PRINCIPALS MENTORING TEACHERS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

by

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A DISSERTATION

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The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the mentoring relationship between principals and their teachers in regards to instructional practice at three demographically diverse elementary schools. Multiple data sources were used to conduct qualitative research which resulted in extensive data collection and analysis. The collection of data was conducted through direct observations, semi-structured interviews, and a review of documents provided by each research site. This case study used the theories of adult learning, instructional leadership and transformational leadership to explain the findings, provide focused implications for mentoring processes between principals and teachers, and to influence the direction of future research on the central phenomenon.

Data analysis involved the direct interpretation and categorical aggregation of themes and sub-themes through a coding process. The themes identified were providing support for teachers, engaging in formal and informal mentoring, and maintaining collaborative communication. Findings were also triangulated through cross case analysis. The specific sampling strategies used for this study were maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling. Maximum variation was employed to select three diverse sites based on demographics and location. Through criterion sampling, a total of twelve individuals were selected across all three sites to participate in the study. The
participants included one principal and three teachers from each site who responded to interview questions and were observed as they interacted with colleagues and students in their settings.

Research findings revealed that principals supported their teachers through positive vocabulary, instructional and material supplies, and emotional encouragement. Formal and informal mentoring practices were also evident among all research participants, in addition to collaborative communication between the principals and teachers. The findings were generally consistent with slight variations among three contrasting demographic settings based on the socio economic levels of low, middle, and high income classes.

Keywords: mentoring relationships, transformational leadership, instructional practices
DEDICATION

To my wife, Leigh, for her unwavering love and support throughout this entire process.

You are my partner in life and ministry. To my children and extended family for their encouragement. To my father, Henry F. Wren, Jr., and in memoriam to my mother, Mary E. Wren, grandmother, Annie R. English, and great aunt, Virginia Newsome.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Studies reveal that mentoring has a positive effect on the quality of classroom instruction, and that the principal plays a significant role as a means of support for the teacher. In research which explored the perspectives of mentors, mentees, and administrators on the success of teacher mentoring programs, it was determined that administrators are the key factor in improving teacher mentoring programs at school sites (Morrison, 2002). Golden (2003) also studied the principal’s role in the mentoring of new teachers and found that principals set standards for high expectations for performance, model the vision and mission of the school, engage the new teacher in reflecting on the teaching and learning process, and facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive orientation program through an open, collaborative relationship with the teacher. The process of mentoring provides an effective means of nurturing this relationship.

The mentoring process between principal and teacher has been shown to be an important component to the implementation of successful instructional practices in the classroom. In research that focuses on the school principal as mentor, the elements of support beginning teachers found helpful were: involved principals, classroom assistance from mentors, and collaborative colleagues (Kaiser, 2004). Sudsberry (2008) found that successful principals hold teachers accountable for instructional practice, and they work within an environment of shared leadership, with teachers actively participating in lead-
ing peers. In a case study on the induction process of first year and transferring elementary teachers, Lequier (2008) discovered that the principals clearly viewed themselves as primarily responsible for ensuring the successful induction of teachers new to their school, and the teachers valued the clear communication they received from their principals regarding expectations for teacher performance in student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

There is a gap in the research on how the principal at the elementary level provides mentorship in regards to instructional practices despite the fact that the topic on the role of principal in the teacher induction process has been widely studied. Therefore, the purpose of this case study is to gain an understanding of how elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices.

Research Questions

In order to better understand the central phenomenon of the relationship between school principals and the instructional practices of their teachers, the researcher in this study attempted to answer the following central research question: In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?

In an effort to effectively analyze this relationship, the researcher addressed the following sub-questions:

1. What criteria do principals employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support?
2. What mentoring behaviors do elementary school principals say they employ with teachers to facilitate change in instructional practices?

3. What mentoring behaviors do elementary school teachers say their principals demonstrate to facilitate change in instructional practices?

4. What are the principal’s perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring they provide to their teachers to improve instructional practices?

5. What are the teacher’s perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring provided by their principals to improve instructional practices?

Assumptions

As a qualitative researcher I made the following assumptions in regard to this study:

1. As a researcher who regularly monitors and evaluates teachers to improve their instructional practices in the classroom, I believe I can effectively bracket my experiences around the central phenomenon.

2. The study participants to be recruited at each site would have direct experience with formal and/or informal mentoring, and therefore be the best informants of the central phenomenon.

3. My knowledge and understanding of the central phenomenon would increase based on the responses drawn from the participants to the interview questions I developed.

4. Those who participate in the study would have a positive experience with the researcher during data collection.
5. An ethical and trustworthy rapport between the researcher and study participants would produce accurate findings in regards to the mentoring process between the principals and teachers.

Theoretical Perspective

In case study research, Yin (1994) stated that theory can be used to guide the study in an exploratory way. In addition, Creswell (1994) posited that theory is employed toward the end of the study providing a “theory-after” perspective in which other theories are compared and contrasted with the theory developed in the case study. Creswell (1998) also noted that the presence and influence of theory in qualitative research varied widely among researchers. He referenced a number of examples when specifically reviewing the application of theory in case study research: a researcher for whom theory framed the course of the study; another’s work in which theory played neither a role in guiding the study nor influenced the interpretation of the data; and research in which theory was discussed following data collection and analysis. This case study utilized the theories of adult learning, Knowles (1980), instructional leadership (Cook, 2000; Gill, 2008; Hackman, 2001; Sternberg & Vroom, 2002), and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Day, 2001; Jackson, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003) to explain the findings, provide focused implications for mentoring processes between principals and teachers, and to influence the direction of future research on the central phenomenon.
Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to the administrators and teachers participating in formal and/or informal mentoring process at three elementary schools in central Alabama.

2. This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of the administrators and teachers participating in mentoring processes at three specific research sites. Experiences and perceptions of educators not directly participating in the mentoring processes are beyond the scope of this study.

Limitations

1. Data collection was limited to interviews, observations, and documents from participants at only three purposefully selected sites.

2. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore elementary school principals mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices.

3. There was no intent to imply generalizability of the findings.

Significance of the Study

The results of this multiple case study research were intended to provide valuable insight and information to a specific audience. The audience included school administrators, and instructional faculty members who may benefit from the findings in this study regarding the mentoring processes they engage in to improve teaching practices and strategies in the classroom. Students may also benefit as recipients of a higher degree of instructional quality from their teachers who have engaged in effective mentoring expe-
riences with their principals. Additionally, school district sponsored mentoring programs may be reevaluated and redesigned based on the findings in this study.

Definitions of Terms

1. **Principalship**: The post of principal in a school setting.

2. **Mentoring**: Traditionally, mentoring has been defined as, “an intense interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced colleague (mentor) and a less experienced junior colleague (protégé) in which the mentor provides support, direction, and feedback regarding career plans and personal development” (Russell & Adams, 1997, p. 2).

3. **Mentor**: A person with experience, expertise, wisdom, and/or power who teach, guide, counsel, and help a less experienced or less knowledgeable person to develop personally and professionally.

4. **Mentee**: A person who is the recipient of the experience, expertise, or wisdom of the mentor.

5. **Micropolitics**: Strategies which individuals and groups adopt in order to ensure that their interests are served in the decision-making process.

6. **Charisma**: A rare personal quality attributed to leaders who arouse fervent popular devotion and enthusiasm.

7. **Novice**: A person new to a field or activity; a beginner.

8. **Teacher Induction**: The period of transition for the beginning teacher from the status of beginner to professional.
Organization of the Study

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction which includes a statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, assumptions, theoretical perspective, limitations and delimitations, significance and feasibility of the study. Chapter Two focuses on a review of related literature and research. Methodology, addressed in Chapter Three, describes the tradition of inquiry, philosophical assumptions, research sites and participants, data collection, data analysis, verification procedures, ethical considerations, and role of the researcher. Chapter Four focuses on a thematic analysis of the study’s findings. Chapter Five provides implications for practicing educators engaged in the mentoring processes, and will make recommendations for future research.

Summary

Current research indicates that the position of principal plays a vital role in the success of the classroom teacher. The success of the teacher is measured in terms of the quality of instruction he/she provides and longevity in the profession through teacher induction and retention. To provide insight into the research, this qualitative study focused on mentoring processes, instructional leadership practices, and related theories and concepts. Interviews were conducted along with personal observations and document gathering to inform the mentoring practices between principals and teachers at the elementary school level.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with a review of existing literature on mentoring and the mentoring practices of principals. The review will provide a framework for the context of this study. In order to understand mentoring practices employed by principals, it is necessary to explore the background of mentoring, the mentoring movement, the definition and benefits of mentoring, and the progression of new teacher mentoring programs. The changing role of the principal from manager to instructional leader will be explored through the lenses of adult learning theory and transformational leadership and the role of principal as mentor for instructional improvement through the concept of instructional leadership.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was comprised of the related concepts of adult learning theory, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership.

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory is based on the premise that adults and children are distinct populations with unique learning needs. As a pioneer in the field of adult learning theory, Knowles (1970) emphasized that adults have prior experiences to draw upon and can
manage their own learning in a self-directed way. Knowles devised six assumptions of adult learning which are implicit to this study on methodologies of mentoring and instruction. Knowles (1980) identified the six key assumptions as follows:

1. Adults learn best when they are involved in diagnosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating their own learning;
2. The role of the facilitator is to create and maintain a supportive climate that promotes conditions necessary for learning to take place;
3. Adult learners have a need to be self-directing;
4. Readiness for learning increases when there is a specific need to know;
5. Life’s reservoir of experience is a primary learning source; the life experiences of others enrich the learning process;
6. Adult learners have an inherent need for immediacy of application. Adults respond best to learning when they are internally motivated to learn.

Subsequent theories on adult learning have further described characteristics of learning experiences and the nature of self-direction in adulthood. Other adult learning theories include experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991), formal and informal learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), critical learning (Welton, 1995), and situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

**Instructional Leadership**

**Concepts.** For the purpose of this study, the conceptual theories and models of leadership which have shaped and guided the principalship will be examined. Over 40 theories of leadership and 1,500 different definitions of the term have been identified in
the literature (Bass 1990a; Edwards, 2000). Leadership has been depicted in several ways using metaphorical and concrete terminology. One definition casts leadership as a performing art form that uses the jazz band metaphor to allude to several features of the creative organization and suggests shared leadership can be a source of creativity and innovation. Another describes leadership as the practical application of a science in which an organized body of knowledge has been accumulated on a specific subject. Still others view leadership as a concept which is based on how often it is used in research rather than on scientific merit (Gill, 2008; Hackman, 2001; Sternberg & Vroom, 2002).

Towards the beginning of the 20th century, leadership was defined as “the ability to impress the will of the leader on those led and induce obedience, respect, loyalty, and cooperation” (Moore, 1927). In the 1930s, leadership was defined by major authors as “the activity of influencing people to cooperation toward some goal which they come to find desirable” (Tead, 1935, p. 20). The group approach to understanding leadership began to dominate the leadership literature in the 1940s, while the 1950s defined leadership as a relationship that developed shared goals (Halpin & Winer, 1952). Shared goals continued to be the focus of leadership theories in the 60s. In the 1970s, Burns (1978) defined leadership as a mobilization process by individuals with certain motives, values, and access to resources in a context of competition and conflict in the pursuit of goals. More recently, leadership is spoken of as either a position or a process (Bradshaw, 2002).

Current research indicates a widespread view that it is both possible and necessary to develop a new, more integrated conceptual framework for leadership. Within this new paradigm, there are four dimensions or forms of ‘intelligence’ that undergird the concept of leading, 1) the intellectual or cognitive, 2) the emotional, 3) the spiritual, and 4) the
behavioral (Gill, 2008). According to Moxley (2000), these dimensions parallel the four arenas of the human condition: the mind (rational thought), the heart (emotions or feelings), the spirit, and the body.

The intellectual or cognitive dimension of leadership is based on the ability to perceive and understand information, reason with it, imagine possibilities, use intuition, make judgments, solve problems, and make decisions (Gill, 2008). It has been argued that these abilities are necessary for creating vision, mission, shared values and strategies for pursuing vision and mission that ‘win’ people’s mind. Related to this study, these are all traits of the successful school principal.

The emotional dimension of leadership is a concept that historically has not been discussed in the workplace or in literature on leadership and performance. However, researchers have described how emotionally insensitive attitudes and behaviors of managers in organizations can create “emotional pain” that becomes toxic and debilitates the organization. Listening to employees, on the other hand, is a way of “cleansing emotional toxins” (Frost, 2003; Nordstrom, 2000). Additional research has also been conducted in the area of effective leadership coupled with emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is a concept which includes the domains of knowing and managing one’s emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships (Maulding, 2002). The emotional dimension of leadership is a crucial, and often requested, function of the principalship.

Another conceptual dimension not usually associated with leadership development is spiritual leadership. Fry (2003), defined spiritual leadership as:
creating a vision wherein organization members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference and establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others, thereby producing a sense of membership fully understood and appreciated. Spiritual leadership taps into the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual survival so they become more organizationally committed and productive (p. 695).

The concept of spirituality in leadership relates to the principalship through an emphasis on shared vision within the organization or school. Spiritual leadership can also be seen in the working relationship between the principal and teacher who share a sense of calling based on care and concern for the students they seek to educate.

The fourth dimension, behavioral leadership, involves the development of skills and abilities to choose and use the appropriate leadership role for the situation (Boal & Hooijberg, 2000). This dimension is important because while leaders may be able to understand and discern the need for particular types of behavior, they may not be able to act in the appropriate manner (Gill, 2008). Therefore, the interaction between thinking and behaving must be considered in behavioral leadership styles (Johnson, Daniels, & Huff, 2001). Effective time management, for example, requires emotional skills such as self-discipline and self-control in addition to cognitive skills. This more integrated conceptual framework for leadership can also be applied to the area of instructional leadership which has become an important responsibility of the school administrator.
Instructional Leadership Models. Instructional leadership has been defined as “leading learning communities” where staff members meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, work together to problem solve, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn. People in a learning community “own the problem” and become agents of its solution. In the late 1970s, instructional leadership models emerged from early research on effective schools. These schools identified strong, directive leadership from the principal focused on curriculum and instruction as a characteristic of elementary schools that were effective at teaching children in poor urban communities. In the United States, instructional leadership became the “model of choice” based upon its adoption by most principal leadership academies which provided professional development for practicing school administrators (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). From research on instructionally effective schools, Hallinger and Murphy (1985a) suggested an early classification of the role of the instructional leader, which included “defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate” (p. 220). Murphy (1990) further developed the characterization of the instructional leader, which included the following strategies: a) promoting quality instruction; b) supervising and evaluating instruction; c) allocating and protecting instructional time; d) coordinating the curriculum; e) promoting content coverage; and f) monitoring student progress.

Instructional leadership has emerged over the past 25 years as a prominent conceptual model that has evolved over time to focus on improved educational outcomes through educational leadership exercised by school administrators and teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999b; Southworth, 2002). Additionally, there has been a movement
away from the managerial, authoritarian, and top-down leadership styles that are typically associated with the science of administration toward collegial and empowering forms of principal leadership as reflected in educational research (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Heck & Hallinger, 1999).

*Characteristics of instructional leaders.* Early studies of effective schools, which focused on poor urban schools in need of substantial change, revealed instructional leaders to be conceived as “strong, directive leaders” (Edmonds, 1979, p.15). Further research revealed instructional leaders from impoverished school settings lead from a combination of expertise and charisma. These leaders were referred to as hands-on principals, ‘hip-deep’ in curriculum and instruction, and unafraid of working with teachers on the improvement of teaching and learning. They were described as goal-oriented, focused on the improvement of student academic outcomes, and content to pursue a narrower mission than many of their peers. A review of the literature further described instructional leaders as culture builders who seek to create an ‘academic press’ that fosters high expectations and standards for students, as well as for teachers (Cuban, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Mortimore, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1984).

Bottoms and O’Neill (2001) identified three key skills for school leaders to effectively lead schools toward higher student achievement: (1) an understanding of instructional practices that contribute to student achievement; (2) the ability to work with personnel to foster continuous student improvement; and (3) the capacity to provide the necessary support as teachers utilize appropriate curriculum and instructional practices. In addition to key skill sets, there are also essential instructional leadership behaviors that
have been associated with the effective practices of principals. Behar-Horenstein and Ornstein (1996) recommended the following behaviors for successful principals: a) model the use of effective instructional strategies; b) promote professional development; c) evaluate student outcomes; d) promote the use of responsive and authentic forms of evaluation; e) demonstrate the use of varied evaluation strategies; and f) examine the congruence between taught and tested curriculum. Heck, Larsen, and Marcoulides (1990) also found that effective principals are directly involved in making decisions about curriculum and instructional strategies. These skills are interrelated, overlapping, and provide a better understanding of the function of the principal in the area of instructional leadership.

In practical terms, the National Association for Elementary School Principals (October, 2001) delineated six standards for "what principals should know and be able to do" (p. 5). Based on current research and best practices in instructional leadership, these standards include: (1) leading schools in a way that puts student and adult learning at the center; (2) promoting the academic success of all students; (3) creating and demanding rigorous content and instruction; (4) creating a climate of continuous learning for adults; (5) using multiple sources of data as a diagnostic tool; and (6) actively engaging the community (p. 5). Further research indicates that principals must also function as manager, politician, human resource director, and symbolic leader in their schools (Bolman & Deal, 2002).

Research has shown that principals must be more than an instructional leader in order to effectively put these skills into practice. Instructional theories of the past, which placed the focus of leadership solely on one person, have been replaced with practices that are more collaborative in nature and require a different approach. This type of leader-
ship requires a deeper level of commitment that seeks to lead others through transformative processes.

Transformational Leadership

During the 1970s and 1980s, transformational leadership was propagated as a theory in the general leadership literature which arose from the study of rebel leadership and revolution in the early 1970s (Bass, 1997; Downton, 1973; Howell & Avolio, 1993). However, it was a political historian and biographer, James McGregor Burns, who first described ‘transforming leadership’ and contrasted it with transactional leadership (Burns, 1978).

By definition, the transformational leader engages in shared or distributed leadership which seeks change through a bottom-up approach (Day, 2001; Jackson, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003). Contrasted with transactional or manage-based leadership, which seeks to maintain the status quo, transformational leadership “seeks to envision and create the future by synthesizing and extending the aspirations of members of the organizational community” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 10). Transforming or transformational leadership occurs when both leaders and followers raise each others’ level of motivation and sense of higher purpose. Comparatively, transactional leadership involves a transaction, or exchange, between the leaders and followers. Further, transformational leadership is concerned with the values of liberty, justice and equality; whereas, transactional leadership concerns values implicit in the means of an act – ‘modal’ values like responsibility, fairness, honesty, and keeping promises (Ciulla, 1999; Gill, 2008).
Transformational leadership is called for in leading change that is nonlinear, multifaceted, uncertain, and even chaotic at times (English & Larson, 1996; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). Patterson (1997) defined four distinct levels of change within an organization, a) culture change, b) pocket change, c) compliance change, and d) event change. Patterson described each of these levels in terms of four concentric circles with cultural change at the center:

1. Culture change is driven by the actions, speech, beliefs and values of the organization;

2. Pocket change is limited to certain affecting particular segments of the organization rather than the entire organization itself;

3. Compliance change occurs when organizational members must deal with changes forced on them by forces outside the group;

4. Event change is the least impactful to an organization because it is typically based on trends as opposed to real changes in core values and beliefs. (pp. 2-5)

According to Schwahn and Spady (1998), cultural change in schools is intensely interpersonal and the critical qualities of clarity of values and purpose, authenticity, candor, trust, and integrity should be applied by transformational leaders in order to promote productive relationships. In demonstrating authentic leadership, the authors delineate three key roles that transformational leaders play. Authentic leaders (1) create and sustain a compelling personal and organizational purpose, (2) are the lead learners in their organization, and (3) model the core values of the organization and principles of professionalism. In terms of the principal leading transformationally, these changes can directly affect the culture of the school.
Transformational Behaviors of Principals

The New Leadership Project, in conjunction with eight urban and rural school districts in south central Colorado, reported the results of a two year research endeavor in which three specific recommendations were made regarding the transformational roles of principals and teachers who served in a leadership capacity. The first recommendation was for teachers to assume primary responsibility for personal and professional development as the employee (teacher) and for the manager (principal) to define success by monitoring the leadership development of those under his/her direct supervision. As outlined through the leadership development program, originally created by the Johnson & Johnson Corporation, this program was referred to as the 200% concept, in which the teacher and principal concurrently, but separately, take 100% responsibility for their own development. The second recommendation described the principal’s role as building the leadership potential of teachers in the school by offering support and structuring leadership opportunities that can yield significant results. The final recommendation was that “teacher leaders” function as “active protégés” who engage in their own development by using school projects to demonstrate leadership abilities in areas where they have had little or no practical experience. (Ballek, O’Rourke, Provenzano, & Bellamy, 2005; Fulmer, 2001).

Transformational behaviors of principals can also be found in research conducted using the Alabama Torchbearer Schools Program. The Torchbearer program was created to recognize high-poverty, high-performing public schools in Alabama. To have been considered for recognition, schools must have met the following three criteria: a) at least 70% of the student population receiving free/reduced meals, b) scored above the 50th
percentile in all subjects at all grade levels on the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT10) or the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, and c) have at least 66% of their students scoring at Level 3 or Level 4 on the Alabama Reading and Math Test (Alabama Leadership Academy, 2004-2005, p. v).

In a study of the differences in school principals’ leadership and management behaviors in high-performing and low performing schools serving high poverty populations, principals in Torchbearer Schools demonstrated specific transformational behaviors (Lindahl, 2009). First, the principals were seen as providing better access to appropriate instructional materials, resources, and instructional technology, promoting better classroom physical environments, providing a safe school environment, ensuring that the school grounds and buildings were clean and well-maintained, providing teachers with sufficient access to office equipment and supplies, and shielding teachers from disruptions, thereby allowing them to focus more on educating students. These principals were also perceived as helping to develop a better climate of trust and mutual respect, consistently enforcing rules for student conduct, and encouraging faculty to meet high performance standards.

