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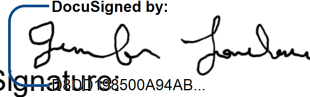
Student Name:

**Vicki Pheil**

CSU ID Number:

**909319774**

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Doctoral Program Office
College of Education and Health Professions
3121 Frank Brown Hall
706-565-1442
edd@columbusstate.edu

Student Name: Vicki Pheil Banner ID: 909319774 EdD Track: EDCI

Committee Chair: Deirdre Greer

Date: 10/17/2022 Time: 10:30 am Location: ZOOM

Dissertation Title: A Case Study of the Retention-Supporting Needs of Beginning Teachers in a West Central Georgia School System

This dissertation has been read and approved by the undersigned. It is recommended for acceptance to the University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Leadership.

Approved by the Following Committee Members:

Committee Member: Deirdre Greer, Chair Signature/Date 11/23/2022 | 3:05 PM
Committee Member: Jan Burcham, Methodologist Signature/Date 11/22/2022 | 2:05 PM
Committee Member: Erinn Bentley, Committee Member Signature/Date 11/22/2022 | 3:38 PM

Recommended by:

Jennifer M. Lovelace, Director of the Doctoral Program Date 11/27/2022 | 8:12 PM EST
Deniz Peker, Chair, Department of Teacher Education, Leadership, and Counseling Date 11/28/2022 | 10:22 AM EST
Margie Yates Date 11/28/2022 | 1:18 PM EST

**A Case Study of the Retention-Supporting Needs of Beginning Teachers in a West Central Georgia School System**

by  
Vicki Thrailkill Pheil

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Education  
in Curriculum and Leadership  
(Curriculum and Instruction)

Keywords: teacher induction, new teacher, teacher retention, teacher supports, professional development

Columbus State University  
Columbus, GA

Deirdre Greer, PhD, Chair, College of Education and Health Professions (retired)  
Jan Burcham, PhD, Methodologist, College of Education and Health Professions  
Erinn Bentley, PhD, Committee Member, Teacher Education, Leadership and Counseling

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation with eternal gratitude and love to my husband, Michael Pheil. His continued support and willingness to accompany me through many adventures have never wavered. He came all this way to save me, and he is doing just that. He is my favorite. Love you, Bud.

My parents, Richard and Dot Thraikill, have always supported me in everything I do. Thank you for encouraging me over the years, instilling a love of learning and reading, and listening to me talk about my ideas, my hopes, and dreams. Your examples of hard work and perseverance were influential to our successes. I love you both very much.

I also dedicate this dissertation to the young ones in my life: Toby, Taylor, Eli, Jake, Emme, Zoe, Evie, and Poppy. I pray that you find your passion in this world and that you pursue that passion with all your energy. I pray that you continue in life with love and grace. Remember to find your contentment in God and not in the ways of this world.

Lastly, this dissertation is for the teachers—from beginning educators to veterans. You have chosen a profession that shapes our world. I pray that you have mentors and that you are willing and able to serve as mentors to others as you influence the minds of our leaders for tomorrow.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

## Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not have been possible without the encouragement and guidance from Dr. Deirdre Greer, my dissertation committee chair. Dr. Greer stuck with me through several challenging trials, and I will never be able to express my gratitude for what she has meant to my professional and academic career. To say that Dr. Greer was instrumental in my doctoral studies is an understatement. She is phenomenal and the academic community will miss her.

Dr. Erinn Bentley became a dissertation committee member at the very start. Her calming presence, focused suggestions, and kindness have all been valuable and much appreciated.

Toward the end of my dissertation journey, Dr. Jan Burcham joined my committee as the methodologist—just in time! Dr. Burcham talked with me about the data without dictating her own ideas. I am thankful for her wealth of knowledge, frankness, and sense of humor.

Gavin Brown, MD significantly changed my life. Thank you will never be sufficient.

As a first-year teacher hired in the middle of a school year, I was fortunate to take the classroom next to Carla Hale. Before teacher induction programs were popular, she became my informal mentor and gave me the support I needed. I also gained a best friend. If every educator had a mentor like Carla, there would never be a teacher shortage.

For 10 years, Mr. Thomas Whatley was my school-level administrator. He ensured I had the tools needed to do my job, and he trusted my care in the hands of Carla Hale, Jean Lanier, and JoAnn Massey. His wife, Gail Whatley, became a good friend and provided encouragement on some of my most difficult days. She's a gem.

Dr. Don Livingston gave this sixth-grade teacher a chance back in 2007, and I am eternally grateful for his friendship and for his professional and academic encouragement.

My colleague and friend, Dr. Gretta Milam, offered spoken words and texts of encouragement that came at the right time, every time.

My extended family, work family, church family, and friends have all witnessed my work on this dissertation. Their support has been valued and is much appreciated. This one took some time, and I thank you for being there every step of the way.

I must acknowledge and express gratitude for the financial support I was blessed to receive during my doctoral studies, including:

the Reverend Robert B. Price Fellowship,

the Callaway Foundation Hatton Lovejoy Graduate Studies Scholarship, and

the Paul R. Hanna Laureate Scholarship and the Henry H. Hill Laureate Scholarship from

the Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education.

## Vita

### Education

#### ***Edd Candidate / Curriculum and Teaching***

Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia  
*Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society*

#### ***PhD Candidate / Curriculum and Teaching English Language Arts Education***

2008–Summer 2011: Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama  
*Delta Epsilon Iota Academic Honor Society*  
*Graduate Teaching Assistant, Intern Supervision, Advisor Undergraduate Students, Sun Belt Writing Project Graduate Research Assistant*

#### ***Master of Education / Middle Grades Education Curriculum***

2000: LaGrange College: LaGrange, Georgia  
*Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society Honor Graduate 4.0 GPA*

#### ***Bachelor of Arts / Middle Grades Education Curriculum***

1998: LaGrange College, LaGrange, Georgia  
*Malcolm Shackelford Award for Excellence in Middle Grades Education 1998*

### Certifications

#### ***National Board for Professional Teaching Standards*** (November 2002)

National Certification: Early Adolescence/English Language Arts

#### ***Georgia Professional Standards Commission Teacher Certification***

Elementary Education, Middle Grades Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science

### Scholarships, Awards and Fellowships

- Kappa Delta Pi International Honor Society in Education Henry H. Hill Laureate Scholarship (2022); Paul R. Hanna Laureate Scholarship (2021)
- Georgia Field Directors Association Innovation Award (2014–2015)
- Hatton Lovejoy Scholarship Recipient (2008–2011)
- Reverend Dr. Robert P. Price, II Fellowship Recipient (2008–2012)

### Selected Publications, Presentations, and Conferences

Georgia Field Directors Association: President (2021–2023), Vice President (2019–2021), Executive Board Member, Secretary (2008–2021)

Georgia Association of Teacher Educators Panel Member (Georgia Association of Teacher Educators Conference, Jekyll Island, Georgia; October 2021): *Moving Forward Together*



Metcalf, C. (2010). *Ultimate guide to softball ministry: A Proven plan for local churches*. Caleb's Mountain Publishing (editor and reviewer)

Georgia Field Directors Meeting – Presentation (at Georgia Association of Teacher Educators Conference, Jekyll Island, Georgia; October 2009): *Creating a Field Experience Handbook*

Georgia Association of Teacher Educators (GATE) Conference (Jekyll Island, Georgia; October 2009): Executive Board Member

Livingston, D., Crowe, D. A., Pheil, V., Hillyer, J., & Yates, M. (2009). Reaching for Validity in NCATE Assessment. AILACTE Monograph, *Liberal Arts Education and Teacher Education: A Lasting Relationship*.

Poster presentation at National Youth-At-Risk Conference (Savannah, Georgia; March 2009): *Looking at Child-care through a Critical lens; a community-based ethnography by pre-service early childhood teachers*

Georgia Association of Teacher Educators (GATE) Conference (Savannah, Georgia; October 2008): Executive Board Member

Auburn University Sun Belt Writing Project (Auburn, Alabama; July 2008): *Teacher Inquiry – Reflective Practice: The Teacher in the Mirror*.

Tk20 User National Conference (Austin, Texas; June 2008): *Initiating Field Experience in 30 Days*, with D. Alan Crowe, PhD

Poster presentation at National Youth-At-Risk Conference (Savannah, Georgia; March 2008): *Teacher Candidates as a Resource*

### **Selected Higher Education Teaching Experience**

***MAT Program*** (middle grades and secondary) Advisor (2014–present)

***MAT Program:*** EDUC 5000 Adolescent Development, EDUC 6030 Reading for Content Area Teachers, EDUC 5060 Students with Special Needs, EDUC 5030A Research in Curriculum, EDUC 5080 Essentials of Adolescent Literature

***Elementary Education Program:*** EDUC 3317 Elementary Science Methods, EDUC 4459 Students with Special Needs, EDST 3343 Adolescent Development, EDMA 3201 Elementary Mathematics I

***Summer Program:*** LaGrange College Education Department Learn2Serve Director of Field Placement (2007–2013)

### **Research Interests**

- New Teacher Induction and Mentorship
- Teacher Education
- English Language Arts Education
- Visual Literacy Instruction and Assessment in English Language Arts
- Adolescent Cognitive Development and Learning
- Professional Development for K–12 Educators
- Community Programs' Collaboration With Higher Education and K–12 Education

**K-12 Teaching Experience and Professional Development**

- Georgia Professional Standards Commission Science Task Force (2021–2022)
- Goal 4 Community Leadership With Troup County School System (2009–2014)
- Sixth-Grade Language Arts and Science Teacher
- Teacher of the Year 2002–2003
- Georgia Performance Standards Troup County School System Trainer (2004–2007)
- Developed and Modified Benchmark Tests for Troup County School System Wide Use for Sixth-Grade Language Arts (2005–2007)
- Thoughtful Education Strategies Trainer for Troup County School System (2004–2007)
- National Board-Certified Teacher Facilitator for Georgia Teacher Center (2003–2007)
- Development of Vocabulary Daily Program for Sixth Grade for Troup County school system (2002–2007)
- Marvin Jones Outdoor Learning Center Curriculum Development for Troup County school system (2001–2002)
- Troup County School System Strategic Planning Committee (1999–2003 planning)

