Though, as a whole, the participants demonstrated problems with verbalizing any connections of emotional, psychological, and cognitive actions with mental supports from school administrators.

In conclusion, the participants shared positive and areas of concerns about system mentors and school administrations related to the systemwide induction programs inside the Beckett County School District. Even though system mentors created a learning community predicated on intelligence, trust, partnership, honesty, kindness, sincerity, and counseling by mixing in-person and online approaches, there presented some concerns about them not having particular technical skills in special education and solid background related to the mathematical sciences. Additionally, whereas school administrators could easily complete executive administration functions, they modeled no instructional leadership neither in classroom and observational feedback, departments, nor professional learning communities due to their scarce employee contact in the workplace as supervisors. The last section explains in detail the practices extended from system mentors and school administrators through the systemwide induction program.

Findings from the Third Round of Interviews

Unique to K-12 education, induction aims to orient first-year teachers into both the general teaching profession and its self-governing local systems. Whereas induction policy at the central office level assumes independent responsibilities through provisions with being the educator of teachers, the leadership inside their local schools takes on the everyday trainer duty related to modeling universal best practices for what good teaching looks like. Thus, the principals and other school leaders function in part as teacher

educator from the tools and resources extended by state agencies and local systems, which speaks to the American exceptionalism of public-school education. The findings from the third round of interviews in this section investigates how study participants made sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District.

System New-Hire Orientation

Responses from the participants depicted the system new-hire orientation as a lengthy, arduous introduction into the Beckett County School District, with a full schedule of workshops and other activities. Nathaniel, Leroy, and Ireland participated in the system new-hire orientation in July of 2018. First, as a transfer into the Beckett County School District, Ireland recounted how she processed the system new-hire orientation by asserting,

The new-hire orientation was long. It was a process. I remembered feeling very much like it's more geared towards brand new teachers to the profession. So, that was interesting. I mean, there's good stuff in there. But it was a little overwhelming. Because then, it's a four-day event before pre-planning. I'd gone over stuff that brand-new teachers needed to know, not necessarily features for teachers in a school system needed to know.

Additionally, with Nathaniel having a “negative bias” before going, and Leroy feeling “the system new-hire orientation was just something to do and get done,” they both shared Ireland’s perception of the system new-hire orientation as well.

Next, Leroy explained, “the (system) new-hire orientation had different vendors there... like, insurance, [Georgia Association of Educators], [Professional Association of

Georgia Educators], and others. It kind of felt like they were there to give me free stuff to get my money.” Then, Nathaniel mentioned the system new-hire orientation had “workshops set up” throughout the four-day event, which as a “brand new teacher” without any schooling in the field of education and student-teacher experience rendered him clueless about what to choose from the available options.

For instance, Nathaniel expressed, “I went through and tried to do as many (workshops) as possible, because I didn’t know what it’s like to teach.” However, as Nathaniel pointed out, while “this should have been a really good thing for me, the workshops to me, almost confused me, because I’m sitting there going, ‘oh how does this apply to math?’ Some of the ideas were good, [but] I probably needed more math specific stuff.” Meanwhile, for Ireland and Leroy, they believed, “there were some good workshops, and some not so good workshops.” To be specific, Ireland and Leroy both considered the classroom management workshop to be helpful, But, other workshops such as “co-teaching” and “methods of teaching,” “weren’t a good experience” for Ireland and Leroy.

Later, Ireland reported, “we hopped on [buses]” as another activity in the system new-hire orientation. In addition, Leroy further explained the bus activity commenting, “so, the new-hires toured not necessarily all the individual schools, but drove by the high schools to kind of show where they were located.” For Nathaniel, during the bus activity, he revealed his inner-self saying, “get me off (this bus),” because he already “lived in the county... knew where everything was, and ... didn’t need to ride around and see it.” Moreover, Ireland, Leroy, and Nathaniel felt “the bus [activity] was also lengthy.” In any

case, at the end of the bus activity, Nathaniel recounted, “we stopped at West Napa High School” to hear the nationally-recognized acapella singing group in their courtyard.

Although Ireland believed the bus activity “was beneficial to a point... (because) it’s always good to see the areas your kids were coming from,” Leroy, Nathaniel, and her shared the perspective of not needing “to sit on the bus for a couple hours.” Thereafter, the last major activity discussed by Ireland, Nathaniel, and Leroy was the presentation of the central office and school administrators in the venue’s auditorium. After the local system’s administrators including the system mentors introduced themselves on the stage, Nathaniel, Ireland, and Leroy remembered “the superintendent [speaking]” to the new-hires as well.

From Leroy’s perspective, “it was my first time that I could remember seeing a Black man as the superintendent of schools. Being from Georgia, I wouldn’t ever have guessed that would happen.” Moreover, Ireland disclosed, “I had a pretty good sense and opinion of the superintendent” when first meeting him. However, at the same time, Leroy and Ireland changed their position about the superintendent after the system leader’s speech. Ireland revealed, “hearing [the superintendent] speak at the new-hire orientation felt very scattered. I think sometimes he lost track of what he was supposed to be talking about.” Additionally, Leroy underscored Ireland’s viewpoint by mentioning, “I was like, ‘oh he’s Black.’ like oh wow I’m listening to what he’s saying. But in actuality, that’s a story for another day.” Ireland and Leroy indicated that they did not get good first impressions from the superintendent.

In general, Nathaniel, Ireland, and Leroy presented some critical feedback about the system new-hire orientation. With Nathaniel, he reinforced, “we spent too much time

there. I felt like I got more from Essex High School than I did from that new-hire orientation through the school system.” Equally important, Leroy added, “I wouldn’t say the system new-hire orientation was something where I met new teachers and was able to establish a miniscule relationship with them.” Lastly, Ireland indicated, “I felt Beckett County could pare the system new-hire orientation down.” Overall, regarding the system new-hire orientation, Ireland, Leroy, and Nathaniel ultimately believed that building relationships should have been a priority, information needed to be concise and relevant, and more time spent inside their local schools called for consideration.

On the contrary, Ash, Yohanna, and Yasmin had no experience attending any system new-hire orientation. Because Yohanna, Ash, and Yasmin were hired “late...in the middle of the year,” they “missed the system new-hire orientation.” For Yohanna, she was “just told to show up the next day” to her assigned workplace after being hired. Ash further explained his feelings about being a late new-hire by stating,

So, I was hired late and did not go through a system new-hire orientation. There’s no orientation that I went through when I was hired. It was basically coming off with no teaching experience whatsoever. West Napa High School said, ‘you got the job,’ after they interviewed me. I did the necessary pre-work background check. Then, they put me in a classroom.

For the most part, “looking back” on a “pretty chaotic” experience, Yohanna and Ash felt “unprepared” and “thrown ‘into the fire’” as late new-hires. Ash and Yohanna heavily relied on school personnel to support them once they started their first day of employment.

Likewise, because of being a Beckett County School District employee as a long-term substitute, when Yasmin became a full-time teacher in November of 2019, she had “no experience from a system new-hire orientation.” As Yasmin detailed, “I had an unconventional start, because I was already teaching classes of students, starting in August, but just as a long-term substitute.” Just as important, “the school administrators (at Essex High School) had even said I wouldn't be going to the (system) new-hire orientation, because I got hired as a long-term substitute in the middle of July, like a little bit before pre-planning.” Different from Ash and Yohanna, Yasmin had been a part of the Beckett County School District for more than a year in a substitute position.

Accordingly, Ash, Yasmin, and Yasmin presented some critical feedback about not attending a system new-hire orientation as well. From the perspective of Ash, Yasmin, and Yohanna, they felt there should have been a system new-hire orientation for them once beginning as first-year teachers. Ash best explained how Yohanna felt as well by noting, “looking back, I wished there was some sort of (system) new-hire orientation. Some sort of prep would have been good...(because) I had no formal training on teaching at all.” In addition, Yohanna considered school personnel as being insufficient with understanding how to properly navigate the Beckett County School District.

In summary, with the three participants who began employment on time, while the system new-hire orientation had various activities about understanding the Beckett County School District, they mentioned wanting the event to be shorter, add content regarding classroom best practices in mathematics, and allow more time inside the local schools. On the other hand, another three participants, who began employment after the school year started, spoke of challenges beginning as a first-year teacher inside the local

school due to not being a part of a system new-hire orientation. With this in mind, the system new-hire orientation, whether attended or not, served as the first major impression of how the Beckett County School District made decisions about their fiscal and human resources. Similarly, in the next subsection, the participants explained the qualities about their school building induction they experienced throughout the school year.

School Building Induction

Responses from the participants revealed the local high schools inside the Beckett County School District implemented new teacher programs to some extent. At Essex High School, Yasmin and Nathaniel outlined the new teacher program between 2018-2020. Regarding the 2018-2019 school year, Nathaniel gave a depiction of Essex High School's building induction by explaining,

The new teacher program met once a month to discuss things that were useful. Then, we would turn around and get the same information in department meetings, too. So, we were getting it twice. Which for me, that was good. I'd never taught before so hearing it a second time was beneficial for me and I got food in the morning so that was good.

Nathaniel understandably characterized the new teacher program as “informational,” with the “school administrators also being present and involved.” Important to realize, Nathaniel connected that having the school administrators involved in the new teacher program helped him “develop relationships” with the principal and assistant principals.

Then, during the 2019-2020 school year, Yasmin declared, “the new teacher program was a nice way to kind of build rapport with other teachers and learn that my experiences were not exclusive to me.” However, according to Yasmin, because of

becoming an official full-time teacher in November 2019, she did not get “matched to a mentor teacher.” Therefore, Yasmin believed she “would have probably benefited with having a teacher in mathematics that could have helped on the teaching side of things.” Additionally, Yasmin felt having a mentor teacher at Essex High School from the Mathematics Department would have been “more beneficial on the social aspect” of the workplace.

Different from Nathaniel, Yasmin characterized the new teacher program as “group therapy” and a safe place to talk about “growing pains” in her first teaching year. To add, Nathaniel spoke of having multiple mentor teachers in the Mathematics Department. But Yasmin disclosed having no mentor teachers in the Mathematics Department. Nevertheless, Nathaniel and Yasmin shared the same accounts of the new teacher program at Essex High School with having monthly morning meetings and involvement from the school administrators.

Meanwhile, at Thomaston High School, from what Leroy could recall, the most beneficial quality about the school building induction involved seeing other new teachers on occasion throughout the school year. In Leroy words, “the new teacher program was kinda like a check-in and to see how things were going type thing with the building mentor.” Leroy further explained, “the new teacher program’s morning meetings might have been 15 minutes at most,” where “new teachers to the profession” met as a “whole group.” However, for Leroy, he “felt like the new teacher program was a waste of time... because there was hardly any math specific content or resources or strategies provided.” After reflecting, Leroy wished the new teacher program offered more learning

opportunities to hear about his coworkers' struggles and socialize with other department teachers at the morning meetings.

At the same time, Yohanna at Alexandria High School recalled no new teacher program for her to be a part of as a first-year teacher. As Yohanna reported, "For new people? Nope (there were no school induction workshops). I was just out there doing what I thought I should do." From Yohanna's perspective,

I think the school administrators may have relied on the master's program that I was going through which, like, had no correlation. Nobody knew what classes I was taking. So, maybe they just assumed that these things were taught in graduate school.

Consequently, "so, since I wasn't breaking any rules and I hadn't been given any expectations," Yohanna highlighted, "I felt like I was just doing my job." On the whole, Yohanna concluded the school administrators took a "reactive" approach to her acclimation into Alexandria High School.

Throughout the school year, Yohanna found out "on the back end," she "rubbed (some) teachers the wrong way and did something that wasn't the status quo," which ultimately upset her coworkers. "Yeah, I had a two-hour meeting with a school administrator and my department chair," as Yohanna recounted. "In hindsight, I believed that was all directed from teachers that I made mad." For this reason, Yohanna gathered, "whatever the direction of the systemwide induction program was thrown out the window. There were unwritten expectations and culture that was allowed and perpetuated throughout the school building." As a result, Yohanna conveyed disappointment with how the central office allowed such a culture to carry on at Alexandria High School.

Lastly, at West Napa High School, Ash and Ireland outlined the new teacher program between 2018-2020. Regarding the 2018-2019 school year, Ireland remembered completing a school-based orientation directly after the system new-hire orientation. According to Ireland, the orientation at the school, led by the building mentor, presented school-sponsored strategies. In addition, Ireland pointed out, “we did a school scavenger hunt, where we had to learn all these facts about West Napa High School. We worked with our mentor teacher on the scavenger hunt.” which she considered “fun” to complete.

Next, when discussing the school building induction process, Ireland remarked, “I think the building mentor did a great job doing the new teacher program throughout the year because she would have monthly meetings with us as a check-in.” Ireland further described, “we would come to her, she’d bring snacks, and we would check-in with her to see how things were going, what was working well, what we were struggling with, and what we needed help with?” After the building mentor completed check-ins with the new teachers at West Napa High School, Ireland noted, “she would always introduce new strategies” which could be helpful in their classrooms to try.

In addition to the monthly meetings, Ireland discussed another feature of the new teacher program by pointing out, “[the building mentor] gave us all (school-based) mentors we could be comfortable with.” Ireland indicated a strong connection with her mentor teacher, because she had a coworker to check-in with, who could “help,” “listen,” and “understand,” when feeling “overwhelmed” about workplace issues. Conversely, Ash had some different experiences with the new teacher program.