Second, Torchbearer principals excelled at providing feedback to help teachers improve teaching, and fostering a culture where the faculty is committed to helping every student learn. They were recognized for exceeding their peers’ performance in giving emphasis to and enhancing teacher knowledge and skills, aligning professional learning opportunities with the school’s continuous improvement plan, providing teachers with opportunities for professional development, providing teacher structured opportunities to learn from one another, encouraging teachers to reflect on their own practice, and encouraging和支持 reasoned risk taking.
Third, principals of Torchbearer Schools effectively demonstrated the use of student data to improve student learning and used the analysis of student learning data to guide professional learning opportunities. They also expressed a desire to involve teachers in educational decisions, included teachers in decisions about continuous school improvement, trusted them to make sound instructional decisions, and encouraged them to participate in professional leadership activities. These principals made opportunities available for members of the school community to contribute school success, developed supportive community relationships, and led the school to take steps to solve problems.

Another example of principals with transformational behaviors can be found in research on 90/90/90 schools. In 1995, Douglas Reeves coined the term 90/90/90 schools after conducting observations in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These schools were designated as 90/90/90 when 90% or more of the students were eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90% or more of the students were members of a minority groups, and 90% or more of the students met the district or state academic standards in reading or another area. A common set of behaviors among principals and teachers in 90/90/90 schools are: a) focus on academic achievement, b) clear curriculum choices, c) frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement, d) an emphasis on nonfiction writing, and e) collaborative scoring of student work (Reeves, 2003).

Transformational Leadership Approaches/Models That Impact Teacher Mentoring

Anderson (2004) described three approaches to school leadership that have potential implications for the mentoring relationship between the principal and teacher. He termed these the buffered approach, the interactive approach, and the contested approach.
While each term describes a different method of conducting leadership, not every approach is necessarily transformational.

In the buffered approach, the principal is usually surrounded by “teacher leaders” who “buffer” him or her from the rest of the staff. These leaders serve to insulate the principal from outside influences and mediate relationships with others. Representatives of committees, chairpersons, and department heads are examples of teacher leaders who may operate in this manner.

In the interactive approach, principals lead through distributive decision-making in a highly interactive and extensively involved instructional staff. Principals and staff maintain visibility with varying degrees of interrelated responsibilities. Typical of transformational leadership, interactive principals enable greater teacher leadership through areas the teachers find meaningful. Consequently, staff members become more connected with both the external and internal contexts of decision-making which can come from the individual or groups of staff. According to the research, this promotes a healthy environment for transformational leadership and the principal-teacher mentoring relationship (Anderson, 2002b; Gronn, 1996; Leithwood, Janzi, & Steinbauch, 1997).

Finally, Anderson (2004) presents a contested approach. In the contested approach, the principal operates outside the organizational loop, and becomes positioned against the teacher leaders. In this situation the principal is outside the power structure of the teachers in his or her school and may be aligned against them. Although the principal may have supporters, they are not actively enlisted as change agents. When decision making occurs, decisions are often contested due to a lack of trust and confidence between the principal and teacher. Based on the best practices of mentoring, in which deci-
sion-making is a shared enterprise and relationships are built on trust, (Orpen, 1997; Ragans, 1997), it would appear that the contested approach to school leadership would be the least successful method for establishing an effective principal-teacher mentoring relationship.

Another transformational leadership model, which describes the type of approach principals take in mentoring their teachers, is based on extensive empirical research by Bass and Avolio (1994), and grounded in Burn’s (1978) seminal work in this field. According to the Bass and Avolio model, transformational leaders tend to use one or more of the four ‘I’s: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation and idealized influence.

*Individualized Consideration.* Transformational leaders display individualized consideration by actively listening to their constituents, identifying the individual’s personal concerns, needs and abilities, and providing matching challenges and opportunities for the individual to learn in a supportive environment. The transformational leader gives developmental feedback through delegation of ideas and peer coaching and practices the habit of MBWA, or Management By Walking Around. The MBWA method has been promoted to school principals as a means of effective supervisory leadership and principals have been encouraged to implement it in their daily routines.

*Intellectual Stimulation.* Transformational leaders use intellectual stimulation to question the status quo, present new ideas to followers and challenge them to think, and encourage imagination and creativity in rethinking assumptions of old ways of doing
things. Intellectual stimulation is not intended to publicly criticize errors, mistakes, failures or ideas or approaches that differ from their own but rather support principals to encourage intuition as well as logic as a recipe for personal growth. Together with individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation is the basis for an effective coaching and mentoring role which would serve well the relationship between the principal and teacher.

Inspirational Motivation. Transformational leaders display inspirational motivation by communicating a clear vision of the possible future and aligning organizational and personal goals so that those they lead can achieve these goals. Transformational leaders treat threats and problems as opportunities to learn and provide meaning and challenge to the work of their followers with appealing and exciting forms of speech and writing. Consequently, followers want to meet expectations and display commitment, not merely compliance, to the vision, goals and tasks through motivation and inspiration.

Idealized Influence. Finally, transformational leaders display idealized influence, something closely related to charisma. Transformational leaders express confidence in the vision, take personal responsibility for actions, and display a sense of purpose, determination, persistence and trust in other people. They emphasize accomplishments rather than failures and gain the admiration, respect, trust and confidence of others by personally demonstrating extraordinary ability of one kind or another. Transformational leaders put the needs of other people before their own, and they display high standards of ethical and moral behavior. As a result of these behaviors, the leaders become role models with
whom people can identify, follow and trust. Trust is perhaps the single most important factor in transformational leadership, and serves as an essential component in the mentoring relationship between the principal and teacher (Bass, 1997).

In their work on transformative leadership, Rafferty and Griffin (2004) present a variation on transformational leadership models with the following five attributes of effective leadership: (1) vision- expressing an idealized picture of the future based around organizational values, (2) inspirational communication-expressing positive and encouraging messages about the organization and making statements to build motivation and confidence, (3) intellectual stimulation- enhancing employee's interest in and awareness of problems and increasing their ability to think about problems in new ways, (4) supportive leadership -- expressing concern for followers and taking account of their individual needs, and (5) personal recognition -- providing rewards such as praise and acknowledging effort for achievement of specified goals. These five dimensions are also fundamental to a healthy mentoring relationship between the principal and teacher because they provide essential components of vision, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, and personal recognition.

Background of Mentoring

The concept of mentoring can be traced back as far as the writings of Greek mythology where the god, Mentor, is introduced in Homer’s Odyssey. Homer described Mentor as a wise person, guide, and/or stand-in parent who assists in the development and growth of the protégé (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). The mentee, Telemachus, son of Odysseus, is left in Mentor’s care who serves “as a sage advisor to the younger man,
helping him grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially” (Jonson, 2008, p. 7). According to Smith (2005), Mentor carried out his duties toward Telemachus with a purpose and specific goals in order to fulfill the desire of Odysseus to foster a type of nurturing relationship between his son and his friend. Smith also pointed out that Odysseus was proactive and intentional in making arrangements for Mentor and Telemachus to meet and get to know each other which facilitated the relationship. From these early writings of classical literature, we can see the framework of the mentoring concept begin to emerge. The transitional process from novice to professional mirrors the transition from youth to adulthood as described in classical literature. Building upon this foundation, mentoring in modern times has become a commonly used process to provide training, instruction, and support from the mentor to the mentee.

The Mentoring Movement

Contemporary mentors are found in many facets of society such as social programs for youth, athletic and fine arts organizations, and in the professional and service arenas which frequently incorporate internship agreements between the skilled professional and the novice. The first formal mentoring program in the United States began in New York in 1904 and was named Big Brothers/Big Sisters. The Big Brothers/Big Sisters program was initiated by a New York court judge who believed that the harsh treatment provided to children in the judicial system is what led to recidivism. This judge believed that children could be provided with the tools needed to reduce criminal behavior through guidance and support (Miller, 2002).
Miller (2002) asserted that during the 1960s and 70s the mentoring process began to enter its second wave of development in which it was viewed as a corporate movement capable of providing women and minorities with the competitive advantage needed for improving their position in the organization. According to Miller, the corporate context changed the manner in which mentoring was applied and even taught to aspiring leaders through the development of training manuals, books, and seminars for mentees.

The 1970s saw a burst of eye-catching articles on the importance of mentoring to career advancement (Collins & Scott, 1978; Kanter, 1977; Levinson, D., Darrow, Klein, Levinson, M., & McKee, 1978; Roche, 1979). Mentoring was heralded as necessary to achieving personal and professional success, and mentoring programs were established in schools, corporations, and professional associations. In the late 1970s, mentoring became a new management technique for the business world. Formalized programs were quickly adopted by organizations with the intent to identify and fast track promising new employees (Field, 2001).

By the 1980s in the U.S. mentoring began to focus once again on programs which served youth in America. During this time the federal government implemented wide-scale initiatives to bolster mentoring among the nation’s youth. Government advocates believed that mentoring programs sponsored through federal and state initiatives would improve educational outcomes for America’s youth and society in general (Miller, 2002).

In 2000, youth programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and GEAR-UP, recruited over one million volunteer mentors, and both programs were targeted to double in size in the next few years. Manza (2001) reported that approximately 39% of the mentoring programs in the United States were community-at-large-based, 29% were school-
based, 19% were community-organization-based, 2% were faith-based, 2% were business-based, and 1% was email-based. The author further stated that while 15.7 million young people wanted or needed mentors, only 500,000 to 700,000 had them at the time. From 1996 to 2001 there was a 40% growth in mentoring programs, 70% percent of that growth in school-based programs due to the growing body of evidence documenting the positive effects of mentoring programs with youth (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002).

Current mentoring programs have progressed to the point where the mentee or learner now plays a more active role which is congruent with the phrase learning partnership (Zachary, 2000). The new mentoring paradigm has shifted from the traditional model so that “wisdom is not passed from an authoritarian teacher to a supplicant student, but is discovered in a learning relationship in which both stand to gain a greater understanding of the workplace and world” (Aubrey & Cohen, 1995, p. 161). This collaborative model has led to a more dynamic process of mentoring characterized by differing lengths of time for the relationship to develop and the use of multiple mentors to address unique learner needs.

In the past, it would be customary for a mentoring relationship to continue for a period of years. However, the mentoring agreement timeframe has been shortened and is linked to accomplishing specific learning targets as opposed to broad, diffuse goals. The use of multiple mentors over a lifetime, sometimes simultaneously, has become the standard over traditional mentoring programs which were limited to one mentor per mentee. In a recent study of Generation Xers, (individuals born between 1965 and 1980), three-
fours of those interviewed preferred having several mentors with varying levels of experience and expertise (Rodgers, 1999; Zachary, 2000).

Current mentoring practices continue to be service-oriented with the business community’s focus on providing its employees with continuous training opportunities and ongoing professional development (Wong, 2005). Wong also noted that this mentoring practice enabled the employee to feel connected to others and to make contributions as members of a professional learning community. Furthermore, the necessity for developing mentoring activities has increased due to the rapidly changing information environment, making them more available to all information professionals and involving more leaders as mentors (Field, 2001).

Definitions and Benefits of Mentoring

Definitions

Research on mentoring provides an array of definitions and descriptions of the relationship between the mentor and mentee. One perspective portrays the mentor as an expert and the mentee seeking out the expert for knowledge, advocacy, and consultation while another describes the mentoring relationship as voluntary, intensive, and empowering (Blauvelt & Spath, 2008; Searby, 2009).

A third definition depicts the mentor as a senior position with the mentee in a junior or subordinate role who receives emotional and career support for long-term growth. A comprehensive definition of mentoring describes the mentoring relationship as “a humanistic, confidential and social relationship between people in which one individual functions as a sponsor, guide, and role model.” (Allen, 2006, p. 30; Katherine, 2007).
This is accomplished through a process that “awakens our confidence in our abilities and opens doors that lead to personal or professional growth which goes beyond teaching knowledge or skills or the mere passing on of information” (Allen, 2006, p. 30; Katherine, 2007).

In the field of education, mentoring has been defined as a practice of professionals who provide beginning teachers with support, guidance, and assistance for success and career growth. The mentoring relationship in educational circles has also been described as a one-on-one relationship in which the mentor can serve as a friend, guide, counselor, supporter, and teacher (Jonson, 2008).

**Functions of Mentoring.** Research has shown that mentors provide three functions to mentees: psychosocial support, role modeling, and career development. Psychosocial support includes providing acceptance and friendship and confirming the mentees’ behavior. Role modeling deals with attitudes, values and behaviors that guide the mentee, and career development involves coaching and protecting the mentee from adverse organizational forces, providing challenging assignments, sponsoring advancement, and fostering positive exposure and visibility (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). While Kram (1985) originally included role modeling as a psychosocial support function, subsequent research has identified role modeling as a distinct mentoring function (Orpen, 1997; Ragins, 1997; Scandura, 1992).
Characteristics of Effective Mentoring. An effective mentor is characterized as one who recognizes and affirms potential and offers a safe place to reflect, ask questions, and to fail without fear of retribution. An effective mentor also provides a model of vulnerability celebrates the progress of the mentee and maintains an interest in growth and learning. There are also specific behaviors attributed to successful mentoring practices which include reflective listening, defining and maintaining appropriate boundaries, participating in accountability, giving grace abundantly, and asking provocative questions (Searby, 2007).

Research has shown that effective mentors demonstrate a genuine commitment to their new role and responsibilities, demonstrate an acceptance of their skills and levels of experience, and display a willingness to examine and improve one’s own interpersonal communication skills. They also demonstrate the ability to adopt a coaching role for mentees, show the ability to continuously model professional and personal growth, and model optimism and hope, even during adverse conditions (Rowley, 2005; Villani, 2006). The Educational Alliance & NAESP (2003), describe effective mentoring as “a process that is much more sophisticated than simply sharing craft knowledge when called upon by organizational newcomers” (p. 11). They further recommend the establishment of a learning contract between the mentor and mentee through a proactive instructional process.

According to Daloz (1999), there are three components of an effective mentoring relationship: support, challenge, and vision. Daloz described support as “the activity of holding, providing a safe space where the student can contact her need for fundamental trust” (p. 209). The author argued that challenges in the mentoring process are best handled by giving feedback because it provides the means for engaging in discussion, setting
up dichotomies, constructing hypotheses, and setting high standards. For the mentee, these challenges can include being willing to risk, sacrifice, be taught, respect, and persevere (Searby, 2007). For the mentor, it is providing vision in several ways. These include role-modeling specific behaviors, reminding the mentee of tradition and what lies ahead, and holding up the mirror of self-awareness, which results in extending the vision of the mentee (Daloz, 1999). When support, challenge, and vision are evident in the mentor-mentee co-learning relationship, stagnation is replaced by growth. As stated by DePree (1989), “In the end it is important to remember that we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are” (p. 87).

Fibkins (2002) described effective mentors based on Webster’s Dictionary definition of a mentor as wise, loyal advisor, a loyal friend, teacher, and coach. He described mentors as people who have experienced and understand the realities of teaching and classroom dynamics, who understand that teaching is hard work and that renewing oneself is not easy. He also stated that wise mentors understand that teachers all arrive in the classroom with biases, pre-made judgments, and prejudices, and understand that bad times, failure, or burn-out can happen to every teacher, even the most successful ones.

As to the relationship between mentor and mentee, Fibkins (2002) recognized that by its very nature a successful mentoring relationship will change over time, and not every teacher will embrace the concept of mentoring. Consequently, wise mentors must possess highly developed communication skills that can be used in a variety of interactions with mentees. He also stated that wise mentors understand how to help teachers find and define their best teaching selves by helping mentees clarify the many roles they play in the classroom, school, and community.
These characteristics reflect effective mentoring practices that are essential to the mentor-mentee relationship shared between the principal and teacher. Research has also shown that there are practical benefits of engaging in a mentoring relationship.

Benefits of Mentoring

Participation in a mentoring relationship for academic, career, and personal success is considered both an accepted and advisable practice for professionals. (McCor- 
mick, 1991). O’Reilly (2001) stated, “Research across a broad range of professions has consistently demonstrated that employees who are involved in mentoring relationships report higher levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of commitment to their companies” (p. 44). O’Reilly further reported that in a recent study “35 percent of employees who do not receive regular mentoring planned to look for another job within 12 months while only 16 percent of those with good mentors planned to do so” (p. 51).

Murphy and Ensher (2006), contended that organizations benefit from mentoring through creating positive relationships that improve job satisfaction and produce a new generation of managers that can provide the organization with support over the long-term. They also asserted that mentees often benefit from professional development which improves “access to promotions, pay raises, and increased career and job satisfaction.” (p. 25).

In a California study conducted on the benefits of effective mentoring for teachers and their students, it was determined that beginning teachers who were well-mentored developed skills that enhanced their classroom preparation and management. These teachers more consistently (a) used instructional practices that improved student
achievement; (b) used more complex, challenging instructional activities that enabled students to learn advanced thinking skills and cooperative work habits; (c) engaged in long-term planning of curriculum and instruction, ensuring that students were taught the entire set of skills and knowledge to be learned during the year; (d) motivated diverse students to engage in productive learning activities; and (e) gave the same complex, challenging assignments to classes of diverse pupils as they did to classes that were ethnically and culturally homogeneous (Bartel, 2005).

**Benefits for mentees.** Potential benefits for mentees include increased satisfaction with their overall education and training experience, higher grades and increased scholarly activity, professional acculturation and skill development, networking opportunities, employment and early career assistance, professional identity development, and psychological health benefits (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991; Johnson, 2002; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Wilson & Johnson, 2001). These mentees often develop a network of support they can utilize throughout their careers as new skills, knowledge, and behaviors are acquired that foster the abilities to achieve success in their careers (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Daresh, 2004; Howley, Chadwich, & Howley, 2002; Reyes, 2003).

**Benefits for mentors.** Potential benefits to mentors include professional stimulation and collaboration, personal fulfillment, friendship and support, motivation to remain current in one’s field, and networking opportunities (Johnson, 2003; Johnson, Koch, Fallow, & Hume, 2000; Russell & Adams, 1997). Murphy and Ensher (2006) reported an
additional benefit, “mentors may gain an important confidant—a person to whom they can pass along their wisdom—and great satisfaction from knowing that they are helping another individual” (p. 27).

Researchers have indicated that mentoring has played a vital role in the field of education, particularly for the classroom teacher. For the purpose of this study, it is important to review the history of teacher mentoring and its' impact on retention and quality of classroom instruction.

Progression of Teacher Mentoring

Mentoring for teachers in the United States is not a new concept. According to Ganser (2005), it was during the 1960s that formal mentoring programs began to emerge through the enlistment of veteran teachers who provided guidance and support for new teachers. In the early 1980s, mentoring became a key strategy to support teachers in the United States (Marable & Raimondi, 2007). Over the past two decades, it had become evident that teachers, especially those new to the profession, are in need of guidance and support from their experienced colleagues. Stonaker (2007) noted that efforts to improve outcomes for education had expanded the use of mentoring for educators to include programs that provide new educators with mentors during their first few years of training. These mentoring programs often represent more formal mentoring programs that pair established teachers with new hires. This has led to the development of new teacher mentoring programs to “ensure that the new teacher to a particular site fits in quickly, with least disturbance to the ways that ‘business as usual’ is conducted” (MacCallum, 2007, p. 134). Efforts such as these which target the needs of the novice teacher in a mentoring
relationship have been in response to the declining teacher retention rate in the United States.

As a result of teacher retirement, reduced class size, and increased student enrollment, it is estimated that more than two million teachers will be hired in the next ten years. This staggering statistic exists partly because half of all public school teachers in the United States leave the profession in their first five years. Consequently, new-teacher mentoring has become increasingly popular and necessary based on positive outcomes of these induction programs. Because of these trends, there have been renewed efforts to improve mentoring practices based on best practices of current research (Flynn & Nolan, 2008; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson, 2001; Villani, 2006).

**Mentoring Support for New Teachers**

Hicks, Glasgow, and McNary (2005) recommended research-based support strategies for mentoring new teachers which include concrete instructional models and a commitment to professional development. The authors proposed nine strategies designed for effective teacher induction through the mentoring process. First, do not underestimate the rigors of the induction period for new teachers. According to the authors, learning itself becomes a mentor that is a conscious process of induction to a different teaching context and does not always emerge naturally from previous teaching experiences with children. The research indicated that the focus of mentoring should be away from the performance of the mentor themselves to the particularities and diversity of the mentoring context with the purpose of assisting new teachers to discover their own teaching style.
Second, as a new mentor, be willing to exchange ideas with mentor colleagues as a means of professional development. In a study exploring a group of teachers attending monthly meetings, researchers found that it was possible to provide new and meaningful ways to build support and collegiality thereby enabling continuous professional growth and development (McCotter, 2001). In the same study, individuals expressed various types of support available through this type of exchange including: the opportunity to ask questions and pursue feedback, the sharing of similar experiences, suggesting solutions or strategies, or just showing support either verbally or nonverbally.

Third, look at the mentoring process as more than a one-on-one relationship between mentor and beginning teacher. Hicks, Glasgow, and McNary (2005) argued that new teachers benefit from the support of other teachers, administrators, and higher education partners. As previously mentioned, research has shown that the use of multiple mentors is preferable over the traditional mentor relationship using a single mentor. Furthermore, Hicks stated that it is the responsibility of the mentor to encourage collegiality among his/her new teacher mentees in order to facilitate a rich and varied environment that is supportive and professional.

The fourth strategy for mentoring beginning teachers is to encourage them to look at conflict and tension as opportunities for personal growth and change. Beach and Pearson (1998) identified four basic types of conflicts in an effort to help mentors more clearly define areas of concern in consideration of helping new teachers. The first type was curriculum and instruction which dealt with conflicts and tensions between planned instruction and actual events, teachers’ perceptions and students’ perceptions of relevancy, or beliefs about their own teaching and curricular choices, and school or department
mandated curriculum and pedagogy. The second type, interpersonal relationships, focused on conflicts and tensions with and among students, other teaching colleagues, and administrators. This category could also relate to a sense of personal isolation. The third type, self-concept or role, centered on personal conflicts and tensions regarding the need to be accepted and well liked, the role of ambiguity of transition from student to teacher, and the further definition of self. The fourth type of conflict was referred to as contextual and institutional. This type dealt with conflicts and tensions related to the expectations of the institutions in which teachers work, teach, and learn. This generally involved acclimation and socialization to the culture of school teaching.