## Abstract

Even though the State of Georgia has issued suggested guidance for new teacher induction programs, not all school systems follow that guidance and varying induction practices have been implemented. Because replacing exiting teachers in the first 5 years of their career has become costly to school systems—both financially and academically regarding student achievement—it is in all stakeholders' best interest to support new teachers to increase retention rates. The purpose of this case study was to describe 1st-year teachers' experiences in a West Central Georgia school system induction program and to identify the retention-supporting needs these new teachers reported as part of a successful induction program. This case study included a document analysis review of the school system's Induction Program Handbook and interviews with six teachers (two elementary, two middle, and two high school) at two points of time in the academic year. Coding the interviews for themes, I used a conceptual framework based on research-proven practices that are strong components for induction programs. This study provides an understanding of what these 1st-year teachers experienced in the induction program and what supports they identified as being most useful to them as they completed their 1st year of employment in a public PreK-12 school system. The results support existing research that outlines induction program needs to increase new teacher intention rates and describes how these supports can be structured to meet all stakeholders' needs. Purposeful mentoring from a trained mentor, collaboration with multiple professionals, and individualized professional learning activities tailored to the unique needs of each 1st-year teacher were identified as strong retention-supporting induction program components.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Almost 30% of new teachers leave the classroom in the first 5 years, and, each year, the collective cost for all school systems in the country to replace teachers who leave the profession is estimated at well over \$7 billion (Barnes et al., 2007; Carroll & Foster, 2010). The national annual average of teacher attrition in the United States is estimated to be 1 in every 6.5 teachers (Taylor & West, 2020). There is a range in variability in rates of teacher attrition by geographic regions of the country, with southern states ranging between 14%–17% (rural and cities/suburbs, respectively) and states in the Northeast reporting 8%–10% turnover (rural and overall, respectively), with as much as a 10% difference between rural and city contexts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Taylor & West, 2020). During the 2018–2019 academic year, Georgia schools' average teacher retention rates ranged from 56% to 96%, with an average of 79.59% (Pelfrey, 2020). Compounding retention efforts is that schools serving high-poverty students had a retention rate of 78.14%, and schools serving low poverty students had a retention rate of 82.06% (Pelfrey, 2020). Induction programs must provide guidance to beginning teachers to increase the likelihood that beginning teachers remain in the job for years to come and impact student achievement positively (Ingersoll, 2012). As Smith and Ingersoll (2004) reported, the field of education is one that allows its new teachers to become “lost at sea” or where experienced educators “cannibalize its young” and try to navigate the many requirements in the classroom and school system through “trial by fire,” resulting in a “revolving door” of new teachers. Further, when teachers leave, costs are both in financial and student performance measures (Watlington et al., 2010).

## **Background of the Problem**

U.S. policymakers realized teacher quality was vital to student achievement before the 1980s (Saultz et al., 2017). In the early 2000s, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted. Although NCLB required reporting of a school's highly qualified teachers after setting minimum standards for teachers (Saultz et al., 2017), its weakness was that funding was not adequate to recruit highly qualified teachers in schools with a large population of lower income students (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015); therefore, "the (President) Obama administration shifted from a focus on teacher qualifications to one of teacher effectiveness" (Saultz et al., 2017, p. 658) by passing the ESSA in December 2015. Although the ESSA (2015) focused on meeting the needs of all learners, it also included a focus on teachers' professional learning, which could become part of an induction program (Dennis, 2017). ESSA also stated building a quality teaching force through professional development was vital (Dennis, 2017; Saultz et al., 2017) and addressed the classroom learning environment as essential to student achievement and a sense of community (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020).

As a state eligible for federal funding under the ESSA, Georgia renewed its commitment to increase teacher effectiveness (Saultz et al., 2017). Georgia's Teacher Induction Guidance was created after the Race to the Top initiative and was realigned by recommendations from a task force in 2017 (Georgia Department of Education [GDOE], 2017). Georgia has produced clear documentation of guidance for all levels of administration (state, system, and school) and seven domains of induction (roles and responsibilities, leadership and organizational structures, orientation, mentoring, ongoing performance assessment, professional learning, and program evaluation) to ensure consistency and professional support for all beginning teachers in the state (GDOE, 2017). Georgia has gone further by establishing state-recognized definitions of

“ineffective teacher” and “inexperienced teacher” in its ESSA plans (Ross, 2019). With legislative mandates connecting certification to induction, teacher induction programs following best practices must be effective and available consistently to teachers throughout the state.

In the last decade, increased classroom sizes, teacher attrition, and teachers who come to the profession underprepared should alarm policymakers (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Teacher turnover has a negative impact on students, the school, the school system, and the community (Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). U.S. school systems spend \$14,000 on average to hire a replacement teacher for one who has left (Nguyen et al., 2020). In a large, urban school system, replacing a teacher can be \$20,000 for each hire (Sutcher et al., 2019), with a national accumulation total between \$7 billion (Hornick-Lockard, 2019) to \$8.5 billion annually (Carroll, 2007). Increased teacher attrition is a problem worldwide and “causes huge economic cost to educational institutions and indicates the need of adequate support for new teachers” (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020, p. 427).

At the school system level, the cost of recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new teachers strains local financial resources, and teacher attrition contributes negatively to all students having a highly effective teacher (Zembytska, 2015). When a teacher leaves a school, the dynamics and qualifications of the entire faculty shift, and when more effective teachers leave and less effective teachers are hired, there tends to be “greater turnover in subsequent years” (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020, p. 14). When teacher turnover is higher than average, this increases the chance that students will have more inexperienced teachers as a replacement (DeCesare et al., 2016) and potentially interrupts the school’s professional development community culture (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Zembytska, 2015). Wong (2004) asserted students assigned to a classroom with an effective teacher instead of an “average” teacher for several years consecutively could reduce

differences in math achievement for students from all socioeconomic levels. Therefore, schools must make improving teacher quality (focusing on teachers' educational background and content knowledge as well as student achievement) a priority for all teachers, thereby reducing the number of times they must replace teachers using costly and time-consuming resources (Barnes et al., 2007). When teachers leave a school, all the impacts and consequences of turnover can impact student achievement negatively, even for those students in veteran teachers' classrooms (Ronfeldt et al., 2013).

Induction is the first step in a professional career, offering transitional supports for the new educator (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). Wong (2004) stated induction must include wide-ranging supports that continue for at least 3 years after a new teacher is hired. Multiple components in an induction program are needed to support these new teachers fully (Beane-Katner, 2014; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Lozinak, 2016; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong & Wong, 2012) and should include mentoring and collaborative professional development (Beane-Katner, 2014; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Long, 2018; Lozinak, 2016; Zembytska, 2015). It is necessary for individual schools and school systems to identify induction components that will improve retention for their PreK-12 teachers (Shockley et al., 2011). Due to economic challenges and policy decisions, funding for actions focused on teacher retention and student achievement is not always realized (Peterson, 2016). However, policies at all governmental levels are impacted by teacher retention efforts and success rates (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Due to ever-increasing budget concerns, the ESSA allows states to reserve funds from Title II for teacher development (Saultz et al., 2017), which could be used to supplement induction programs.

Despite retention efforts and alternative certification programs making it easier for professionals to enter the teaching field, teachers are still not being retained in the profession

successfully. Induction programs should bridge teacher preparation and the profession (Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon, 2020; Martin et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2008). An integrated approach using multiple components in a comprehensive induction program/process centered around individualized professional development better meets all stakeholders' needs (Saultz et al., 2017). Every student deserves access to effective teachers (Saultz et al., 2017), and research shows teacher quality is the strongest (school-based) factor related to student achievement (Ross, 2019). Teachers, especially beginning teachers, should not be seen as “finished learning” but instead viewed as lifelong learners who have their own knowledge and skills to offer (Dennis, 2017). Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of graduating teacher candidates should transition into field research because “studying new teachers can provide insights into ways of supporting them during these early years and improving education for prospective teachers” (Nixon et al., 2017, p. 1197). Information from beginning teachers’ research can compare what research says, what guidelines suggest, and what school leaders and beginning teachers are going through (DeCesare et al., 2016). As teacher quality improves, student achievement will improve.

### **Statement of the Problem**

New hires and beginning teachers in Georgia are provided with guidance for a teacher induction program that is practiced through research-based methods (GDOE, 2017). Best practices may not always be followed, even though teacher certification has become high stakes for principals, beginning teachers, and higher education institutions. Induction programs are not designed to continue initial teacher training received during certification years. Induction is for those who have already mastered basic training (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004) and should act as the connection between theory, practice, and application. Similarly, induction is not solely providing access to a mentor but rather an organized and structured process given to new teachers to

provide support in multiple ways (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kelly et al., 2019; New Teacher Center, 2019; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). Effective induction is multifaceted and pervasive throughout the beginning few years of a teacher's career. However, implementing a teacher induction program that follows best practices will increase consistency across the state, ensuring beginning teachers progress through the tiered certification model and become eligible for professional certification (Georgia Professional Standards Commission [GaPSC], 2020). "Induction has a positive effect" (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 51) on teacher retention. The specific problem is that although effective mentorship leads toward teacher retention, and although the State of Georgia has provided guidance for induction programs for beginning teachers, including a mentoring component, variances in local school systems' implementation of their respective induction programs have not been examined. Therefore, this research identified the specific retention-supporting mentorship needs of new public-school teachers in West Central Georgia.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the retention-supporting mentorship needs and experiences of new public-school teachers in a rural West Central Georgia school district. The study described their experiences as they participated in a teacher induction model in Georgia and compared the theory of teacher induction with practice. By conducting a descriptive case study to describe several examples of beginning teachers' experiences in an induction program, this study described teacher induction programs in theory, investigated teacher induction programs in praxis, and examined how these components compared to best practices theory for beginning teacher induction programs. This study offers a guide to best practices to strengthen teacher induction programs in the school system and state.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do beginning teachers in selected West Central Georgia K-12 classrooms describe their induction programs?
  - a. How do 1st-year teachers describe the induction program purpose and procedures?
  - b. How do 1st-year teachers describe the induction support they receive from system-level administrators?
  - c. How do 1st-year teachers describe the induction support they receive from school-level administrators and mentors?
2. What retention-supporting services do 1st-year teachers report they need as part of a successful induction program?

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study focused on the research-based components of effective induction programs (see Figure 1). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) asserted an induction program must first decide its purpose: to develop growth among new teachers, to evaluate new hires to ensure they are making gains in student achievement, to provide a mentoring opportunity for the beginning teachers, or a combination of these three components. Even though the State of Georgia has provided a guide to school systems for induction programs, differences in implementation, oversight, and evaluation will occur. With the increasing desire to retain as many teachers as possible each year, most school systems concentrate on mentoring new teachers to be better equipped to assimilate into their school community.