For example, instead of monthly meetings, Ash recalled the new teacher program had “quarterly meetings.” Also, while West Napa High School assigned Ash a mentor teacher, he asserted his colleague “wasn’t really mentoring” him, causing a “void” with his acclimation into the teaching profession, the local system, and the school. In any case, Ash characterized the new teacher program meetings as a “hangout type socialization,” which he believed carried some “value.” Overall, Ash considered the new teacher program as not beneficial, finding the services from his mentor in the systemwide induction program invaluable.

On the whole, the participants described varying degrees of school building induction activities, ranging between not any to major involvement from the school leadership inside the Beckett County School District. Even though one high school reportedly had no new teacher program, the rest of the high schools developed some services in their new teacher programs for most participants. Altogether, the participants reinforced the new teacher programs at their local schools extended services more on socialization, and less about system-sponsored teaching strategies and subject-area learning. Furthermore, concerning the school building induction in the local schools, the participants discussed no known data collection, oversight measures, and evaluation from the central office level to understand the content and the level of participation for improving future experiences.

The third subsection delves deeper into the participants’ perceptions about the systemwide induction program in respect to the role of school administrators.

Role of School Administrators in the Systemwide Induction Program

Responses from the participants signaled the role of school administrators in the systemwide induction program as limited. From Ash's perception, he did not believe "the school administrators necessarily had an active role" in the systemwide induction program. Ash further clarified by commenting, none of them "checked on me or anything like that." Likewise, Ireland expressed, "no school administrator talked to me about the (systemwide) induction program" as a new teacher inside the Beckett County School District. Similar to Ireland and Ash, Yasmin confirmed, "I don't feel like the school administrators didn't play much of a role" in the systemwide induction program.

Nathaniel shared his viewpoint about the role of school administrators in the systemwide induction program mentioning, "they were more behind the scenes. They were guiding other teachers to make sure the job got done." In like manner as Nathaniel, Yasmin asserted, "I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing that the school administrators weren't super involved" in the systemwide induction program.

However, Leroy underscored a reason why the role of school administrators was important to the systemwide induction program by remarking, "the school administrators made the new teacher program mandatory, but I don't think there was any follow-up to make sure new teachers were going or what conversations were happening in the meetings." Leroy connected how vital the influence of school administrators can be in the workplace.

Some more instances regarding the role of school administrators in the systemwide induction program were provided by Ireland, Ash, and Nathaniel. First, Ash cited how the school administrators allowed him "access in the building and classroom"

as a first-year teacher to complete employee duties on the weekends. Next, Nathaniel recalled “the school administrators would present information at the new teacher program meetings monthly,” which helped to strengthen the relationships between him and the principal and assistant principals. Also, Ireland highlighted, “I think the only school administrator that was really invested in how the new teachers were doing in our classrooms was an assistant principal who was in charge of evaluating all of us.”

Another key point about the role of school administrators in the systemwide induction program referred to their relationship with system mentors from the central office. Markedly, Nathaniel voiced, “I knew that my system mentor talked to the principal (multiple times throughout the school year). But at the time I didn't really realize that.” Similar to Nathaniel, Ash confirmed, “my system mentor collaborated with the principal” in one-on-one meetings throughout the school year. Notably, as Yasmin illuminated,

The principal and my system mentor were independent of each other, which was nice for me when it came to maybe certain issues I was having with like the school climate or something like that. It was nice to know that's not going straight back to the school, because that would have been quite embarrassing. I think it was beneficial that the school administrators and my system mentor were independent of each other.

Similar to Yasmin, Ireland revealed, “it was not a hidden secret... My system mentor was very transparent about discussions he had with the principal.” Generally speaking, Nathaniel, Ireland, Ash, and Yasmin stressed the role of the school administrators as collaborators with the system mentor in the systemwide induction program.

In contrast, Leroy reported no collaboration “whatsoever” between his system mentor and the school administrators. Moreover, although Yohanna acknowledged her system mentor met with the principal and assistant principals and functioned independently, she depicted the role of the school administrators as counter to the direction of the systemwide induction program. Yohanna described the role of school administrators in the systemwide induction program as “hiring new teachers,” then, having “one-on-one, two-on-one, or three-on-one meetings with new-hires, scaring them, and exhausting them into leaving or just going with the culture.” Overall, Yohanna and Leroy found no substantial collaboration between their system mentors and the school administrators which improved induction services for them.

To sum up, the participants represented the role of school administrators as narrow, yet collaborative with system mentors in the systemwide induction program. The majority of the participants believed the school administrators played a backstage role by directing and managing resources such as teacher leaders in the local schools in favor of the systemwide induction program. Additionally, the relationship between school administrators and system mentors was understood as independent of each other, with neither having authority over the other. On balance, as a matter of fact, while the school administrators had full authority inside local schools, the system mentors inherently possessed positional authority as central office personnel coming from the Division of Human Resources. Accordingly, the fourth subsection analyzes the independent work of the system mentors by explaining their instructional support from the systemwide induction program.

Instructional Support from System Mentors

Responses from the participants indicated their system mentors broke down feedback in a digestible manner for them to follow. Yohanna detailed how her system mentor segmented aspects of the observation comments into smaller organized chunks. In Yohanna's words, "I really liked how everything was laid out: the communication with the students, it's time stamped, the commentary, the action, and the responses, all included here in the feedback to model what happened in real-life." At the end of the feedback, Yohanna recognized the overall comments provided her a perspective to consider, ultimately asking her thoughts on ways some other teaching practices could be implemented in the future.

For Leroy, he acknowledged the feedback being "fairly simple and easy to follow." Leroy depicted the feedback as "formal," with "visual observations of what was seen" inside the classroom. Also, from Leroy's perspective,

the feedback showed student actions. So, I'm like 'okay, cool.' Now I have something to converse about based off of [data] that was mentioned from the observation. So now I could defend myself, or ask for what I could have done better.

Furthermore, Leroy added, "the feedback showed exactly when (events) happened" by attaching the times to student and teacher behavior. In short, Leroy believed the observational notes would give him and his system mentor a starting point for conversation around specific contexts.

Similar to Yohanna and Leroy, Ireland mentioned, "the feedback was segmented and broken up." However, slightly different from Leroy, Ireland represented the feedback

as “a mix of informal and formal elements.” To clarify, Ireland explained, “my system mentor’s [data collection] on what I was teaching was very formal, and the writing was very formal.” But, Ireland asserted, “when I got the overall comments, I thought there’s a little bit more personal aspects in there, a little less formal.” For these reasons, Ireland concluded the feedback was “professionally done,” “very-well-constructed,” and “thorough,” which reinforced the depiction of her system mentor being clearly “present, engaged, and paying attention,” while offering instructional support.

Likewise, Ash also recognized the feedback from his system mentor as being broken down into smaller chunks of information. Subsequent to the presentation of segmented data, Ash understood the overall comments to emphasize major features and actions within classroom observations. Regarding instructional support, Ash revealed,

I liked the format. I think it was good the way my system mentor broke down the [feedback] content, and had overall comments to kind of recap everything. He gave encouraging feedback and noted some things that we did well when co-teaching together.

Ash further reflected that he was able to envision the classroom from the depiction his system mentor gave observational feedback. In addition, Ash noted how his system mentor’s feedback provided him with an outlook on the co-taught practices implemented inside the classroom environment.

Then, Yasmin echoed similar sentiments as Yohanna, Leroy, Ireland and Ash about the instructional support. Yasmin expanded more on how her system mentor gave classroom and observational feedback by noting, “this setup of the feedback reminded me of my graduate school program. So, I do like that the feedback referenced I think our

lesson plans with how it's [structured]." Additionally, Yasmin specified with more details about the structure of the classroom and observational feedback pointing out, "the feedback had teacher actions, student actions, and teacher reactions to what students were saying and how students were reacting to the lesson." According to Yasmin, she received "helpful" instructional support from her system mentor because of the "data" provided in the classroom and observational feedback.

Nathaniel delved deeper into some other aspects of the feedback from his system mentor. From Nathaniel's perspective, "my system mentor communicated feedback with me by first laying out what happened in the classroom within the focus areas and how they were addressed." Next, Nathaniel detailed, "my system mentor placed an 'X' to let me know that the focus area was accomplished and handled properly." At the end of feedback, Nathaniel shared, "my system mentor provided some overall comments based off of the observation: what he liked and how it worked with the classroom." Overall, Nathaniel underlined how the instructional support gave him "feedback to do activities again" because of his system mentor's positive assessments on them.

Responses from the participants highlighted descriptors of the instructional support from their system mentors. While Nathaniel specified the instructional support from his system mentor provided him "instant acknowledgement" and an "instant boost," Leroy agreed by stating, "positive feedback... that was overly important for me" as a new teacher. Of equal importance, Ireland admitted, the feedback was "written in a very positive way. While it's very thorough, like it's very positive overall. Even my system mentor's suggestions were phrased in question forms. I liked that." From the perspectives

of Ireland, Leroy, and Nathaniel, they saw positive feedback as important in instructional support.

Another key descriptor about the instructional support dealt with the positionality of the system mentors. To begin with, Yohanna asserted, “the feedback felt neutral, and it was accurate” from her system mentor. Yasmin further clarified about her system mentor’s instructional support by mentioning, “I think the classroom and observational feedback was objective. It's about what happened. What’s being observed.” Furthermore, Yohanna shared more thoughts about her system mentor’s instructional support explaining, “I think the feedback gave a depiction of what's going on in my classroom, backed by research.” To sum up the perspective of Yohanna and Yasmin, Ireland asserted the instructional support from her system mentor emerged as “a very unbiased viewpoint,” ultimately trusting the feedback because it was “very factual” overall.

The last major descriptor about the instructional feedback considered the type of data collected from the system mentors. As Ash pointed out, the instructional support by his system mentor came from “just raw information...observational type data” for him “to go back and look at digitally.” Yasmin added to Ash’s perspective about instructional support from her system mentor remarking, “the feedback had a reflective aspect. Like, I could read these and relate them to specific events or specific feelings, while also looking at them from a professional or more objective standpoint.” Moreover, Yasmin further explained,

It’s helpful as a new teacher being able to see my lesson mapped out and how students reacted to it. That’s helpful for me in future years with maybe teaching that same particular lesson or with teaching a similar lesson, reading back on the

data and seeing how my students were with the lesson. Then, figuring out okay, what could be best practices for the next time that lesson comes.

With this in mind, Ireland confirmed, “I would have a very clear picture of what I was doing in my classroom. I think it's kind of refreshing to see data” in instructional support from her system mentor. On the whole, Ash, Yasmin, and Ireland hinted at how instructional support from their system mentors began the process of reflection for them.

Lastly, responses from the participants uncovered various outcomes as a product of the instructional support from their system mentors. According to Yohanna, because “this was the only time and still the only time where true teaching strategies have been discussed when it comes to professional development as a teacher,” she asserted, “I feel like coaching from my system mentor really helped me with breaking content down for students” as an outcome of instructional support.

On a different note, Ash and Ireland spoke about the instructional feedback from their system mentors as multi-perspective relating to classroom behaviors and practices. With Ash, he recalled “I could see my system mentor’s perspective in the feedback. And then I could see it from my vantage point too.” Additionally, Ireland confirmed, “when I read feedback, I could see it through my system mentor’s eyes. When I read through the [overall comments], I got a very clear picture of what he saw in my classroom.” To further clarify, Ireland continued, “I felt like my system mentor gave feedback on what I might have not even known I did or not been completely aware of myself when teaching,” as a part of the instructional support.

Because Yasmin had no teaching experience, she illustrated how instructional support became a teaching tool from her system mentor to learn more about educational

terminology. Regarding classroom and observational feedback, Yasmin recalled, “I think when I read feedback, I could see okay, like representations, the conceptual discovery that happened. Like okay, that was having the students put an equation into the calculator and just see what happens with the graph.” Then, Yasmin gave another example adding, “and with independent practice, linking that to a specific event. Like okay, that was me saying, ‘you guys y'all take some time and complete this number by yourselves, and we'll check on it together afterwards.’” Yasmin found reading feedback as “helpful” when linked to the names of strategies she used in the classroom.

As for Leroy and Nathaniel, they enjoyed instructional feedback which increased positive internal feelings for them. From Nathaniel’s perspective, he mentioned, “the feedback from my system mentor helped to build up my confidence in what I was doing was sound and effective.” In addition, Nathaniel mentioned, “the feedback helped to instill confidence in me” as instructional support from his system mentor. Moreover, while “a positive connection” showed to be important for Leroy, he also pointed out, “I think the feedback could have added some of the points of growth. It's very positive feedback. But showing and telling an adult in a respectful way areas to grow would also be more beneficial” as well.

Given these points, the participants described how their system mentors gave them instructional support after carrying a neutral stance, collecting data on behaviors and practices, communicating assessments about teaching strategies, and confirming some effects from classroom and observational feedback. Equally important regarding instructional support, the system mentors formulated classroom and observational feedback by fragmenting data, organizing content, and constructing analysis for the

participants to easily comprehend and accept. While some criticism emerged about desiring instructional support which tracks the participants' areas of growth, the classroom and observational feedback evoked reflective thoughts about their recent teaching practices and behaviors. In the fifth subsection, the participants illustrate how their system mentors guided them through reflective exercises.