The fifth strategy to assist the mentor with the process of new teacher induction used site politics as a means of facilitating the induction process through mentoring relationships. According to Hicks, Glasgow, and McNary (2005), this strategy pointed to the task of helping new teachers become more micropolitically aware, active, and literate. In this context micropolitics describes the ways in which individuals attempt to influence others in order to attain desired goals.

Strategy six encouraged the mentor to mentally prepare for special challenges, such as late hires to the school or new teachers taking over classes mid-year. The research on this strategy identified three scenarios in which a mentor would be especially helpful to the new teacher, 1) teachers asked to use a unique or innovative instructional approach in which the new teacher has no background, 2) the assignment of a new teacher to a subject or a grade level in which he or she has no experience or field preparation, and 3) the presence of many new teachers, all of whom need some degree of mentoring (Mutchler, Pan, Glover, & Shapley, 2000).
The seventh strategy recommended that mentors be aware that beginning teachers in less effective schools were at a greater risk for leaving the field than those teaching at more effective schools. Based on research conducted in Louisiana, the following mentoring characteristics in less effective schools were observed: 1) new teachers were forced to seek out guidance and informal mentoring for procedures regarding day-to-day activities, knowledge of planning, paperwork, curriculum, and classroom management, 2) teachers were offered few resources or had to find their own, and 3) the activity of the mentor was largely limited to checking, editing, or rechecking the lesson plans or making critiques and observations.

Conversely, mentoring characteristics in more effective schools indicated: 1) schools promoted mentoring from the whole person perspective, 2) mentors were proactive, 3) the mentor took the lead in providing information ahead of time and worked with new teachers much like an aide helping with paperwork, 4) mentors role-played as parents with the new teacher prior to conferences, 5) mentors role-played student management discipline scenarios, 6) mentors met frequently with new teachers and sought them out rather than waiting for them, 7) the principal’s expectations for the mentors were that their role was a vital one, and 8) mentors focused on the assimilation of their new teachers into the total school culture (Angelle, 2002).

The eighth strategy for effective teacher induction through the mentoring process required the integration of the principal into the induction loop as a key source of support and guidance for the beginning teacher. The purpose of the study behind this strategy was to examine the perceptions of principals and beginning teachers regarding problems, role expectations, and assistance in the first year teaching. Study findings indicated the prin-
cipal plays a major role for new teachers in the first three to five years of their professional experience, and that both teacher and principal should maintain contact throughout the school’s induction process (Brock & Grady, 1998).

The final strategy for effective teacher induction through the mentoring process recommended the mentor use job sharing arrangements to produce personal and supportive co-mentoring or peer mentoring relationships within the learning environment. While peer mentoring was productive in the study based on this strategy, the teachers who participated in the study could have benefited by more time with an experienced mentor or pairing with a second or third year teacher (Eick, 2002).

The research presented on effective strategies for mentoring teachers through induction aligns with the purpose of this study on principals mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices. It is equally important to consider the role of principal as a mentor and instructional leader.

The Changing Role of Principal

*Manager to Instructional Leader*

To fully understand the principal’s role as an innovative leader today, it is important to first look at the history of the school administrator. According to Wood, Nicholson, and Findley (1985), the first administrative position to evolve in the United States was that of school principal. However, the process began at the inception of the United States and took many years to develop. Interestingly, the term “principal” was used because this person was “considered the best and most talented teacher, or the principal
teacher” (Drake & Roe, 1999, p. 23). The early evolution of the school principal position was described by Ensign (1923) as follows:

In the academies that attained considerable size, the school heads were known by varying titles, such as head master, rector, preceptor, provost, and occasionally principal. At Phillips Andover, one of the truly great academies of New England, the official title of Eliphalet Pearson, the first head, was preceptor, but in the records he is frequently referred to as principal Pearson; and in 1786 the title was so designated in the contract of the new principal (p.187).

At the turn of the 20th century, the position of principal became more structured and formalized. According to Pierce (1934), “By the early 1900s, principals were involved in the general organization and management of the schools, were in charge of supervision of instruction and staff development, and were charged with the responsibility of school/community relations” (p. 213). Further, the school principal position was “primarily a twentieth-century development and was concomitant with the great growth of pupil enrollments after 1900” (Pierce, 1934, p. 3). During the next fifty years, the responsibility of the principal shifted less from instruction and more to school organization and general school management.

Schools dramatically increased in size due to the baby boom and school consolidation of the 1950s and 1960s which led to the construction of new school buildings across the United States. Consequently, more principals were needed to run more schools and manage new buildings which led to administrator positions becoming full-time with more numerous and varied responsibilities. Eventually, principals were called upon by the community for managerial and instructional concerns which “increased as special
education and legal issues became prominent in the 1970s and 1980s” (Sharp & Walter, 2003, p. 5).

By the mid-1970s, managing curriculum reform and federal program compliance took a more prominent role in the principal's work (Hallinger, 1992). In his seminal study on effective schools in the Detroit Michigan area, Edmond (1979) revealed the importance of the role of principal and opened the door for thinking of this position as the instructional leader being accountable for school improvement in student achievement. The role of principal as an instructional leader had fully emerged by the early 1980s, shifting emphasis from managerial to instructional leadership. The shift was significantly influenced by research which provided recognition that effective schools typically have principals who stressed the importance of instructional leadership (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982).

In the 1990s discussions of school-based management and facilitative leadership began to replace the attention placed on instructional leadership (Lashway, 2002). However, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) ushered in a resurgence of instructional leadership based on academic standards and the need for schools to be accountable through high-stakes assessments. Signed into legislation on January 8, 2001, NCLB represented some of the most prominent changes in U.S. educational policy. As a result, training for principals changed in order to meet the demands of this new federally mandated program.

Bottoms and O’Neill (2001) recognized the need for changing the way new school leaders received training to prepare for these high-stakes accountability standards based on student achievement. The authors pointed out that state accountability systems
are increasingly placing the burden of school success, and individual student achievement, squarely on the principal’s shoulders. Their research also revealed that the principal’s job description has expanded to a point that today’s school leader is expected to perform in the role of “chief learning officer,” with ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the school.

Principals must be prepared to focus time, attention and effort on changing what students are taught, how they are taught, and what they are learning. This formidable challenge demands a new breed of school leaders, with skills and knowledge far greater than those expected of “school managers” in the past. They also must work with teachers to provide professional learning experiences focused on improvement of student learning, develop leadership capacity in various personnel within the school, and learn to use data from a variety of sources to guide decisions (King, 2002).

Principal’s Role in Leadership

The expectations of principals and other educational leaders have expanded to include more emphasis on teaching and learning, data-driven decision making, accountability, and professional development (IEL, 2000; NAESP, 2001). According to Malone, Sharp, and Thompson (2001), the principal is “expected to be an instructional leader, a motivator, a lay psychologist, a public relations expert, and an excellent manager” (p. 2). Furthermore, though principals today have a dual role of manager and instructional leader, “instructional leadership remains the central expectation of the principalship” (Morris, Cole, & Lawlor, 1984, p. 16). Commonly referred to as ‘bifocal leadership,’ the duality
of the principalship is a leadership phenomena which combines two different organizational frameworks into one position of authority (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Brookover (1982) divided the role of the principal into two categories: the instructional leader and the change agent. He stressed that the most critical functions of the principal are (a) to facilitate the improvement of the instructional program and (b) to encourage teachers to be risk takers in trying innovative techniques and strategies. If the school is not meeting standards, the principal must serve as a change agent by modifying conditions so that the instructional program will meet students’ needs more effectively. A closer look at the concept of organizational change will help bring into focus the role of principal as an innovative leader.

As principals operate as agents of change within their school organizations, they confront daily challenges which can impact the dynamic relationship between administrator and teacher. Patterson (1997) proposed thinking of change in organizational leadership in terms of confronting harsh realities about people and organizations. Patterson offered the following postulates regarding organizational change:

1. Most of the people act first in their own self-interest, not in the interest of the organization;

2. Most people do not want to genuinely understand the “what” and “why” of organizational change;

3. Most people engage in organizational change because of their own pain, not because of the merits of the change;

4. Most people expect to be viewed as trustworthy, even though they view with mistrust the motives of those initiating organizational change;
5. Most people opt out to be victims of change rather than architects of change (p. 30).

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), define a change agent as “the extent to which the school leader is willing to and actively challenges the status quo. This individual is comfortable leading change initiatives with certain outcomes. He/she systematically considers new and better ways of doing things” (p. 9). As a transformational leader, the principal in the mentoring process must effectively “sell” to the teacher the need for instructional changes. According to Kotter (1996), this can be successfully accomplished by creating a high sense of urgency in order to convince the participant of the eminent problems and pitfalls which will occur should the change not take place. In the case of the teacher as mentee and the principal as mentor, urgency is communicated through mentoring dialogue based on the instructional needs in the classroom.

Senge (1996) stated, “We are coming to believe that leaders are those people who ‘walk ahead,’ people who are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and in their organizations. They lead through developing new skills, capabilities, and understandings” (p. 8). This type of effective leadership is the key to improving and enhancing instructional practices within a school. However, principals must be more than facilitators of change, they must also provide successful leadership through mentoring.

The Role of Principal as Mentor

According to Marsh (1997), the role of principal as the school’s lead instructional leader has become dynamic and changing in regards to one who can “both articulate and implement the vision of an effective instructional environment for all students and teachers” (p. 39). The challenge for principals, therefore, is to lead novice first year teachers
with limited practical experiences and repertoires through the induction process in ways that (a) promote high levels of classroom practice, (b) ensure the academic success of all students, and (c) encourage new ways of being in schools for novice and veteran teachers alike (Moir & Gless, 2001).

The responsibility of the principal to provide mentoring to the instructional staff often encompasses leading a wide range of individuals with varying levels of teaching experience. Principals can expect to work with instructors who have little to no practical teaching experience to tenured teachers who serve as leaders in their school. Portner (2005) pointed out that administrators who engage in “purposeful nurturing” of new teachers through shared leadership modeling and who dedicate human and financial resources are effective in providing mentoring to new teachers (p. 76). Furthermore, the role of principal has been determined to be pivotal in the development of healthy interdependent relationships which are vital to successful mentoring experiences (DuFour, 2003).

In a study of the role of principals in the induction of beginning teachers, Brock and Grady (1998) found that principals expected first year teachers to demonstrate proficiency in or possess (a) a professional attitude, (b) adequate knowledge of subject areas, (c) good classroom management skills, (d) excellent communication skills, (e) a belief that every child can learn, and (f) a desire to help students succeed.

The principal has a direct impact with regards to mentoring and modeling successful leadership strategies. When discussing teachers’ perspectives of how their principals influence them instructionally, Blase (1993), suggested that “principals influence largely through exchange” (p. 150). Furthermore, principals who lead by example were
able to achieve greater participation and involvement from their staff in key areas of leadership and initiatives (Anderson, 2004). In an ethnographic study of 25 teachers, effective mentoring principals were cited as those who “heard and respected opinions” of their teachers, and were “open to ideas of change and seemed to readily embrace innovation” (Beachum & Dentith, 2004, p. 280).

Principals can also provide informal or indirect mentoring to their teachers in the form of support to site-based induction programs. Building principals can play an important role in promoting a productive dialogue between the new teacher and teacher-mentor. For example, the principal can give the new teacher an initial orientation on the mentoring process, plan or lead mentor and mentee training sessions or meetings, and ensure that all site-level activities related to the induction program take place. Additionally, principals can maintain the focus on the school’s vision of teaching for the mentor and mentee, collect data related to the induction activities implementation, and serve as an evaluator of the induction program (Bartell, 2005).

In research on the induction of first year and transferring elementary teachers, Lequier (2008) discovered that the principals who demonstrated effective communication skills were viewed by the teachers as approachable and accessible leaders. Teachers participating in the study specifically identified as significant and meaningful the ongoing, informal support, and clear communication demonstrated by their principals. Structured support was also found to be provided by the principals in the form of professional development with the existing staff. Additionally, traits of effective mentoring such as listening, empathizing, and providing encouragement during challenging times were identified by the researcher as meaningful between the teacher and principal.
In a grounded theory study on the professional preparation process of alternative certified teachers, Carpenter (2008) revealed characteristics of effective mentoring practices for the principal. Research findings identified principals as playing the most significant role in the professional preparation of certified teachers, and were credited with providing dynamic leadership in addressing specific needs of the teachers by being innovative, creative, and knowledgeable. According to the study, professional preparation for teachers was guided by principals who provided positive school cultures, mentors for new teachers, and professional development. The teachers who participated in the study indicated that they experienced success with formal mentors who were “flexible, friendly, patient, and kind” (p. 165).

The existing scholarship on the role of principal of meeting needs of novice teachers reveals that mentoring is a key factor in terms of professional development and support (Jackson, 2008). The literature also suggests that the successful induction of beginning teachers is accomplished by combining support, resources, professional development, and mentoring (Gimbert & Fultz, 2009).

Summary

The evolutionary processes of both the principal position and the concept of mentoring have had a direct impact on the quality of instruction in the classroom. A review of the literature highlighted concepts, strategies, and recommendations for the mentoring processes between the principal and teacher. The theoretical framework of this study included research based on the concepts of adult learning theory, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership. Models and characteristics of each theory were dis-
cussed in regards to the overall purpose of this study. Background on mentoring from classical literature to current practices was presented to chronicle the mentoring movement and development in society and in education. This review featured existing literature regarding the development of the school principal from manager to instructional leader, and of teacher mentoring programs and instructional practices. Research literature was presented to support the important function of the principal as mentor in the induction processes of teachers and data were presented on the principal’s role in leading and improving instructional practices which directly addresses the central research question of this study: In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

In order to fully examine the phenomenon of the mentoring processes between principals and their teachers and the impact these processes have on instructional practices, I chose a qualitative approach because it provided the greatest support of the intent of my research to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?

2. What criteria do principals employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support?

3. What mentoring behaviors do elementary school principals say they use with teachers to facilitate change in instructional practices?

4. What mentoring behaviors do elementary school teachers say their principal uses with them to facilitate change in instructional practices?

5. What are the principal's perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring they provide to their teachers to improve instructional practices?

6. What are the teacher's perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring provided by their principals to improve instructional practices?
Qualitative research is described by Creswell (2008) as:

A type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words or text from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner (p. 46).

This type of approach to field study has a history of evolving through emphasis and importance, and today stands on its own as an effective instrument in data collection and analysis.

Qualitative research was one of the first forms of social studies (conducted by Bronisław Malinowski or Elton Mayo), but in the 1950s and 1960s when quantitative science reached its peak of popularity, qualitative research was diminished in importance and began to regain recognition as late as the 1970s. The phrase "qualitative research" was until then restricted as a discipline of anthropology or sociology, and terms like ethnography, fieldwork, participant observation, and Chicago School (discussed later) were used instead (Becker, 1996). Anthropologists such as Malinowski, Mead, and Radcliffe-Brown were pioneers in qualitative research as they spent extended periods of time producing ethnographic accounts among natives in distant lands. Their fieldwork practices became the genesis for participant observation, interviewing, and artifact gathering which are standards of qualitative data collection today (Rosaldo, 1989).

During the 1970s and 1980s qualitative research began to be used in other disciplines and became a significant type of research in the fields of education studies, social
work studies, women's studies, disability studies, information studies, management studies, nursing service studies, human service studies, psychology, communication studies, and others. Some qualitative research occurred in the consumer products industry during this period. Researchers most interested in investigating consumer new product and product positioning opportunities worked with a handful of the earliest consumer research pioneers including Gene Reilly of The Gene Reilly Group in Darien, CT; Jerry Schoenfeld of Gerald Schoenfeld & Partners in Tarrytown, NY; and Martin Calle of Calle & Company in Greenwich, CT (Becker, 1996).

Sociologists around the turn of the century explored the possibilities of qualitative research methods. This led to the emergence of “Chicago School” at the University of Chicago, which paved the way for real-life social laboratories in urban settings (Vidich & Lyman, 1994). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.12-18), the next phases in qualitative research were characterized by the “modernist phase” from the postwar years to the mid 1970s and the “moment of blurred genres” which led to a wide range of paradigms, strategies, and methods reaching across discipline boundaries of research and culminating in present day practices. In the late 1980s and 1990s after a spate of criticisms from the quantitative side, parallling a slowdown in traditional media spending for the decade, new methods of qualitative research evolved to address the perceived problems with reliability and imprecise modes of data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

According to Creswell (2005), qualitative research is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. The intent of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon from the perspectives of those who experience it, with the researcher acting as a data gathering instrument in order to assemble data in written or
pictorial form (Hatch, 2002). In qualitative research, the main goal is understanding and discovery, and the findings are comprehensive, holistic, and richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998). This approach to research is well suited for this study because the researcher seeks to understand the meanings people construct, which is how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative research design is also flexible, general, and evolving with the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection. This design provides the correct framework for the type of study the researcher will conduct in the area of principals mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices.

Qualitative Tradition

One tradition of qualitative research is case study. Procedures for gathering and analyzing data are now increasingly recognized as valid and meaningful in this tradition (Morse & Richards, 2002). A case study focuses on a variation of ethnography in that the researcher provides an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g. an activity, an event, a process, or an individual) based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2007). The case study tradition will also allow the researcher to gather extensive data from multiple sources and to report the findings in a descriptive manner (Yin, 1994), while satisfying the three tenets of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining (Tellis, 1997). According to Yin (2009), the case study is preferred in examining contemporary events and uses two distinct sources of evidence: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events. Yin defined the scope of the case study in the following manner:
1. A case study is an empirical in wary that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when they boundaries between phenomenon in context are not clearly evident;

2. The case study inquiry codes would be technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest in data points is one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with added needing to converge in a triangulating fa-

shion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical prop-
ositions to guide data collection and analysis (p.18).

A study is considered to be a “bounded system” if it is limited by time and space (Cres-
well, 2007). Because of the focus of this study, which was geographically limited to three schools in central Alabama, the researcher believed the multiple case study design to be the most appropriate qualitative tradition to follow, incorporating the use of thick, rich descriptions and coded, thematic data analysis.

Multiple Case Study

According to Creswell (1998), when multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case. In order to provide an opportunity for the researcher to incorporate a cross-case analysis of data, three separate but similar case studies were conducted. Also referred to as a collective case study, each research site was used to report out data pertaining to the overall study
purpose (Stake, 1995). The multiple cases were also selected so that replication could be achieved to produce either similar or contrasting results (Yin, 1981b).

**Sampling Methods**

Purposeful sampling strategies were used in this case study. According to Creswell (2007), purposeful sampling involves the researcher selecting sites and participants because they can provide information pertinent to the research topic. The research sites for this study were three public elementary schools within north-central Alabama. The researcher requested verbal permission to collect data from the superintendents of each school system. Recruitment letters (see Appendix A) were sent via registered mail to the superintendents of the school systems in which these schools were located. Once permission was granted, a cover letter stating the study purpose, and interview question sets were sent to the head principal, and subsequently to teachers who participated in a mentoring relationship with the school administrator. The question sets gave the research participants an opportunity to review and reflect prior to the actual interview. A digital version of all study documents were sent to the e-mail account of each participant.

The specific sampling strategies used for this study were maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling. In maximum variation sampling, research sites and participants were chosen for their diversity so that researchers can determine common patterns (Merriam, 1998). The maximum variation approach consisted of determining in advance some criteria that differentiated the sites or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that were quite different on the criteria (Creswell, 2007). The three central Alabama elementary schools which were used as research sites differ in demographics
and location. Site I was an elementary school located in an economically depressed area. Site II was located in a middle-class community. Site III was located in an affluent area.

In criterion sampling, participants must meet certain criteria reflecting the study’s purpose (Merriam, 1998). The sample included the principal of each school along with teachers who have been formally or informally mentored in regards to improving instructional practices. Teachers selected to participate in the study were based on recommendations from the school administrator.

Site Selection

In July of 2009, I began the process of choosing research sites which met the criteria for the purpose of study focusing on principals mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices. I also sought out three sites which were located in diverse socio-economic surroundings in order to provide the opportunity for triangulation and cross-case analysis. After consulting with colleagues in K-12 and higher education arenas, three schools emerged as sufficient in meeting the research criteria set forth above.

Specific Sites Selected for Participation

Site I was located in a rural county in the central-eastern section of Alabama with a median household income of approximately $30,000/year. The school campus consisted of a principal and assistant principal, one school counselor, one librarian, and forty-four classroom and special area teachers. The average daily membership (ADM) for this site during the 2007/2008 school year was 499, with 84.5% of the student population receiving free or reduced meals.
Located in a suburban, central Alabama city, Site II consisted of middle to upper-middle class economic demographics with a diverse cultural population. The average household income was approximately $100,000/year. The ADM for this school during the 2007/2008 school year was 559 with 31.7% of the students receiving free or reduced meals. The school staff included one principal, one assistant principal, a media-specialist and one school counselor, and 50 classroom and special area teachers.

Site III was situated in an affluent community consisting of median household incomes of $122,000. During the 2007/2008 school year, this site had an ADM of 505, with no students receiving free or reduced meals. The school consisted of one principal, one assistant principal, a librarian, one school counselor, and 41 classroom and special area teachers.

Data Collection

To obtain the detailed information needed for the description required in case study research, the researcher used multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2007). Textual data was collected from the participants through interviews, observations, and documents over a three month period. Each participant was interviewed one time in the school setting for approximately 30 minutes to one hour. Participants were given the interview questions prior to the interview, and an interview protocol (see Appendix B) was used during the interview. The interview protocol included the dissemination of a recruitment letter with introductory information, the purpose of the research study, and a place to sign giving consent to participate in the study. An icebreaker question was asked at the beginning of the interview followed by descriptive, structural, and contrast questions related to
the research questions (Hatch, 2002). The interview protocol concluded with a question asking participants for additional information and closing remarks. Interviews were semi-structured using open-ended questions combined with probing questions in order to gain as much information as possible. Interview questions were developed based on the central research question of principals providing mentoring to teachers in order to improve instructional practices. Interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

The researcher conducted observations of the participants in the school setting during instruction of students, grade level meetings, team teaching, and mentoring sessions. Observations were conducted based on the number of site participants involved in the study. Each observation lasted from 30 minutes to one hour, and participants were informed of the observation in the recruitment letter. An observation protocol (see Appendix D) was used by the researcher to record descriptive and reflective notes during observations.