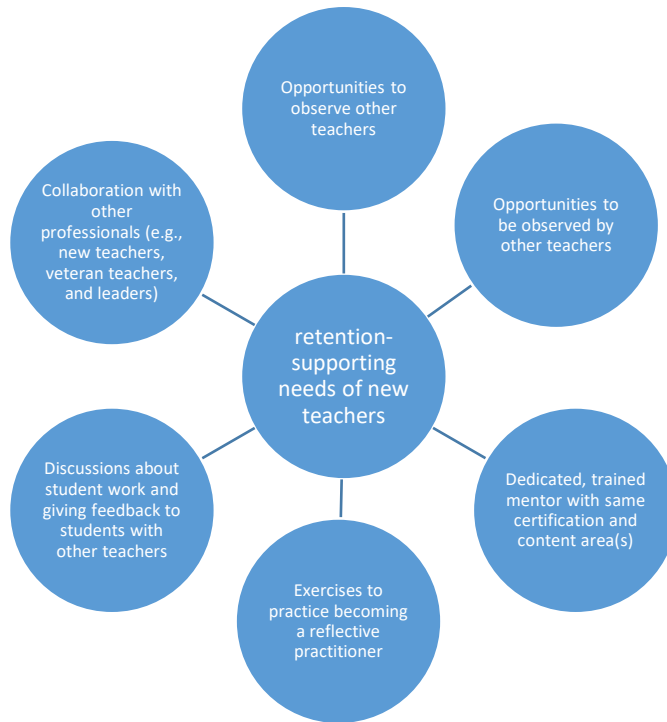
The strongest influence for teacher retention was working with a mentor of the same content area who has received appropriate training in becoming a strong guide, and common

planning time with a collaborative network of other teachers (Desimone et al., 2014; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Martin et al., 2016; Moss, 2010). Because of scheduling conflicts and lack of available mentors who hold current teaching certification as each new hire, neither of these aspects is always feasible (Desimone et al., 2014). Mentors and new hires have requested a reduction to in-class instruction time or a system-hired assistant to reduce in-class workload (Kelly et al., 2019; Zembytska, 2015); however, the weakest components of a strong induction program include a lighter teaching load and classroom assistance (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Mutual observation with follow-up discussion (e.g., mentor–mentee, mentee–mentor, mentee–peer) is one integral part of a collaborative professional development-style induction program (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020; Wong, 2004; Zembytska, 2015). Having an opportunity to meet with other teachers to review student work samples will help the induction phase teacher become more familiar with quality work appropriate to the students' content and grade level (Martin et al., 2016). An additional component found to be effective in teacher induction programs is the pervasive opportunity for collaborative partnerships among veteran teachers, induction phase teachers, school leaders, school system leaders, induction program leaders, and others (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; New Teacher Center, 2019; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong, 2004; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). Lastly, the combination of all these components is done to facilitate the process of induction phase teachers to becoming reflective educators (Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon, 2020; Lozinak, 2016; Martin et al., 2016; Moss, 2010; New Teacher Center, 2019).



## Figure 1

### *Conceptual Framework*



## Methodology Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to use inquiry methods to gather data in the natural setting to identify patterns of thinking and themes of practice among new public-school teachers (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research was appropriate because I wanted to identify and describe how participants experience components of the state-guided public school system induction program (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2018) defined case study research as investigating “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world contexts especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 15). The research questions asked were “about a contemporary set of events,” and the “researcher has little or no control” (Yin, 2018, p. 13) regarding the setting or phenomenon and context. “In choosing a

case, we almost always choose to study its situation” (Stake, 2006, p. 2), such as beginning teachers participating in an induction program.

The inquiry design for this study was an explanatory qualitative case study of six newly hired, beginning PreK-12 schoolteachers in their 1st year of employment assigned to complete the induction program process at a West Central Georgia public school system. I chose the explanatory case study as the research questions “seek to explain some contemporary circumstance” (i.e., a school-system provided new teacher induction support program; Yin, 2018, p. 4). I collected information from individual interviews with each participant at the end of the first semester (introduction of the induction program for these beginning teachers) and from a second, and final, interview 12–14 weeks after the start of the second semester. The initial interview was used to gather first impressions from new teachers regarding the onboarding induction experience, and the second interview will provide additional information related to these new teachers’ perceptions regarding actual induction program implementation and their perceive needs of support. Data from these interviews were used to examine uniqueness, commonalities, themes, and specific retention-supporting needs for these beginning educators. The third data source was a review of induction program documents (e.g., handbooks, evaluation forms, mentor exercises) provided by the school system to examine the practices outlined by system and school leaders, including program purpose, the mentor/mentee matching process, induction procedures, and evaluation of the induction program.

Of the six teachers in the study, two of the teachers were assigned to teach in an elementary school (PreK-Grade 5), two were assigned to teach in a middle school (Grades 6–8), and two were assigned to teach in a high school setting (Grades 9–12). Potential participants were identified by the human resources office personnel at the school system. Using stratified

sampling, those potential participants were categorized into subgroups depending upon the school level where they have been hired to teach (i.e., elementary, middle school, or high school). Then, two participants from each subgroup were selected randomly and invited to participate. This selection enabled me to examine the differences in retention-supporting needs and induction supports provided at different grade levels and school communities within the same school system. The teachers had either already earned or were currently earning certification through traditional pathways (including coursework and supervised field experiences) or were completing their 1st year of teaching through provisional employment without certification. Additionally, other than initial certification field experiences, participants did not have any teaching experience. Participation in the study was voluntary, and there was no compensation given for involvement. After I provided an explanation of the study, its purpose, and the procedures, each participant gave written consent to participate and could opt out of the study at any time.

Interview questions addressed the topics from the conceptual framework, including opportunities to observe other teachers; opportunities to be observed by other teachers; having a dedicated, trained mentor with the same certification and content area(s); exercises to practice becoming a reflective practitioner, discussions about student work and giving feedback to students with other teachers; and collaboration with other professionals (e.g., new teachers, veteran teachers, and leaders). Written transcription from the interviews enabled me to review and categorize themes that emerged from the data. Although informal analysis occurred as part of the interview process, making “the final analysis more manageable and more meaningful” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 190), the final transcription record of each interview served as the primary source of data used for interpretation to learn the retention-supporting needs of these

new public-school teachers in the study and the ways these teachers have received support (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The research may have participants who are new hires and are completing the induction process but may have prior teaching experience during required field experiences during their teacher certification program. Their previous experience with mentorship and coaching in those prior settings will not be examined.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The results may not be transferable to schools in a different setting (i.e., rural, urban, or suburban) than participants' schools. Because the teachers are in one school system, there was a limitation in generalizing the findings to other schools and/or systems. Further, it is likely not all new hires agree to participate or will complete their 1st year of teaching, so the intended number of cases may be lower than the actual number of new hires.

### **Definition of Terms**

Teacher induction guidance refers to the induction model provided by the State of Georgia Department of Education guiding the “creation, implementation, and sustainability of a quality induction program” (GDOE, 2017, p. 1).

*Teacher induction program* refers to “a comprehensive, coherent, sustainable program that supports not only retention but also the induction phase teacher’s and their mentor’s growth, thereby increasing student learning” (GDOE, 2020, p. 1); the induction program “requires an investment from all stakeholders” (GDOE, 2017, p. 5) and has multiple layers and types of support (GDOE, 2017; Moss, 2010; Podolsky et al., 2019; Wong, 2004).

An *induction phase teacher* is “any teacher who has been hired into a new permanent position in any Georgia school” (GDOE, 2017) receiving support and remaining in an induction program until they meet predetermined goals and requirements, based on the needs of the individual (GDOE, 2017)

The *teacher induction support team* includes all stakeholders invested in successful induction of induction phase teachers, including but not limited to “immediate supervisor or designee, a mentor, and when possible, an external support agency representative (i.e., higher education, regional educational service agency, or district specialist)” (GDOE, 2017, p. 3)

A *mentor* is a highly qualified committed individual who supports, leads, and advises personal and professional growth of an induction phase teacher. “The mentor provides guidance, shares knowledge and experiences, and supports the induction phase teacher in making a positive impact on student growth and achievement” (GDOE, 2017, p. 3)

### **Assumptions of the Study**

I assumed beginning teachers not only accept but seek opportunities to work with mentors, whether formally or informally, to improve their instruction. I also assumed beginning teachers and assigned mentors would take their roles seriously and act in a professional manner, which at times may include practicing humility and remaining open to the criticism of others. Even though participation in induction programs for beginning teachers is currently seen as fundamental in our state, there may be a variance in implementation and oversight; therefore, there may be some reluctance from administrators, beginning teachers, and experienced teachers (mentors) to fulfill their duties in the process. It may be difficult, time consuming, and costly for administrators to make the necessary structural changes to implement purposeful mentor-relationships that provide the necessary resources to beginning teachers during the induction

process, so I assumed these factors may have limited implementation of the induction program as prescribed.

### **Significance of the Study**

Even though beginning teacher induction is for those who have already mastered basic training (Gordon, 2020; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004) and should act as the final connection between theory, practice, and application, teaching remains a complex task, and it is nearly impossible for beginning teachers to receive all the instruction they will need before employment (Ingersoll, 2012). Similarly, induction is not solely providing access to a mentor, but rather an organized and structured set of factors given to new teachers to provide support in multiple ways (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kelly et al., 2019; New Teacher Center, 2019; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). First, an induction program must have a defined purpose: to develop growth among new teachers, to evaluate new hires to ensure they are making gains in student achievement, to provide a mentoring opportunity for the beginning teachers, or a combination of these three components (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The strongest influences for teachers who completed a formalized induction program successfully was working with a mentor of the same content area who had received appropriate training in becoming a strong guide, and having a common planning time with a strong network of other teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Podolsky et al., 2019). Zembytska (2015) identified a reduced teaching load as necessary to recruit mentors, but another study showed the weakest components of an induction program included a lighter teaching load and classroom assistance (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). At a larger scale, a professional learning community should be developed with simultaneous goals of engaging students and increasing student achievement, resulting in high-quality induction

activities for the beginning teacher (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Mullen, 2011; Nguyen et al., 2020; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Barnes et al. (2007) and Dean et al. (2016) recommended systems invest in induction programs and use funds up front on teacher improvement rather than replace teachers who have not received support during their 1st years of teaching. In a pilot study to look at costs associated with hiring and training new teachers due to increased teacher turnover rates, Barnes et al. discovered urban school districts spend on average \$9,000 for each teacher who leaves the system, and school systems in nonurban communities spend on average \$6,250 per teacher. It is even more costly to larger school systems than smaller systems. For example, the cost of teacher turnover in the Chicago Public School System is “estimated to be over \$86 million” (Barnes et al., 2007, p. 5) each year. Each year, the collective cost for all school systems in the country to replace teachers who leave the profession is estimated at well over \$7 billion, used to provide training and to pay for resources to recruit new teachers, incentives for new teachers, and administrative processing (Barnes et al., 2007). Many systems hire new teachers continuously to save money due to lower salaries, but costs associated with recruiting and training replacement teachers are often not considered, not to mention the potential decrease in student achievement (Carroll, 2007). In 2018–2019, Georgia hired 8,179 new teachers, 7.05% of all teachers in the state (Pelfrey, 2020). The collective benefits of multiple induction components increase retention rates for beginning teachers (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Additionally, with high teacher turnover, there is a loss of community and little sense of pulling together for the families, teachers, and students, and this is vital for schools to succeed (Carroll, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). When a teacher leaves the classroom, the associated costs are categorized as separation costs, hiring costs, and costs associated with new teacher

professional development. These costs can be measured and analyzed, and school districts should employ a practice to do this regularly. Once school system personnel understand the high costs of turnover rates, investing a smaller, yet substantial, amount of money into cost-effective teacher induction programs early in the beginning teacher's career is a wise investment (Heller, 2004; Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Watlington et al., 2010).