Reflection with System Mentors

Responses from the participants narrated how their system mentors gave them time, space, exercises, and counsel as they contemplated issues concerning the workplace, classroom, students, and teaching practices. In Ash's words, "I remembered how my system mentor guided me through reflection. It was very conversational." Additionally, after asking questions, Ash revealed his system mentor let him "talk" while his system mentor "listened." Furthermore, Ash included how he felt the conversations between him and his system mentor did not feel "high-stakes," but rather "very relaxed" during the reflective process.

As Ash pointed out how his system mentor guided him through reflective exercises using conversational strategies, he also specified, "we were able to go through reflection together by analyzing data, and looking at different feedback and other aspects of the classroom." Ash connected the way his system mentor worked in a "collaborative" manner with him. Along with "active listening" skills, Ash remarked about how his system mentor directed "reflection (on) who I was, what my goals were, and my strengths" as a first-year teacher. In short, Ash expressed feeling relaxed and safe through reflective exercises with his system mentor because of the "partnership" they shared throughout the process.

From Nathaniel's recollection on completing reflection exercises with his system mentor, he described them as conversations about aspects of the classroom experience such as teaching instruction, student demographics, and other related information. To further clarify on the reflection exercises, Nathaniel explained,

I knew that we would talk about how [events] went in the classroom. Sometimes we would reflect on how specific students were doing and there were different ranges of students. The reflections (with my system mentor) pushed me to find a way to reach or to engage different students with different backgrounds and different struggles.

According to Nathaniel, the act of reflection with his system mentor functioned to build awareness about previous classroom events, and initiate plans for adjusting students' experiences.

To add, Nathaniel highlighted, "the reflections made me stop and think and helped me develop [healthy] relationships with my kids." Nathaniel spoke of the reflection exercises as "intentional" from his system mentors to "build (him) into a more effective teacher." As Nathaniel pointed out, "reflections made me intentionally think about my classroom, and it was intentional in making me improve." Overall, Nathaniel felt his system mentor had a purpose with the reflective exercises he went through as a first-year teacher by focusing on classroom events, teaching practices, and student behavior.

With the reflection exercises, from Yohanna's perspective, she described the conversational process as "collaboration" and "partnership" with her system mentor. Yohanna confirmed, "I remember going through reflection activities together (with my

system mentor). We just talked through the activities. They were timely.” Furthermore, to expand on Nathaniel’s thoughts about reflective exercises, Yohanna asserted, “everything always felt really transparent with our relationship. I really valued honesty, transparency, and professionalism.” Moreover, looking back on reflection, Yohanna noted how she found herself professionally in the reflective exercises by piecing together “accurate” representations from some data with her system mentor.

For these reasons, Yohanna depicted her system mentor in reflection using conversational strategy from a “non-judgmental” stance, where she grew to express some professional qualities about herself. According to Yohanna, not only did “the reflections summarized my whole experiences,” but also, “the reflective activities kind of gave suggestions about how to push forward” by setting goals. Unfortunately, Yohanna confessed the areas to concentrate her learning remained the same in general because of the lack of coaching after her first-year teaching.

In respect to reflection with Ireland, she substantiated much of the testimony of Ash, Nathaniel, and Yohanna detailing how her system mentor provided guidance through reflective exercises. From Ireland’s recollection, she revealed, “oh Lord, I think my system mentor had to guide me a lot in reflection because I hate talking about myself. He would ask me questions about myself and I would just stare at him.” Ireland recalled feeling “very unsure” about herself, and “didn’t have a clue” with how to answer questions when asked from her system mentor.

Because Ireland had reflection challenges, she acknowledged her system mentor possessed plenty of patience throughout reflective exercises for supporting some major struggles to reflect on herself. As Ireland explained, “I think my system mentor was very

patient with me because I'm sure there were some days when we reflected, and it was like pulling teeth trying to get me to talk about myself.” However, then Ireland pointed out, “I think it was nice to sit down and do reflection activities with him, even though I was very unsure of myself still as a teacher.” Even though Ireland spoke of “a struggle... to reflect” on herself with her system mentor, she believed the reflective exercises “did such a good job” with “confidence building” and “offering suggestions” to grow professionally.

Then, Yasmin also remembered being guided by her system mentor through reflection activities. Yasmin disclosed how her system mentor used conversational strategies in reflective exercises by explaining, “we’d reference specific experiences. And I know how I was sometimes, I would just kind of give the ‘what,’ and not the ‘why.’” As a result, Yasmin recalled, “so, my system mentor brought the ‘why’ out of me by asking, ‘okay, what did this word come from? Where does that feeling come from? He kind of asked me to explain a little more and elaborate.” Yasmin made clear the way her system mentor used questioning approaches to conjure emotions and moods about previous events which occurred in the workplace.

Also, the reflections offered Yasmin more opportunities to understand her own teacher personality by unpacking some past moods she underwent as a first-year teacher. From Yasmin’s perspective, she remembered her system mentor “asking (reflective) questions about descriptive characteristics” about herself professionally. Afterwards, Yasmin referenced “goal setting” as the ending part of the reflective process to advance herself professionally with her system mentor.

Finally, Leroy shared some of his perspective on reflective exercises asserting, “instead of ‘[my system mentor’s] here. Oh, my gosh,’ I would rather have a heads up that she’s coming... That would lead to some, in my opinion, positive conversations.” In any case, Leroy affirmed the importance of reflection as a way to be a better teacher. Leroy further explained,

Reflections would actually help [me] objectively look at (myself), and then bounce ideas off with [my system mentor] from what was observed because I don't always know what goes on in my class... Reflections were more (of) a data science... from what was observed before from my classroom.

As Leroy depicted, alongside a system mentor, reflection can work best to improve his teaching experiences. Leroy in addition to Nathaniel, Yohanna, Ash, Ireland, and Yasmin believed “improvement” emerged as a “common theme” throughout the reflective process.

Overall, the participants understood reflection as an “informal” back-and-forth dialogue, where their system mentors asked questions and followed-up with more discussion to have them expand on previous events, behaviors, and a frame of mind concerning students, themselves, and other school personnel. Although active listening came up from the participants’ testimony as a critical skill used by their system mentors, they also indicated being guided through a reflection cycle in reflective exercises ending with some resolutions to progress themselves professionally. In brief, reflection with system mentors granted the participants numerous opportunities to comprehend what occurred, examine data collected, consider perspectives from others, and promote action steps for positive change.

Moving forward, the next subsection explains the various virtual aids by system mentors to support professional development provided from the systemwide induction program.

Virtual Aids from the Systemwide Induction Program

Responses from the participants revealed how virtual aids from the systemwide induction program employed multi-level marketing strategies to extend anytime, anywhere professional development. To begin with, Leroy highlighted the way “virtual aids” provided “information” on aspects of teaching such as “different games and [activities]” to use in the classroom. Additionally, while Ireland agreed with Leroy by describing virtual aids as “very informational,” she also pointed out, “there's plenty of overlapping data and research and tech that any subject can use” professionally.

Of equal importance, Ireland enjoyed the way virtual aids from the systemwide induction program delivered to her “what’s new in education” through various “newsletters” as products. From Yasmin’s perspective, she portrayed virtual aids as building a learning community declaring,

The newsletters were an editorial version of a safe space. I think it's more open in terms of other new teachers being involved. It kind of brought out perspectives.

Like okay, I'm not the only new teacher, and there were other new teachers dealing with the same experiences. So, being able to see other new teachers' opinions and them sharing their experiences and their concerns.

Moreover, Ireland and Yasmin appreciated virtual aids being about “new information” by system mentors who did the “digging” for them. Yasmin and Ireland indicated benefits

with being sent quality content, without thinking about how to find and synthesize the information.

The flagship virtual aid named *The Chronicle* from the systemwide induction program was the first newsletter that participants brought up. *The Chronicle* served as a bi-weekly induction report for staying updated on local system strategies, being informed about recent studies, and learning from others who have made a difference.

For Nathaniel, he described *The Chronicle* as a newsletter which “immediately grabbed (his) attention.” Also, Yohanna offered a representation of *The Chronicle* by noting the newsletter “had a wide range of topics and useful information, whether that's the links or the suggestions for practice.” Meanwhile, as Nathaniel thought of *The Chronicle* as being “insightful,” Ireland expanded on Yohanna’s description by disclosing how this newsletter had a “research section,” a “technology portion,” a “favorite teaching moment (on a new teacher),” and “even more research” to consider reading.

The Chronicle, from the perspectives of Yohanna, Ireland, and Nathaniel, represented a virtual aid “with a purpose” of communicating authentic content for support in being a local system employee and an American public-school teacher. Yohanna confirmed, “I liked that *The Chronicle* had real-life experiences.” Additionally, Nathaniel affirmed, “*The Chronicle* talked about technology support and learning... devoted to real situations.” Furthermore, Nathaniel explained the virtual aid “made me think about how we understand [technology] as informational, computational, and communicative devices, and not something that thinks for you. So, it would take me back to my days at

Georgia Tech.” In addition, Ireland admitted, “there’s a lot of good information to digest” as a lifelong learner.

Another virtual aid, namely *The Pedagogy Brief*, was mentioned as a second newsletter pushed out from the systemwide induction program. In *The Pedagogy Brief*, this bi-weekly periodical devoted content towards teaching practices which could support new teachers in shaping a student-centered, interactive classroom.

Similar to *The Chronicle*, Yasmin explained *The Pedagogy Brief* as being “multi-perspective,” because she saw “the same question being answered in a lot of different ways and coming from different approaches.” Yasmin further noted, “I saw some (answers) coming from more of an academic standpoint, while some others coming from an emotional more human stance. That's interesting to see” as a new teacher.

Distinctively, Yasmin also found *The Pedagogy Brief* to be “balanced” because of the knowledge she “gained” from the newsletter which helped her “professionally and personally.” In addition, Yasmin believed *The Pedagogy Brief* “not only helped with teaching students,” but the newsletter also helped how she “could speak to and with coworkers, working in an environment that is changing.” Yasmin revealed, “the information was helpful when it came to speaking to adults” about aspects of the classroom in K-12 public education as a new teacher.

At the same time, *Webout Wednesdays* was a third virtual aid from the systemwide induction program, pushing out a considerable amount of online content for new teachers to select their own learning interests involving instruction, curriculum, classroom management, multiculturalism, and other information related to K-12 public

education. For *Webout Wednesdays*, the weekly design sought to deliver options in virtual learning from various internet sources.

From Ash's perspective, he alluded to the innovative way *Webout Wednesdays* sent out information to him as a first-year teacher. Ash affirmed, "I think *Webout Wednesdays* was creative, because of how it sent out helpful information." To further explain, Ash clarified, "*Webout Wednesdays* was a way to differentiate helpful information through podcasts, videos, reading, and news learning." Overall, Ash referenced a utilitarian approach in *Webout Wednesdays*, which connected significant amounts of information to the greatest number of newest teachers inside the Beckett County School District.

Equally important, Ash spelled out, "all these (resources) were great, because not every teacher liked watching videos. Not every teacher liked podcasts, like I do. So, that was a great way to connect information to the most teachers" in a way they would enjoy digesting content. In general, Ash saw *Webout Wednesdays* this virtual aid as "here's some information you might find useful" as an American public-school teacher.

Lastly, important to mention, responses from the participants offered suggestions to improve the virtual aids from the systemwide induction program. Even though the participants described the virtual aids as "beautiful," "organized," "informative," and "chunking (of information)" which "allowed (them) to learn at (their) own pace" and "see some ideas and examples of what other new teachers were doing in the classroom," some of them also shared some critiques to consider as well.

Understandably for Yohanna, she brought up not wanting to waste time with reading information she found "unnecessary." Regarding the content, Yohanna described

the virtual aids at times as being “forced,” highlighting that some information seemed inapplicable and outside her professional learning needs. Yohanna detailed reasoning about only reading information applicable to her area in special education as a new teacher commenting,

Some of the information seemed forced, like kindergarten registration, for example. That wouldn’t apply to me. Another security measure in our school system. I mean, that’s great but not applicable to what I’m doing in the classroom.

Nathaniel and Leroy agreed with Yohanna’s sentiments on the content. While Leroy stated the virtual aids such as *The Chronicle* were “a lot to read” and looked “busy,” Nathaniel confirmed by adding, “I was not reading everything because some of that was not my ‘cup of tea’” Nathaniel, Yohanna, and Leroy suggested the need to gather more information for understanding their learning needs.

Altogether, the participants disclosed the system mentors’ efforts to generate some online professional development by using engaging strategies such as storytelling, community building, choice in learning, resources, mixtures of digital media, and branding. Even though the participants thought the products of classroom and observational feedback and reflection exhibited elements in being virtual aids as well, the newsletters focused on featuring content about broad topics related to the Beckett County School District and K-12 public education. In other words, the virtual aids functioned as a way for system mentors to distribute educational in-house periodicals targeted towards new teachers based on their local system’s interests and needs.

Broadly speaking, the last subsection examines the forms of public communication on the systemwide induction program from the Beckett County School

District, which played a role in helping the participants comprehend and manage expectations as a new teacher.

Public Communication about the Systemwide Induction Program

Responses from the participants portrayed the public communication about the systemwide induction program as being solely in-person through their system mentors. At Essex High School and West Napa High School, Yasmin, Nathaniel, Ireland, and Ash, shared similar experiences regarding the public communication about the systemwide induction program from 2018 to 2020.