Unobtrusive data related to mentoring of teachers were collected in the form of documents. Documents were collected as a means of triangulation (Hatch, 2002). Examples of documents included, but were not limited to, agendas from workshops, collaborative lesson plans, and information gathered from principal and teacher study participants.

Data Analysis

The goal for this research study was to develop multiple case studies to investigate the patterns in the data and to identify themes that describe the role and impact of the principal as mentor to teachers in regards to improving instructional practices in schools within central Alabama. The data analysis process used in this research study was pat-
terned after Hatch (2002), who stated “analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (p. 148).

According to Creswell (2007), data analysis in qualitative research begins with researchers organizing the data for analysis. After conducting interviews of the participants, the researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim. Transcripts were reviewed and compared to taped recordings to ensure participants’ words were accurately transcribed. Then the researcher organized the data by source. The next step in data analysis is “reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 148). Once the data were organized for analysis, the researcher read through the interview transcripts and made notes in the margins to create initial codes. The researcher compared these initial codes to eliminate duplicate codes and added new codes before continuing in the data analysis process. Observation protocols and artifacts were also reviewed to find patterns across all three sources of data. Finally, similar codes were grouped into categories using categorical aggregation to find emerging themes. Themes which emerged were listed. The final step in data analysis was representing the data in various forms (Creswell, 2007). The researcher represented the themes with their corresponding codes in a table.

Establishing Credibility

The researcher chose validation strategies to aid in establishing credibility of the case study results. The first strategy was triangulation or analyzing data from multiple sources to look for common themes (Merriam, 1998). In order to address the central re-
search question, data were collected from interviews, observations, and artifacts. Artifacts were collected and observations made from each site which presented evidence of communication and impact the principals have as mentors of their teachers. Using the three forms of data together yielded a more accurate description of principal mentorship as opposed to using one source of data.

The researcher used detailed descriptions of the specific school settings and site participants in the case study. The descriptions allowed others to see the larger context in which the participants worked which verified if the study results can be applied in similar environments. Finally, the researcher clarified researcher bias and orientations that impacted and shaped the interpretations of the study in the section Researcher’s Role and whenever appropriate throughout the study.

**Ethical Considerations**

According to the Preamble to the American Psychological Association’s *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*, “this Ethics Code … has as its goals the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom psychologists work…” (2002). Ethical behavior entails following a strict code of guidelines that foster good behavior. The researcher was careful to consider the informants first, then steps were followed to ensure that use of the data and the practices in which he engaged were not harmful to the participants in any way.

The goal of the researcher in this study was to develop a rapport of trust, truth, and openness with the participants. The researcher avoided placing the participants at risk (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). While informed consent did not cover every poss-
ible problem that might have surfaced, it afforded the researcher the opportunity to explain the risks involved in the study and gave the participants the choice to ask questions, get clarification, and then continue or opt out of the study.

Sound ethical principals warrant that researchers “always honor and respect the wishes of the participants” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 158). According to Creswell (2007), researchers must do all they can to avoid any behavior that will bring harm to the participants. Researchers must not do anything that would be a breech of confidentiality. A trustworthy researcher would do everything possible to avoid deception. If any information had come to light in the study that might have caused harm to anyone or was illegal, then that would have been the only time to consider divulging information given by a participant. IRB approval was requested for this research study. Accordingly, the researcher took many steps to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The researcher in this multiple case study put the findings in terms as general as possible, and used pseudonyms for the names of research sites and participants. The researcher stored the data files in a secure location using password protected computer files. The imperative here was to protect the participants and their rights, and to use good manners and follow a strict code of ethics (Merriam, 1998).

Researcher’s Role

The perspective a researcher uses when interpreting data is greatly impacted by how he positions himself within the study. The focus of the researcher, as well as the entire research process, can be determined by researcher biases, values, and personal interests. The level of involvement between the researcher and the participants is also influ-
enced by whether the researcher sees himself as an insider or an outsider. Since most qualitative research studies are inspired by the personal experiences of the researcher, it becomes increasingly more difficult for the researcher to eliminate all subjectivity. Thus, as an instrument of the study, the researcher in this study acknowledged his perceptions, positions, and the roles they played in the collection and interpretation of the data (Jones et al., 2006).

Creswell (2007) speaks against research in one’s own backyard because as an insider, the researcher can find it difficult to maintain a proper distance from the stories to avoid telling the researcher’s story rather than the participants’ story. There is always the risk of the researcher disappointing the participants with the information revealed and jeopardizing a potential relationship, or perhaps failing to do something about the conditions exposed in his own backyard. In other words, the data could be biased, incomplete, or compromised (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the researcher went outside his normal venue of operations, and thus was not an insider.

The researcher has been in public education for ten years, nine as a teacher and one as an assistant principal. During his tenure as an educator, he has served three school districts located within the a central Alabama county, participated in a district sponsored new teacher orientation program, mentored teachers going through the National Board certification process, and provided instructional and administrative support in an elementary school setting for 45 faculty members, five of whom were considered new to the teaching profession.

During his formative years as a public school teacher, the researcher was never given the opportunity to participate in a formal mentoring program with his administra-
tors or teacher leaders within the schools he served. However, his first full-time teaching position in an inner city K-5th elementary school did provide opportunities for regular meetings with his principal which developed into an informal mentoring relationship. During these meetings, the researcher was allowed to ask various questions and/or share concerns pertaining to challenges with students and fellow teachers in and out of the classroom. The administrator would actively listen and offer suggestions and advice based on decades of experience as a classroom teacher and school administrator. It was during this experience that the researcher realized the importance of having opportunities to engage in productive dialogue with the instructional leader of the school. The researcher gained valuable information and benefitted from having this type of mentoring relationship which led, in part, to the formation of the study purpose of this research study on how principals mentor teachers.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Qualitative research is described by Creswell (2008) as,

A type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the user participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words or text from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner (p. 46).

In order to better understand the central phenomenon of the relationship between school principals and the instructional practices of their teachers, the researcher in this study attempted to answer the following central research question: In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?

Three central Alabama elementary schools were used as research sites which differed in demographics and location. Site I was an elementary school located in an economically depressed area. Site II was located in a middle-class community. Site III located in an affluent area. In criterion sampling, participants must meet certain criteria reflecting the study’s purpose (Merriam, 1998). The sample included the principal of each school along with teachers who had been formally or informally mentored in regards to improving instructional practices. Teachers selected to participate in the study were based on recommendations from the school administrator.
The findings for this multiple case study are reported in two sections beginning with site descriptions of settings, participants, and themes that emerged during data analysis. The second section employs cross-case analysis which offers comparisons of each case site in terms of similarities and differences.

Site I

Setting: Site I Demographics and Description

Site I was located in a rural county in the central-eastern section of Alabama with a median household income of approximately $30,000/year. The school campus consisted of a principal and assistant principal, one school counselor, one librarian, and forty-four classroom and special area teachers. Students from kindergarten through the sixth grade received instruction at this site. The average daily membership (ADM) for this site during the 2007/2008 school year was 499, with 84.5% of the student population receiving free or reduced meals.

Site I was constructed as a new school in 1990 as a result of the separation from a K-12 school which also required student consolidation from two demographically diverse communities, one predominately white, the other black. Both groups, however, came from rural areas with low socio-economic status and were brought together to Site I in an unincorporated area located on county property.

Site I was located approximately ten minutes from the interstate, but was not visible from main roads due to the rural location of the buildings. As I entered the property for the first time, I noticed the seclusion of the area surrounding Site I. There were no indications of any commercial development, only a few residential homes across the road.
from the school which appeared to have been built 30 to 40 years ago. A sign and gate welcomed the visitor to the site which appeared to be in relatively good shape in the 20 years since Site I was newly constructed. A paved driveway led up to the site which was surrounded by much land and trees. An outside courtyard was also visible which was well designed and maintained. The main entrance from the parking area included a covered awning which revealed award banners which were proudly displayed on the exterior walls.

The interior environment of Site I was in stark contrast with its external surroundings and location. When I first entered the main corridor, brightly colored posters with pictures of students busy at work were seen on the walls. The connecting hall to the other parts of the building were painted in brilliant colors, some with mural paintings of animals and a colorfully constructed tree on a bulletin board indicating access to the Kindergarten wing. The halls leading to the upper grades were well lit and lined with samples of student work and signs which included the site’s mission statement and student creed. Park benches, chairs, and student desks were also placed at strategic places in the halls indicating learning in and out of the classroom. Occasionally, a vocabulary or spelling word would be seen placed in one of the fluorescent, ceiling light fixtures which was used to remind students to always be thinking and learning. The faculty and staff were found to be very friendly and willing to answer any questions about their school. The students were always actively engaged in learning and seemed to feel quite comfortable and safe in their surroundings.
Participants: Site I

Including the principal, four individuals participated at Site I in this multiple case study. All participants were women ranging in age from their mid-twenties to their early sixties with three being Caucasian, and one African American. Two of the teacher participants had ten years or less experience in education, and one was a veteran educator with over thirty years in the teaching profession. The principal had over 30 years experience in public education. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in order to protect her identity.

Principal A held a Bachelors degree in elementary and secondary education, and a Masters, Class A in school administration. Before becoming the principal at Site I, Principal A served as the assistant principal when the school first began in 1990. Prior to that, she served as a classroom teacher in a kindergarten through twelfth grade school located in the same school district as Site I. Although she stated “I’ve always wanted to be a teacher,” Principal A did not enter the teaching profession until the age of 30. However, with over thirty years experience in education, (twenty of those years in Site I as the assistant principal and then principal), Principal A was well prepared to fulfill her duties as the chief school leader and administrator.

Teacher A earned her Bachelors and Masters degree in elementary education and transitioned from classroom teacher to reading coach in October of 2009. Prior to that time, she served as a second grade teacher and had been at Site I for a total of seven years. Teacher A reflected on her first year at Site I which “was a struggle for me. I came from a school completely different than this school.” She indicated, however, that the
school administrators helped her through this challenging period and she felt much support in her present role as reading coach.

Teacher B went to college “when my daughter started kindergarten, so I went through as a nontraditional type student and got my Bachelors (degree)”. Site I being her first teaching assignment, she had been a second grade teacher at this site for the past four years. Teacher B reflected on the challenges she had faced going through different learning programs which included a recent comprehensive reading and language curriculum adoption. She also indicated that throughout the process there were times of feeling overwhelmed, but her grade level worked together as a team and improvements were being made. Teacher B expressed a positive outlook on her responsibilities as a classroom instructor with remarks such as, “We have a great bunch of kids, they are so eager to learn and they come in and they are ready to work hard for us. I am really excited about being here at this school and I love being in the classroom.”

Teacher C earned her Bachelors degree in elementary education during the 1970s. At the time of the interview, she was in her 30th year as a public school educator. Her entire tenure in teaching had been in the same school district, eighteen of those years in Site I when it was first constructed. As a kindergarten teacher throughout her career, Teacher C stated that “I have enjoyed teaching, I love working with young children, and it’s just a great profession.” She also indicated that “the support of my coworkers and my principal” had helped her through each year when she would have a variety of special needs children including those with autism and Down Syndrome.
Themes: Site I

During analysis of the observations and interviews from the research conducted at Site I, the following themes emerged: Principals Providing Support for Teachers, Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring Practices, and Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Interviews included question sets for both the principals and the teachers. Administrator questions were:

1) Tell me about your educational background and why you chose to enter the teaching profession. 2a) What do you perceive to be the needs of your teachers in regards classroom instruction? 2b) Describe any structured activities you have implemented to address the instructional needs of your teachers. 3) Describe your concept of mentoring as an instructional leader. 4) What criteria do you employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support? 5a) In what ways do you formally or informally mentor your teachers who are in need of improving their instructional practices? 5b) What do you personally do to ensure the success of the mentoring process? 6) Is there any additional information you would like to share?

Questions for the teacher participants included: 1) Tell me about your educational background including college, teaching, experiences, etc. 2) Please describe your experience at this school in regards to classroom instruction. 3) In what ways has the principal addressed your instructional needs? 4) What activities are you involved in pertaining to improving instructional practices? 5) Please describe the mentoring process you are engaged in with your principal. 6) Is the mentoring process formal or informal, and how has this experience affected your ability to teach in the classroom? 7) Is there any additional information you would like to share?
The following sections explore each theme with attention devoted to sub themes which emerged during data analysis. The themes are reported in the order listed above.

The following table identifies the themes and sub themes that emerged at Site I.

Table I

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Themes and Sub-Themes for Site I

*Providing Support for Teachers*

Direct observations, independent interviews, and meeting notes revealed the data for this theme. Informal dialogue with the participants during preliminary and scheduled site visits also produced support for the emergence of this theme.

All Site I teacher participants agreed that Principal A provided support to meet their needs. They each used words such as “helpful,” “supportive,” and “encourage” to describe their relationship with their principal. During an observation of a meeting among
grade level leaders at Site I, Principal A presented herself as one who was committed to providing support for her teachers through her words and actions. She used words which were indicative of encouragement and emphasized problem-solving as the center of focus.

During an interview, Principal A stated,

My philosophy is if we’re going to do something, I want to be in there with them and doing it with them and I think they know that. I will be there to support them, cover classes, make schedules, provide resources, whatever we have to do because I think if they know you were involved in it and they think you think it is important then they are going to be supportive and they are going to go for it.

During analysis of the data to this theme, three sub themes emerged: 1) Providing Instructional Support: Professional Development, 2) Allocating Material Support: Technology and Supplies, and 3) Giving Emotional Support.

*Producing Instructional Support: Professional Development*

Emphasis on professional development had been a major focus at Site I since its inception as described by Principal A:

We began in 1990 along with the principal, and I was the assistant principal and we looked at mission statements and how we wanted to lead our school. We observed lots of schools, we looked at whole language and did a little of that for a while. And we struggled to try to find a niche to pull us all together. When we finally did, we came upon reading styles and started doing reading styles as one of our literacy components and was actually deemed a reading styles site and had
schools from around the county come and visit. Great professional development has always been a big part of our philosophy as we began the school to provide lots of professional development and lots of support for our teachers. We did have a lot of turnover in our school, though, because we are a very rural school and because I think for some people it was hard and difficult to teach the poverty children which was one of the challenges in our school. We had tremendous turnover. But we finally got stabilized and were actually a blue ribbon school in 1996 and worked hard for that. There have always been issues with test scores in trying to make the grade but luckily we been able to maintain our AYP and hopefully we can do that and continue to improve. The best thing that we have done in the last few years is the Harcourt reading series which has pulled us all together again which made us be consistent, phonics continuums, we have done lots of things on our own trying to pull it together. I think with this Harcourt we have got it together as far as our reading. We are still trying to pull it all together for our kids and help them be successful.

Principal A emphasized her role as the chief instructional leader by providing her teachers with the tools and resources they needed to improve their instructional quality in the classroom. She indicated that walk-throughs in the building were conducted regularly by herself, the reading coaches, and the assistant principal to identify curricular needs and other areas that required assistance. Principal A also designed and launched a collaborative teaching project which she referred to as “in-house coaching.” She explained the project provided the opportunity for the teachers from each grade level to individually observe a reading coach teach a lesson in the classroom over a three day period. After the
lessons were completed, the reading coaches would report back to the principals and teachers. The teachers would then meet together to discuss what they observed and the instructional strategies that had proved to be beneficial.

As reading coach, Teacher A was responsible for modeling instructional strategies for each teacher and indicated that the collaborative project was an example where the principal “does a really good job pulling in teachers to do things.” Teacher B also mentioned this project as an activity she was involved in to improve her instructional practices. According to Teacher C, off-site professional development opportunities such as grade level conferences and workshops were arranged by the principal where “you are able to communicate with other teachers, and hear speakers so it would help with different areas and skills we would need to teach.” Principal A also scheduled a common planning period for her teachers “that provides time for us to look at data which is something that does drive our instruction here and we keep that as a focus in our school.”

Other examples of imbedded professional development that each research participant mentioned included book studies, curriculum support personnel who lead site-based workshops, data meetings, and cross grade level and faculty meetings where individual teachers would lead sessions on educational strategies. Teacher B stated that the principal provided “a huge amount of professional development” in “just about anything” that the teachers needed.

Allocating Material Support: Technology and Supplies

All teachers at Site I agreed that the principal did an outstanding job of providing support through technology. Teacher A mentioned videos attained by Principal A which
showed effective teachers modeling lessons for classroom instruction. Teacher B stated, “my principal is an advocate for technology, and technology that we have in this school amazes me. The Smart Boards®, and the laptops, anything that we need, she finds a way to get it.” She also mentioned digital imaging cameras, and other technological devices were acquired by the principal to support learning at Site I. “Some of the other schools in our county do not have the technology that we do or the opportunity to be trained using these devices.”

For Teacher C, the principal was “up on technology. She has installed all of the white boards in the classroom which is very much needed because the children are all engaged in doing when you work with the white board.” According to Principal A, “if a teacher is struggling, they need to see it done correctly.” She mentioned using available technology to video tape “teachers so they can reflect on their (teaching), and look at the videos together.” During dialogue with the researcher, Principal A also expressed her keen interest and expertise in educational technology as a means of providing much needed support to her teachers who instructed students who did not have access to computers and internet at home. Site observations revealed the presence of interactive devices in the classroom which were readily available and used for enrichment and instruction. Basic supplies such as textbooks, paper, writing utensils and markers were also on hand to enable the teachers to fulfill their instructional responsibilities.

Giving Emotional Support

In regards to the relationship between the principal and teachers at Site I, emotional support was seen as vital to success among the research participants. For example,
Principal A used phrases such as “being involved,” “being visible,” and “support them anyway we can help them” to emphasize the importance of the human element of leadership. She stated:

I will be there to support them, cover classes, make schedules, provide resources, whatever we have to do because I think if they know you are involved in it, and they think you think it is important, then they are going to be supportive and they are going to go for it. I think if you isolate yourself from it, it’s almost like you don’t think it is worthy, so being involved is very important and being visible, with the activity, so I tried to do that. We have our grade group meetings, I am involved in that so if I need to cover a class for another teacher to go observe another teacher…we have lots of flexible scheduling, we do whatever it takes to get the teachers to where they need to be in what they need to be doing.

Teacher A responded that her principal encouraged her when “she tells me ‘you did a good job’ when I do something good….just knowing that I have that support is huge.” From Teacher B’s point of view, her principal “is always very positive and very supportive and very encouraging.” Teacher B also described feeling comfortable in her teaching abilities because her principal would “be there to support me even if make a mistake,” and “because I know I have her confidence.” Teacher C concurred with this opinion and stated, “Sometimes you have principals who are so strict it just makes you nervous….but with my principal and assistant principal, I just felt comfortable.”
Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring

Data for this theme initially emerged from individual interviews with the research participants. Additional data were collected through observations and documentation of classroom instruction and teacher meetings.

All teacher participants at Site I reported that their principal provided both formal and informal mentoring support in order to address instructional concerns. Principal A revealed one of her objectives as the instructional leader was to meet with staff both individually and as a group to “talk to them about their needs” and “just support them in any way we can help.” When asked about the effectiveness of the mentoring she provided to her teachers, Principal A recognized that there were a few teachers in the past who did not favorably respond to her one-on-one approach. Therefore, when targeted support was needed for such a teacher, she would pair that teacher with herself and/or the reading coach to provide mentoring assistance. She described a particular account of a teacher who had instructional issues in the classroom:

We had a teacher that was doing worksheets, I saw it, the reading coach saw it, it was like a skill sheet rather than being interactive with that sheet. So, we talked about it, the reading coach and I, and then we made a plan and we went back and offered that plan, the reading coach did and it worked. I didn’t have to get involved directly in that there was a need addressed through the reading coach and sometimes the teachers are more comfortable to express their needs to someone rather than myself.

Based on interview data and analysis, Principal A recognized that there were times when someone other than herself was better equipped to directly mentor a struggling teacher.
Therefore, she would put the appropriate people in place to provide the most helpful and effective mentoring experience for that teacher.

Teacher A described her mentoring experience with the principal as an exercise in cognitive coaching:

What I like about the principal is she makes you tell her what you think the problem is, which is kind of hard sometimes when you want to be told what you need to go do. She really makes you think about what I am doing and what do I need to fix, or what do I see that is wrong and how do I think I can fix it, she is really good about that. But she also has ideas if I am completely blank or I am not really sure. So I think that is a really good strategy, not just giving the information but letting you decide on your own how you think you did. Even when I was a classroom teacher and she came and observed to evaluate me, that’s how she started it by asking ‘What do you think went well what do you think did not go so well?’ so she makes you reflect.

During analysis of the data to this theme, two sub themes emerged: 1) Providing Structured Programs, 2) Conducting Impromptu Meetings.

*Providing Structured Programs*

Principal A described programs she implemented at Site I which were designed to give opportunities for growth and support of her staff in a formal setting. One program was specifically targeted for new teachers which addressed their needs and concerns at the beginning of the year. Another program involved the use of a formal observation method in which the principal would sit in on a lesson of a particular teacher for instruction-
al evaluation purposes. All three teacher participants at Site I mentioned this evaluation process as part of their formal mentoring experiences. Principal A also mentioned, “I think we do a lot of the mentoring in our grade level data meetings.”

Principal A also stated that she had collaborated with her reading coach to design and lead a formal instructional support program for the teachers at Site I which brought in outside professional staff. Referred to as the Collaborative Teaching/Coaching Project, the event covered a three-day period in which each teacher observed a regional reading coach conduct a lesson in a classroom other than her own. During day two and three, the teacher would teach side-by-side with the reading coach, similar to the peer mentoring process. On the day of the Site I visit, the researcher observed Teacher B as she participated in this program which was followed by a debriefing session. During the session, she met with the school and regional coaches, the other grade level teachers and her principal to discuss the instructional strategies used during the lesson. She indicated that this type of formal support was “great work” and provided needed help with the new reading series which Site I had recently adopted. As the reading coach for Site I, Teacher A was heavily involved in this project in which she would model lessons for each grade level teacher then report back in a debriefing session the instructional strategies she used. The transference of formal mentoring among the participants was observed and documented during this collaborative instructional program. The following documentation provided by a site teacher detailed the event and overview of the collaborative project activities which included opportunities for group dialogue, feedback and discussion as part of the mentoring process:
Three coaches went into our classrooms to demonstrate strategies based on our needs that we identified in grade group meetings. The coaches spent three days in our classrooms teaching all components of the reading block: Whole Group, Small Group, and Strategic Intervention. They implemented strategies that increased the amount of reading students did during small group, maximized student engagement in all components of the reading block, and streamlined whole group to allow adequate time for small group. We provided feedback daily on things that went well and things that needed improvement (focusing mainly on student learning). After three days of teaching, we came together to reflect on the whole process. We charted student learning and successful strategies for each component of the reading block. Then, we decided as a grade group which strategies impacted student learning the most. These are the strategies that we implemented in our classrooms, and we will share these strategies with other grade levels. Research shows that peer coaching is a highly effective practice. This peer coaching project will allow teachers to collaborate in the planning and implementation of successful strategies that will increase student learning.