Coupled with the fact that teachers often leave low-performing schools for high-performing schools and at times leave the profession altogether (Barnes et al., 2007; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020) when there are no formalized induction activities for them to acclimate to the profession and the school, it has become more than a monetary investment schools must make. A continuous cycle of training new teachers rather than improving teachers' instructional practices and subsequently positively impacting the students' learning is a repetitive cycle that is difficult to break (Barnes et al., 2007; Gordon, 2020). Induction programs must provide guidance to beginning teachers to increase the likelihood beginning teachers remain on the job for years to come and can positively impact student achievement (Ingersoll, 2012; James & Wyckoff, 2020) because beginning teachers who received support structures in numerous ways were more likely to remain employed at the school after the 1st year (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; New Teacher Center, 2019). There is a strong statistically significant association between teachers who received some type of induction and mentoring and remaining employed, and the strength of the association is determined by the types and number of supports given to the new teacher (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Because formalized mentoring through emotional, logistical, and communal support to a beginning teacher can impact student learning, this nonmonetary investment made upfront is essential to changing the beginning teacher's classroom (Mullen,



2011). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated although the number of beginning teachers who participate in induction programs has increased, differences between the induction programs' components are varied. Due to the state's teacher induction guidelines and responding to the need for an organized induction program statewide, each school district tailors, implements, and oversees the induction program for their teachers.

### **Summary**

Because Georgia has issued guidance for induction programs, understanding the retention-supporting mentorship needs of new public-school teachers in West Central Georgia would allow the school system to improve induction program practices and better allocate resources to meet the needs of their teachers, school leaders, and students. Because different school systems and schools have diverse populations and needs, varied induction components may be implemented and needed for teachers' professional development and increased retention.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

As a state that has followed the guidelines of the ESSA, Georgia has committed to increasing teacher effectiveness, because state leaders recognize “effective teacher induction programs have an impact on teacher effectiveness, teacher retention and teacher leadership, all of which will have an impact on student learning and growth” (GDOE, 2017, p. 1). Georgia has produced specific documents providing guidance for all levels of administration (state, system, and school) and seven domains of induction (roles and responsibilities, leadership and organizational structures, orientation, mentoring, ongoing performance assessment, professional learning, and program evaluation) to ensure consistency and professional support for all beginning teachers in the state (GDOE, 2017). This guidance does allow school system flexibility to meet the needs of the students, teachers, and communities they serve (GDOE, 2017). Beginning teachers must complete their school system’s induction program to progress successfully through the tiered certification process to professional certification.

As a result of the ESSA, the GaPSC (2020) moved teacher certification to a tiered certification model; teacher induction programs are based on best practices because successful completion of the induction process becomes the only way for a beginning teacher to acquire renewable teacher licensure. The GaPSC induction tier is for teachers with fewer than 3 years of experience within the last 5 years for certification only, and teachers are in an “induction phase” until they successfully complete the district’s induction program to attain a professional certificate. Further, each district’s induction program will be tiered to provide differentiated support based on the individual’s needs (GaPSC, 2020).

The literature review for this study was guided by the research questions focused on discovering the retention-supporting needs of 1st-year teachers in a West Central Georgia school

district while understanding the background and demographics of beginning teachers and the overarching theme of teacher retention. The literature review is divided into the following sections: (a) teacher retention, (b) beginning teacher induction, (c) teacher mentorship, (c) new public school teachers, and (d) the retention-supporting needs of new public school teachers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study focuses on research-based components of effective induction programs. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) asserted an induction program must first decide its purpose for its induction program. Differences in how induction programs are organized, planned, and implemented exist in the State of Georgia even though there are established guidelines for school system personnel to follow when installing an induction program. Mentoring is a common trait for many induction programs, and school systems may rely on mentoring alone to retain new teachers.

This study examined the influences of the following research-based induction components that prove to be most successful: opportunities to observe other teachers; opportunities to be observed by other teachers; having a dedicated, trained mentor with the same certification and content area(s); exercises to practice becoming a reflective practitioner, discussions about student work and giving feedback to students with other teachers; and collaboration with other professionals (e.g., new teachers, veteran teachers, and leaders). Induction programs offering a combination of these components are typically most successful in retaining teachers.

### **Teacher Retention and Attrition**

Teacher retention and attrition are essential to understand as education leaders want to retain effective teachers, preventing them from exiting the profession early for reasons that can

be prevented (Kelchtermans, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Without understanding the growing diversity of schools, teachers, and students, educators' successful retention in the United States is still a challenge (Carlsson et al., 2019; Miller, 2018). Even the smallest change in teacher attrition nationally can yield more significant repercussions to the local teacher workforce (i.e., needing approximately 125,000 new teachers annually; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019), impacting PreK-12 schools and teacher preparation programs (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015). Although teacher turnover is currently addressed in multiple venues (e.g., school finance discussions, teacher preparation programs, and leadership plans; James & Wyckoff, 2020), it remains clear that multiple factors, including individual academic preparation and school climate, can guide predictive data for those who tend to exit teaching the profession (Podolsky et al., 2019). Because school systems now plan for teacher-leavers, considering hiring more than needed has been discussed. Based on retention statistics, if a school system needs to employ 75 new educators, they need to pursue at least 89 to keep the 75 employed (Taylor & West, 2020).

Low-performing educators may stay in the profession due to a lack of oversight from an educational mentor, leader, or administrator (Carlsson et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Cochran-Smith et al., 2012). The lack of oversight that may allow an ineffective teacher to remain may also cause effective teachers to leave. Isolating turnover effect by the most effective teachers leaving, “teaching skills decline by more than 1.5 standard deviation” (James & Wyckoff, 2020, p. 8), which translates to approximately 2 months of (reading) instruction. Further complicating retention, if nearby schools offer what may seem to be a better working opportunity, teachers were more likely to leave (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). When low-performing educators exit teaching, teaching quality, and student achievement increases (James & Wyckoff, 2020). Podolsky et al. (2019) stated teachers’ working conditions

need attention by policymakers and education leaders as teachers who were more satisfied with their teaching position were 15% less likely than those who were not (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Leadership communication skills (Podolsky et al., 2019) and embedded leader-teacher support mechanisms (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019) increase teacher retention.

### ***Teacher Attrition***

Educators who left the profession listed a range of decision-making factors, including dissatisfaction with school assessment, accountability, and system and school leadership (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012; Farmer, 2020; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2019; Podolsky et al., 2019). To this list, Mawhinney and Rinke (2019) added job security and workload, which added emotional consequences to these teacher leavers. Workloads that do not align with salaries contributed to attrition in a recent study (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). Further, educators who lacked the skills to address job-related stress coupled with exhaustion found their only option was to leave the profession (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2019). Kelly et al. (2019) stated career opportunities were “significant predictors of intentions to stay or leave, with appreciable effect sizes” (p. 107).

The national annual average of teacher attrition in the United States is estimated to be 1 in every 6.5 teachers (Taylor & West, 2020). There is a range in variability in rates of teacher attrition by geographic regions of the country, with southern states ranging between 14%–17% (rural and cities/suburbs, respectively) and the Northeast reporting 8%–10% turnover (rural and overall, respectively), with as much as a 10% difference between rural and city contexts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Taylor & West, 2020). Sorensen and Ladd (2020) stated geographically isolated schools were more likely to hire lesser qualified teachers following teacher turnover, stating when a PreK-12 school is situated more than 1 hour from a teacher

certification program, acquiring lower quality teachers increases by almost 10 percentage points. Kelly et al. (2019) supported this statement, as their study reported working in physically distant schools is a strong predictor of intent to exit teaching, at least at that site. However, larger cities may have added difficulty in retaining teachers, as James and Wyckoff (2020) found in their recent study showing Washington, DC loses approximately 20% of their teachers annually, compounded to 57% over 5 years between 2012 and 2017, but this does not contribute negatively to the teachers' skills or student achievement. In addition to teaching in an urban setting, Taylor and West (2020) added economically disadvantaged schools as a contributing factor for teacher attrition. Conversely, Nguyen et al. (2020) found no evidence that urban teachers were more likely to leave. Additionally, teachers who work in science, math, and special education were found to leave the profession at higher rates than other content areas (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Sutchter et al., 2019). Nguyen et al. also reported middle school educators' turnover is 51% higher than for elementary school teachers. The following components were not directly related to teacher turnover: class size nor classroom assistance (Nguyen et al., 2020), school size (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020), parental support, student behavior, and decision-making power (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019), and a safe school environment (Farmer, 2020). Sorensen and Ladd stated, when a school has significant teacher turnover, it can cause more of the remaining teachers to be assigned to teach a content area outside their certification.

### ***Factors Impacting Teacher Retention and Attrition***

Preparation of teachers impacts teacher retention and attrition, supporting the need for pedagogical skills during the certification process (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Adding to pedagogy, Darling-Hammond and DePaoli (2020) included child psychology and learning theory,

classroom resource usage, and extensive field experiences with supportive feedback as a predictor of those who stay in the profession. However, whether a teacher holds a graduate degree or baccalaureate degree did not predict retention (Nguyen et al., 2020).

In 2018, public school teachers left teaching at a rate of 83 per 10,000 each month, which is the highest recorded exit since teacher attrition records were first maintained in 2001 (Farmer, 2020). Rates for those who leave the teaching profession after 5 years of service range from 16%–17% annually (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Gray & Taie, 2015), 26.4% (Carlsson et al., 2019), to almost 30% (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Compounding this problem is that all these teachers leave the profession before their 7th year, which is when mastery of teaching is assumed (Hannon, 2020).

Additional data to consider are less than one third of national educator attrition is caused by retirement (Sutcher et al., 2019), and for teachers older than 28 years of age, the odds of leaving the school were reduced by 30% compared to younger teachers (Nguyen et al., 2020). After controlling for age, a teacher's level of experience does not impact teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019); in contrast, other studies report that leaving the profession by teachers with less than 3 years of experience is as much as 54% higher than teachers with more than 3 years of experience (Nguyen et al., 2020; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Neither educator gender (Nguyen et al., 2020) nor race (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019) has a relationship with departure from the profession. Nguyen et al. (2020) stated the percentage of students who receive reduced or free lunch, the number of students who receive additional learning supports, and students categorized as low socioeconomic status do not significantly impact teacher turnover rates. By contrast, other studies reported teacher turnover within Title I schools (schools with high percentages of low-income students who receive federal

funds) were nearly 50% greater than those schools not classified as Title I (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Podolsky et al., 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) further stated this is compounded for Title I school math and science teachers, as they leave at a significantly higher rate at 70% than math and science teachers from non-Title I schools.