Different from Ash, Ireland recalled, “the building mentor let me know we would get a system mentor, and what that would look like.” However, similar to Ash, Ireland detailed how the public communication about the systemwide induction program came to her explaining,

I got an initial email from [my system mentor] introducing himself and stating what the purpose of the induction program was and what it was going to look like. I think that was the only communication to me. So, I got a snapshot of what was going to happen and what the program would look like.

Then, after the initial email, Ash illustrated the first in-person visit from his system mentor by recalling, “My system mentor was like, ‘hey, I’m your system mentor. I was like ‘cool, let’s do this!’ So, through my system mentor, and us forming our relationship, the expectations were communicated” about the systemwide induction program.

Ultimately, as Ash pointed out, with “the communication between my system mentor and myself, (I understood) he represented the systemwide induction program and the central office of the Beckett County School District.” Ireland confirmed Ash’s

perspective remarking, “I kind of thought it was nice that my system mentor was the contact point, and I wasn’t getting notifications from (other central office employees) that I’d never spoken to... Because as far as most of the information about the induction program, it came from my system mentor.” Therefore, Ireland and Ash believed even though “there wasn’t a (systemwide induction program) website,” they did not mind “the personal touch” and “the more direct methods of contact” from their system mentors.

Back at Essex High School, Nathaniel agreed with Ireland and Ash by noting, “I mean, really the only communication I remember (about the systemwide induction program) ... was through my system mentor.” Nathaniel also added, “the Assistant Director of Human Resources discussed being in the graduate program” and the process for obtaining his state teacher licensure. But, as Nathaniel remembered, “outside of the assistant director and my system mentor, I didn’t have a whole lot of communication through the school system” about the expectations of the systemwide induction program.

Comparable to Ash’s experience, although Yasmin started late as a new teacher in November of 2019 and “hadn’t heard anything about [the systemwide induction program] before,” once becoming a (provisionally) certified employee, she remembered, “that’s around the time that my system mentor came around. That was the first bit of communication I got.” Otherwise, Yasmin substantiated the recollections of Nathaniel, Ireland, and Ash stating, “I can’t think of any public communication from the school system about the induction program” inside the Beckett County School District.

Likewise, at Alexandria High School, Yohanna could not remember any public communication published by the Beckett County School District about the systemwide induction program, except from her system mentor. In Yohanna’s words, “I don’t feel like

there was any public communication” about the systemwide induction program. Though, Yohanna thought of “like newsletters (communiques) that [the Beckett County School District] sent out (to all employees) with a new teacher this or just a new teacher blah blah blah” to her email inbox. Otherwise, Yohanna voiced, “I don't think there's anything that sticks out in my mind” about expectations about being in the systemwide induction program.

Records collected from 2018 to 2020 inside the Beckett County School District corroborated Yohanna’s assertion. The Communications Department at the central office pushed out newsletters to all stakeholders in the Beckett County School District on relevant information pertaining to the local system’s work. From 2018-2020, data collected included at least seven newsletters sent to all stakeholders concerning new teachers inside the Beckett County School District.

The first newsletter mentioning new teachers came out on August 3, 2018, with the superintendent discussing the 270 teacher employees who participated in the system new-hire orientation. The second newsletter on August 17, 2018 featured the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy discussing the system new-hire orientation. Not until August 23, 2019 did a third newsletter come out about new teachers, with this communique featuring two new teachers and a brief spread about the system new-hire orientation.

A fourth newsletter three months later published an announcement about a grant from the U.S. Department of Education being awarded to the Beckett County School District for developing new teachers in collaboration with a local state university. In January of 2020, a similar newsletter came out about more information on the system’s

collaboration with a local state university. On April 17, 2020, a sixth newsletter was sent about a new teacher, who participated in systemwide induction program from 2018-2019, being voted as “Best High School Teacher” by the local county newspaper. Lastly, the May 2020 newsletter highlighted a letter by the superintendent, where he touched on “brand new teachers” having to endure an unusual school year due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

On balance, Leroy at Thomaston High School affirmed, “outside of the system new-hire orientation, where the central office mentioned that new teachers were going to have a system mentor, I don't remember hearing much about it at all.” But, different from Yohanna, Yasmin, Nathaniel, Ireland and Ash, Leroy expressed receiving no form of public communication, even from his system mentor, to help him comprehend and manage expectations as a new teacher. Also, Leroy criticized the systemwide induction program for being a useless experience for him, and further argued,

Overall, it seemed like the central office heard that some system somewhere was doing an induction program, and felt like they needed to do it to help retain new teachers. But they didn't know really what it looked like, or felt like in our instance... for it to be successful.

Because Leroy only had one experience with his system mentor, from his perspective, the systemwide induction program “seemed like it was one of those ideas that the central office thought was a good idea. But the central office didn't know how to execute it” to be effective.

Overall, the participants acknowledged that most to all of the public communication about the systemwide induction program came from one-on-one social

interactions with their system mentors. For the most part, aside from one case, every participant appreciated individual assistance from their system mentors to comprehend and manage expectations as a new teacher in the systemwide induction program. Critical to mention, testimony from the participants revealed no other forms of public communication about the systemwide induction program occurred from 2018-2020, even though the Beckett County School District referenced “new teachers” a few times in the system’s communiques. In general, the participants depicted their system mentors as agents of the central office, who covertly operated in the local schools to implement policy concerning the systemwide induction policy.

In conclusion, the participants made sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School System by explaining the key processes involved with the system new-hire orientation, school building induction, and the roles of school administrators and system mentors. Given that the system new-hire orientation and the school building induction had different purposes and activities, each of these events aimed to position the participants for success as new teachers in the local system.

Chapter Summary

The findings extensively followed participants with diverse representations of personal and professional backgrounds and experiences who experienced the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District. For this case study, the participants spoke at great length about the local system and school supports they received, the types of coaching and mentorship they found beneficial, and the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program.

In the first round of interviews, the participants gave explicit details about their motivations for becoming K-12 school teachers, instructional experiences before teaching, first-year and second-year teaching assignments, and motivations to come back into teaching in Beckett County. Findings from the first round of interviews indicated the participants being called into the profession because of their care for children.

In the second round of interviews, the participants widely explained experiences with their coaching and mentorship before teaching, supportive professionals while teaching, perceptions of high school departments and professional learning communities, relationship with system mentors, and classroom and observational feedback and other types of critical supports from school administrators and system mentors. Findings from the second round of interviews divulged the exclusive and serious work of system mentors from the Division of Human Resources, when compared to school administrators.

In the third round of interviews, the participants assessed in clear terms the processes related to the systemwide induction program such as system new-hire orientation, school building induction, role of school administrators, instructional support and reflection with system mentors, virtual aids, and public communication. Finding from the third round of interviews explained useful practices from the Division of Human Resources to retain and supervise new teacher development in the local system inside the Beckett County School District.

Chapter 6 identifies common themes drawn from the analysis of the data presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THEMES

Evident from present-day research, the state of affairs in K-12 public education related to workplace conditions (Simon & Johnson, 2015), poor administration, and mentorship (Miller & Youngs, 2021) for new teachers entering America's teaching profession needs urgent transformation. Even though the Georgia Department of Education (2017) adopted a strong philosophy respecting the induction processes of new teachers, public-school systems across the United States vary considerably on key policy elements dedicated to funding, standards, and other program provisions.

Now, alongside the “deleterious and long-term effects” of the global COVID-19 outbreak, a significant hardship remains for local school systems to retain as many new teachers as possible (Zepeda & Lanoue, 2021). Furthermore, because American K-12 public education has not seen much improvement in decades, there have been calls for state policymakers to issue reliable guidance aimed at improving teacher retention (Gamborg et al., 2018). Yet, since policy meets practice at the system and site levels, more research emphasis needs to be situated in local contexts for studying how inherent workplace conditions operate with systemwide induction programs.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District (pseudonym). The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e.,

observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

The overarching question is how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experiences do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program?

This chapter includes themes emerging from the findings. Accordingly, the themes and analysis presented in the following sections relate to the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the theoretical perspectives.

Theoretical Perspectives

In this case study, the findings embodied elements of storytelling to uncover internal conditions existing at local high schools inside the Beckett County School District concerning the induction processes for first-year teachers. Throughout the 2021-2022 school year, data collection from multiple sources established a chain of evidence.

The interpretative and conceptual frameworks of this case study drew from social constructivism and sensemaking perspectives. Given this study investigated how first-year teachers made sense of their induction experiences, social constructivism and

sensemaking guided data analysis as a strategic, reflective process, where relevant narratives framed a coherent storyline for communicating resourceful information. As a result, this thematic analysis illustrated the induction experiences of new teachers over time to account for the general happenings within an institution.

Briefly, the findings of this study disclosed in Chapter 5 came from data primarily generated through the three rounds of interviews. A systematic coding process was used to complete within-case and cross-case analyses after data collection. The coding employed an open-coding strategy that stayed close to the content to generate categories through an overall point-of-view, guided by the research questions. Thus, themes emerged from the data connected to each research question. See Table 6.1 for a summary of the emergent themes connected to the research questions.

Table 6.1

Summary of Themes Connected to Research Questions

Research Questions	Themes
How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?	Theme 1: Presence from the Division of Human Resources Recognize First-Year Teachers Theme 2: Departmental Leadership Shape Workplace Conditions
What types of coaching and mentorship experiences do these first-year teachers find beneficial?	Theme 3: The Special Relationship Offset Power Dynamics Between System Mentor and First-Year Teachers
How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program?	Theme 4: System Mentors Contribute Independent, Versatile Guidance

The next sections present an analysis of each thematic finding aligned with the research questions of the study.

Research Question 1

In light of the primary determinant associated with improving teacher retention being administrative support, two-thirds of teachers reported leaving K-12 public education due to dissatisfaction with their school administration (Tran & Smith, 2020). Of equal importance, the workplace conditions new teachers endure inside public-schools have been shown to depend a great deal on their own knowledge and skill set for professional success (Bjork et al., 2019). Therefore, the central office of local systems and its school administrators shape the success of new teachers, and for this reason they strongly influence any prospect to continue in the K-12 teaching profession (Kraft et al., 2016).

With the first research question, the investigation sought how first-year teachers inside the Beckett County School District described the supports affecting their decision to stay or leave teaching. The data analysis indicated first-year teachers found supports related to developing relationships with the central office of the local system and school personnel as decisive factors for them being retained inside their high schools. In essence, the first two themes describe the concurrent supports from the presence of the Division of Human Resources and departmental leadership inside the local high schools that recognized and shaped the workplace conditions for first-year teachers.

THEME 1: Presence from the Division of Human Resources Recognize First-Year Teachers

The presence from the Division of Human Resources recognized first-year teachers in the local schools by collaborating with school administrators concerning new teacher retention, development, and growth. School administrators and system mentors had no authority over the other. Moreover, school administrators and system mentors functioned independently, yet collaboratively with each other in the local schools. Under the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy, the system mentors performed duties and responsibilities with implementing policies concerning the systemwide induction program to combat the persistently high teacher turnover inside the Beckett County School District.

Ash confirmed his system mentor “collaborated with the principal” in multiple one-on-one meetings for discussing employee matters related to him throughout the school year. Nathaniel, Yohanna, and Yasmin also acknowledged their system mentors “talked to the principal” and other school administrators multiple times throughout the school year about employee matters related to them as well at the local high schools. Ireland further revealed, “it was not a hidden secret... My system mentor was very transparent about discussions he had with the principal.” Leroy was the only participant to report no knowledge of collaboration between his system mentor and the school administrators about employee matters related to him.

Whereas system mentors coming from the Division of Human Resources inherently possessed positional authority with policy oversight, school administrators had full authority inside the local schools, even though holding a narrow role concerning the

systemwide induction program. On balance, system mentors collaborated with school administrators continuously throughout the school year to acknowledge newly hired employee needs in development and growth. Additionally, the collaborative relationship between school administrators and system mentors enabled transparency and open lines of communication on behalf of first-year teachers to inquire about employee matters related to the workplace.

Secondly, because system mentors circulated around the Beckett County School District, their presence broke up building isolation in the local schools. Along with offering an outside point-of-view, the ongoing visits from system mentors in the local schools granted them opportunities to experience workplace conditions alongside new teachers. Hence, the responsibilities and duties of system mentors concerning the systemwide induction program positioned them to best advocate for the developmental needs of first-year teachers as employees inside the Beckett County School District.

Yohanna attested to her system mentor being “supportive” because she felt advocacy from “human resources” in the workplace as a first-year teacher. Ireland “looked forward” to her system mentor’s visits, for the reason that she “wasn’t alone,” and had “a safe space to talk” when needed. Nathaniel confirmed the sentiments of Yohanna and Ireland by declaring his system mentor’s visits as “comforting” to him while being a first-year teacher. Yasmin added her system mentor visited with the “intentions... to observe and not to judge,” as she recalled “affirmations” respecting generational and racial dynamics that took place in the workplace. Ash asserted his system mentor was “a lifeline to reach out to” with “an outside perspective.”

Leroy believed that his system mentor could have been more beneficial with subject-area experience in mathematics, since “being a math teacher has its own unique challenges that other content areas cannot fathom.” However, Nathaniel, Yasmin, Ash, and Yohanna recalled how their system mentors provided them with necessary technical assistance which aligned best teaching practices to mathematics instruction.

Yohanna added her system mentor needed “special education experience” to provide support in the workplace for meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Ash and Yohanna also desired for their system mentors to be “familiar with processes” regarding special education and related services, while they experienced the workplace conditions as co-teachers in the local high schools.