Conducting Impromptu Meetings

Although each teacher participant concurred that both formal and informal mentoring occurred at Site I, the consensus was that the informal meetings were more frequent and somewhat spontaneous. For example, Teacher C stated “most of the time it is informal, they (principals) just drop by our classroom and give comments to the students.” Teacher B made reference to the “pop in” meetings she had with her principal
were helpful because it gave her the opportunity to discuss any issues in a comfortable setting. During the interview with Teacher A, the informal meetings with her principal were referred to as “constantly mentoring” which included a time of reflection and discussion. Observations and dialogue with Principal A confirmed this description and attitude of always wanting to mentor others. In fact, it was observed during the site visit that she constantly moved throughout the halls and classrooms checking on students, making quick observations of classroom activities, and offering to dialogue on-the-spot with teachers if necessary. As she stated, “My philosophy is if we’re going to do something, I want to be in there with them, and I think they know that.” Teacher A also described how the impromptu meetings with her principal were beneficial during the first year at Site I, “The meetings helped me a lot because when I first got this job, I had no clue what I was supposed to do….so the meetings with the principal helped me just to know where to go and what to do.”

*Maintaining Collaborative Communication*

Data for this theme emerged through independent interviews among all study participants, observations of teacher meetings and classroom instruction, and review of research documents collected from Site I. Listening to the dialogue between the principal and teachers was particularly helpful during information gathering in regards to collaboration and communication.

All study participants at Site I agreed that collaboration was a key component to the success and health of the principal/teacher relationship. Words such as “together,” “team,” “involved,” and “with them” resonated during the interviews and dialogue be-
tween the principal and teachers. Teacher A described her initial teaching experience at Site I and how the principal played a key role in helping her assimilate to new surroundings:

My first year here was a struggle for me. I came from a school completely different than this school and so I struggled mainly with classroom management. It affected everything because if you don’t have control you know you can’t teach. So she came in, she brought the cornerstone coaches in that we had at the time and they helped me with room arrangements and gave me a lot of strategies that I could use. Then I had an extra plan for the next year, a professional plan for the next year where I videotaped myself and made journal entries which really helped me. And she would check up and make sure I had videos, read my reflections, we talked about them together. So I could kind of see in my second year was like night and day from my first, so that helped me tremendously. It wasn’t just you are doing a terrible job, it was let me help you fix the way that you are teaching or the way that you are managing your classroom, that helped me tremendously.

During analysis of the data to this theme, two sub-themes emerged: 1) Having an Open Door Policy, 2) Creating a Sense of Trust.

*Using An Open Door Approach*

Referring to her accessibility to teachers, Principal A remarked, “I think you have to be that support for the teacher, you have to be able to open that door if they need you for anything.” Conversely, she stated, “I think if you isolate yourself from it, (classroom and teachers), it’s almost like you don’t think it is worthy, so being involved is very im-
important.” This view was supported by Teacher B who stated, “Anytime I have a problem or question, she basically has an open door policy, and she is very much willing to listen to my side and how I feel and what I think.” In recalling the struggles in her first year at Site I, Teacher A inferred that her principal was not only accessible, but also encouraged two-way dialogue through open discussion about the issues she was facing which, in her words, “helped me tremendously.” When asked how effective the mentoring provided by her principals Teacher C commented, “It has been very effective because with them coming in and communicating with the students, communicating with me, that is letting me know I am on the right track.”

Creating a Sense of Trust

Throughout the interviews and during observations at Site I, a common theme became evident which was, at times, directly mentioned but mostly implied. The theme of trust emerged as a by-product of the collaborative communication between the principal and teacher. Principal A, for example, referred to one third grade teacher who was struggling in the classroom. She described how the teacher was identified in a non-threatening manner during a routine walk-through when the principal, assistant principal, and/or reading coaches discretely walked into a classroom to observe. Instead of targeting and criticizing the teacher, Principal A covered her class for three days to allow her to observe another accomplished teacher in the building. As a result, the teacher had a positive learning experience which addressed her instructional needs and helped to build trust with her principal. When interacting with her teachers, Principal A stated, “You have to do it in a very kind and compassionate way.” This approach resonated with Teacher C.
who described her feelings of comfort when the principal dropped by her classroom and
gave a word of encouragement. She also reflected on her 30 years of teaching and re-
called other administrators who had the opposite effect because of their strict demeanor
which made her “nervous.” Trust was also evident from the interview data collected from
Teacher B who mentioned that, “Every time I have a parent conference, I invite her
(principal/assistant principal) because I want to make sure what I am saying is correct,
and they may have more ideas and can answer the questions better than I can.” Teacher B
also indicated feelings of trust with her principal in regards to helping deal with parents
and retaining a child. She described her principal as “an excellent support and catch net.”
Teacher A discussed how the principal was good at encouraging her to reflect on her own
teaching practices, and required that she should come up with workable solutions to in-
structional problems. In her words, “She (principal) really makes me think about what I
am doing and what I need to fix, or what do I see that is wrong, and how do I think I can
fix it.”

Summary

Based on the central research question, In what ways do elementary school prin-
cipals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?, three distinct themes emerged
from analysis of the data collected at Site I: Providing Support for Teachers, Engaging in
Formal and Informal Mentoring, and Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Teacher
support was provided by the principal in the following manner: Instructionally through
professional development opportunities; materially through the allocation of technology
and supplies; and emotionally by the moral support given to the teachers by the school
administration. Formal and informal mentoring experiences were developed through the use of structured programs using site based and outsourced personnel, and with frequent but spontaneous visits by the principal with the teachers before, during, and following classroom instruction. Maintaining collaborative communication at Site I was accomplished by the principal who created accessibility to teachers with an open door policy, and by encouraging the teachers to operate in a similar fashion. There developed also a sense of trust between the principal and her teachers based on the comfort level of communication between each party.

Site II

Setting: Site II Demographics and Description

Located in a suburban, central Alabama city, Site II consists of middle to upper-middle class economic demographics with a diverse cultural population. The average household income was approximately $100,000/year. The ADM for this school during the 2007/2008 school year was 559 with 31.7% of the students receiving free or reduced meals. Students from kindergarten through the 5th grade attended Site II. The school staff included one principal, one assistant principal, a media-specialist and one school counselor, and 50 classroom and special area teachers.

Located in a growing city incorporated during the 1960s, Site II was one of four elementary schools originally constructed to serve the students in the eastern corridor adjacent to a major interstate. Nestled in a quiet, residential community, this site was part of a relatively young school district which had completed 21 years of operation at the time of this study. Due to population growth over time in the surrounding areas, Site II had
become one of 10 other elementary schools in the district which had caused its original student enrollment to decrease from approximately 700 to 500 in range.

The building and façade of Site II had been built and modified over the past several decades which had resulted in a modernization of the exterior and interior structures. The entry to the school was bright and inviting which included an expansive hallway connecting to the main office and other parts of the building. Upon check in, security appeared to be a high priority with the use of a computer verification system that required me to use my driver’s license to gain admittance into the school from the main office. Once cleared, I toured the building with the assistant principal as he made his usual morning rounds. I first noticed the cleanliness of the floors and walls which were brightly colored with displays of student work throughout. The school mission statement was posted along with other signs indicating that learning was to be constant and a high priority. The staff and students were very pleasant and eager to help in any way. The atmosphere of teaching and learning at Site II was positive, upbeat, and energetic. Along with the assistant principal, four individuals participated at Site II in this multiple case study.

Participants: Site II

The participants were Caucasian which included three women and one man ranging in age from their early thirties to their late forties. Two of the teacher participants along with the assistant principal had over ten years experience in education, and one was relatively new to the teaching profession. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their identities.
Principal B received his Bachelors degree in social studies education with certification in grades seven through 12. He chose social studies as his first area of concentration “because it was a very diverse field and I always had a love of theater, music, history, and government.” After teaching for several years, he earned his Masters in elementary education while instructing students overseas at a private American school in Paraguay. When he later returned to the U.S., Principal B earned a second Masters and a Ph.D. in educational administration. His experience as a school administrator had included two years at a previous school and over two years at Site II.

After graduating in 1999 with a Bachelors in early childhood and elementary education, Teacher D taught preschool for several years with her own children and had served as a second grade teacher in a Christian school prior coming to Site II. She indicated her desire to teach with statements such as, “I have always wanted to be a teacher from an early age. I have always loved school, and I love learning.” Teacher D was in her fourth year as second grade teacher at this site.

Teacher E was in her second year as a kindergarten teacher at Site II. Having worked in the field of grant writing for several years with a Bachelors in English, and a Masters degree in public administration, Teacher E returned to school and earned her Masters in education. She also had performed her student teaching in the first grade level at Site II under the supervision of Principal B and was hired the following year to teach Kindergarten.

Teacher F’s background included an undergraduate degree in human development and family studies with prior experience as a preschool teacher and as an activities coordinator with terminally ill children. After she had realized that teaching children was her
desire she decided to return to school and earned a Masters in education. Teacher F completed her student teaching at Site II and had taught third grade for the past four years.

_Themes: Site II_

During analysis of the observations and interviews from the research conducted at Site II, the following themes emerged: Principals Providing Support for Teachers, Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring Practices, and Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Interviews included question sets for both the principals and the teachers. Administrator questions were:

1) Tell me about your educational background and why you chose to enter the teaching profession. 2a) What do you perceive to be the needs of your teachers in regards to classroom instruction? 2b) Describe any structured activities you have implemented to address the instructional needs of your teachers. 3) Describe your concept of mentoring as an instructional leader. 4) What criteria do you employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support? 5a) In what ways do you formally or informally mentor your teachers who are in need of improving their instructional practices? 5b) What do you personally do to ensure the success of the mentoring process? 6) Is there any additional information you would like to share?

Questions for teachers included: 1) Tell me about your educational background. College, teaching, experiences, etc. 2) Please describe your experience at this school in regards to classroom instruction. 3) In what ways has the principal addressed your instructional needs? 4) What activities are you involved in pertaining to improving instructional practices? 5) Please describe the mentoring process you are engaged in with your
principal. 6) Is the mentoring process formal or informal, and how has this experience affected your ability to teach in the classroom? 7) Is there any additional information you would like to share?

The following sections explore each theme with attention devoted to sub themes which emerged during data analysis. The themes are reported in the order listed above. The following table identifies the themes and sub themes that emerged at Site II.

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Themes and Sub-Themes for Site II

Providing Support for Teachers

Direct observations, independent interviews, copies of emails, agendas, typed and handwritten notes revealed the data for this theme. Informal dialogue with the participants during preliminary and scheduled site visits also produced support for the emer-
gence of this theme. Support for teachers by their principals was a dominant theme during data collection at Site II. Teacher D stated her administrators were “always asking: ‘What do you need, do you have everything that you need, do we need to look into getting you other materials?’” According to Teacher F, “The principal is constantly in our rooms. Each day she comes in to see what we are doing, asking if there is anything we need that they can support us with.” In my interview with Principal B it was clear that he, as assistant principal, and the principal at Site II were very serious and committed to supporting their teachers. Principal B remarked, “We are here, we are part of the conversation about the challenges they are having as instructors in the classroom.” Teacher E used words such as “forthright” and “a lot of direction” to describe the relationship she developed with the assistant principal who had served as her on-site supervisor during her student internship at Site II. During analysis of the data to this theme, three sub themes emerged: 1) Providing Instructional Support: Professional Development, 2) Allocating Material Support: Technology and Supplies, and 3) Giving Emotional Support.

Producing Instructional Support: Professional Development

Principal B indicated a strong emphasis on professional development for teachers at Site II both at the local school and district levels. He detailed instructional development provided by his district during the summer where teachers can learn different types of assessments useful in the areas of reading and mathematics. He also referred to opportunities for teachers to receive on-site training through job-embedded professional development days in the areas of reading, mathematics, and technology:
We have district sponsored professional development where teachers during the summertime can attend sessions to learn how to give these different assessments. For example, we had the mobile math initiative training for all the different grade levels to go through. Therefore, if you are a new teacher, depending on the summer they offer training, for at least two different grade levels we address those needs by teaching them the strategies associated with the math initiative along with the assessments. Also in the summertime, we have reading instruction demonstrations with, for example, the level literacy instruction, how to implement our leveled literacy instruction, and also other assessments so they can turn determine the students reading level to better meet their needs, that is given during the summertime. And then during the school year we have district wide professional development days where those may be emphasized again especially in reading and math and technology. We have also had district wide technology professional development days so the teacher so comfortable using the new equipment that they have. At the school-based level, we offer professional learning blocks twice a year once each semester where the students are still here and they are participating in curricular activities to extend the curriculum while their teachers are participating in job embedded professional development throughout the day usually pertaining to reading or math. Then we also offer professional learning afternoons periodically when the need arises and that's an opportunity for teachers to sign up on their own. They may be interested to learn more about a certain map strategy or practice using the technology and discuss technology as well as reading strategies and giving the different assessments so we will have those are offered periodically
for half an hour usually from 3:00 pm to 3:30 pm through the school year. And then during team meetings, that's a time for job embedded professional development where we have book talks which go on throughout the year. As the curriculum coordinator, and assistant principal, I lead those book talks once a month with the teachers. We discuss certain chapters that have been assigned as well as looking at student work, analyzing student work, and also where teachers will choose different strategies to implement and then will assess how did that strategy worked, was it effective and what is the evidence by analyzing student work. So we also use the team meetings as a job embedded professional development time. And we have a meeting each month that focuses on math instruction and we have a math facilitator committee and that is one representative from each grade level and they teach professional development to their team based on their teams needs pertaining to math.

Teacher E agreed that professional development was a high priority at Site II. She referred to the many opportunities for training provided by her administrators which included before and after school meetings. Teacher D described an in-house activity arranged by her principals:

It is called ‘enrichment journeys’ where our teachers will be doing workshops in the morning and our children get to rotate through different stations and get to have a learning time as well. They incorporate that into our days so we are not having to spend time outside of school or a lot of time in the summers doing extra things which is very helpful as a mom and wife. So those are readily available and we do quite a few of those throughout the year as well. The enrichment journeys
are probably our favorites, so we get to come together as a whole school as teachers and talk and collaborate, knowing that our children are doing some fun activities as well.

According to Teacher F, additional professional development was also provided through other instructional leaders including math and reading coaches who worked directly with the teachers during classroom instruction.

Allocating Material Support: Technology and Supplies

The emphasis on technology as a means of support was observed at Site II. Based on personal observations, it was noticeable that the classrooms were well-equipped with technologically-advanced hardware and educational software programming. Each room contained a wall-mounted video monitor for closed circuit feed of daily announcements, and video-conferencing for group learning. Principal B was a staunch advocate for the use of technology to assist his teachers, and indicated a high level of interest and expertise in this area of support for instruction:

Infusing the technology into the existing curriculum, they have a lot of technology such as electronic writing tablets. They have three desktop computers. They have iPods® and a digital camera and video camera along with a Light Smith® (visual presenter). Learning how to use the applications and then apply them to make it a deep and rich instruction given the curriculum is a challenge for them.

Teachers D and F referred to the technological support they had received from their principals through suggested web sites and recommendations to use PowerPoint® during student instruction. The teachers interviewed at Site II also agreed that in addition to tech-
nology, their principals would provide other types of tangible support which included materials and supplies.

*Giving Emotional Support*

During interviews and observations at Site II, it became evident that the principals and teachers highly valued supporting each other in ways that transcended beyond material support. Within the dynamic of the principal and teacher relationship, there was evidence at this site of emotional support which was described by the teacher participants as an important intangible. Comments by the teacher participants such as “very helpful,” “so willing to help,” and “we are backed up a lot by our principal and assistant principal” indicated the feelings the teachers had towards their administrators. Teacher F described the helpful attitude that her principals demonstrated with daily visits to her classroom with questions such as “how’s it going?” and “can I do anything?” The visibility and accessibility of her principals during classroom instruction resonated with Teacher D who recalled the personal and professional support she had received from them since coming to Site II:

My first year, she, (the principal), came in a lot to make sure everything was going well. We did a formal evaluation and an informal evaluation and then she met with me to discuss things she saw or maybe she did not see it in the lesson but wanted to know are we doing that or are we not doing that, how can she help, was there anything we do not feel comfortable with, if we need some more training on that. Coming from a Christian school into a public school, they are worlds apart. So there were a few things I wasn't sure I was doing correctly or not doing the
way that I had heard other people talk about the way they were doing. So, she said “Would you like to go and observe some other teachers?” Of course, I said yes. So she arranged for me to go and visit other teachers classrooms just to get a better understanding of how things work here, what she was looking for as a principal and that’s great. And a lot of principals don’t do that, they won’t offer to get a sub so you can go observe other teachers in the classroom so that was very helpful.

Teacher E also expressed similar feelings about her administrators with the statement, “I know that they are there.” Principal B stated:

The principal and I each have excellent relationships with our teachers because they know we are very involved. They see us as leaders in the team meetings by leading book talks, by discussing data, by discussing instructional strategies, by reviewing lesson plans and they know they are held accountable for posting their lesson plans on a weekly basis by Monday afternoon because they know they will get e-mail from me if they don't.

*Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring*

Direct observations, independent interviews, copies of emails, agendas, typed and hand written notes revealed the data for this theme. Informal dialogue with the participants during preliminary and scheduled site visits also produced support for the emergence of this theme.

The consensus of each study participant at Site II was that there were both formal and informal opportunities for mentoring. According to Principal B, all aspects of me-
toring for teachers were coordinated through the building principal and a building mentor program coordinator at the local and district levels. He then would meet with the principal to gather information which was disseminated to the instructional staff as needed. During analysis of the data to this theme, two sub themes emerged: 1) Providing Structured Programs, 2) Conducting Impromptu Meetings.

Providing Structured Programs

At Site II, the district provided a formal mentoring program for each of the teacher participants during their initial three years of teaching. Principal B described the program as a partnership between an experienced teacher who served as the mentor and the new hire who was the mentee. He explained that mentors were selected based on who the principals believed would work best with the new teacher. The building mentor program coordinator was trained at the district level to meet monthly with the mentors and mentees to bring information and provide instructional guidance. According to Teacher E, there had to be a minimum of four contact hours per month between the mentor and mentee, and formal meetings were conducted twice a month by the program coordinator. Teachers D and F also referred to the district sponsored mentoring program as significant during their formative years at Site II. They concurred with the other study participants as to the effectiveness of the type of mentoring they received as a means of support during induction.

The principals also used a teacher evaluation process as a means of formal mentoring which required classroom observations, dialogue, and post conference meetings between the administrators and teachers. Designed and implemented by the State Board
of Education, this program was required as a means of teacher recertification and annual review of instructional skills in the classroom. Teacher F described it as a time when “they come in and observe us formally, and then meet to discuss what we thought we can improve on and what they thought we can improve on.” Accountability was also mentioned by Teachers D and E as a benefit of the formal observation process. They used phrases such as “it keeps me on my toes,” “keeps me honest,” and “you have to be busy staying on top of what has to be done.”

*Conducting Impromptu Meetings*

Unscheduled visits and meetings between the principals and teachers were cited as examples of informal mentoring at Site II. During his interview, Principal B remarked, “The informal criteria would come from everyday walking into their classrooms and having conversations with the teachers” and “meeting with them during team meetings, getting a sense of where they are, how they are doing, their strengths, and the areas they need to improve.”

Teacher E spoke positively of unscheduled meetings with her principals as she recounted the following event:

A situation developed with some room parents, and I really wasn’t sure how I should proceed, and after school the principal just happened to walk by. I was going to go seek her out when she walked by so I asked her if she had a minute to talk. Then we just came in and I showed her some of the e-mails and she gave me some suggestions on how we should proceed so that we were unified in our approach, and it seemed to work out fine.
Teacher F stated she was accustomed to her administrators visiting the classroom on a daily basis "because that is what they are there for, to mentor us, to teach us, versus coming in formally to observe us and judge what we are doing." She described the process in the following manner:

Every day they come into the classroom and they say 'how's it going? What are you up to, what are the kids doing, is there anything I can do?' So we have a lot of support daily that is probably more informal than anything, just knowing they're there. Constantly saying, 'Have you been meeting with the reading coach, can I do anything?' They will come in on those meetings, for example our team meeting, to make sure we are on track.

*Maintaining Collaborative Communication*

Data for this theme emerged through independent interviews among all study participants, observations of teacher meetings and classroom instruction, and review of research documents collected from Site II. Listening to the dialogue between the principal and teachers was particularly helpful during information gathering in regards to collaboration and communication.

All study participants agreed that collaboration was a key component to the success and health of the principal/teacher relationship at Site II. Words such as "together," "involved," and "we are here" resonated during the interviews and dialogue between the principal and teachers. A particularly strong theme of teamwork became evident during the teacher interviews and analysis of documents including the school newsletter. During
analysis of the data to this theme, three sub themes emerged: 1) Using an Open-Door Approach, 2) Promoting Team Effort, 3) Creating a Sense of Trust.

*Using an Open Door Approach*

Principal B stressed the importance of accessibility of the building administrators to the teachers through an emphasis on involvement in the educational process:

We are here, we are part of the conversation about the challenges they are having as instructors in the classroom, that they are having with giving their assessments or finding time to assess their children. We are part of that conversation constantly, and so there is a dialogue already established which then makes it so much easier when, or if, an issue arises. And if I or the principal needs to meet with a teacher and talk to them about improving a certain strategy or adjusting something that happens in the room, that foundation and communication is already established through so many other formal and informal types of settings that we have here at school.