Teachers in schools with a higher percentage of non-White students leave teaching or change schools 40% more often than teachers from schools with fewer non-White students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Similarly, non-White teachers were more likely to leave the profession (Miller, 2018). More diverse teachers need to be trained and retained in the public-school systems to gain more equity in the school's teacher workforce (Miller, 2018). Where a teacher teaches and what a teacher teaches (i.e., content and grade level) is a determinant of teacher retention.

If a school employs an evaluation system for teachers, teacher attrition is 5% lower (Nguyen et al., 2020), primarily if those evaluations address effective instruction and support teacher improvement (James & Wyckoff, 2020). Similarly, least effective educators leave at a rate 5 times greater than highly effective teachers (James & Wyckoff, 2020). Podolsky et al. (2019) found over 50% of those educators who left teaching would contemplate returning based on financial factors (e.g., salary increase, retention of retirement benefits, and student loan repayments). Other studies have found what is perceived to be a low salary as a reason for teacher departure (Lozinak, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2020; Torres & Weiner, 2018; Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). "More generous district salary schedules do influence teacher retention decisions" (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019, p. 17), especially in lower socioeconomic schools (Podolsky et al., 2019). Compared to other professions, establishing



competitive salary and benefits packages allows schools to compete for highly qualified educators (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Directing funds to improve the overall school culture, job satisfaction, and consistent professional support further increases teacher retention (Dean et al., 2016).

Changes in the economy and multiple education-related factors affect teacher hiring trends (i.e., school enrollment needs, teacher preparation requirements and enrollment numbers, compensation, and changes in class sizes; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Podolsky et al., 2019). Teacher attrition for the right reasons, such as retirement or not renewing the contract of an ineffective educator, can lead to increased teacher effectiveness evenly shared within a school system (Nguyen et al., 2020). To retain the most effective educators, raising salaries, employing research-based induction programs, engaging in professional collaborative learning communities, maintaining a clearly outlined discipline protocol for students, and maintaining continued support from school and system administrators were factors that lead to strong teacher retention (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020; Podolsky et al., 2019). Because teaching is often viewed as a calling, choosing to leave the profession can be seen as quitting or not being committed enough (Hannon, 2020), even though not all those who leave education should be viewed negatively (Carlsson et al., 2019). Podolsky et al. (2019) stated even though it is popular to hire teachers who have been trained through alternative certification (e.g., provisional licensure) to fill an immediate need, “these pathways are generally associated with lower retention rates” (p. 9). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) reported when all factors except certification route is held constant, alternatively prepared teachers “were 25% more likely to leave their school” (p. 13) compared to their traditionally prepared counterparts. Therefore, addressing controllable factors can improve

retention rates. There were fewer certified teachers for hire each year simultaneously, with more educators leaving the profession (Podolsky et al., 2019).

### ***Teacher Retention***

Building strong working relationships among school faculty is challenging and ever-changing (Carlsson et al., 2019). However, student-teacher residences, professional development, and induction programs should be personalized to meet district and school needs, increasing the number of diverse educators and embracing effective instruction (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020; Jones & Kahn, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Collaboration across grade levels and academic content areas and positive, collegial professional working relationships allow teachers to become empowered participants in the workforce, leading to satisfied educators (Farmer, 2020; Gordon, 2020; Podolsky et al., 2019; Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). Conversely, little collegiality in a school leads to teacher turnover (Carlsson et al., 2019; Lozinak, 2016; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2019).

School systems, and individual schools within the system, should capitalize on teacher expertise and experiences by building a collaborative culture that connects professional development objectives to district, school, and student goals and needs (Wong, 2004), as building teacher empowerment is positively associated with professional efficacy (Torres & Weiner, 2018). Because teachers develop and grow during their careers, these induction and professional development programs should be personalized for educators' career progression (Lozinak, 2016; Wong, 2004). To support this, Nguyen et al. (2020) found teachers who reported having effective professional development at their assigned school had "16% lower odds" (p. 8) of leaving than teachers without effective professional development. Teachers who were immersed in positive school culture and view their teaching environment positively were more

likely to continue in the profession (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020; Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Individualizing goals for educators and fostering school loyalty based on teamwork rather than isolation is necessary for retention (Martin et al., 2016; Mawhinney & Rinke, 2019). Nguyen et al. (2020) stated teacher attrition in schools with a robust professional development plan, and teamwork culture is reduced by almost 45% compared to schools without. Because “working conditions (for teachers) are also students’ learning conditions” (Podolsky et al., 2019, p. 18), teacher efficacy is strongly linked to job satisfaction, which, in turn, impacts retention.

In most states, the most significant turnover is when teachers move or choose to leave teaching before retirement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). However, attrition is not a sustained situation (Carlsson et al., 2019), and research should address that “‘stayers’ and ‘leavers’ are not homogenous groups” (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012, p. 846). When exiting teachers can be replaced by a more effective teacher, deliberate retention efforts can address overall school effectiveness (James & Wyckoff, 2020).

Unlike most research and resulting policy, Cochran-Smith et al. (2012) asserted that beginning teachers make career decisions based on their teaching abilities and that attention must be given to the variety of career paths beginning teachers can make and mentoring them accordingly. These interventions were done to build a sustainable workforce of quality teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). When school systems attempt to fill empty classrooms by employing underqualified or provisionally licensed educators, this can lead to higher teacher turnover and reduced student achievement (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Saultz et al., 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Sutcher et al., 2019). The odds of alternatively certified teachers leaving the profession were 53% greater than those of traditionally certified

educators (Nguyen et al., 2020). In 2018–2019, 85.98% of teacher candidates were in traditional certification programs, and 14.02% sought alternative certification (Pelfrey, 2020). All these teachers need individualized supports during their 1st years of employment.

“Retaining (a teacher) is more cost-effective than recruiting” (Heller, 2004, p. 40).

Therefore, investing in an induction program with several key components (e.g., professional development with collaborative teams and peer observation) that capitalizes on the knowledge and skills they already have, is essential to keep the teachers in the workforce (Heller, 2004; Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). By way of contrast, some induction programs have not been successful at retaining teachers (Lopez et al., 2004; Shockley et al., 2011). Additionally, factors outside a particular school’s controls impact a teacher’s decision to stay, including higher salaries and better benefits, student involvement, the individual teacher’s health, and the educator’s sense of personal fulfillment (Farmer, 2020; Hannon, 2020; Miller, 2018). Hannon (2020) stated students were seldom the reason teachers exit education before retirement. The goal of research into why teachers leave the profession should be to “improve the satisfaction with working conditions of all teachers” (Kelly et al., 2019, p. 94) to reduce attrition, which should then naturally occur mostly to circumstances outside the school’s control. Within the system’s budgetary controls, having more classroom resources available reduces turnover (Miller, 2018), as much as 15% (Nguyen et al., 2020).

### ***Impact of Teacher Retention***

Because “teachers have a measurable impact on student learning” (Stronge et al., 2011, p. 348) and the “common denominator in school improvement and student success *is* the teacher” (p. 351), it is essential to determine why some teachers choose to stay in the profession and why some choose to leave. Stayers and leavers experience numerous teaching practice variations and

make different career decisions (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012); induction programs need to be tailored to address all beginning teachers' needs. As teachers depart and are most often replaced with teachers who have little to no experience or without full certification, “these teacher characteristics were widely believed to signal lower education quality for students” (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020, p. 13) and can be damaging to the daily functions of the school.

Teachers leave low-performing schools in search of high-performing schools, or at times, leave the profession altogether (Barnes et al., 2007). Further, high turnover in a school can impact student achievement negatively (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020), which could begin a cycle of teachers leaving low-performing schools, decreasing student achievement, leaving the next school, and so forth. These accrued costs, both monetarily and academically, negatively impact economically disadvantaged students more often than not, and the effects were compounded in the future (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). With 30% or more teachers leaving before the end of the 5th year, quality of instruction suffers (due to available teachers and the potential for increased class size), there is an educational disadvantage, and student learning is reduced (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015). Complicating the issue, the precursor to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, was passed in 1975; there have not been enough certified special education teachers to meet the needs of public schools (Ludlow et al., 2005). Finding teachers who are willing to stay at low-performing schools can be accomplished through clearly defined and well-organized induction programs. How a school responds when teachers leave may lead to increased class size or teachers shifting from one position to another (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

## **Beginning Teacher Induction**

After new teachers are hired, they are supported in a variety of ways through induction programs. Although not all induction programs are equal, one common factor of beginning teacher induction is an organized plan that includes mentorship. This section addresses induction programs, teacher mentorship, and the roles and responsibilities of mentors.

### ***Induction Programs***

Induction programs became part of U.S. educational reform in the 1980s when teacher shortages were imminent and were followed by governmental policy changes (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015; Zembytska, 2015). Before 1984, only eight states included induction as a requirement, and by the early 1990s, that number grew to 17 states requiring induction, with another 17 offering induction to new teachers (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015). Induction programs use a comprehensive method to support teachers and the learning environment to increase their effectiveness and retention (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Wong's (2004) research showed schools with low retention needed induction programs with multiple components to provide comprehensive supports to new teachers. At first, many schools employed induction programs, but between 2008 and 2012 (i.e., the Great Recession), every component of most induction programs, including joint planning and mentorship, became less common (Podolsky et al., 2019). Although the terms mentoring and induction are sometimes used in the same way with the same meaning, they are two different constructs (Shockley et al., 2011). According to Wong (2004), "Induction is a process . . . mentoring is an action" (p. 42). Induction is a combined set of supports to help beginning teachers move from preservice to beginning professionals and improve teacher retention (Podolsky et al., 2019). With constructivism as its foundation, induction programs help novice teachers build their skills and

techniques through guidance and mentor supports (Moss, 2010). Because of its collective benefits, induction is now available throughout the United States, even though the programs vary significantly as each school, system, and state determine policy (Podolsky et al., 2019; Zembytska, 2015).

Even though lack of funding often reduces the support available in induction (Glazerman et al., 2010), Barnes et al. (2007) recommended systems should invest in induction programs and use funds upfront on teacher improvement rather than replace teachers who have not received support during their 1st years of teaching. Based on beginning teachers' skills and goals, schools and systems should implement appropriate professional development opportunities and recruit mentors to help these teachers reach their goals. Doing this builds commitment to helping the teacher grow, and in turn, they will hopefully feel more connected to the individual school, its students, and the profession (Cochran-Smith et al., 2012). Without a clear plan and anticipated results, induction programs wavered (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011). All induction program stakeholders (e.g., school leaders, professional development leaders) need to be adequately trained to address each teacher's professional goals (Wong, 2004), which should focus on supporting each teacher so they will thrive to stay rather than simply survive (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). The supports new teachers receive influence whether or not that teacher will remain in the profession as a beneficial contributor or leave the teaching field altogether (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019).