System mentors upheld the mission of the Division of the Human Resources by taking a “leadership role in... retaining” the “best qualified” teachers. Equally important, system mentors supported the “work environments and school cultures... for teaching and learning” to take place. Additionally, concerning “safe, healthy, and secure settings,” systems mentors were helpful in maintaining “compliance with federal, state, school board, employment, and labor laws and policies” within the local schools. Generally speaking, system mentors promoted the belief that employees should be treated as “the most valuable resource” inside the Beckett County School District.

Lastly, given that teachers solely received classroom and observational feedback through the platform of Georgia’s teacher evaluation system, school administrators offered marginal instructional support outside of being evaluated. With school administrators, the feedback on classroom and instruction repeated vague, blanket commentary alongside 1 to 4 ratings about teaching abilities and the instructional

practices of new teachers. As instructional supervisors, system mentors validated teaching practices inside the classroom of new teachers through mentorship and coaching from a relational stance.

Yasmin explained the teacher evaluations from school administrators looked “more like paperwork” which did not provoke any “negative or positive emotions” for her when reading feedback. Ireland mentioned, “there’s really no ‘you need to work on this,’ ‘you need to work on that.’ ... [Evaluations] just felt like a genetic checklist.” Nathaniel characterized feedback from evaluations by school administrators as “odd.” Since Nathaniel “didn’t get that instant feedback” from school administrators, they made him “really nervous” in the process with receiving evaluations. Leroy noted his misconception about teacher evaluations by commenting that he did not know feedback was “supposed to be a help-type thing.” Yohanna disclosed school administrators gave neither “instructional advice,” “suggestions for the classroom,” nor guidance on a “lesson plan” in teacher evaluation as a first-year teacher.

Ash recalled his system mentor did “observe” oftentimes without being scheduled to conduct classroom observations, and gave “encouraging” and “affirmative” feedback. Nathaniel valued his system mentor’s instructional support, because the service helped him feel “confident” about teaching and “less nervous” when being observed. Yohanna appreciated the instructional support from her system mentor came “without judgment” and with ways they “could help students achieve” learning goals together. Yasmin pointed out her system mentor’s instructional support focused on “instruction and classroom management” with students. Ireland enjoyed the instructional feedback from

her system mentor which “highlighted... strengths” to “keep working on” in the classroom.

Overall, while system mentors moved around the Beckett County School District to serve new teachers, they mostly implemented phases of induction policy inside the local schools operated by school administrators. In contrast, school administrators played a limited role in the systemwide induction program by directing and managing building resources such as teacher leaders to support new teachers. The second theme delves deeper into the teacher leadership roles within high school departments which shaped workplace conditions in the local schools.

THEME 2: Departmental Leadership Shape Workplace Conditions

High schools inside the Beckett County School District framed resources around its instructional departments, with chairs managing teacher participation in departmental operations, norms, expectations, and identity. Thereby, school administrators shaped workplace conditions toward or away from favorable circumstances through the selection of chairs who guided high school departments concerning particular subject-area interests. Because chairs as teacher leaders and peer mentors played a frontline role in conveying specific instructional expertise, departmental leadership under the supervision of the school principals impacted the work cultures for new teachers in the systemwide induction program.

Leroy depicted the Mathematics Department at Thomaston High School as “strong” because “the chair passed down information in a clear and concise manner.” Nathaniel explained the Mathematics Department chair at Essex High School managed day-to-day departmental operations, and he met with him weekly to provide “all the

material” needed for classroom instruction. Yasmin portrayed the Mathematics Department chair at Essex High School as being “micromanaging” and overly involved in her first-year teaching experience. Ireland described the Science Department at West Napa High School as “really good,” since the chair “figured out” and became “mindful of where” she was at in her teaching career.

Ash agreed with Ireland’s perspective about the Science Department and the chair’s capabilities, but criticized the poor departmental leadership in the Special Education Department at West Napa High School. Yohanna depicted the Special Education Department at Alexandria High School as a “clusterfuck” and “weird” because the departmental leadership had “special education teachers moving in all different directions” to complete duties mandated by federal and state laws. Ash confirmed Yohanna’s perspective of facing critical workplace challenges in the Special Education Department at West Napa High School as well. Yohanna shared a similar perspective as Yasmin, by asserting the Mathematics Department at Alexandria High School hindered her collaboration and innovation.

Subject-area departments in high schools inside the Beckett County School District established traditional group-oriented structures, where chairs set the tone to some extent toward promoting collaboration, transferring institutional knowledge, and developing curriculum objectives from the local system’s instruction with their colleagues. Different from subject-area departments, the Special Education Department within high schools had to comply with federal and state legal requirements including the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, which played a part in enlarging the complexities of workplace conditions. Important to realize, high school departments

inconsistently exhibited development-oriented structures such as professional learning practices inside the Beckett County School District.

Another key feature of high school departments inside the Beckett County School District referenced the professional learning communities where new teachers worked closely in collaborative teams with other subject-area coworkers who taught the same courses. Professional learning communities shaped the workplace conditions because collaborative teams somewhat involved roles as teacher leaders and teamwork on curriculum development, lesson planning, sharing resources and teaching techniques, and other related instructional preparation in high school departments.

Ireland depicted the biology professional learning community as a collaborative team in which they “did data dives,” discussed “past assessments,” and answered questions “why did students miss these questions? How can we address this? What do we need to do next semester? What do we need to do to remediate?” after data collection to complete strategic planning.

There were other less professional experiences in the high school departments. Nathaniel shared that the Algebra II professional learning community did not do “anything other than talking” most of the time during collaborative team meetings. Leroy referred to the geometry professional learning community as being “teaching politics,” because the collaborative team refused ideas from him. Leroy felt that he was “dismissed” and not a professional.

Yasmin criticized the Algebra I professional learning community, where the collaborative team used a “cookie cutter” approach that restricted collaboration and was not beneficial for students receiving special education and related services. Yohanna

disclosed not being “invited” to any of the different professional learning communities she was a part of as a special education teacher “for collaborating.” Ash recalled “conflict” between general education teachers and special education teachers in the different professional learning communities he was a part of as a special education teacher, because all collaborative teams “met in the same space” simultaneously when making planning decisions.

Nathaniel and Ireland highlighted the sharing of resources as one focus for teacher leaders in professional learning communities. Ash, Yohanna, and Leroy witnessed how negative aspects of professional learning communities adversely impacted collaboration, learning, and development between coworkers, and “made things tense” altogether in the workplace. Yasmin described being constrained to solely use one coworker’s instructional methods in professional learning communities for meeting all students’ needs in the course.

The last feature of departmental leadership shaping workplace conditions emerged as advice from coworkers in subject areas. Collegial support supplemented the development of new teachers within instructional departments by generously transferring knowledge on teaching in the workplace such as school culture, classroom learning, curriculum planning, and discipline practices. With neither monetary incentive nor adult learning training, coworkers in subject areas informally volunteered as peer mentors for welcoming newcomers into high school departments and school communities.

Nathaniel felt similar to “jumping in head first without a life jacket” when entering K-12 public education, but he noted how “every single math teacher in the hallway” gave him “life rafts” as critical supports during his first year of teaching. Ireland

felt recognized and valued being placed when appointed the lead within the biology professional learning community by the Science Department Chair. With help from an assigned peer mentor Ireland was able to “manage” this teacher leader role. Leroy recognized a close coworker in the geometry professional learning community as a peer mentor, who would “sit down and map out” instructional units individually with him for curriculum support and direction.

Yohanna admitted her mom, the Executive Director of Special Education, and supervisors from the central office helped with answering questions on completing paperwork for special education. Yasmin revealed a colleague outside her teaching subject area gave advice as a peer mentor when “dealing with some differences” in the Mathematics Department regarding demographics and communication concerns from the chair and coworkers. Ash pointed out two coworkers in the Science Department who “helped ... in classroom management, (but) not so much on the special education side because they didn't know.” Yohanna, Ash, and Yasmin confessed to unfortunately not receiving any peer mentor support from their instructional departments.

Altogether, structures in high school departments supervised by school administrators played a critical role in shaping the success of new teachers with peer supports and affecting their decisions to stay or to leave teaching. Because of inconsistencies with collaborative practices, instructional departments required advancements in performing evidence-based models such as active teacher development, curriculum programming, shared collective values and responsibilities, common goals and strategies, and other features related to building a collegial inclusive learning environment.

The third theme centers on the most important evidence-based models of coaching and mentorship first-year teachers found beneficial from their system mentors.

Research Question 2

Grounded in teamwork and problem-solving, coaching and mentorship at its highest level in the K-12 teaching profession features social learning on-the-job from a healthy, professional stance (Carr et al., 2017). Although school administrators act as mentors for new teachers in most cases, their administrative duties have the capability to severely restrict coaching and mentorship throughout the school year (DeCearse et al., 2016). In any case, because the practice of coaching and mentorship works best alongside strong trust, new teachers desire collaboration with experienced professionals who promote a fault-free learning environment built on confidentiality and data driven decision making (Hong & Matsko, 2019).

For the second research question, the investigation sought the types of coaching and mentorship the first-year teachers found beneficial inside the Beckett County School District. The data analysis revealed first-year teachers consider non-adversarial relationships with experienced professionals vital for generating a willingness to seek learning opportunities and growth. On the whole, the third theme explores some key qualities in producing a culture of alliance between system mentors from the Division of Human Resources and the first-year teachers.

THEME 3: The Special Relationship Offset Power Dynamics Between System Mentors and First-Year Teachers

Because the Division of Human Resources envisioned an innovative approach for the systemwide induction program, system mentors valued forging genuine, trustful

connections with new teachers inside the Beckett County School District. Central within the induction policy empowered system mentors to individualize coaching and mentorship approaches with new teachers in real-time by developing authentic rapport for neutralizing the dynamics of power. Attributes which embodied the senior-junior partnership between system mentors and first-year teachers include cooperation, agreements, frequent visits, tactfulness, and reasonable privacy.

Ash connected his system mentor's "collaborative" coaching and mentorship approach as being in a "partnership" with one another, leading him to talk about "everything." Yohanna confirmed Ash's perspective about "collaboration" and "partnership" with her system mentor, by adding she received "emotional support" to navigate unpleasant workplace conditions. Ireland paralleled her system mentor to a "school therapist" because she described the relationship as "very professional, very warm, and friendly" throughout the school year.

Nathaniel confirmed the relationship between his system mentor and him was "warm," "comfortable," "welcoming," and "exciting," due to "the emotional, mental, and psychological supports" he received throughout the conversational process. Leroy agreed with Nathaniel about desiring to "call" on his system mentor when he had "a bad day" or "days it's draining," so that they could "pour into each other" together. Yasmin defined her system mentor's counsel as being able to "talk about life, and how that has an effect on everything that goes on in the classroom" within coaching and mentorship.

Leroy asserted the importance of "leadership and an accountability partner" as qualities present with his system mentor. Ireland and Ash depicted the relationship with their system mentors as being "non-judgmental" alongside conversations similar to

“counseling sessions.” Yohanna and Yasmin portrayed the relationship with their system mentors as “positive,” “a good change of pace,” and “great terms” in employee development. Nathaniel revealed how he was “taught” lessons throughout new teacher development from his system mentor “without (him) knowing” because of the strong trust they shared together.

The special relationship between system mentors and new teachers inside the Beckett County School District existed from a healthy foundation of confidentiality alongside professionalism between them. In general, system mentors engaged new teachers as advisers in their first-year teacher journey inside the Beckett County School District. Through stimulating two-way reflections on various topics including student behavior, teacher persona, and other higher-order thinking discussions related to the workplace, new teachers received purposeful consultative services by means of cognitive therapeutic exercises from system mentors to advance their professional agency.

Ireland mentioned being “open and honest” in reflective conversations because she thought her system mentor exemplified an “unbiased party” in the local schools. Ash revealed “fluid” conversations with his system mentor felt more “relaxed” and less “high-stakes” as he openly disclosed experiences of being a special education co-teacher. Nathaniel associated “smiling” and being “soft spoken” as irresistible qualities, which helped him feel “at home” to have open and honest conversations about “individual students” with his system mentor.

Yohanna also expressed her system mentor abilities to “disarm” by being “trustworthy” and “transparent” in their open and honest conversations. Yasmin recognized “sense of humor” as a conversational strategy from her system mentor, which

she felt yielded some “relief, release, and support... for the whole-self, as a teacher and individual.” Leroy corroborated sharing that his system mentor was a “conversationalist” who offered a “relatable” aspect in mentorship, ultimately enabling an exchange of perspectives on a “variety of topics,” including strategic thinking.

Yasmin characterized the relationship with her system mentor as flowing between “Ms. Roberts-focused” to “Yasmin-focused,” which she felt illustrated being “cared” for “in the school system.” Ireland and Nathaniel believed having “a lot more honest talks” with their system mentors after developing strong trust helped them build “confidence,” lower “anxiety,” and improve “cognitively” as a new teacher.

Coming from the Division of Human Resources, the importance of system mentors to carry an impartial positionality inside the Beckett County School District upheld legitimacy with their efforts in the local schools. Even though some work from system mentors involved ongoing collaboration alongside school administrators, conversations with new teachers had an assurance of being strictly private for employment protection. On that account, through the confidence of privacy, new teachers engaged freely in professional discussions with their system mentors, allowing them to be sincere about workplace conditions.