He also referred to the professional relationship that he and the principal shared with the teachers as “excellent because they know we are very involved.”

“A collaborative atmosphere” and “her door is always open” was how Teacher D described her interactions with the principals at Site II who were also referred to as “open” and “willing to help.” Teachers E and F made similar comments about the openness and ease of approaching their principals who were described in terms of always being available, visible, and willing to offer assistance in any way possible.
Promoting Team Effort

Teamwork was a reoccurring theme among the teacher study participants at Site II during interviews and review of submitted research documents. When describing the effectiveness of mentoring provided by her principal, Teacher E referred to her grade level colleagues as part of “my team” and they worked on plans as a “team.” When giving her perspective on the type of communication and interactions she shared with her principals and colleagues, Teacher F stated:

It's a teamwork feel, they respect what you are doing and are going to listen to you even why you have done something. With the team teaching coming in and showing us on their own and same 'see what you think of this, would this work for you, you haven't seen it let me show you.’

When asked what mentoring strategies her principals used to facilitate instruction, Teacher D stated, “She (the principal) very much wants it to be a team atmosphere and everybody working together, and she really likes the team building and working with each other.” She also mentioned that classes at Site II were called “teams” and the principals would pick a team each week that worked well together and award them with a certificate. The team concept was also apparent during interview data collection with Principal B:

So we also used the team meetings as a job-embedded professional development time. We also have book talks during that time. One of the team meetings per month is focused on reading in all different grade levels, and teams of professional development associated with reading. And we have a meeting each month that focuses on math instruction and we have a math facilitator committee and that is
one representative from each grade level and they teach professional development to their team based on their team’s needs pertaining to math.

Creating a Sense of Trust

During the data collection phase at Site II an implied theme of trust in the relationship between the principal and teachers was revealed. For example, Teacher D described how she felt comfortable with her administrators coming into her classroom at random to observe or ask if there was anything they could do to help. She explained that over time the principals had cultivated an atmosphere of collaboration which led to the development of a spirit of trust between each other. According to Teacher E, the genesis of trust with her principal actually began before she was hired as a teacher at Site II:

Interestingly, I had the assistant principal as my on-site supervisor when I was doing my student teaching. Because of that, he was observing me quite a bit and we developed a relationship that was already established when I was hired to teach. That was kind of nice because he knew my instructional style. Throughout my internship, during my student teaching, he was very forthright about the things he said that I needed to work on, the areas where I had a lot of strength and the things I could continue to fine tune. So, he just gave me a lot of direction in that way.

When asked what mentoring strategies her principals used to impact instructional practices, Teacher F stated that the support she received was most effective:

Where you don’t feel like they are watching over you to see what you are doing wrong, rather they are watching to see what you are doing right. There’s not a fear
of messing up with them because you know that they are going to step in and say ‘here has been my experience, have you tried this?’

During interviews, Principal B indicated a desire to engender trust with his teachers in a non-threatening environment:

I try to meet in their classroom so that they feel more comfortable because that’s where the instruction is taking place, and look at what I or the principal saw that needs to be addressed. Sometimes, depending on the teacher, we may meet with them weekly to address different issues such as classroom management, instruction, home-to-school communication. We then meet with teachers individually usually on a weekly basis in order to address these issues until they improve.

Summary

Based on the central research question, In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?, three distinct themes emerged from analysis of the data collected at Site II: Providing Support for Teachers, Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring, and Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Teacher support was provided by the principal in the following manner: Instructionally through professional development opportunities; materially through the allocation of technology and supplies; and emotionally by the moral support given to the teachers by the school administration. Formal and informal mentoring experiences were developed through the use of structured programs using site based and outsourced personnel, and with frequent but spontaneous visits by the principal with the teachers before, during, and following classroom instruction. Maintaining collaborative communication at Site II was accom-
plished by the principal who created accessibility to teachers with an open door policy, and by encouraging the teachers to operate in a similar fashion. A sense of trust was also established between the principal and her teachers based on the comfort level of communication between each party.

Site III

Setting: Site III Demographics and Description

Site III was situated in an affluent, residential community consisting of median household incomes of $122,000. During the 2007/2008 school year, this site had an ADM of 505, with no students receiving free or reduced meals. The school consisted of one principal, one assistant principal, a librarian, one school counselor, and 41 classroom and special area teachers. Special area teaching included fulltime instructors in music, art, technology, gifted programs, and special needs.

Students from kindergarten through sixth grade attended Site III which had gone through multiple phases of construction and renovation in the past. Built in 1964, this school was part of a small but financially strong district which had grown from three original buildings to a total of six schools spread throughout a residential population of approximately 21,000. The district had recently celebrated 50 years as an autonomous school system, which was established in 1959.

As I drove into the parking lot of Site III for the first time, I noticed that the outside of the school was constructed with a standard red brick design. Two statues, one of a girl and one of a boy, were strategically placed in front of the entrance walkway surrounded by a triangular configuration of shrubbery with three trees in the background.
The name of the school was predominantly displayed on the front façade of the building and the walkway leading to the main door included landscaping which was simple but inviting.

Upon entering the main hall of this site, the circular design of the hallways and interior corridors were immediately evident. The main office which included the administration suite was connected to the rest of the building through a series of corridors which led throughout with brightly colored walls and well-lit ceilings. I also noticed the presence of student lockers in the hallways which were located outside the sixth grade classrooms. The classrooms I visited were well organized and provided adequate room for instruction. The library, which had previously gone through a major remodeling and redesign, was particularly interesting with a wall mural depicting mythical creatures reading to one another. There were also well-manicured courtyards accessible from various parts of the building which provided the students opportunities for outside exploration and instruction in a secure environment.

Participants: Site III

In addition to the assistant principal, three teachers participated at Site III in this multiple case study. The study participants at Site III were all female and included one African American and three Caucasians who ranged in age from their mid-twenties to the upper fifties. Each teacher had less than ten years of experience and the assistant principal was in her 26th year as a public school educator.

Principal C earned a Bachelors degree in early childhood education in the 1970s and began her teaching career first as a kindergarten teacher. After teaching for four years
she took an eight year leave of absence from the profession when her children were born. Upon returning to teaching, Principal C was hired as a third grade instructor at Site III and eventually became the lead teacher for the school. She explained that the lead teacher position was originally created by the Superintendent to have another individual in the building to fulfill administrative duties in addition to the principal. This position eventually evolved into an official role of assistant principal which Principal C had held for thirteen years. She had also returned to graduate school and received her Masters in school administration during the past two years.

Teacher G completed an undergraduate degree in psychology and a Masters in counselor education in a neighboring state. During her formative years, Teacher G also worked for a non-denominational Christian ministry that reached out to adolescents through volunteers, staff, club meetings, and camps. Upon moving to Alabama, she became the school counselor in an urban elementary school in another district then transferred to Site III in the fall of 2009. At the time of the site visit, she was serving as school counselor.

Teacher H received her Bachelors degree in music performance with additional course work in special education as a major in music therapy from a college in South Carolina. Having been born and raised in Alabama, she returned to complete a Masters in early childhood and elementary education from a regional university. She also shared that her former first grade teacher, who had become a college professor, convinced her to focus on teaching rather than music therapy which led her to a 2nd grade teaching position at a former elementary school, then at Site III. Teacher H taught 2nd grade for 3 years un-
Til she was moved into the reading coach position which she had occupied for the past 6 years.

Teacher I received her undergraduate degree from a college in Florida. She taught 5th grade in that state until moving to Alabama to begin graduate studies at a major state university where her brother also attended. She shared that her brother was the main reason for wanting to move from her home state of Florida to Alabama. She was in her fourth year as an educator, and year two as the gifted teacher at Site II.

Themes: Site III

During analysis of the observations and interviews from the research conducted at Site III, the following themes emerged: Principals Providing Support for Teachers, Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring Practices, and Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Interviews included question sets for both the principals and the teachers. Administrator questions were: 1) Tell me about your educational background and why you chose to enter the teaching profession. 2a) What do you perceive to be the needs of your teachers in regards classroom instruction? 2b) Describe any structured activities you have implemented to address the instructional needs of your teachers. 3) Describe your concept of mentoring as an instructional leader. 4) What criteria do you employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support? 5a) In what ways do you formally or informally mentor your teachers who are in need of improving their instructional practices? 5b) What do you personally do to ensure the success of the mentoring process? 6) Is there any additional information you would like to share?
Questions for teachers included: 1) Tell me about your educational background. College, teaching, experiences, etc. 2) Please describe your experience at this school in regards to classroom instruction. 3) In what ways has the principal addressed your instructional needs? 4) What activities are you involved in pertaining to improving instructional practices? 5) Please describe the mentoring process you are engaged in with your principal. 6) Is the mentoring process formal or informal, and how has this experience affected your ability to teach in the classroom? 7) Is there any additional information you would like to share?

The following sections explore each theme with attention devoted to sub themes which emerged during data analysis. The themes are reported in the order listed above. The following table identifies the themes and sub themes that emerged at Site III.

Table III

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Themes and Sub-Themes for Site III

*Providing Support for Teachers*

Direct observations, independent interviews, copies of emails, agendas, typed and handwritten notes revealed the data for this theme. Informal dialogue with the participants during preliminary and scheduled site visits also produced support for the emergence of this theme.

Principal support for teachers was revealed during data collection at Site III. Teacher G stated that support from her administrators was always available and they provided practically everything that was needed in the classroom. Administrative support was described by Teacher I as “giving me freedom to explore different ways to teach” and giving her “pep talks” periodically throughout the year. Support for Teacher H was referred to as something she felt immediately from the principals and teachers when she first began her career at Site III. The attitudes and educational philosophies of the administrators, according to Teacher H, were important to her as a means of material and emotional support. Principal C described her support of her teachers through engaging in productive dialogue, tangible support, and using mentoring strategies such as cognitive coaching when problem solving with a teacher. During analysis of the data to this theme, three sub themes emerged: 1) Producing Instructional Support: Professional Development, 2) Allocating Material Support: Technology and Supplies, and 3) Giving Emotional Support.
Producing Instructional Support: Professional Development

Principal C stated that she provided instructional support in her role as the director for new curriculum assimilation among the teaching staff. She explained her job was to take new teaching initiatives and form committees within the building to provide information and guidance to the teachers in regards to course content and learning strategies:

So my role is to kind of be the person who cheerleads them into sort of believing they can do it that way, but also making sure that they have the tools to be able to do it, whether it be the actual physical tools or whether it is professional development. So I can help guide them through and suggest professional development opportunities for them to go to. I am like an extra pair of eyes in the classroom for them.

She also described support given to teachers through professional development opportunities such as structuring the school day schedule to allow time for each grade level to participate in “professional learning communities” during a common planning time. This common planning time, according to Principal C, provided the teachers one hour and fifteen minutes four days a week which allowed her to meet with them on a regular basis. She explained that she used this time to bring new ideas and instructional strategies to each grade level.

Teacher H talked about the professional development support she received from the assistant principal who, in the past, would cover her class to allow her observe another teacher either on or off campus depending on her instructional needs:
I went to (Principal C) who arranged for coverage for my class so I could watch a reading workshop in this teacher’s class, and she also arranged for me to go to other schools and see things so I could come back and make sure that I was really implementing the way it needed to be implemented. And if I found some type of professional development and we were not offering it here, or if I wanted to go to another school, she would always make that possible. Or, she would tell me a book I needed to read, or she would come in, it just depends. She always supported me.

Teacher H also mentioned the district support she received as the school reading coach which included a professional learning network composed of the principal, assistant principal, and three teachers.

As the school counselor, Teacher G mentioned the significance of the monthly district meetings and summer professional development activities which were discussed with her principals throughout the year. She explained that because of the significant amount of professional development provided by the school district during the summer and non-instructional hours during the school year, it allowed her to have more time for classroom instruction.

Teacher I also stated the valuable support she received from the district and her school administrators who provided guidance in her field of gifted education, “They have kind of given me freedom to explore different ways to teach it and work with other teachers and go to professional development and encourage that and pay for it.” Based on data collected during an observation, Teacher I demonstrated the benefits of the support she
had received through the incorporation of best practices and differentiated instruction with her students.

**Allocating Material Support: Technology and Supplies**

Tangible support for teachers was revealed as a dominate theme at Site III. Teacher G reflected on a time when she first arrived at Site III as school counselor and discovered that the closets in her room were full of outdated and some missing materials. Because of state budget cuts and no local funds available until the following October, she had immediate instructional supply needs without an accessible funding source. She explained that her principals were able to secure the financing of materials such as books and small group curriculum plans through the school PTO. In regards to technological support, Teacher G stated:

The technology I have in here is incredible. At my old school, I traveled from room to room which would have been fine except that none of the teachers had the same technology and I never knew what I was going to be able to use in one classroom to the next. I never knew if I could use my PowerPoint or if I could show a video clip, so it has been really nice to just have that taken care of, and to not have to travel around. I feel like they have provided just about everything that I need.

Principal C summed up her view on material support for her teachers in the following way, “When they (teachers) need something, when they need help or they need me to buy something or when there is a job no one else is going to do, I am the ‘mom’.”
Giving Emotional Support

It became evident during interviews and observations that the principals and teachers highly valued supporting each other in ways that transcended beyond material support at Site III. Within the dynamic of the principal and teacher relationship, there was evidence at this site of emotional support which was described by the teacher participants as an important intangible. Teacher H, for example, emphasized the impact that her principals had on her from the first day she began teaching at Site III:

From day one! And even when I took this role it just grew. And though she (Principal C) was never my formal mentor, she was always just there. I could always just go in her office and she would guide me through. When I took this role, it was like seeing a whole ‘nother life…you really see things differently, you see a bigger part or bigger piece of the pie as opposed to how different people affect that piece as opposed to when I’m just in that classroom. So I now understand that the principal and assistant principal saw things even bigger than what I could see.

She helped me with the grade levels, she helped me organize how our meetings would go. She helped me with how much each grade level needed. So, she helped me that way. She has been there from day one. She always put me in roles that I did not think I was ready for such as leadership.

Teacher I described how the principals encouraged her with “pep talks” and would contact her if she had not checked in with them on a daily basis. Emails were also sent by the principals inviting her to “sit down and talk about how things are going. That of course is helpful for them to come in here and talk to us.” She indicated this level of
attention and support was important in regards to the successful performance of her duties.

When reflecting on the personal support she had received at Site III, Teacher G stated, “The principals have affirmed that (job performance) from notes that were sent which thanked me for certain things I had been doing, and told me that I was doing a good job.” Principal C described her role as a support for teachers in the following manner:

So first and foremost I got to learn the personality of everyone in the building and I have to learn who I can say what to. You have to know that person as a teacher, you need to know them as a person. You are almost like a therapist for them at times because you kind of know what's going on at home. If I know of someone in a particular grade level as having something stressful going on in their lives, I'm not going to come at them with an hour-and-a-half formative assessment meeting when I know at least one of the people in the group cannot hear what I'm saying. That's what I kind of see my role as.

Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring

Data for this theme initially emerged from individual interviews with the research participants. Additional data was collected through observations and documentation of classroom instruction and teacher meetings.

Site III teacher participants reported they received both formal and informal mentoring support from their principals in order to address instructional concerns. Formal mentoring was often mentioned as coming from the district level by way of the principal
to the teacher. For example, new teachers were required to participate in a mentoring
program which paired them with a veteran teacher in the building. The program was su-
pervised within the building by the principal and/or assistant principal. Informal mentor-
ing took place exclusively at the local school level at Site III which was primarily un-
scheduled, unplanned meetings between the principal and teacher. During analysis of the
data to this theme, two sub themes emerged: 1) Providing Structured Programs, 2) Con-
ducting Impromptu Meetings.

_Producing Structured Programs_

In addition to the district support programs, Principal C discussed other oppor-
tunities she used to formally mentor teachers at Site III. On one occasion, she worked
with a teacher who was struggling in the classroom and needed additional support:

_We had a teacher last year and classroom management was very difficult for her._
_She was teaching upper elementary and having a very difficult time. I had gone
into observe after she had asked me to come in and observe a lesson. When she
came back to talk to me about the lesson, I had a couple of suggestions for her. So
we set up a time for me to go back and have her do a similar lesson with some of
the things incorporated that I had suggested and it was not any better than it was
the first time that I went. So she and I sat down and I said ‘I think what we need
to do we need to have a more routine time for you and me to sit down and talk so
once every month.’ She and I would sit down and talk. But also going on during
that time, I set up a time where someone would go in and cover her class so she
could go watch another teacher teach a like subject. So she and I would meet and
I would also have this time in between when we would meet where she would go in and observe in the classroom. She and I had a very formal arrangement of me going in her classroom and her coming and talking with me and I would give her books to read and different websites to check out.

Principal C also described the professional learning communities (PLC) which were created for every grade level to allow the teachers to have a one hour block of time each day. She would use this time, if needed, to formally mentor in a group setting to address instructional needs and practices.

Teacher H recalled back to her first year of teaching when Principal C would meet with her once a month to discuss how things were going with her appointed mentor. She stated, “She (Principal C) wasn’t my formal mentor but had a formal role in making sure that we understood the professional learning community concept.” As a first year teacher, Teacher G talked about the support she had received from her administrators during their scheduled meetings. She stated:

One thing they have probably mentored me a lot on is how to deal with and communicate with our parents. It is very different than where I was before. Parents are really overly involved here. In some cases where I was they were not involved at all, so just learning those differences and what is the most appropriate way to go about it has given me the tools to use, and strategies with the kids. There was a situation with a parent who asked me about something and there really wasn't a good answer to it. So, I discussed it with the AP, (assistant principal). When I went to call the parent back, I found myself almost saying exactly what the AP,
(assistant principal), had said because it just made sense. From August to now I already feel that I am more confident in what I am doing and how I am doing it.

**Conducting Impromptu Meetings**

Unscheduled visits and meetings between the principals and teachers were cited and observed as examples of informal mentoring at Site III. In her role as assistant principal, Principal C stated that she did not formally evaluate the teachers and therefore viewed her role as one who was able to meet more frequently and with shorter notice. She stated:

I don’t do formal observations but when I go into the classrooms, I’m looking at the whether or not they are teaching in the most engaging way they can. My goal is to make them good at their craft, not at their subject.

The researcher observed one such unscheduled meeting between Principal C and Teacher I which occurred during instruction in the classroom. There was brief dialogue followed by a recommendation to follow up later in the administrator’s office. Upon reflection, Teacher I described how she felt supported when the principals would drop by her room to talk, or send her emails to come to their office for an informal visit:

And just knowing I can talk to them about anything. I think if I was afraid to go talk to them I would not enjoy it as much. For the most part I feel like I can interrupt them whenever they are doing something. Just knowing that if I’m kind of concerned about a lesson I’m going to do and I have a question about it, I can go in and ask them that day and they can give me their advice on it.
Referring to meetings with Principal C, Teacher H commented, “She would talk to me so much, it was so informal, but I could always go into her office, sit down, and she would talk me through.” The research participants at Site III indicated a preference for meeting informally as a means of facilitating effective mentoring and showing support.

**Maintaining Collaborative Communication**

Data for this theme emerged through independent interviews among all study participants, observations of teacher meetings and classroom instruction, and review of research documents collected from Site III. Listening to the dialogue between the principal and teachers was particularly helpful during information gathering in regards to collaboration and communication.

During interviews and observations at Site III, it became evident that the participants worked closely together through individual and group meetings which involved verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Examples of collaboration included district curriculum committees which brought together grade level representatives and the assistant principals from each school in the district to review the state course of study. Book studies, common planning times, peer teaching, and professional development were also mentioned as collaborative opportunities to unite the principals with the teachers. Communication between the teachers and administrators at Site III came in the form of verbal dialogue during individual and group sessions and non-verbal methods such as handwritten notes, and e-mail messaging. During analysis of the data to this theme, three sub themes emerged: 1) Using an Open-Door Approach, 2) Building Relationships, 3) Creating a Sense of Trust.
Using an Open Door Approach

Principal C explained how she set the tone for teachers, students, and parents to feel comfortable meeting with her about issues or concerns. She stated, “My door’s always open, the principal’s door is always open” when referring to how she communicates with others. Specifically, she indicated a desire for her teachers to feel at ease and supported when they approached the school administrators and/or mentors about matters of concern:

One of the things I have learned in this job is that most people need somebody to tell them they are doing a good job. If I have developed a relationship with the teachers who work here, they are going to be more willing to come and say I need help with this than if I seem like I really don't care what their issues are. So I could really see firsthand what an impact that just being out in the building and having a relationship with people is important because it's what makes us feel comfortable and be okay with our imperfections and when you're okay with your imperfections you’re going to go to somebody and say I need help. They need to feel like they can come to us for anything.

When referring to her appointed teacher mentor, Teacher I commented, “I can walk into her classroom at any time and she will drop what she is doing and help me out and call me on a regular basis to see how I am doing.” In her first year at Site III, Teacher G explained how her mentor was her first point of contact when questions or problems arose, but the principals had also been “real open, real helpful” when she needed them. She also recalled that during the beginning of the school year, the principals told her “that they wanted to have an open door policy and be there for me.” Teacher H described the acce-
Building Relationships

During the data collection phase at Site III, there was a theme of the importance of building effective relationships between principals, teachers, parents and students. Principal C discussed her role as a mediator between the teacher and parent and how her desire to personally know each student had helped develop relationships between the school and community:

I’m not as concerned about the content as I am about the way they go about doing it in the classroom, and the relationships in the community they connect and create in their classroom. And that’s another role I think the administrators have and that is being the people whose work set the tone for what we believe community is. It’s letting everybody feel important as the next person.

She also described the relationship she had facilitated with each of the teacher participants as “reflective,” “effective,” “very hands on”, and “approachable.” In her personal reflection in the role of assistant principal, Principal C stated:

Having a relationship with people is important because it’s what makes us feel comfortable with our imperfections, and when you’re okay with your imperfections, you are going to go to somebody and say ‘I need help’. They (teachers) need to feel like they can come to us for anything.

In the description of the dynamic between teacher and the principal, Teacher H commented:
We have a relationship, and relationships make the difference for me. I feel like they trust me, empower me. I feel like I can go to them about anything. I think the relationship is more important than the formal mentoring from the principal or assistant principal.

Teacher G shared:

I think the relationship between me and my principals is important professionally and it helps me to grow, but I think that when it is not there, morale is down at the school. I would expect the relationship to continue as long as I’m here.