Most often, induction programs include a partnership between schools and teacher preparation programs (Zembytska, 2015) and provided support to teachers during their first formative years of employment (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Nixon et al., 2017). This partnership allows novice teachers to have a continued relationship with higher education

faculty. Because these faculty are also within the educational system, they have a unique understanding of new teachers' needs, and these stakeholders can work together to study relevant, timely education concerns (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Gordon, 2020). Induction programs should differ because they have different populations and unique needs for students, teachers, schools, and districts (Wong, 2004). Because of the one-size-fits-all approach many schools take with mentoring and induction programs, many beginning teachers' needs are not met. One goal of effective induction programs focuses on assisting beginning teachers to become more reflective educators who can review their current performance and analyze that data to determine goals for the future (Delaware Department of Education, 2010). Although broadly focused on teacher retention and improved teaching strategies for new educators, induction has the goal of benefits for PreK-12 learners (Podolsky et al., 2019). Even though more than half of the states require induction programs, and the number of beginning teachers who participate in induction programs has increased from 50% in 1990 to almost 92% in 2008, consistency does not exist among the level of involvement and effectiveness of the support; however, "induction has a positive effect" (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 51).

In Connecticut, educators must complete an induction program that spans multiple years to obtain licensure (Long, 2018). Long (2018) also stated Hawaii's induction program has improved its educational system in multiple ways, including school culture, student achievement, and reducing teacher turnover. However, in another study, it was found neither teachers who completed an induction program nor those who did not receive induction support were more likely to stay at their school, district, or in the profession (Glazerman et al., 2010). A new teacher's length of time in an induction program (1 vs. 2 years) did not impact retention, but those who received induction supports for 2 years did have a "positive and statistically



significant impact on student achievement” (Glazerman et al., 2010, p. A-11). Even though there is conflicting research on whether or not induction improves teaching achievement and retention (Shockley et al., 2011), supporting new teachers through induction, especially mentoring, increases teacher efficacy, and teachers see the benefits (Lopez et al., 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008). An induction program should be based on theory, have clear definitions and descriptions of the support roles, and consider teacher evaluations and induction research (Shockley et al., 2011). Those programs lacking clear definitions of its components and stakeholders, only self-reported without outside input or oversight, and were not aligned with teachers’ professional needs were unsuccessful (Lopez et al., 2004).

### ***Successful Induction Program Components***

The collective benefit of multiple induction components, rather than singular or fragmented components, is increased retention rates (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong & Wong, 2012). Wong and Wong (2012) reported if beginning teachers receive no induction support, they were 41% likely to leave the classroom after 1 year. If beginning teachers receive only mentoring, they were still 39% likely to leave the classroom after 1 year (Wong & Wong, 2012). Mentoring alone does not make a significant difference. However, Wong and Wong stated if beginning teachers receive 4 to 7 induction support components, the likelihood they will leave the profession after 1 year decreases to 27% and 18%, respectively. There is an association between teachers who received some type of induction and mentoring and remaining employed, and the strength of the association is determined by the types and number of supports given to the new teacher (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The most substantial influence was working with a mentor of the same content area who has received appropriate training in becoming a strong guide, and common planning time with a strong network of other teachers (Ingersoll &

Smith, 2004). The weakest components include a lighter teaching load and classroom assistance (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The length of time spent in an induction program is also vital. Neither participation in a 1- nor a 2-year induction group affected retention, but retention gains were made after 3 years of participation in induction (Glazerman et al., 2010).

Induction programs should include a clear transition from teacher preparation to professionalism, develop teachers' sense of community, provide trained and carefully selected mentors who have the time and resources to serve new teachers, provide support for implanting the curriculum, include observations by other teachers with constructive feedback, and offer continued opportunities for reflection (Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon, 2020; Martin et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2008). Induction activities should begin the summer before starting the new academic year to capitalize on this transitional period (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011). An all-inclusive induction program capitalizes on a blend of these supports, rather than isolated events (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015; Wong & Wong, 2012). Participants of induction programs recognize the value of these supports (Torres & Weiner, 2018). Having a quality teacher in all classrooms is an obtainable goal if schools employ a "structured, sustained, multi-year induction program with a professional culture . . . in which teachers thrive and grow" (Wong, 2004, p. 53). Lopez et al. (2004) stated, "There are very few rigorous studies that have investigated the impact of induction on teacher quality and retention" (p. 32) and "studies of induction have been weak" and "are not strong enough for us to conclude that induction works – that it improves teacher retention or effectiveness" (p. 32). To support this conclusion, studies and research completed in Florida portray a contradictory report: induction programs were present, teachers find them effective, but it has not helped the state retain teachers in the field (Shockley et al., 2011).

Shockley et al. (2011) agreed there is a “lack of research measuring the effectiveness of induction programs with inconsistent results regarding their efficacy” (p. 12).

In one study, Glazerman et al. (2010) examined teachers who were part of a multiyear induction program and achievement levels for the students assigned to their classroom. They report no impact on student achievement after the 1st year for either the 1- or the 2-year group (Glazerman et al., 2010). However, those in the 2-year treatment group showed a “positive and statistically significant impact on student achievement” (Glazerman et al., 2010, p. 87). Lopez et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of teacher retention research and found 4 of 10 studies reported a relationship between induction participation and teacher effectiveness. Onchwari and Keengwe (2010) reported students of teachers in the experimental group (teachers participated in mentoring initiative) performed significantly better in all listening, speaking, reading, and writing than the control group and that reading and writing scores were significantly higher than those of students whose teachers were in the control group. Also, teachers who received the mentor–coach initiative provided better classroom literacy activities than those who did not (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2010). Cruickshank (1985) supported this finding, saying mentoring does enhance teacher pedagogy, which in turn contributes to student’s performance.

### ***Teacher Mentorship***

Teacher induction research almost always includes mentoring (Lozinak, 2016; Zembytska, 2015). Although mentoring programs have value and can support new teachers as they learn about their school’s population (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017), they were only one part of the support that new teachers need (McIlheran, 2018). Many states tackle teacher shortages by implementing collaborative practices and high-quality mentoring (Espinoza et al., 2018). School districts adopt their own mentoring rules as state policies are typically suggestive and not

regulatory. Due to budget restraints and educational trends, mentoring continues to evolve and appears in many forms (Zembytska, 2015). Until recently, there was a lack of data on mentoring programs from the teacher's perspective in general (DeCesare et al., 2016), generalizing from research into mentoring difficult as there is little consistency regarding selection, implementation, guidelines, resources, costs, and assessment of those programs.

Mentoring is defined as “a process which facilitates adaptation of novice teachers to real working conditions, increases their motivation, positive attitude to the teaching profession and psychological comfort, promotes effective interpersonal communication and collaboration with teaching staff and administration” (Zembytska, 2015, p. 106), all to increase teacher retention. In most cases, mentors assist novice teachers in transitioning into the profession by helping them learn the school's routines and culture (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011), by providing collegial relationships (Lozinak, 2016), and individualizing support (Martin et al., 2016). A mentor is essential to new teachers as they serve as a confidant and can alleviate concerns quickly (Wong, 2004), and can increase the novice teacher's “cultural competence levels” (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017, p. 12).

School administrators and new teachers stated “simply assigning a mentor alone does little” (Wong, 2004, p. 44) to boost new teachers' morale and does not increase retention. In a 2012 study, Cook reported 64% of teachers who were mentored were satisfied with the mentoring experience, and 35% were unsatisfied. However, more recently, Gray and Taie (2015) found the percentage of retained teachers was larger for those who had a mentor than teachers who did not have a mentor. Mentoring is a useful retention tool and has the most impact when selected mentors have the most experience and who have repeated success in their students’

academic achievement in the school (DeCesare et al., 2016; Hornick-Lockard, 2019; Kelly et al., 2019).

Having one mentor limits new teachers' options, including a lack of diverse opinions and little opportunity for flexible scheduling (Wong, 2004). If the mentor–mentee relationship is not working, valuable time may pass before an administrator is alerted to the dysfunctional relationship. Like all successful relationships, this relationship must have a foundation of trust (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). Many schools should consider using multiple mentors to guide novice teachers rather than an experienced individual teacher (Beane-Katner, 2014; Lozinak, 2016; Wasburn et al., 2008). Assigning more than one mentor to a mentee through a carefully planned infrastructure could remedy a lack of qualified mentors or availability (Beane-Katner, 2014; Wasburn et al., 2008).

Mentoring should be valued as a “mutually beneficial formal collaboration” (Zembytska, 2015, p. 106) between the novice teacher(s) and the experienced teacher(s) and can address psychological concerns and pedagogical improvements. Adding curriculum content work is also essential for mentors and mentees (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Focused support and working toward clear goals are part of the mentor-mentee relationship (Wasburn et al., 2008), particularly as skilled, carefully selected mentors assist new teachers in fulfilling their duties (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). The mentor and mentee need to know the school’s and the system’s mission and goals (Wong, 2004). Further, the mentor should receive appropriate training to view their active mentor role in a way that endorses cutting-edge teaching practices (Cohan & Honigfeld, 2011). As Torres and Weiner (2018) reported, mentees reported ineffective instruction from mentors, and this could be due to a lack of training for the mentor’s role or a lack of understanding of the system’s goals. Making the most of collaboration time can decrease

frustration for stakeholders (Martin et al., 2016). The mentor's role is especially vital as they are the primary link between the novice teacher and the school culture (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017)

A new teacher's 1st year is often described as survival or trying to keep up and may include mentoring relationships with experienced teachers who have similar certification, duties, and responsibilities (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Zembytska, 2015). However, many school systems employ mentoring or induction for new teachers only for the 1st year (DeCesare et al., 2016). Cook (2012) reported 60% of new teachers received mentoring for only 1 year, 34% received mentoring for 2 years, 2% received mentoring for 3 years, and less than 2% received mentoring for more than 3 years. Although there is no correlation made between the amount of mentoring time and years of experience, it is noted "over 65% of the teachers in this survey have less than 10 years of teaching experience" (Cook, 2012, p. 4).

### ***Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors***

Because school systems develop their mentoring guidelines, there are also varying definitions of *quality mentors* across schools, systems, and states, but they must be part of a comprehensive induction program (Wong, 2004). The first, most important part of mentoring is matching the mentor with the mentee, with the mentor understanding their role has many purposes (Wasburn et al., 2008). Unfortunately, Lozinak (2016) found purposeful matches were not a priority for many induction programs, and system employees often made these decisions with little guidance or oversight. Many new hires also reported doubt regarding their mentor's effectiveness and dedication to their needs (Lozinak, 2016). Although some states require a mentor to have at least 3 years of successful teaching experience, others require at least 5 years or a certain teaching certification level (Zembytska, 2015). In many schools, mentors were

volunteers, but schools could improve the mentor pool by offering incentives, such as monetary supplements, formal recognition, or reduced teaching load (Zembytska, 2015).