Along with confidential discussions, whereas system mentors operated a differentiated, co-constructive, and socially responsible learning model, new teachers experienced persistent inquiry in conversation to creatively implement a full-range of induction services. By using timeboxing in scheduling and time-management, the onus of building credible relationships with new teachers motivated system mentors to deliver

regular and favorable social interactions for securing viable links between educational philosophies and other evidence-based methods.

Yohanna found her system mentor to be “objective,” “accurate,” and “non-judgmental,” when discussing ideas and receiving insights. Ireland further clarified her system mentor “created a situation,” similar to being inside “the War Room,” where she was “willing to learn” since they “touched on strategy” in conversations. Ash, Nathaniel, Yohanna, and Yasmin agreed with Ireland that their system mentors acted as a sounding board for them to push ideas and build awareness about themselves as teaching professionals.

Nathaniel explained strategizing with his system mentor caused a “subconscious impact,” which shaped him to become “more aware of issues” regarding the “outcomes of students” as a top support. Yasmin validated Nathaniel’s accounts, by conveying how she leveraged insights from discussions with her system mentor “to strategize the grouping” of students for improving classroom experiences. Ash also validated Nathaniel’s perception about strategizing by noting his system mentor “produced felt effects” for him because of being able “to bounce ideas” and “talk through different issues” in “productive” conversations.

Ireland asserted she “valued... the opportunity to pick (her system mentor’s) brain.” Yohanna represented insights from conversations with her system mentor as being “a breath of fresh air” and “backed by research.” Leroy confirmed he would enjoy being able to “talk” and get “advice” from his system mentor, rather than “just checking off a box and not forming a relationship” through the coaching and mentorship. Nathaniel, Yasmin, Ireland, and Yohanna spoke of their system mentors providing “valuable”

insights into “tools to use in the classroom” from a “very positive,” “very factual,” and “very unbiased” outlook.

Largely, the relationship with system mentors conclusively generated improvements in emotional health, classroom strategy, and an understanding of professional-self for new teachers inside the Beckett County School District. While new teachers appreciated consistent, positive social interactions, faith in system mentors to be reliable on their mutual agreements sustained a thriving unique bond.

The fourth theme relates the essential induction processes performed by system mentors to retain and supervise new teacher development from the Division of Human Resources.

Research Question 3

Past empirical research suggests high-intensity induction processes from local systems engender worthwhile services toward improving new teacher retention, learning, and performance (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Together with the global COVID-19 pandemic making online services commonplace in K-12 public education, virtual interactive engagement must now also be a staple within the induction processes of local systems as well (Jeong et al., 2020). Regardless, mentors drive system induction policy into practice through the implementation of processes and their social interactions with new teachers (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009).

The third research question sought an investigation into the way first-year teachers made sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District. Data analysis indicated first-year teachers gave specifics about classroom and instructional feedback, reflection, and virtual

aids as the three main processes in the systemwide induction program apart from the school-level supports. Given these points, the fourth theme details how system mentors equipped first-year teachers with universal instruction on a wide range of service areas.

THEME 4: System Mentors Contribute Independent, Versatile Guidance

Given the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District aimed to bolster new teachers' classroom practices, the Division of Human Resources enacted the system policy in five phases by implementing processes in the local schools as a leadership team throughout the school year. The first two phases of policy implementation addressed setting expectations with new teachers in the systemwide induction program. Being independent from school administrators, system mentors from the Division of Human Resources covertly operated in the local schools to support new teachers with comprehending and managing expectations concerning the systemwide induction program.

Yasmin recognized the school principal and her system mentor as being “independent of each other.” Ireland detailed the initial communication about the systemwide induction program came from an email by her system mentor “stating... the purpose of the induction program... and what it would look like” during the school year. Nathaniel, Yohanna, Ash, and Yasmin confirmed Ireland's accounts on “communication” about the systemwide induction program came solely from their system mentors.

Ash further recalled his system mentor completing proper introductions with him after scheduling an in-person school visit to begin “forming” a relationship and communicate “the expectations” about the systemwide induction program as a representative of the central office. Ireland confirmed Ash's perspective, remarking her

system mentor acted as “the contact point” for “what was going to happen” and “what the [systemwide induction program] would look like” throughout the school year. Leroy reported, “outside... the system new-hire orientation,” he experienced no communication from his system mentor for him to comprehend and manage expectations about being a part of the systemwide induction program.

The third phase of policy implementation dealt with system mentors independently assigning degrees of urgency to direct how often visits should happen for each new teacher such as daily, weekly, bi-weekly, and/or monthly. Classroom and observational feedback acted as an essential induction process in this phase, where system mentors conducted observations of new teachers to provide key instructional support. Throughout classroom observations, system mentors carried out several tasks involving data collection, analysis and synthesis, and instant feedback as a part of extending instructional support to new teachers.

Ireland described the format of the classroom and observational feedback from her system mentor as being “segmented and broken up,” which provided “a clear picture” relating to teacher actions and student behavior. Ash and Ireland commented on how they envisioned the classroom and observational feedback from “through the eyes” of their system mentors. Yasmin agreed with Ireland and Ash that the structure of the classroom and observational feedback having “teacher actions, student actions, and teacher reactions” from their system mentors “broke down” data for them to become “completely aware of” themselves after teaching students.

Leroy depicted classroom and observational feedback from the systemwide induction program as “formal” data collections “of what was seen.” Yohanna further

explained classroom and observational feedback from her system “laid out: the communication” along with “time stamped ... commentary, the action, and the responses... to model what happened in real-life” as she taught students. Nathaniel added to Leroy’s depiction of classroom and observational feedback by mentioning his system mentor “provided some overall comments based off” data collection, with how effective activities supported student learning.

During the process of classroom and observational feedback, system mentors took a neutral stance when collecting data on behaviors and practices and communicating assessments about teaching strategies to heighten new teachers’ perspectives related to student learning and outcomes in the workplace. Of equal importance, instructional support worked best paired with reflective exercises as a secondary induction process with new teachers after classroom and observation feedback.

In the fourth and fifth phases of policy implementation, system mentors focused on devoting efforts to complete reflections with new teachers in the systemwide induction program. Considering the senior executives within the Division of Human Resources empowered system mentors to function autonomously as instructional supervisors in the local schools, they had considerable flexibility with meeting scheduling needs (i.e., planning time) of new teachers on their caseloads for completing reflective exercises.

Yohanna referenced “going through reflection activities together” with her system mentor at “timely” stages within her new teacher journey as a chief feature in the reflective process. Ash and Yasmin confirmed their system mentors “guided” them “through reflection together by analyzing data,” “looking at different feedback,” and

asking and answering questions to “explain,” “elaborate,” and bring out the “why” about previous events which occurred in the workplace.

Nathaniel pointed out how reflective exercises with his system mentor made him “stop” and “intentionally think” about “specific” classroom “events” for ways to “engage,” “improve,” and “develop [healthy] relationships” with students. Ireland asserted “it was nice to sit down and do reflection activities” with her system mentor, because the reflective process offered “suggestions” in ways of growing “professionally” as a new teacher. Leroy summed up the perspectives of Nathaniel and Ireland by depicting reflections as an overall “data science” process with his system mentor to analyze himself “objectively” based on what happened in the classroom.

By using conversational strategies, system mentors asked questions and followed-up on more discussion to have new teachers expand on previous events, behaviors, and a frame of mind concerning students, themselves, and other workplace related situations. Guided by a reflection cycle, new teachers completed reflective exercises alongside system mentors in one-on-one meetings to examine data, consider perspectives, and promote action steps for positive change, ending with some resolutions to advance professionally.

Simultaneously, with all the phases of policy implementation, the systemwide induction program fit in the third induction process, which produced virtual aids as in-house periodicals to target new teachers in the local schools. To round out a full-range of induction services, virtual aids from the systemwide induction program engaged new teachers with storytelling, community building, choice in learning, and mixtures of digital

media to feature content about broad topics related to the Beckett County School District and teaching in this system.

Ash explained the systemwide induction program “sent out helpful” virtual aids, which he described as “creative” and an “innovative way” to push out “great” resources intended for new teachers inside the Beckett County School District. Ireland characterized virtual aids from the systemwide induction program as offering provisions of “general support” with “a purpose” to communicate extensive “data and research... that any subject can use” in the K-12 teaching profession.

Yasmin portrayed virtual aids from the systemwide induction program as “an editorial version of a safe space” for building a “multi-perspective” new teacher learning community by “coming from more of an academic standpoint” and “an emotional more human stance.” Leroy along with Nathaniel and Yohanna indicated “improvement” as a “common theme” in “information” on aspects of teaching within the virtual aids from the systemwide induction program.

Nathaniel described the virtual aids from the systemwide induction program “immediately grabbed (his) attention” because of being “devoted to real life situations” involving “technology support and learning,” which he believed to be “insight” in professional learning. Yohanna revealed an overview description about virtual aids from the systemwide induction program, which “had a wide range of topics” “useful information,” and “real-life experiences,” with a “research section,” a “technology section,” a “favorite teaching moment (on a new teacher),” “links,” “even more research,” and “suggestions for practices” to consider as a first-year teacher.

As a whole, the three main processes from the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District connected aspects of in-person and online approaches to contribute independent, versatile guidance for new teachers in the local schools. The classroom and observational feedback, reflective exercises, and virtual aids chronicled new teacher development, self-examination as a professional, options within instructional learning, and goals to consider in the systemwide induction program.

Chapter Summary

In this case study, four overall themes emerged from the data analysis related to the research questions. Research Question 1 investigated the supports affecting first-year teachers' decision to stay or leave teaching. The first emergent theme described how the presence of the Division of Human Resources recognized first-year teachers in the workplace throughout the school year related to areas involving retention, development, and growth. The second emergent theme explained the way departmental leadership shaped workplace conditions for new teachers within the structures in high school departments.

Research Question 2 investigated the types of coaching and mentorship beneficial to first-year teachers in the workplace. The third emergent theme explored to what degree the special relationship offset power dynamics between system mentors and first-year teachers for generating improvements in emotional health, classroom strategy, and an understanding of professional-self.

Research Question 3 investigated how first-year teachers made sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program. The fourth emergent theme detailed the ways system mentors contributed independent, versatile

guidance to new teachers by explaining the three main induction processes used in policy implementation from the Division of Human Resources.

The final chapter concludes with a summary of research design, discussion of the findings, implications and recommendations for practice, policy, and further research, and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

America's teacher shortages have a strong likelihood to worsen unless the federal and state governments intervene in favor of stability within the teaching workforce (Sutcher et al., 2019). Georgia, as an illustration in the United States, faced high percentages of new teachers leaving the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019), with empirical studies showing how this unreasonable turnover and attrition damages future outcomes for students (Miller & Youngs, 2021). Even so, the workplace conditions teachers encounter continue to raise serious concerns about what type of federal and state policies best improve teacher effectiveness, retention, and leadership to positively impact student learning and growth (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

With growing urgency to reform new teacher experiences and workplace conditions, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (2015) called for a devotion of "valuable resources" toward recruitment, hiring, and induction which would have "otherwise be spent on ... student instruction" in K-12 public education (p. 5). Teacher induction, a general practice inside American public-school systems, has shown possibilities in lowering turnover, even though reportedly being an unfunded state mandate and poorly designed to meet retention goals (Jackson et al., 2014; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of six first-year teachers related to the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction

program within one Georgia school system, Beckett County School District (pseudonym). The research sought to investigate the types of coaching tools (i.e., observations, activities, conversations, etc.), mentorship experiences, personnel resources, and other learning opportunities extended to first-year teachers in their professional development through the systemwide induction program.

The overarching question is how does professional learning in a formalized system program influence teacher attrition? The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did first-year teachers in Beckett County describe how the supports they received affected their decision to stay or leave teaching?
2. What types of coaching and mentorship experiences do these first-year teachers find beneficial?
3. How do these first-year teachers make sense of the practices they experienced through the systemwide induction program?

This chapter provides a summary of the research design, brief discussion about the major themes related to the literature, implications for research, policy, and system and school leadership. The chapter ends with concluding thoughts about the study.

Summary of Research Design

The theoretical perspectives in this study drew from social constructivism and sensemaking as interpretative and conceptual frameworks. Whereas the interpretative framework focused on how first-year teachers made sense of processes, practices, and policies within one local public-school system (Cobb, 1995; Snow, 2011), the conceptual framework cited theories involving instructional supervision and employee socialization

such as coaching (Zepeda, 2017), mentorship (Bressman et al., 2018), learning communities (Liu et al., 2020), and induction (Youngs, 2007).

This research study featured storytelling by using qualitative inquiry to investigate the systemwide induction program inside the Beckett County School District (Freeman, 2017). Since qualitative research aimed to document what, how, and why over a time period, this study selected a case study as the investigative method for following a social timeline of events and activities from perspectives involved in the local system's induction policy (Golafshani, 2003; Stake 1995). To acquire greater insights about the systemwide induction program, this case study combined interviews with other artifacts such as official records and field notes for the purposes of triangulation (Merriam, 2009).

Because of serious concerns about the dependability of qualitative research, this case study implemented appropriate procedures (i.e., triangulation) related to credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability for promoting transparency and establishing trustworthiness in the findings (Gibbert et al., 2008; Quintao et al., 2020). In addition, the researcher wrote a statement of reflexivity related to employment inside the Beckett County School District and his personal bias and beliefs concerning how this local system's leaders' roles and support affect turnover and attrition in the K-12 teaching field (Johnson-Bailey, 2004).