Establishing strong, working relationships with her colleagues and principals were important to Teacher I based on her previous experiences at a former school where she discovered the value of productive human interaction.

Creating a Sense of Trust

An implied theme of trust in the relationship between the principal and teachers was noted during the data collection phase at Site III. Reflecting over the past 13 years as assistant principal, Principal C spoke of trust that had been built with her teachers to the point where they felt willing to come to her for any need or issue in a non-threatening environment. Teacher G concurred with this view as she indicated a sense of trust in her principals who were “great about answering my questions and not making me feel like I am a burden.”

Teacher I recalled how her impressions of the assistant principal had changed from feelings of intimidation to an appreciation for her honesty which had gradually developed over time and created a trusting relationship:
At first, I was intimidated with the AP just because she is willing to give more of a direct answer and is more of a direct person in general. At first that scared me, but now I really appreciate it and I kind of know which things to go to which person for. If I need a quick direct thing I go to the AP, but if I need a more elaborate sit down the visit I go to the principal. They know that I tend to ask questions because I get nervous about not wanting to do things the wrong way, that's gradually gotten a little bit better since I came here.

Teacher H described her relationship with Principal C as a combination of cognitive coaching and positive feedback. She stated:

She (Principal C) is naturally good at making you feel good about what you have already done, and shows you how to try something else without making you feel threatened. I never felt threatened. I always felt I could go in their door.

Furthermore, all participants agreed that building trust was not an instant process but required time and effort from the principal and teacher to foster healthy collaborations and communication.

Summary

Based on the central research question, In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices?, three distinct themes emerged from analysis of the data collected at Site III: Providing Support for Teachers, Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring, and Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Teacher support was provided by the principal in the following manner: Instructionally through professional development opportunities; materially through the allocation of
technology and supplies; and emotionally by the moral support given to the teachers by the school administration. Formal and informal mentoring experiences were developed through the use of structured programs using site-based and outsourced personnel and with frequent but spontaneous visits by the principal with the teachers before, during, and following classroom instruction. Maintaining collaborative communication at Site III was accomplished by the principal who created accessibility to teachers with an open door policy and by encouraging the teachers to operate in a similar fashion. Relationship building was a dominant sub-theme which addressed the interactions primarily between principal and teacher, and secondarily between school and community. A sense of trust was also established between the principal and her teachers based on the comfort level of communication between each party.

Cross-Case Analysis

Based on the central research question, three distinct themes emerged at each site: 1) Providing Support for Teachers, 2) Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring, 3) Maintaining Collaborative Communication. A cross-case analysis of the three themes is offered for the purpose of prompting the reader to reflect on similarities and differences among the relationships between principals and teachers in regards to mentoring to improve instructional practices. The following table identifies the themes and sub-themes that emerged at all three sites. Note: Sub-themes that emerged at only one site are noted in parenthesis by the school’s identifying Roman numeral.
Table IV

<table>
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Themes and Sub-Themes across Three Cases

*Providing Support for Teachers*

*Similarities.* Research revealed across three sites that the language of the principal was intended to support the teachers. Site I teacher participants agreed that Principal A provided support to meet their needs. They each used words such as “helpful,” “supportive,” and “encourage” to describe their relationship with their principal. At Site II, Teacher D stated her administrators were “always asking, ‘What do you need, do you have everything that you need, do we need to look into getting you other materials?’” Administrative support was described by Teacher I at Site III as “giving me freedom to explore different ways to teach” and giving her “pep talks” periodically throughout the year.
An emphasis on professional development was documented at each site as a way of producing instructional support from the principal to the teacher. According to Principal A, “Great professional development has always been a big part of our philosophy as we began the school to provide lots of professional development and lots of support for our teachers.” Principal B indicated a strong emphasis on professional development for teachers at Site II both at the local school and district levels. The Site III administrator described support given to her teachers through professional development opportunities such as structuring the school day schedule to allow time for each grade level to participate in “professional learning communities” during a common planning time.

District professional development programs were mentioned at all three sites as tools for induction of new teachers and enrichment of veteran instructional staff. These programs were designed to mentor and guide teachers to improve and enhance the quality of instruction for their students and were provided at both on-campus and off-campus locations.

The use of technology and supplies as methods of allocating material support was a common sub-theme found at each research site. Data collection revealed that each site principal was not only knowledgeable of current technological devices and practices but also emphasized and integrated its use into the daily instructional routines of his/her teachers. Each principal agreed that their schools must remain technologically innovative with devices for the classroom and software programming which meet the needs of their teachers and students. All site teacher participants indicated they were supported by their principals in the area of technology and the allocation of basic materials and supplies for the classroom. Teacher B stated, “My principal is an advocate for technology and tech-
ology that we have in this school amazes me.” Teachers D and F referred to the technological support they had received from their principals through suggested websites, and recommendations to use PowerPoint® during student instruction.

Another area of commonality found among each site was in the area of principal-to-teacher emotional support. Phrases including “being involved,” “so willing to help,” and “she was always just there” emerged at each site indicating a supportive dynamic within the principal and teacher relationship. The accessibility and visibility of the principal were also discussed by each teacher as important in regards to the personal support they felt from their administrators. Tangible and verbal expressions of encouragement to teachers by the site principals were also common characteristics found among the research participants. Each site principal and teacher agreed that they had healthy, productive, and supportive relationships with one another.

**Differences.** While the general consensus of each research site indicated emotional support was evident between principal and teacher, there were slight variations to how support was manifest at each site. For example, a Site III teacher participant specifically mentioned that the use of simple note cards with encouraging words written by her principal was significant to her. Daily visits with “how can I help?” type questions by her administrators were meaningful to a teacher at Site II. The positive attitude and comfort level provided by her principal were mentioned by a Site I teacher as important in the emotional support she felt in the classroom and the fulfillment of her duties. Teacher I specifically discussed the instructional support she received from her principal through cognitive coaching strategies:
What I like about the principal is she makes you tell her what you think the problem is, which is kind of hard sometimes when you want to be told this is it this is what you need to go do, she really makes you think about what I am doing and what do I need to fix, or what do I see that is wrong and how do I think I can fix it, she is really good about that. But she also has ideas to if I am completely blank or I am not really sure, she has some ideas to, so I think that is a really good strategy, not just giving the information that letting you decide on your own how you think you did.

Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring

Similarities. The themes of mentoring both formally and informally were evident among all research participants at each site. Formal mentoring was primarily referenced as a function of the district through structured programs which provided designated mentors for new teachers at the local school level. These programs were supervised by the building principal at each school. Teachers at each site with three or more year’s experience received formal mentoring either directly or indirectly from their principal through teacher evaluations and observations. All sites concurred that formal mentoring opportunities for both novice and experienced teachers were important in the success and development of quality classroom instruction.

Examples of informal mentoring at each site included unscheduled, impromptu meetings between the principals and teachers. These meetings took place in locations such as the classroom, hallways, and administrator offices where dialogue would ensue between the principal and teacher in regards to instructional practices, classroom man-
agement, and problem-solving. All sites agreed that informal mentoring opportunities occurred more frequently and were preferred when compared to the structured, mentoring programs they experienced at the district and local school levels. During data collection at Site I, Teacher A also described how the impromptu meetings with her principal were beneficial during the first year at Site I: “The meetings helped me a lot because when I first got this job, I had no clue what I was supposed to do….so the meetings with the principal helped me just to know where to go and what to do.”

**Differences.** At Site III, Principal C went beyond the standard formal mentoring programs offered by her district by personally intervening and mentoring a teacher who was struggling in the classroom. She described how she had set up monthly meetings with this teacher in order to provide guidance and support specifically in the areas of instruction and classroom management. Principal A at Site I also co-sponsored an instructional-support program with her Reading Coach which culminated into a collaborative teaching and coaching project involving grade level teachers and regional reading coaches. This program allowed Principal A and her teachers to observe and dialogue in a formal mentoring environment in regards to recommendations for best instructional practices.

Data collection at all sites indicated that informal mentoring between principals and teachers were similar in structure with slight variations. Some teachers included unannounced visits by the principals to their classrooms; whereas others described how they initiated the impromptu mentoring session by knocking on the door of the administrator’s
office to request a quick meeting. This type of meeting was cited as particularly helpful to first year teachers.

Maintaining Collaborative Communication

Similarities. Study participants at Sites I, II, and III concurred that collaboration was vital to the health and success of the principal/teacher relationship. During interviews, observations, and listening to dialogue, words such as “together,” “team,” and “involved” were used to describe the interactions between school administrators and teachers. Forms of communication common to each site included verbal dialogue during individual and group sessions and non-verbal methods such as hand written notes, and e-mail messaging.

Each site revealed a sub theme of an open door approach used by the principals to foster collaboration and communication with their teachers. Statements such as “you have to be able to open that door,” “her door is always open,” and “the principal’s door is always open” by all site participants indicated a common desire to meet together. Availability, visibility, and a willingness to help were also mentioned as keys to promoting an open and collaborative relationship between principals and teachers.

Another sub theme common to each site was an implied sense of trust among principal and teacher study participants. The theme of trust emerged as a by-product of the collaborative communication between the principals and teachers. During interviews, each teacher recalled an event during her first year of teaching where the principal demonstrated patience, understanding, and a desire to help with a parent problem or classroom issue. As a result, the teachers felt more secure and less intimidated in their rela-
tionship with the principal and developed a greater sense of loyalty and trust in their leadership.

**Differences.** Unique to Site II, data collection revealed a sub-theme of teamwork among the teacher participants. During interviews and review of submitted research documents, phrases such as “my team,” “teammate,” “team teaching,” and “teamwork feel” were made by each teacher in regards to grade level colleagues and the approach of the mentoring process. Teacher E referred to her grade level colleagues as part of “my team” and they worked on plans as a “team.” When giving her perspective on the type of communication and interactions she shared with her principals and colleagues, Teacher F stated, “It's a teamwork feel, they respect what you are doing and are going to listen to you even why you have done something.” According to Teacher D, the principal “very much wants it to be a team atmosphere and everybody working together.” She also stated that grade level units at Site II were referred to as “teams” by the school administrators.

The sub-theme of building relationships was found to be prevalent during documentation of data at Site III. Specifically, the importance of building relationships among the principals, teachers, parents and students was discussed by the study participants. Principal C described her role as mediator between teacher and parent along with a desire to personally know each student as opportunities to develop relationships between the school and community. In her personal reflection on her role as assistant principal, Principal C stated:

Having a relationship with people is important because it’s what makes us feel comfortable with our imperfections, and when you’re okay with your imperfe-
tions, you are going to go to somebody and say ‘I need help’. They (teachers) need to feel like they can come to us for anything.

She also used terms such as reflective, effective, and approachable to explain the relationship she had established with her teachers. Teacher H indicated that the relationship with her principals had engendered trust and self empowerment. Teacher G shared the professional benefits and growth she had experienced as a result of a healthy principal/teacher dynamic relationship.

Conclusions

Based on analysis of the themes and sub-themes that emerged in individual cases and during cross-case analysis, concluding results are presented according to data collected at each site. Results are categorized by three major themes: 1) Providing Support for Teachers, 2) Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring, and 3) Maintaining Collaborative Communication.

Providing Support for Teachers

Data collection at all three research sites revealed that the principals provided support for their teachers in several ways. Instructional support was given to the teachers directly and indirectly by the school administrators through district sponsored professional development and individualized mentoring programs. As instructional leaders, the principals at each site provided opportunities for personal and professional growth of their teachers. They demonstrated support and encouragement for their teachers with positive words and actions based on a sincere desire to see them succeed as a person and an
educator. Findings also indicated that support from the principal to the teacher was provided through tangible and intangible means. The tangibles included access to current instructional technological equipment, software training, and teaching supplies such as paper, adequate copies, and writing utensils. During site based research, intangible expressions of support revealed a desire and need for emotional support in the principal/teacher relationship. Emotional support was provided by the site principals to their teachers which established trust based on open communication and collaboration.

*Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring*

During data collection at each site, mentoring was determined to be a key component in the relationship between the principal and teacher in regards to the quality of classroom instruction. Formal mentoring opportunities were discussed by all study site participants as a primary function of the school district and subsequently the school itself. Examples were given of mentoring programs for teachers going through the induction process which included an individualized formal mentoring meeting created by Principal C designed to help a struggling teacher.

The research also revealed that informal mentoring was cited more frequently by the study participants and preferred over the formal mentoring programs discussed. The reasons given for this preference were the accessibility and visibility of the principals who were willing to meet on short notice in differing venues such as the classroom, hallways, and administration offices. Impromptu or unscheduled meetings between the principals and teachers allowed for greater frequency of dialogue and problem solving, and enhanced the mentoring experience for both parties.
Maintaining Collaborative Communication

The words and phrases expressed by the participants at all three sites indicated the importance of working together through collaborative efforts based on effective communication between the principals and teachers. Examples of verbal and non-verbal forms of communication included one-on-one and group dialogue, handwritten notes, and e-mails. A dominant sub-theme among all sites was the use of an open door approach by the principals to encourage dialogue with the teachers. According to the teachers at each site, feelings of intimidation and cynicism towards the principal were replaced by feelings of trust to dialogue in a non-threatening environment due to the openness of their relationship.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the research findings of this study. The following distinct themes emerged during analysis of the interviews, observation notes, and documents from research conducted at all three sites: 1) Providing Support for Teachers, 2) Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring, and 3) Maintaining Collaborative Communication. The findings for this multiple case study were reported in two sections. The first section presented each case through a description of settings, participants, themes, and sub-themes that emerged during data analysis. The second section presented a cross-case analysis of the three research sites in terms of their similarities and differences.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This multiple case study examined the mentoring relationship between principals and their teachers in regards to instructional practice at three sites in Alabama. Multiple data sources were used to conduct qualitative research which resulted in extensive data collection and analysis. The collection of data was conducted through direct observations, interviews, and a review of documents provided by each research site. Data analysis involved the direct interpretation and categorical aggregation of themes and sub-themes through a coding process. The themes identified were 1) Providing Support for Teachers, 2) Engaging in Formal and Informal Mentoring, and 3) Maintaining Collaborative Communication. Findings were also triangulated through cross case analysis. The specific sampling strategies used for this study were maximum variation sampling and criterion sampling. Maximum variation was employed to select three diverse sites based on demographics and location. Through criterion sampling, a total of twelve individuals were selected across all three sites to participate in the study. The participants included one principal and three teachers from each site who responded to interview questions and were observed as they interacted with colleagues and students in their settings. This research study was guided by the central research question: In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices? The study was furthered guided by five sub-questions:
1. What criteria do principals employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support?

2. What mentoring behaviors do elementary school principals say they employ with teachers to facilitate change in instructional practices?

3. What mentoring behaviors do elementary school teachers say their principals demonstrate to facilitate change in instructional practices?

4. What are the principal’s perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring they provide to their teachers to improve instructional practices?

5. What are the teacher’s perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring provided by their principals to improve instructional practices?

Chapter Five is comprised of a summary of major findings, answers to research questions, findings as related to the theory of transformational leadership, implications for educational leaders and teachers, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Major Findings

During research conducted at each site, I discovered the principals supported their teachers through vocabulary that was positive, uplifting and encouraging. Instructional support for the teachers was also provided by the principals in the form of professional development via district professional development programs for induction of new teachers and enrichment of veteran instructional staff. These programs were designed to mentor and guide teachers to improve and enhance the quality of instruction for their students. I found that principals provided material support for their teachers through the use of technology and emphasized and integrated its use into the daily instructional routines.
of their teachers. All site teacher participants indicated they were supported by their principals in the area of technology in addition to the allocation of basic materials and supplies for the classroom.

As a researcher, I learned that emotional support provided by the principals to the teachers at each site was significant among the participants. Specifically, the accessibility and visibility of the principal, along with tangible and verbal expressions of encouragement, were revealed as important to the teachers. Consistent among all study participants was the view of the principal-teacher relationship as being healthy, productive, and supportive.

Formal and informal mentoring practices were evident among all research participants at each site. Formal mentoring was primarily referenced as a function of the district through structured programs which provided designated mentors for new teachers at the local school level. All sites concurred that formal mentoring opportunities for both novice and experienced teachers were important in the success and development of quality classroom instruction. Data collection and analysis revealed informal mentoring at each site came in the form of unscheduled, impromptu meetings between the principals and teachers. All site participants agreed that informal mentoring opportunities occurred more frequently and were preferred when compared to the structured, mentoring programs they experienced at the district and local school levels.

I discovered during research that collaboration and communication were considered by all participants as vital to the health and success of the principal/teacher relationship. Forms of communication common to each site included verbal dialogue during individual and group sessions and non-verbal methods such as handwritten notes and e-
mail messaging. Availability, visibility, and a willingness to help were also mentioned as key to encouraging an open, collaborative, relationship between principals and teachers.

An implied sense of trust was revealed among principal and teacher study participants during data analysis at all three sites. Trust emerged as a by-product of the collaborative communication between the principals and teachers at each site. The teachers indicated feelings of security, loyalty and trust as opposed to intimidation in their relationship with the principal. Additionally, relationship building among the principals, teachers, parents and students was deemed paramount in the success and effectiveness of classroom instruction at each site.

Research Questions Answered

The central research question along with successive sub questions guided this multiple case study. The central research question was: In what ways do elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices? Sub-questions included the following:

1) What criteria do principals employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support?
2) What mentoring behaviors do elementary school principals say they employ with teachers to facilitate change in instructional practices?
3) What mentoring behaviors do elementary school teachers say their principals demonstrate to facilitate change in instructional practices?
4) What are the principal’s perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring they provide to their teachers to improve instructional practices?
5) What are the teacher’s perceptions about the effectiveness of the mentoring provided by their principals to improve instructional practices?

During research conducted at all three sites, I discovered that principals used formal and informal mentoring opportunities and collaborative communication as methods to determine the level of support their teachers required. Formal mentoring of teachers was provided by the district of each site and subsequently supervised by each building principal. This allowed the principal to maintain the focus on the school’s vision of teaching for the mentor and mentee, collect data related to the induction activities implementation, and serve as an evaluator of the induction program (Bartell, 2005). Informal mentoring was cited more frequently by the study participants and preferred over formal mentoring because of the greater frequency of dialogue and problem solving experienced between the principals and teachers. This confirmed earlier research conducted by Lequier (2008) on the induction of first year and transferring elementary teachers. Lequier noted that teachers specifically identified as significant and meaningful the ongoing, informal support, and clear communication demonstrated by their principals.

One mentoring behavior employed by the principals towards their teachers was in the form of instructional support. Instructional support was given to the teachers directly and indirectly by the school administrators through district sponsored professional development and individualized mentoring programs. According to Jackson (2008), a key factor of principals meeting the needs of their teachers is through mentoring based on professional development and support. As instructional leaders, the principals at each site provided opportunities for personal and professional growth of their teachers.
Among the teacher participants, emotional support based on a healthy relationship with their principals was cited as important in affecting a positive change in the classroom. Research conducted in the area of effective leadership coupled with emotional intelligence supports this approach. Emotional intelligence is a concept which includes the domains of knowing and managing one’s emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing emotions in others, and handling relationships (Maulding, 2002). The accessibility and visibility of school administrators were mentioned by Teacher H and G as behaviors which encouraged trust, self empowerment, and professional growth. This coincides with research on instructional leadership which has moved away from managerial, authoritarian, and top-down leadership styles toward collegial and empowering forms of principal leadership (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002; Heck & Hallinger, 1999).

Principal A indicated that she provided effective mentoring through targeted support for struggling teachers by pairing them with an administrator and/or the school reading coach. Referred to in the literature as a learning partnership, this approach is representative of a new mentoring paradigm where “wisdom is not passed from an authoritarian teacher to a supplicant student, but is discovered in a learning relationship in which both stand to gain a greater understanding of the workplace and world” (Aubrey & Cohen, 1995, p. 161; Zachary, 2000). Principal A also described programs she implemented at Site I which were designed to give opportunities for growth and support of her staff in a formal setting. In research conducted by Lequier (2008), structured support in the form of professional development was found to be significant among the teacher participants as a means of effective mentoring.
Site II teacher participants spoke favorably of the district mentoring program supervised by their principals as an effective method of support during their first year of teaching and beyond. In terms of professional development and support, existing scholarship on the role of principal reveals that mentoring is a key factor in meeting the needs of novice teachers (Jackson, 2008). During interviews at Site III, Teacher G talked about the support she had received from her administrators and described how their mentoring sessions gave her the tools and strategies needed to effectively teach the students, and communicate with the parents. Similar benefits were revealed during a California study which analyzed the use of effective mentoring for teachers and their students. Results included improved student achievement, the incorporation of long-term planning and instruction, and increased motivation among learners (Bartel, 2005).

**Findings Related to the Theory of Transformational Leadership**

The theoretical framework for this multiple case study was comprised of adult learning theory, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership. By definition, the transformational leader engages in shared or distributed leadership which seeks changes through a bottom-up approach (Day, 2001; Jackson, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003). Transforming or transformational leadership occurs when both leaders and followers raise each others’ level of motivation and sense of higher purpose. In their work on transformative leadership, Rafferty and Griffen (2004) mentioned this approach as one of five attributes of effective leadership. Referred to as inspirational communication, transformational leadership involves the use of expressing positive and encouraging messages about the organization and making statements to build motivation and confidence.
Evidence of this type of leadership was revealed at each site in the type of support provided by the principals to their teachers. Emotional support was reported by the study participants as an integral part of the relationship between principal and teacher. Positive attitudes, inspiring dialogue, and tangible expressions of encouragement such as simple note cards were given as examples of meaningful support.

Schwann and Spady (1998) delineated key roles that transformational leaders play in demonstrating authentic leadership. One such role of authentic, transformational leaders is that of the lead learner in the organization. The principals at each site in this multiple case study gave examples of how they functioned as the instructional leader of their schools. Principal A emphasized her role as the chief instructional leader by providing her teachers with the tools and resources they needed to improve their instructional quality in the classroom. She also scheduled a common planning period for her teachers “that provides time for us to look at data which is something that does drive our instruction here and we keep that as a focus in our school.”