Although years of experience and teaching certification were often considered, traits that were more difficult to ascertain and track were essential to the mentoring program, including communication skills, willingness to serve as a mentor, and a lifelong learner attitude (Zembytska, 2015). Wang and Odell (2002) stated mentors were essential “agents of change” (p. 489) as they work intimately with novice teachers, guiding them toward becoming lifelong reflective practitioners. Cohan and Honigsfeld (2011) supported this, stating “reform-minded teaching” (p. 76) is the foundation of mentorship. Mackie (2018) stated mentors who volunteer to serve as mentors were more important than those who were not asked but were required to serve in the role. Multiple mentoring forms (i.e., mutual, group, peer, and reverse) should be employed to capitalize on diverse training preferences (Beane-Katner, 2014). Kostadinova and Gruncheva (2020) reported beginning teachers prefer compassionate mentors capable of handling issues before becoming exaggerated and unmanageable. Goal setting, communication, and professional encouragement were also traits novice teachers desire in mentors (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). An essential part of any induction and mentoring program includes evaluating the program’s processes and relationships by the school system’s induction coordinator (Beane-Katner, 2014).

Over half (51%) of novice teachers reported having both formal and informal mentors who had similar teaching certificates, were employed in the same school, and had dedicated meeting times for mentoring activities (Desimone et al., 2014). Mentors located in the same school as the mentee were beneficial as feedback regarding academics (e.g., pacing and standards) was relevant because they taught the same students or the same content (Desimone et

al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016). Whether formal or informal, mentors and mentees should also be in classrooms nearby to foster regular, consistent communication and offer higher support levels (Lozinak, 2016; McIlheran, 2018). Having joint planning sessions or regularly scheduled meeting times allows the mentor and mentee to discuss in-depth teaching strategies to impact student learning positively (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Martin et al., 2016; Podolsky et al., 2019), but Torres and Weiner (2018) found professional development frequently did not focus on knowledge new teachers needed for classroom instruction. Formal mentors were most often assigned at the school or system level and typically responded to new teachers' curriculum standards' needs more effectively than informal mentors and were considerably more likely to have observed other teachers teaching the curriculum (Desimone et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016). Informal mentoring relationships often occur naturally but play a vital role in developing and retaining new educators (Desimone et al., 2014). Novice teachers reported they received classroom management strategies from informal and formal mentors but prefer to seek this support from individuals not responsible for evaluating them (Desimone et al., 2014).

Desimone et al. (2014) stated formal mentors should be given release to be readily available for novice teachers. Additionally, stipends can be useful in recruiting and keeping mentors (DeCesare et al., 2016; Wasburn et al., 2008), and approximately half of school systems with mentoring programs do offer stipends to novice teachers' mentors as the mentor role is offered mostly by full-time teachers with their assigned classrooms, students, and teaching responsibilities (DeCesare et al., 2016). Lack of funding and time were the most common obstacles to sufficiently creating and maintaining an effective mentoring program (DeCesare et al., 2016). In most cases, funds from Title II may be used to support mentoring programs (Dean



et al., 2016), and school systems should investigate this opportunity as a resource to offer retention bonuses and mentoring stipends (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Although formal and informal mentors support instruction, informal mentors typically spend more time on school routines and expectations, working with parents (Desimone et al., 2014), and school logistics, such as acquiring classroom supplies and other basic needs (Martin et al., 2016). Both types of mentors should be viewed as collaborative partners rather than seen as an expert with all the answers because the mentee also has knowledge and experiences to share (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). As the relationship develops over time, the novice teacher typically becomes more open to mentoring unless a collaborative partnership is not formed (Martin et al., 2016). Similarly, both the mentor and mentee should allow for changes in power dynamics in the relationship (Wasburn et al., 2008). Although both are important roles, informal mentors could build a collegial relationship with the novice teacher without official oversight and responsibility (Desimone et al., 2014) and could allow school leaders to bring in advisors from an assortment of backgrounds and viewpoints (McIlheran, 2018).

Observation of teaching instruction and providing feedback is a typical practice for mentors (DeCesare et al., 2016; Desimone et al., 2014). Desimone et al. (2014) reported mentee teachers valued the observation and feedback practice and sought more of these opportunities. New teachers appreciated observation feedback more than other mentor–mentee activities as it directly impacted teaching practice and student achievement (Martin et al., 2016). If the novice teacher loses the mentoring relationship, gains in teaching professionalism, and student achievement can be reduced.

## **New Public School Teachers**

New public school teachers are unique and bring their own skills and abilities to their classroom. This section describes the demographics of new public school teachers, varying certification pathways, and their work environment.

### ***Demographics***

Each year, approximately 100,000 new public-school teachers enter the profession bringing their own set of experiences, knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Hornick-Lockard, 2019). Familiarity with beginning teachers' current problems plus various ways to react and address these problems is essential for school system leaders because they are responsible for helping these educators transition into the profession (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017; New Teacher Center, 2019). It is vital that a school's existing teachers and administrators view these educators as unique and not just "younger versions of themselves" (Beane-Katner, 2014, p. 92). These beginning years are complex and can be problematic for new teachers (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011). Unfortunately, in a recent study, more than one third of new teachers stated they did not receive mentor support (due to lack of effective communication, bias toward beginning teachers, and unclear processes), and 8% stated they had no mentor (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). New teachers need to see the connection between their teaching philosophy and the school's culture, and mentors or an induction program can assist with this (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Miller (2018) reported 80% of the current teacher workforce is White, down from 87%, but the profession is becoming more female at 77%, up from 71% a decade prior. In 2018–2019, 71% of all Georgia teachers were White (Pelfrey, 2020).

### *Certification Pathways*

Beginning teachers who received certification through a teacher preparation program have completed required field experiences and coursework to prepare them for teaching. However, a beginning teachers' knowledge was often treated as isolated and could not be transferred into the particular schools' classrooms (Torres & Weiner, 2018). These two key components, field experiences and coursework, could continue a seamless link between higher education faculty and beginning teachers, as the teacher preparation program should also prepare teacher candidates to move into the profession with resources and knowledge about induction programs (Gordon, 2020). Onchwari and Keengwe (2010) asserted teacher preparation programs should never be considered the endpoint for teacher quality and instruction. It stands to reason, though, that the most-qualified teacher preparation programs have a clear vision and standards, coupled with sequenced coursework and fieldwork, to exhibit teaching practices grounded in research (Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2019). Beginning teachers who completed courses in pedagogy and had 1 semester or longer of student teaching were half as likely to leave education as those who did not complete similar preparation (Podolsky et al., 2019). Those who completed more comprehensive programs (e.g., observing others, student teaching at least one semester, pedagogy courses, and resources selection) were 2.5 times less likely to leave the profession after the 1st year than beginning teachers who received little or no method instruction (Podolsky et al., 2019). Subsequently, 1st-year teachers felt more prepared to enter the PreK-12 classroom and planned to stay in teaching longer than 1st-year teachers who did not feel prepared (DeAngelis et al., 2013), and preparedness is also connected to student achievement (Wong, 2004). Unfortunately, new teachers were often discouraged from practicing innovative techniques

during induction and were encouraged to revert to more traditional teaching practices (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017).

Not all beginning teachers enter the profession with similar training. This variance in knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Martin et al., 2016) is challenging for new teachers and their veteran counterparts as they attempt induction exercises. Survey data recently revealed 1 in 10 first-year teachers began teaching without completing student teaching (Podolsky et al., 2019). Beginning educators who have not been prepared to operate a classroom or have not had training related to teaching students at the appropriate social and cognitive levels were at a disadvantage (Martin et al., 2016). Many of these new teachers were prepared through alternative programs and have become popular this last decade to fill teaching shortage needs; however, these programs were not associated with higher teacher retention (Podolsky et al., 2019). In these cases, induction programs were essential to extend the learning of these often-underprepared new teachers (Torres & Weiner, 2018), but the professional development sessions need to be structured so new teachers can grasp schoolwide concerns and how they impact individual classroom culture (Martin et al., 2016).

### ***New Public School Teachers' Work Environment***

Because an individual's perception is their reality, a beginning teachers' working conditions affect their satisfaction with teaching (Farmer, 2020). Although many teachers consider teaching activities as most important (e.g., planning, teaching, assessing, reflecting; Lozinak, 2016), they were also expected to possess continued information about individual student's academic abilities and any related psychological conditions to meet the needs of all students fully (Farmer, 2020). "Teachers are in the forefront of ensuring their (students') safety" (Farmer, 2020, p. 41), adding to the constant decisions and actions teachers must make.

In a recent study, many new teachers stated they had not received instruction about induction programs (48%), but teacher preparation programs should make this part of their capstone experiences (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015). In one study, approximately 71% of student teachers realized they should have learned about induction during their teacher preparation years (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015). Because Gordon (2020) found many new teacher respondents stated moving from teacher preparation to teaching professional was “rather” or “very overwhelming,” including induction instruction at the pre-teaching level can reduce anxiety and increase satisfaction for new teachers (Wilkins & Okrasinski, 2015). Teachers who had teaching experience but were new hires to the school were frequently asked to participate in induction programs, as each school has its own culture, unique student needs, and teacher challenges (Torres & Weiner, 2018).

All teachers, but especially new teachers, find new challenges every day. For new teachers, a lack of support, managing time, curriculum decisions, discipline concerns, and a sense of being overwhelmed were listed as challenges (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Because new teachers are often treated like veteran teachers (e.g., the same evaluation system, same duties), these high expectations can be discouraging (Farmer, 2020). Because missing induction supports were listed as problematic for new teachers (Long, 2018), and with student achievement often connected to teachers’ evaluations (Farmer, 2020), new teachers often feel alone and under-prepared. School systems with many students from underserved communities attempt to recruit highly effective teachers (Podolsky et al., 2019). However, more students today present with complex needs and abilities, requiring new teachers to walk in the door equipped to handle various requirements, practices, and assessments (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). Feeling unprepared or underqualified for challenges can lead to an increasing amount of “compassion

fatigue at a level that is unprecedented” (Farmer, 2020, p. 41). Compounding a new teacher’s situation is the concept of teaching out-of-field, which heightens the challenges presented and may hinder the new educator from transitioning into becoming a more competent educator (Nixon et al., 2017). If a new teacher has not received adequate training to develop collaborative partnerships with the schools’ parents, these negative relationships can cause additional strain on the students (Farmer, 2020). Kutsyuruba et al. (2017) stated prospering in a “diverse cultural context” (p. 12) is a significant challenge for novice educators. These new teachers can receive appropriate training during induction to learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to reach all students and their needs (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020), including how learning occurs, how to supplement instruction with tools and resources, and considering the whole learner (Cantor & Gomperts, 2020).