In this case study, interviews used a semi-structured approach with a flexible protocol of open-ended questions to enable conversation around issues concerning a formalized system program influencing teacher attrition (Baskarada, 2014). The second source, namely official records, came from the Division of Human Resource inside the Beckett County School District to mainly corroborate testimony from the interviews

(Bowen, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Lastly, detailed field notes as researcher-generated data contained insights of body language, gestures, impressions, assumptions, actions, and other non-linguistic data to supplement the interviews (Tessier, 2012).

For data management, ATLAS.ti was used to organize audio files, interview transcriptions, and field notes through a password-encrypted software system for storing, managing, accessing, and analyzing fieldwork (Antonio et al., 2020). All sources of data collected classified any identifying and related information by using pseudonyms as a code. Accordingly, the ATLAS.ti software served as a means to examine unseen and underlying relationship rigorously and methodically from within this complex phenomenon of K-12 induction (Paulus & Lester, 2016).

Data analysis was structured examining sources inductively, and then afterwards comparatively (Merriam, 2009). To further explain, this case study implemented the constant comparison method, by comparing data from previous coded analysis with one another to conduct both within-case and cross-case analyses (Glaser, 1965; Stenseth & Stromso, 2019). Throughout this analysis, open-coding and line-by-line coding broke down data into smaller units of meaning to systematically develop categories and to generate common themes (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Kolb, 2012).

An extensive review of the literature informed and grounded this case study. Overall, the literature review focused on issues related to first-year teachers in K-12 public education such as the teacher labor market, workplace conditions, retention, induction, coaching and mentorship supports, and law and policy concerning new teacher employment. Much of this research provided valuable reinforcement in the case study's

design, implementation, analysis, and discussion. The next section aligns the existing research presented in the literature review with the findings from this case study.

Discussion of the Findings

Guided by three research questions, this case study investigated how professional learning in a formalized system program influenced teacher attrition. The findings from this case study aligned with the existing research presented in the review of the related literature. Themes emerged from the findings connected to each research question through a systematic coding process. Building on existing research, this section explores how emergent themes from findings related to previous literature on retention, induction, coaching and mentorship supports, and policy concerning new teacher employment.

Theme 1: Presence from the Division of Human Resources Recognize First-Year Teachers

The local system's office dealing with personnel typically brings about the induction policy by identifying new teachers for newly hired employee services to be provided (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). This case study found the Division of Human Resources inside the Beckett County School District recognized first-year teachers in the local schools. Under the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Policy, system mentors from the Division of Human Resources served new teachers in the local schools within their sphere of influence associated with retention, development, and growth.

The participants confirmed system mentors providing induction services in the local schools through the systemwide induction program during the entire school year. Markedly, key instruments useful in system induction policy involved at least a year of mentorship, funding provisions, and standards frameworks (Carver & Feiman-Nemser,

2009). As system mentors circulated around the Beckett County School District throughout the school year, their ongoing visits in the local schools granted them opportunities to experience work environments alongside new teachers participating in the systemwide induction program.

Furthermore, since workplace conditions weaken new teachers' belief of teaching being a rewarding profession (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003), the responsibilities and duties of system mentors positioned them to best advocate for new teachers' employee needs inside the Beckett County School District. Participants corroborated how system mentors provided technical assistance, advocacy, "a safe space to talk," and "affirmations" to support them in the local schools throughout the school year.

Coming from the Division of Human Resources, system mentors inherently possessed positional authority with policy oversight to take a "leadership role in... retaining" the "best qualified" teachers in the local schools. On balance, school administrators had full authority inside the local schools, even though holding a narrow role concerning the systemwide induction program.

Because mentorship emerged as a preferred approach in teacher induction, collaboration between school administrators and mentors should exist to share understandings for what good teaching looks like (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). In this case study, participants acknowledged system mentors "collaborated with" and "talked to" principals multiple times throughout the school year in the local schools. Accordingly, the collaborative relationship between school administrators and system mentors inside the Beckett County School District enabled transparency and open lines of

communication on behalf of first-year teachers to inquire about employee matters related to the workplace.

Of equal importance, even though local systems do not usually develop any special circumstances for new teachers during their first professional years (Kardos et al., 2001), the presence of system mentors inside the Beckett County School broke up building isolation in the local schools to specifically combat the persistently high teacher turnover rates in the local schools. In this case study, participants recalled system mentors visited with “intentions... to observe and not to judge,” give “encouraging” and “affirmative” feedback, and deliver instructional support which “highlighted... strengths” to “keep working on” in the classroom.

Given these points, the most important factor associated with improving teacher retention has been identified as administrative support (Miller & Youngs. 2021). School administrators and system mentors functioned independently, with no authority over the other. Generally speaking, on top of contributing an outside point-of-view, system mentors promoted the belief that employees should be treated as “the most valuable resource” by maintaining “compliance with federal, state, school board, employment, and labor laws and policies” within the local schools.

Important to realize, new teachers received classroom and observational feedback from school administrators through the platform of Georgia’s teacher evaluation system, which repeated vague, blanket commentary alongside 1 to 4 ratings about teaching abilities and practices. In this case study, participants described their teacher evaluations from school administrators as mostly a “generic checklist.” Since other design considerations in induction policy involve the teacher evaluation process as instructional

supervisors, system mentors validated teaching practices inside the classrooms of new teachers through mentorship and coaching from a relational stance.

On the whole, nearly half of new teachers leave the profession after five years of teaching (Georgia Department of Education, 2017). Thus, local systems and their school administrators strongly shape the success of teachers (Kraft et al., 2016). System mentors supported the “work environments and school cultures... for teaching and learning” to take place in the local schools, as school administrators played a limited role in the systemwide induction program by primarily directing and managing building resources such as teacher leaders for supporting new teachers.

The second theme explained the way school administrators shaped workplace conditions for new teachers through departmental leadership within the structures in high school departments.

Theme 2: Departmental Leadership Shape Workplace Conditions

School-level mentoring tools extended to new teachers focus on managing classroom practices and behavior (Hudson, 2012). This case study found school administrators shaped workplace conditions toward or away from favorable circumstances through the departmental leadership, who acted as teacher leaders and peer mentors by conveying specific instructional expertise. Under the supervision of school administrators, high school departments inside the Beckett County School District fairly affected new teachers’ decisions to stay or leave teaching.

In this case study, participants reported subject-area departments exhibited much more measures of common sense, while explaining how special education departments passed on painful workplace conditions. Unquestionably, as Youngs (2007) emphasized,

new teachers have a higher chance of moving away from the survival stage toward the mastery stage within teaching when principals hold knowledge of induction practices. The structures in high school departments supervised by school administrators shaped the success of new teachers with peer supports. Instructional departments within high schools inside the Beckett County School District established traditional group-oriented structures, where the selection of chairs by school administrators played a frontline role in impacting work cultures for new teachers in the systemwide induction program.

Notably, high school departments inside the Beckett County School District had limited development-oriented structures such as shared collective values, common goals and strategies, and other features related to building a collegial inclusive learning environment. Ingersoll et al. (2017) further pointed out, “instructional leadership and areas of teacher leadership that are most strongly related to student achievement are least often implemented in schools” (p. 14). In this case study, participants depicted chairs in managerial terms such as “strong” and “micromanaging” rather than being developmental or offering supportive spaces to learn how to teach.

Within subject-area departments, professional learning communities existed as a primary departmental structure inside the Beckett County School District. To explain, new teachers rely heavily on professional learning communities for guidance, with no certainty of competence from school administrators in creating forums to showcase collaboration with knowledgeable and experienced teachers (Hong & Matsko, 2019). Since collaborative teams within high school departments to some extent involved roles such as teacher leaders, professional learning communities shaped workplace conditions

on curriculum development, lesson planning, sharing resources, and other related instructional preparation inside the Beckett County School District.

Moreover, even though K-12 public schools offer professional learning communities, not all have strong cultures open to ongoing development opportunities for improving classroom practices (Bressman et al., 2018). Inside the Beckett County School District, professional learning communities in high school departments exhibited inconsistencies with promoting evidence-based models in collaboration, active teacher development, curriculum programming, and other shared responsibilities. Moreover, participants mostly concluded professional learning communities adversely impacted collaboration, learning, and development between coworkers, with only one participant indicating data-driven collaboration in collaborative team meetings.

Another key feature in departmental structures included receiving critical advice from subject-area coworkers. Even though school administrators in most cases act as mentors for new teachers (DeCearse et al., 2016), collegial support mostly provided the development of new teachers inside the Beckett County School District. The participants affirmed receiving subject-area supports from colleagues, though half of the participants admitted to not being provided peer mentor support within their instructional departments. With neither having any daily release time (Carr et al., 2017), monetary incentive, nor training in adult learning, subject-area coworkers inside the Beckett County School District volunteered as peer mentors for supporting new teachers.

Largely, mentoring included planning support for new teachers (Hudson, 2012). Altogether, high schools inside the Beckett County School District framed resources around its instructional departments to develop curriculum practices as support for new

teachers. While the importance of school administrators taking on a mentoring role with new teachers adds to career success (Campione, 2014), departmental leadership in high schools handled mentoring new teachers.

The third theme explores some key qualities in producing a culture of alliance between system mentors from the Division of Human Resources and first-year teachers.

Theme 3: The Special Relationship Offset Power Dynamics Between System Mentors and First-Year Teachers

Alongside frequent social interactions in coaching and mentorship, strong trust must be developed over time to support areas of teaching such as lesson planning, professionalism, methodology, classroom management, and other commitments inside the profession (Hong & Matsko, 2019). The system mentors from the Division of Human Resources valued forging genuine, trustful connections with new teachers inside the Beckett County School District to neutralize power dynamics while extending practices in coaching and mentorship.

In this case study, the participants described the relationship between them and their system mentors as “collaborative,” “very professional, and on being on “good terms.” Mentors established senior-junior partnerships with new teachers in the systemwide induction program through cooperation, agreements, frequent visits, tactfulness, and reasonable privacy. While oftentimes new teachers lack authority and decision-making power over much of their own professional development and growth (Ingersoll et al., 2017), system mentors inside the Beckett County School District operated a differentiated, co-constructive, and socially responsible learning model to individualize coaching and mentorship approaches in-real time.

Some best practices in coaching and mentorship involve privacy, co-constructive agreements, transferring data-driven insights, and observations within fault-free work spaces to support continuous improvement along the way (Carr et al., 2017; Zepeda, 2017). Because the special relationship between system mentors and new teachers who participated in the program, they were able to engage freely in two-way reflective conversations about student behavior, teacher persona, and other higher-order thinking discussions related to workplace conditions. Participants described system mentors as being an “unbiased party,” who had “open and honest,” “fluid,” “relaxed,” and “transparent” reflective conversations on a “variety of topics” with them.

Generally speaking, workplace conditions matter to new teachers, who usually work longer hours and depend a great deal more on their own knowledge and skill set for success in teaching (Bjork et al., 2019). Coming from the Division of Human Resources, system mentors inside the Beckett County School District carried a responsibility of having an impartial positionality for extending purposeful consultative services such as cognitive therapeutic exercises to advance new teachers developing their professional agency and to empower them in their future decision-making about using best practices inside the workplace (Knight, 2009).

Provided that the Division of Human Resources envisioned an innovative approach for the systemwide induction program, system mentors engaged new teachers as advisers in their first-year teacher journey inside the Beckett County School District. Participants confirmed system mentors supported them with “strategy” discussion and as a sounding board to “talk through different issues” that emerged in their first year of teaching. With this in mind, coaching and mentorship as induction practices guide new

teachers slowly through navigating classroom life by contributing resources intended to enhance learning for students (Bressman et al., 2018).

New teachers inside the Beckett County School District experienced persistent inquiry in conversations from system mentors to creatively implement a full-range of induction services. With the practice of coaching and mentorship referencing inquiry-based dialogue driven by classroom observational data (Knight, 2009), system mentors were motivated to build credible relationships with new teachers by engaging in regular and favorable social interactions. Through these credible relationships the system coaches worked with their first-year teachers as a way to connect their classroom and instructional philosophies with other evidence-based methods. Participants spoke of their system mentors providing them “valuable” insights into “tools to use in the classroom” from a “very positive,” “very factual,” and “very unbiased” outlook “backed by research.”

Altogether, inherent in high-quality coaching and mentorship is social learning, which accepts equity, integrity, knowledge, and experience as some of the best practices for adult development (Robertson et al., 2020). The relationship with system mentors came from a healthy foundation of confidentiality alongside professionalism to conclusively generate mental, emotional, psychological, and cognitive supports for new teachers throughout the school year inside the Beckett County School District.

The fourth theme details the essential induction processes performed by system mentors to retain and supervise new teacher development from the Division of Human Resources.

Theme 4: System Mentors Contribute Independent, Versatile Guidance

Local systems behave as the educator of teachers in that policy implementation specifies compliant practices for teacher employees to cite during the development process (Grossman & Thomas, 2004). This case study found the Division of Human Resources inside the Beckett County School District enacted the system induction policy in five phases by implementing processes in the local schools as a leadership team throughout the school year to bolster new teachers' classroom practices.