Principal B indicated a strong emphasis on professional development for teachers at Site II both at the local school and district levels. He also referred to opportunities for teachers to receive on-site training through job-embedded professional development days in the areas of reading, mathematics, and technology. Principal C stated that she provided instructional support in her role as the director for new curriculum assimilation among the teaching staff. She explained her job was to take new teaching initiatives and form committees within the building to provide information and guidance to the teachers in regards to course content and learning strategies. She also provided support through professional development opportunities for teachers such as structuring the school day sche-
dule to allow time for each grade level to participate in “professional learning communities” during a common planning time.

In a study of the differences in school principals’ leadership and management behaviors in high-performing and low performing schools serving high poverty populations, principals in Torchbearer Schools demonstrated specific transformational behaviors (Lindahl, 2009). Similar behaviors were also revealed among the participants in this research study on principals mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices. For example, in the Torchbearer study, the principals were seen as providing better access to appropriate instructional materials, resources, and instructional technology. Comparatively, the use of technology and supplies as methods of allocating material support was a common sub-theme found at each research site in this study. Data collection revealed that each site principal was not only knowledgeable of current technological devices and practices but also emphasized and integrated its use into the daily instructional routines of their teachers. Each site principal agreed their schools must remain technologically innovative with devices for the classroom and software programming which meet the needs of their teachers and students.

In regards to transformational leadership and mentoring, Anderson (2004) described three approaches which have potential implications for the mentoring relationship between the principal and teacher. He termed these the buffered approach, the interactive approach, and the contested approach. In the interactive approach, principals lead through distributive decision-making, maintain visibility, and enable greater teacher leadership. Data collection at each site revealed that the interactive approach was used among several of the study participants. Cross case analysis indicated that the teacher participants dis-
cussed the accessibility and visibility of their principals as important in regards to personal support. At Site I, teacher leadership was encouraged by Principal A who designed and implemented a collaborative teaching project which provided grade level teachers the opportunity to observe a lesson taught by a reading coach. She would then engage in distributive decision making with her teachers by allowing them to determine the best strategies needed to improve their instructional practices.

Elements of the transformational leadership model based on extensive empirical research by Bass and Avolio (1994), and grounded in Burn’s (1978) seminal work, are evident in the findings of this multiple case study. According to the Bass and Avolio model, transformational leaders displayed individualized consideration by actively listening to their constituents and identifying the individual’s personal concerns and needs. Evidence of individualized consideration was revealed at each site through the observations and testimonies of the participants who indicated the importance of communication and meeting needs.

Teacher B made reference to the “pop in” meetings she had with her principal were helpful because it gave her the opportunity to discuss any issues in a comfortable setting. During an interview with Teacher A, the informal meetings with her principal were referred to as “constantly mentoring” which included a time of reflection and discussion. Principal A revealed one of her objectives as the instructional leader was to meet with staff both individually and as a group to “talk to them about their needs.”
Implications

The findings of this study present several implications for practitioners of classroom instruction, educational leadership, and higher education training of K-12 administrators.

Implications for Teachers

First, teachers who participated in this study expressed the importance of support which they received from their principals. Support came in the form of instructional guidance, materials, and emotional encouragement. Teachers received instructional support from their principals through professional development opportunities at the local school and district levels. Examples of imbedded professional development included book studies, curriculum support personnel who lead site-based workshops, data meetings, and cross grade level meetings. District instructional support for teachers included grade level conferences, summer programs for student assessment training, and curriculum guidance from central office personnel. Teachers can greatly benefit from these types of instructional support provided by their principals.

During research conducted at each site, emotional support was cited as key to a successful relationship between the principals and teachers. Teacher participants described how their principals demonstrated support through positive words and actions based on a sincere desire to them succeed as a person and an educator. The visibility and accessibility of the principals were also mentioned as significant sources of personal and professional support for the teachers. Regular contact between the principal and teacher is essential for a healthy, open relationship based on emotional support.
A second implication for teachers focused on the mentoring process they shared with their principals. The perceptions of teachers participating in the study indicated they highly valued the formal and informal mentoring relationships with their principals. Formal mentoring opportunities were provided in the form of district sponsored induction programs and teacher observation/evaluation assessments. According to the findings in this study, informal mentoring occurred more frequently and was preferred over formal mentoring programs. Specifically, unscheduled or impromptu meetings between the principals and teachers were mentioned as most beneficial due to greater frequency of dialogue and collaborative problem solving. Casual meetings are at times the most effective between principals and teachers.

The third implication for teachers centers on communication with their principals. Working together through collaborative efforts based on effective communication was expressed as significant by the participants at all three sites. One-on-one and group dialogue, handwritten notes, and e-mails were cited as examples of effective verbal and nonverbal forms of communication. The teachers also described the open relationship they shared with their principals as a means of engendering trust in a non-threatening environment. Trust is a key component to a productive relationship between the principal and teacher which must be developed carefully and methodically over time.

Implications for Principals

The implications for practitioners of elementary level administration based on the findings of this multiple case study included providing support for teachers, engaging in formal and informal mentoring, maintaining collaborative communication, and creating
trust. First, the language of the principals was found to be a significant source of positive support for the teachers. Words such as “helpful” and “supportive” were used to describe the relationship shared between site principals and teachers. Several teachers described the dialogue they engaged in with their administrators as encouraging and similar to “pep talks.” Principal-to-teacher communication must be professionally and positively conducted in order to be productive.

Another form of support provided by the principals was instructionally based through professional development opportunities for teachers. For example, one principal scheduled a common planning period which allowed for weekly data meetings and instructional guidance with her teachers. Another principal engaged in “professional learning afternoons” designed for his teachers following regular school hours, and conducting quarterly book talks as a means of professional development. Instructional support was also provided by each principal through funding for technology and basic supplies. To improve instructional practices, principals must provide the necessary professional development opportunities and material needs for their teachers.

Principals in this study provided emotional support for their teachers in various ways. Emphasizing the importance of the human element of leadership, one principal used phrases such as “being involved,” “being visible,” and to “support them anyway we can help them.” Teachers also described this principal as one who made them feel comfortable because of her positive, supportive, and encouraging demeanor. Another principal was noted for being highly visible, accessible, and involved in the daily routines of her teachers. When describing her role as a support for her teachers, one principal commented:
I’ve got to learn the personality of everyone in the building, and you need to know them as a person. You are almost like a therapist for them at times because you kind of know what’s going on at home.

The human resource framework of leadership should be standard practice among school principals who desire to build an emotionally healthy relationship with their teachers.

A second implication for principals centers on the formal and informal mentoring relationships with their teachers. The principals at each site provided formal mentoring for their teachers through structured programs which included self-designed and district sponsored events. One principal created her own formal mentoring program which she referred to as a collaborative teaching/coaching project. The event covered a three day period which involved her teachers observing lessons taught by advanced instructors and culminated in round-table mentoring sessions between the participants and leaders. District mentoring opportunities were primarily used for new teacher induction which generally covered the first three years of classroom instruction. There are obvious benefits to principals in the utilization of formal mentoring programs for the assimilation and growth of their teachers.

Informal mentoring was revealed at each site through impromptu meetings held between the principals and teachers. During data collection at one particular site, a teacher described the informal meetings with her principal as “constantly mentoring” which included a time of reflection and discussion. Another teacher spoke favorably of the unscheduled meetings she had with her principal who had helped her with a difficult parent issue. Among all site participants, the informal nature of unplanned mentoring sessions was preferred over the structured mentoring programs previously mentioned. Principals
should value the importance and necessity of the mentoring relationship with their teachers and should embrace formal and informal meeting opportunities.

Third, maintaining collaborative communication was found to be a commonality among the research participants. The principals interviewed at each site shared a similar approach in how they communicated with their teachers. Each principal supported an open-door policy with those under their supervision by being available to meet on short notice at locations in addition to the administrative office. One teacher described the interactions with her principal as “a collaborative atmosphere” where “her door is always open.” When describing the type of communication she shared with her principal, one teacher used words and phrases such as “teammate,” “team teaching,” and “teamwork feel.” She also mentioned that her principal referred to each homeroom as a team rather than a grade in order to encourage collaboration and communication with the teachers. Effective principals operate with an attitude of openness and availability towards those they lead.

A final implication for principals is directed at creating a sense of trust between the administrator and teacher. Throughout interviews and observations at all three sites, the theme of trust emerged as a by-product of the collaborative communication between the principals and teachers. Teachers described their encounters with their principals as non-threatening and supportive which helped to establish a healthy, professional relationship. Self-reflection on instructional practices and risk taking were also referenced by study participants as results of a trusting relationship between the principals and teachers. Creating trust between the principal and teacher can be a slow process, but the benefits are worth the time and energy required.
Implications for Higher Education Training of K-12 Administrators

The findings of this multiple case study also offer implications for practitioners of university course work for aspiring and practicing K-12 principals. First, course work should reflect best practices on professional development ideas for teachers to improve the quality of their instruction. The psychology of human interaction and emotional support should be reviewed based on the research revealed in this study. It is important to remember that principals are human beings first and school administrators second.

The second implication for higher education coursework is in the area of formal and informal mentoring. Role playing and observations of live mentoring sessions would be advantageous for those who are engaged in principal preparatory classes. In particular, there should be opportunities for students to simulate with each other impromptu meetings between the principal and teacher.

Third, instruction should be provided on current research in regards to effective collaboration and communication practices in a K-12 setting. Role playing would also be effective here along with video examples of correct and incorrect communication methods for contrast and comparison. Good communication skills are essential to principals effectively mentoring teachers to improve their instructional practices.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further study is based on the following recommendations:

1. The scope of this study was limited to an elementary, kindergarten through 5th grade setting. Expansion of research into the middle and high school levels is rec-
ommended for further investigation into principals mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices.

2. The review of literature indicated that research on the transformational behaviors of principals contains numerous examples of which one or more could be isolated for further study into the principal to teacher mentoring relationship.

3. This multiple case study focused on the dynamics of the relationship between the principal and teacher. Further research could be conducted on the impact this relationship has on students, parents and/or community stakeholders.

4. Because this study involved multiple cases, three research sites with contrasting demographics were chosen for data collection and analysis. There was one low, middle, and high income setting which provided the findings in this study. A single case study targeted to a specific demographic location could be investigated for further inquiry and research.

5. Rather than selecting research sites based on socio-economic status, as in this study, site selection could be based on student test results as reflected in state mandated assessments.

Conclusion

The purpose of this multiple case study was to gain an understanding of how elementary school principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices. In order to better understand the central phenomenon of the relationship between school principals and the instructional practices of their teachers, the researcher in this study attempted to answer the following central research question: In what ways do elementary school prin-
cipals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices? Research findings revealed that principals supported their teachers through positive vocabulary, instructional and material supplies, and emotional encouragement. Formal and informal mentoring practices were also evident among all research participants in addition to collaborative communication between the principals and teachers. The findings were generally consistent with slight variations among three contrasting demographic settings based on the socio-economic levels of low, middle, and high income classes. Ultimately, the unit of analysis for this study, the relationship between the principal and teacher, proved to be the determining factor in understanding the central phenomenon and answering the central research question.
References


APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices:

A Multiple Case Study

Interview Protocol-Administrator

Name ______________________________  Title ______________________________

School System _____________________  Site ______________________________

Date ______________________________

Introduction

Thank you for giving me your time to discuss your perspective of mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices. I will record and transcribe what we say. It is important that the transcription be verbatim so that I do not paraphrase something you have said and interpret it incorrectly. You should know that your name will not be used in the study and the data from the interview will be available for you to review. I want to ensure that I have accurately captured what you intended to say.

I am exploring in this study how school principals mentor their teachers in order to provide the necessary tools for improving the instructional practices within the classroom. The questions are being provided to you beforehand so that you will have time to think about them. Feel free to discuss your views openly because I want to know your perspective on the topic. I may ask you some additional questions for clarification purposes as the interview proceeds. Are you ready to begin?

1) Tell me about your educational background and why you chose to enter the teaching profession.

2a) What do you perceive to be the needs of your teachers in regards to classroom instruction?

2b) Describe any structured activities you have implemented to address the instructional needs of your teachers.

3) Describe your concept of mentoring as an instructional leader.

4) What criteria do you employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support?
5) In what ways do you formally or informally mentor your teachers who are in need of improving their instructional practices?

5b) What do you personally do to ensure the success of the mentoring process?

6) Is there any additional information you would like to share?
APPENDIX B

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices:
A Multiple Case Study
Interview Protocol- Teachers

Name _____________________________  Title _____________________________
School System _____________________  Site _____________________________
Date _______________________________

Introduction
Thank you for giving me your time to discuss your perspective of mentoring teachers to improve instructional practices. I will record and transcribe what we say. It is important that the transcription be verbatim so that I do not paraphrase something you have said and interpret it incorrectly. You should know that your name will not be used in the study and the data from the interview will be available for you to review. I want to ensure that I have accurately captured what you intended to say.

I am exploring in this study how school principals mentor their teachers in order to provide the necessary tools for improving the instructional practices within the classroom. The questions are being provided to you beforehand so that you will have time to think about them. Feel free to discuss your views openly because I want to know your perspective on the topic. I may ask you some additional questions for clarification purposes as the interview proceeds. Are you ready to begin?

1) Tell me about your educational background. College, teaching experiences, etc.

2) Please describe your experience at this school in regards to classroom instruction.

3) In what ways has the principal addressed your instructional needs?

4) What activities are you involved in pertaining to improving instructional practices?
5) Please describe the mentoring process you are engaged in with your principal.

6) Is the mentoring process formal or informal, and how has this experience affected your ability to teach in the classroom?

7) Is there any additional information you would like to share?
APPENDIX C

PRINCIPAL LETTER RESEARCH REQUEST
August, 2009

Dear Principal,

My name is Burke Wren. I am working towards fulfilling my requirements for a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. One of the degree requirements is the completion of a research study. I have chosen to conduct a study on Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices. Prior research has shown that the position of school administrator has had a significant impact on the success and effectiveness of the classroom teacher.

I am conducting the study using interview questions which analyze the mentoring relationship between the building principal and classroom teachers in regards to improving instruction. In conducting the study, data will also be gathered in the form of observations of meetings and related documentation.

I am asking for your help in helping me conduct this study. If you are willing to assist in the study, I would like to conduct an oral interview with you at your convenience, along with teachers you have formally or informally mentored during the past year.

Please email me at wbwren@charter.net if you have any questions or decline to assist in the study.

Sincerely,

Burke Wren
APPENDIX D

SUPERINTENDENT LETTER RESEARCH REQUEST
August, 2009

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Burke Wren. I am working towards fulfilling my requirements for a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. One of the degree requirements is the completion of a research study. I have chosen to conduct a study on Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices. Prior research has shown that the position of school administrator has had a significant impact on the success and effectiveness of the classroom teacher.

I am conducting the study using interview questions which analyze the mentoring relationship between the building principal and classroom teachers in regards to improving instruction. In conducting the study, data will also be gathered in the form of observations of meetings and related documentation.

I will ask the principals from one of your schools to participate in an oral interview which will not last more than one hour. I will also ask the principal to recommend teachers that he or she has formally or informally mentored during the past year to participate in the study. Please email me at wbwren@charter.net if you have any questions or decline to assist in the study.

Sincerely,

Burke Wren
Mentoring Teachers: Observational Protocol

Observer: __________________________   Date: ______________________________
Time: _____________________________   Length of Observation: ______________
Setting: __________________________________________________________________

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APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORMS
Informed Consent-Principal

Title of Research: Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices

Protocol Number: X090821008

Investigator: Burke Wren

Sponsor: UAB Department of Educational Leadership

Explanation of Procedures:
The primary goal of this project is to better understand how principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices. This study involves research. You will be asked to participate in an interview 30 to 60 minutes in length. This interview will be audio taped. During the interview, you will be asked the following questions: 1) Tell me about your educational background and why you chose to enter the teaching profession. 2a) What do you perceive to be the needs of your teachers in regards to classroom instruction? 2b) Describe any structured activities you have implemented to address the instructional needs of your teachers. 3) Describe your concept of mentoring as an instructional leader. 4) What criteria do you employ to determine which teachers need focused mentoring versus general support? 5a) In what ways do you formally or informally mentor your teachers who are in need of improving their instructional practices? 5b) What do you personally do to ensure the success of the mentoring process? 6) Is there any additional information you would like to share?

The researcher will also conduct observations of you in the school setting during instruction of students, grade level meetings, team teaching, and mentoring sessions. These observations will be non-intrusive, and conducted using a protocol format which includes descriptive and reflective note taking.

Risks and Discomforts:
The risk and discomforts from participating in this research are no greater than the risks and discomforts of day to day living.

Benefits:
You may not receive direct benefit from participating in this study. Information gained from this study may help improve the achievement of students in your school by discovering ways to improve the quality of instructional practices of classroom teachers.

Alternatives:
The only alternative to participating in this study is not to participate.

UAB - IRB
Consent Form Approval 9/15/09
Expiration Date 9/15/10

Participant's initials: 

Revisions Date: September 2, 2009
Confidentiality:

Information obtained about you for this study will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. However, research information that identifies you may be shared with the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research, including people on behalf of the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP). The results of the study may be published for scientific purposes. However, your identity will not be given out. Electronic data will be stored electronically on computers that are password protected. The primary investigator will have sole access to these passwords. Physical data including taped interviews will be stored in a locked metal file cabinet during the duration of the study and destroyed three years after the study completion.

Withdrawal from Study:

You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in this project at any time. Your participation in this study may be ended without your consent if it is determined by the investigator that it is in your best interest.

Cost of Participating in Research:

There is no cost for participating in this study.

Payment for Participation in Research:

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the research, Burke Wren will be glad to answer them. Mr. Wren’s number is 205-901-3628. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore. Ms. Moore is the Director of the Office of Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Ms. Moore can be reached at 205-934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for “all other calls” or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of the IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk to someone else.

Legal Rights:

You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this form.
Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed document.

Signature of Participant ___________________________ Date ____________

Signature of Principal Investigator ___________________________ Date ____________

Witness ___________________________ Date ____________
Informed Consent-Teacher

Title of Research: Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices

Protocol Number: X090821008

Investigator: Burke Wren

Sponsor: UAB Department of Educational Leadership

Explanation of Procedures:

The primary goal of this project is to better understand how principals mentor teachers to improve instructional practices. This study involves research. You will be asked to participate in an interview 30 to 60 minutes in length. This interview will be audio taped. During the interview, you will be asked the following questions: 1) Tell me about your educational background. College, teaching experiences, etc.; 2) Please describe your experience at this school in regards to classroom instruction; 3) In what ways has the principal addressed your instructional needs?; 4) What activities are you involved in pertaining to improving instructional practices?; 5) Please describe the mentoring process you are engaged in with your principal; 6) Is the mentoring process formal or informal, and how has this experience affected your ability to teach in the classroom?; 7) Is there any additional information you would like to share?

The researcher will also conduct observations of you in the school setting during instruction of students, grade level meetings, team teaching, and mentoring sessions. These observations will be non-intrusive, and conducted using a protocol format which includes descriptive and reflective note taking.

Risks and Discomforts:

The risk and discomforts from participating in this research are no greater than the risks and discomforts of day to day living.

Benefits:

You may not receive direct benefit from participating in this study. Information gained from this study may help improve the achievement of students in your school by discovering ways to improve the quality of instructional practices of classroom teachers.

Alternatives:

The only alternative to participating in this study is not to participate.

UAB - IRB
Consent Form Approval 9/15/09
Expiration Date 9/15/10

Participants Initials

Revisions Date: September 2, 2009
Confidentiality:
Information obtained about you for this study will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. However, research information that identifies you may be shared with the UAB Institutional Review Board (IRB) and others who are responsible for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations related to research, including people on behalf of the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP). The results of the study may be published for scientific purposes. However, your identity will not be given out. Electronic data will be stored electronically on computers that are password protected. The primary investigator will have sole access to these passwords. Physical data including taped interviews will be stored in a locked metal file cabinet during the duration of the study and destroyed three years after the study completion.

Withdrawal from Study:
You are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in this project at any time. Your participation in this study may be ended without your consent if it is determined by the investigator that it is in your best interest.

Cost of Participating in Research:
There is no cost for participating in this study.

Payment for Participation in Research:
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Questions:
If you have any questions about the research, Burke Wren will be glad to answer them. Mr. Wren’s number is 205-901-3628. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, or concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact Ms. Sheila Moore. Ms. Moore is the Director of the Office of Institutional Review Board for Human Use (OIRB) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Ms. Moore can be reached at 205-934-3789 or 1-800-822-8816. If calling the toll-free number, press the option for “all other calls” or for an operator/attendant and ask for extension 4-3789. Regular hours for the Office of the IRB are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CT, Monday through Friday. You may also call this number in the event the research staff cannot be reached or you wish to talk to someone else.

Legal Rights:
You are not waiving any of your legal rights by signing this form.
Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study. You will receive a copy of this signed document.

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APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL
Form 4: IRB Approval Form
Identification and Certification of Research
Projects Involving Human Subjects

UAB's Institutional Review Boards for Human Use (IRBs) have an approved Federalwide Assurance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). The Assurance number is FWA00005960 and it expires on January 23, 2012. The UAB IRBs are also in compliance with 21 CFR Parts 50 and 56 and ICH GCP Guidelines.

Principal Investigator: WREN, BURKE
Co-Investigator(s):
Protocol Number: X090821008
Protocol Title: Principals Mentoring Teachers to Improve Instructional Practices: A Multiple Case Study

The IRB reviewed and approved the above named project on 9/15/09. The review was conducted in accordance with UAB's Assurance of Compliance approved by the Department of Health and Human Services. This Project will be subject to Annual continuing review as provided in that Assurance.

This project received EXPEDITED review.
IRB Approval Date: 9-15-09
Date IRB Approval Issued: 9/15/09

Marilyn Doss, M.A.
Vice Chair of the Institutional Review Board for Human Use (IRB)

Investigators please note:

The IRB approved consent form used in the study must contain the IRB approval date and expiration date.

IRB approval is given for one year unless otherwise noted. For projects subject to annual review research activities may not continue past the one year anniversary of the IRB approval date.

Any modifications in the study methodology, protocol and/or consent form must be submitted for review and approval to the IRB prior to implementation.

Adverse Events and/or unanticipated risks to subjects or others at UAB or other participating institutions must be reported promptly to the IRB.