Being independent from school administrators, system mentors from the Division of Human Resources covertly operated in the local schools concerning the systemwide induction program. The processes extended through the system induction policy fundamentally respond to the workplace conditions in K-12 public education (Carver & Feiman-Nemser, 2009). Within the five phases, three main processes of the systemwide induction program contributed independent, versatile guidance for new teachers inside the Beckett County School District. In this case study, participants discussed classroom and observational feedback, reflective exercises, and virtual aids as the three main processes of the systemwide induction program.

Specifically, as Carver and Feiman-Nemser (2009) explained, "through their interactions with [new] teachers, mentors bring induction policy to life, determining to a great extent ... how the aims of the policy will be realized" (p. 315). During the first two phases of policy implementation, system mentors addressed setting, comprehending, and managing expectations about the systemwide induction program with new teachers. In this case study, participants recognized how their system mentors scheduled one-on-one meetings for introductions and to communicate "the expectations" of the systemwide

induction program as “the contact point.” At large, research suggests local systems that use high-intensity support processes are more readily able to implement more effective induction services to new teachers (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Classroom and observational feedback from system mentors inside the Beckett County School District acted as an essential induction process in instructional support within the third phase of policy implementation. In this case study, participants referenced the instructional support as being data-driven feedback relating to “teacher actions, student actions, and teacher reactions” from their system mentors.

Because isolation and loneliness manifest in the workplace to some extent, new teachers require differentiated guidance for becoming self-reliant as newly hired employees (Hong & Matsko, 2019). A part of the third phase of policy implementation, system mentors from the Division of Human Resources, who functioned autonomously as instructional supervisors with scheduling flexibility, independently assigned degrees of urgency to direct how often classroom visits should happen for each new teacher such as daily, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly.

Induction offering broad range services in mentorship and coaching consists of opportunities for new teachers to share their perspectives with experienced professionals (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Accordingly, in the fourth and fifth phases of policy implementation, system mentors inside the Beckett County School District paired instructional support with reflective exercises as a secondary induction process to provide new teachers after classroom and observational feedback. In this case study, participants explained the reflection as a “data science” meeting with their system mentors to “intentionally think” about “specific” classroom “events” and grow “professionally.”

New teachers and mentors should participate in frequent meetings together to reflect on classroom practices (Lindgren, 2005).

Together with all the phases of policy implementation, the systemwide induction program produced virtual aids as the third induction process by targeting new teachers with in-house periodicals in the local schools to rounding out a full-range of services. Remarkably, since media technology promotes the feature of user autonomy, new teachers can choose the knowledge they desire, which enriches teacher development opportunities and champions web-based community learning (Liu et al., 2020; Ruey, 2010).

Virtual aids from the systemwide induction program engaged in storytelling, community building, choice in learning, and mixtures of digital media to feature content related to K-12 public education and the Beckett County School District. In this case study, participants explained the way virtual ideas “sent out helpful” information from a “multi-perspective” stance, with a “common theme” of “improvement” on the aspects of teaching and classroom practices.

Normally, the connections between induction policy from local systems and the enactment of processes and practices demonstrate challenges with being implemented in local schools (Youngs, 2003). Inside the Beckett County School District, classroom and observational feedback, reflective exercises, and virtual aids from the Division of Human Resources indicated favorable outcomes as high-intensity support processes, which brought into effect the system induction policy.

Implications

At the present time, with the substantial growth of new teachers entering the teaching force, K-12 induction policy and practices have gained momentum in American public-school systems (Ingersoll et al., 2018). However, there remains a critical need to increase empirical research about outcomes accounting for teacher workplace conditions, retention, and attrition from induction policy and programs (Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). For that reason, the findings of this case study cover future research, policy, and practice as it relates to new teacher induction from a local system's program. This section discusses the major implications to consider in induction.

Implications and Recommendations

Provided that this case study found public-school teachers who participated in the systemwide induction program gave positive adjectives about their overall first-year teaching experiences, Jacobs (2021) advised further examination of new teachers' experiences, and the length of time they remain inside local school systems. In addition, to point out, this case study found first-year teachers may not have engaged in student teacher experiences before entering the K-12 teaching profession.

With first-year teachers enduring challenging workplace conditions in schools, this case study's findings also illustrated that they experience a new set of challenges during their second teaching year as well. However, as Goldrick et al. (2012) reported, "high-impact, multi-year induction support" does not usually happen in local systems for new teachers entering K-12 public education.

Since the average American teacher is now within their beginning years in the teaching profession, there is a critical need to offer comprehensive and quality induction

programs for new teachers into the profession over multiple years (Ingersoll et al., 2018). This case study found the public-school teachers desired more time with system mentors, and corroborated the need for more induction supports after their first-year of teaching. This case study findings align with the earlier work of Curry et al. (2016) and Jones and Youngs (2012) who independently and strongly suggested that comprehensive teacher induction efforts should last at least three years.

This case study highlighted how induction supports from system mentors ranked higher than school administrators in classroom management and instructional support, reflective exercises, and differentiated professional learning. Also, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic shifting American public education online (i.e., hybrid, etc.) to teach students, there are induction needs for new teachers to support on-the-job professional learning in this area as well. For that reason, online services as an induction approach in coaching, mentorship, and virtual learning communities can support improvement in problem solving skills for new teachers (Zhang et al., 2017). Systems must look at the online learning community as a potential area to focus attention.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Ordinarily, teachers as professionals inside K-12 schools work in a long-standing culture where they do not contribute much to the development of schools' social norms, policies, and other such decisions (Ingersoll et al., 2017). This case study specified how departmental leadership as teacher leaders and peer mentors shape workplace conditions toward or away from favorable circumstances. Based on the findings of this case study, the following recommendations for practice should be considered.

First, under the supervision of school administrators, instructional departments

have increasingly become significant in school governance, with chairs as teacher leaders assuming responsibilities for meeting the needs of departmental teachers. This case study found that more than three-fourths of new teachers felt helped and supported after receiving advice from their school administration and leadership such as principal, assistant principal, and department chairs.

Because chairs hold such a frontline role in instructional expertise (Vanblaere & Devos, 2017), subsequent to being trained on adult learning, more can be asked from them to work closely with new teachers alongside their departmental responsibilities, with much better compensation and a smaller teaching role. Additionally, the Georgia Department of Education (2022) advocated for teachers such as chairs who “seem to go beyond their call of teaching” to be “compensated... for their efforts” in local schools (p. 18).

Additionally, a critical note to point out, this case study depicted special education departments as painful to navigate through for new teachers in the workplace. Special education teachers new to the K-12 teaching profession need critical support from carefully selected chairs, who can provide step-by-step technical assistance on completing federally mandated paperwork and how to better serve students by being familiar with the needs and characteristics of children who are served by special education services.

Second, this case study found professional learning communities in high school departments did not offer much in active teacher development, collaboration, and curriculum programming. Vanblaere and Devos (2017) declared, teachers do not readily engage in naturally functioning, profound systematic collaboration. The findings of this

study support that professional learning communities need to be developed organically by teachers.

Despite this case study's findings showing school administrators modeled no instructional leadership in professional learning communities, considerable resources from the local system's central office should find ways to support principals in improving, monitoring, and guiding collaboration between teacher professionals toward better decision-making and advancing the agency of new teachers (Calvert, 2016) respecting curriculum and classroom planning. For principals and other leaders to support new teachers in profoundly different ways, they must learn how to do so.

Third, distributive leadership between central office personnel, school administrators, coaches, and teacher leaders can support improvements in subject-area knowledge and best teaching practices (Diamond & Spillane, 2016). This case study shared how subject-area colleagues supported new teachers related to mentorship experiences in lesson planning and other instructional support.

The Georgia Department of Education (2022) affirmed, "... so many decisions are made regarding what should be happening in a classroom by people who are no longer in a classroom and have been out for a long time, or by people who have never been in a classroom" (p. 16). Using evidence-based models in collaboration such as the Japanese Lesson Study might best facilitate research in collaboration between coworkers to improve lesson planning, teaching students, and new teacher development (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

Implications and Recommendations for Policy

This case study found the positive and collaborative relationships between school administrators and system mentors from the Division of Human Resources had a favorable effect on the new teachers. In general, findings highlighted how system mentors functioned as agents of the central office, who operated behind-the-scenes in the local schools to implement the systemwide induction program.

Another key point in this case was school administrators and system mentors had no authority over the other, and functioned independently; yet, collaboratively with each other in the local schools. Weick (1976) confirmed, when two positions such as school administrators and system mentors share weak commonalities, they are independent from one another, thereby being an example of loosely coupled. The Georgia Department of Education (2022) endorsed that state policymakers, local systems, and school leaders take opportunities to reimagine how K-12 public education treats teachers as professionals and engage their voices in policy.

The concepts of loose coupling embody decentralization and school autonomy between central offices and school buildings (Xia et al., 2020), which this case study demonstrated can have a positive outcome (i.e., retention rate of 91%) for new teachers in the systemwide induction program due to the collaboration of central office and school-level supports. Outside of bureaucratic procedures, loose coupling exhibits ambiguity between personnel in the central offices and school buildings, with substantial independence from one another (Gamoran & Dreeben, 1986).

To that end, loose coupling involving the central office and local schools as agents of policy might work best within the personnel domain such as induction for

shaping positive power relationships (Xia et al., 2020). Forging solid relationships between personnel from the central office and school buildings can reinforce the likelihood of positive outcomes in professional development and collaboration (Honig, 2012). With loose coupling consisting of limited rules, order, and supervision, future policy considerations involving some type of accountability systems can be supportive when central office personnel work alongside and collaborate with principals (Gamoran & Dreeben, 1986; Honig, 2012; Xia et al., 2020).

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This case study followed the diverse narratives (i.e., personal and professional background and experiences) of first-year teachers entering the K-12 teaching profession. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the portraits of first-year teachers in this case study represented different genders and races, recent and past graduates, career changers, and millennials and proceeding generations, each with their own educational philosophies.

Because local systems assume responsibility for retaining as many new teachers as possible, there are calls for more scrutiny about employers and everyday work environments in American public education. Whereas Richardson (2000) insisted narratives carry some causal connections from personal descriptive accounts, Johnson-Bailey (2004) explained narratives embrace the power of voice and in this present study allowing glimpses into the workplace conditions in a school system.

In addition to this case study's findings capturing useful and distinctive perspectives on how a formalized system program influences teacher attrition (Patton, 2002), the data also generated narratives about the teacher labor market, workplace

conditions, system-level and building-level supports, teaching assignments, teacher evaluations, tenure and dismissal, and other issues related to first-year teachers existing in a local school system.

Mancini (2019) conducted a study involving coaching and mentorship using social constructivism and sensemaking to capture perspectives, where he called for an even more intentional application of narrative research on future studies. This case study presented findings on extensive information about the systemwide induction program such as personnel information on the participants and descriptions of the local system, its high schools, and the Division of Human Resources. Uniquely, the application of narrative research works best linked to phenomena embodying experiential learning such as induction, because study participants can connect their emotion and intellect for depicting past realities and events (Lapum, 2009).

Boden and Eatough (2014) urged such a future study respecting the application of narrative research to apply multimodal approaches within the analytical process for better comprehending the various dimensions in being a first-year teacher. Large-scale problems related to new teachers' workplace conditions in K-12 public education (Mirra & Rogers, 2020) stand in the way of retaining teacher professionals (Kraft et al., 2020). Thus, further research might consider using portraiture as an analytic methodology (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) to examine the workplace conditions in American public-school systems from the perspectives of first-year teachers, who experienced a systemwide induction program from one Georgia school system.

Concluding Thoughts

The United States of America bears noticeably high teacher attrition and turnover rates inside K-12 public-school systems. While teachers leaving the profession contributes to shortages in the teaching supply, new teacher induction offers experiential learning as a worthwhile response for simultaneously reducing turnover and cultivating instructional effectiveness. However, induction services nationwide lack clear types of universal policies and supports to improve retention consistently and substantially.

Workplace conditions especially for new teachers in critical areas such as high school mathematics, science, and special education require necessary technical assistance by means of individual support to retain them. Coaching that is highly beneficial within induction programs for public-school teachers must exemplify non-adversarial relationships to generate willingness in being a part of active professional learning and improvement. To add, early-career teachers must receive immediate emotional supports as a component of induction programs for managing difficulties in the work environment.

On another note, school administrators lack solid relationships with teachers entering the profession, though possessing the authority to direct and manage resources toward or away from programs that can support the development of favorable workplace conditions for building personnel partially through the selection of department chairs. State policymakers ought to codify department chairs as teacher leaders inside local schools with increases in competitive salary pay and responsibility to expand leadership roles within K-12 public education. With being frontline teacher leaders, department chairs provide instructional expertise to new teachers in local schools.

Broadly speaking, the Division of Human Resources at the central level must be ever more active in personnel management inside local systems' schools for improving teacher retention. Adding instructional supervisors doubly as induction coaches and system mentors while being agents of principal learning from the central office should deliver vital resources in local schools for new teachers. State policymakers must be open toward encouraging and monitoring innovative plans for providing ongoing induction activities to new teachers, based on local contexts.

Induction policies fundamentally respond to challenges in work environments new teachers encounter inside local schools. Even though local systems and schools must work together in implementing systemwide induction programs, ultimately state policymakers have to establish the blueprint for K-12 public education concerning the treatment of schoolteacher employees. The tools and resources extended in the teaching profession by state agencies and local systems should promote the honorable character of American exceptionalism to achieve a respectable life for the teacher workforce.

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