If appropriate induction activities are not implemented, the end of the 1st year for the new teacher can be isolating and can feel exhausting (McIlheran, 2018). Due to overwhelming challenges, new teachers had little time to socialize with peers (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017). Research showed collaborative school cultures can help lessen many aspects that negatively influence novice educators' experiences (Kutsyuruba et al., 2017), including meeting high expectations and balancing personal and professional expectations (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020). Beginning teachers typically move through cycles during their 1st year of teaching: “anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation” (New Teacher Center, 2019, pp. 1–2) and hopefully end with “reflection and anticipation” (p. 2) for the next year. Because highly effective teachers seek employment in schools with likeminded teachers, building a school staff with a principal’s commitment to professional development, and student learning is key (Wong, 2004).

## **The Retention-Supporting Mentorship Needs of New Public School Teachers**

New public school teachers have unique needs of support that will increase their retention in the profession. Those needs include participation in a comprehensive induction program with a mentoring component, involvement in a collaborative learning community, and the identification of specific needs based on each individual new teacher.

### ***Comprehensive Induction Program***

Because effective, comprehensive induction programs have shown to increase teacher retention for beginning teachers (Gordon, 2020; Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020; Lopez et al., 2004), beginning teachers must have access to an induction program early in their career (Shockley et al., 2011; Wong & Wong, 2012). These novice teachers are beginning to develop their teaching style, are susceptible to discouragement, and need professional support (Nixon et al., 2017). Gordon (2020) stated we should move from a “recruit – burn out – replace” model to an “educate – mentor – nurture” model. Because student achievement is the goal of PreK-12 education, novice educators need multiple supports from school system leaders, school administrators, and veteran teachers (New Teacher Center, 2019). First, the purpose of an induction program for the system and school must be identified (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). A high-quality induction program should involve multiple activities with multiple people, follow a coherent plan developed between the beginning teacher and the mentor, and continue for several years to best reach the beginning teacher’s changing needs (Picucci, 2016; Public Education Network, 2003; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). Although induction programs should include the larger school community (Public Education Network, 2003; Wong, 2004), the supports provided should be personalized to meet each 1st-year teacher’s professional goals and needs (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Public Education Network, 2003). There needs to be a

change in thinking that induction is not “delivery of information” but instead collaborative mentoring, with ideas shared by and with everyone (Beane-Katner, 2014), including other teachers, team leaders, and teacher leaders (McIlheran, 2018). Induction programs have recently become established in most school systems across the country, yet all traits associated with the most effective programs were not always a part of these programs (Podolsky et al., 2019). To meet the needs of the 21st century learner, all teachers, including novice teachers, need instruction and a community learning model to best use technology in delivering content in a myriad of ways (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020).

A comprehensive induction program should prepare for funding, implementation, assessment, and reflection of the program’s execution. This accountability plan could be a larger part of professional development, using resources often available to all teachers (Penuel et al., 2016). Building a sustainable program ensuring all stakeholders benefit is the goal (Kelly et al., 2019). This investment toward making newly hired teachers active participants in the school’s collaborative workforce seeking a common goal of student achievement leads to teacher retention for the school system (Wong, 2004).

Induction supports should begin early (Shockley et al., 2011), after the hire but before the first day of preplanning, even as early as the spring or summer before the start of the academic year (Public Education Network, 2003). Because many induction supports ended after the 1st year, long-term retention data are not available (Gordon, 2020). Because the 2nd and 3rd years of teaching are just as crucial as the 1st year, continuing induction supports beyond the 1st year through a sustainable program can maintain a collaboration culture (Public Education Network, 2003; Wong & Wong, 2012) and increase teacher retention.



### ***The Mentoring Component***

Ingersoll and Smith (2004) recommended developing growth among new teachers, monitoring new hires to ensure their students were making achievement gains, providing a mentoring opportunity for the beginning teachers, or a combination of these three components. Additionally, induction programs should incorporate authentic activities, including mentors available for guidance and modeling best practices, opportunities to observe other teachers, so they can focus on instruction techniques, reflective practices, sharing of knowledge, and scaffolding until the beginning teacher can succeed with little guidance (Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon, 2020; Moss, 2010). Wong and Wong (2012) found 18% of new teachers who participate in an induction program with seven or more effective components leave after the 1st year, compared to 39% who received only one component: mentoring. Mentoring alone does not make an effective induction program. Whereas mentoring is only about immediate support, induction is comprehensive with multiple supports (Wong & Wong, 2012). Ingersoll (2012) stated the most common activity for induction programs is regular communication with an administrator, but, when coupled with other supports, including having a mentor and regular collaboration with colleagues, the possibility that the teacher will remain in the field of teaching increases.

### ***A Collaborative Learning Community***

Although a learning community dedicated to teaching practices can benefit every teacher, novice teachers can benefit greatly (Martin et al., 2016; McIlheran, 2018). Schools should build a natural structure that encourages and supports school leaders, veteran teachers, and beginning teachers to share their skills and knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). This collaborative infrastructure starts with strong leadership (Kelly et al., 2019; Wong, 2004). After the first few years when the novice teacher has become a practicing professional during the final

phase of induction, action research conducted by the new teacher, perhaps in conjunction with a collaborative professional learning group, reinforces the school's culture of a community of learners (Cohan & Honigfeld, 2011). Promoting teachers' self-efficacy impacts their attitudes and disposition toward teaching; therefore, retention can be achieved (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020).

Several induction programs (Delaware Department of Education, 2010; Moss, 2010) have focused on reflection as the induction program's framework. The Delaware Mentoring and Induction Program (Delaware Department of Education, 2010) includes building reflective practitioners who can review their present professional performance level and use that data to set future professional development goals. Allowing time for collaborative planning and involving the broader school community is essential to an effective induction program (Cook, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kutsyruba et al., 2017; Public Education Network, 2003; Wong, 2004). Novice teachers, especially those in the same school, can support each other by learning to strengthen their own teaching styles because they were working with similar curriculum and the same student population (Beane-Katner, 2014). Curriculum work and learning additional pedagogical skills were significant in a recent study (Martin et al., 2016).

Mentors, reduced teaching loads, and multiple opportunities to observe other teachers all significantly affect job satisfaction for novice teachers (Kelly et al., 2019), with observing veteran teachers as the "most influential professional development" (Martin et al., 2016, p. 10) activity. Observing veteran teachers helped new teachers in a recent study see practical examples of how content was being delivered in an actual classroom (Martin et al., 2016). Additionally, Desimone et al. (2014) stated new teachers should be observed many times by their mentors to receive specific feedback about their instruction. Mutual observation with follow-up discussion

(e.g., mentor-mentee, mentee-mentor, and mentee-peer) is one integral part of a collaborative professional development-style induction program (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020; Wong, 2004; Zembytska, 2015). In a recent study, the odds of beginning teachers reporting they planned to leave were lower for those who had consistently scheduled interactions with others about their daily experiences (Kelly et al., 2019).

Observations also allow new teachers to receive feedback regarding classroom management issues and teaching challenges, such as differentiation and grouping (Martin et al., 2016). This active learning style, compared to passive instruction, allows new teachers to ask specific questions and discuss possible ideas with peers and mentors (Desimone et al., 2014). Teachers must view the professional school setting as a collaborative model rather than a state of seclusion (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2010; Wong, 2004).

Because teaching is a highly personal profession, new teachers desire to find “balance” with their new workload, as 15% of respondents indicated in a recent survey (Gordon, 2020). All teachers prosper if they feel they are a part of a professional learning community; they “want and need to belong” (Wong, 2004, p. 52). Mentors and other induction program supports can model and assist new teachers in finding a healthy attitude, or balance, with their new profession, leading to greater job satisfaction and retention (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). Because there is a mostly homogenous teaching force, schools can use induction and professional development activities to examine biases and cultural differences (Miller, 2018). This preparation can better assist new teachers in addressing the myriad of challenges PreK-12 classroom teachers face daily with a diverse student population (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Kelly et al., 2019).

### ***Induction Program Needs***

When coupled with other components, induction programs generally produce more significant results. However, the weakest components include giving the beginning teacher a lighter teaching load and in-classroom assistance, such as a paraprofessional or full-time, experienced co-teacher (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). School administrators should also give clear expectations for success and realize personality differences between the beginning teacher and the mentor can harm the relationship from achieving maximum professional growth (Wasburn et al., 2008). Other pitfalls occur when mentors fail to meet with beginning teachers regularly, if mentors have not received adequate training, or lack compatibility between the mentor and the beginning teacher concerning grade-level expertise or content material (Public Education Network, 2003). Those teachers who received induction activities focused on instruction and included multiple components regularly during the school year reported being more satisfied but did not report feeling more prepared (Glazerman et al., 2010). However, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) reported novice teachers who received multiple supports were more likely to remain employed at the school after the 1st year. Some induction programs revert to repeating prior years' professional development practices, ignoring current hires' personal needs (Gordon, 2020). Adding to the complexity of beginning teachers in a new school were new hires who teach out of field or grade level, who need induction supports (i.e., pedagogical content knowledge strategies) targeted for their needs (Nixon et al., 2017).

Even with few resources, school systems can use the knowledge and skills of institutions of higher education to implement effective induction and mentoring programs for its teachers (Moss, 2010). Focusing on professional identity and professional socialization in the beginning stages of careers, partnerships with universities can supplement reflective practice and mentoring

for beginning teachers (Moss, 2010). Assisting new teachers to evolve from a teacher candidate to a practicing educator should address each novice teacher's uniqueness, and all they can offer the ever-increasing diverse PreK-12 school population (Gordon, 2020). Providing clear connections between teacher preparation and the 1st year of teaching can open opportunities for community collaboration and in-depth support (Gordon, 2020), and teacher preparation faculty can assist in this process to enhance reflective education practices (Moss, 2010). Capturing the skills new teachers have learned in teacher preparation programs can be enhanced through professional development activities during the induction program (Darling-Hammond & DePaoli, 2020). When challenged with few resources, faculty with local schools of higher education can complement induction programs for its teachers (Moss, 2010) by serving as a conduit of collaborative professional learning between teacher preparation and the profession (Kelly et al., 2019).

The Delaware Mentoring and Induction Program guidelines state every new teacher should be provided with a mentor for the induction program's initial phase and subsequent cycles (Delaware Department of Education, 2010). The mentor will help the new teacher become familiar with the school, the district, and state resources, procedures, and policies. School district personnel and school administrators need to work together to decide what is best for the mentor and the mentee's professional and personal interest, and when matching the mentor/mentee, both individuals should be included in the process (Cook, 2012; Public Education Network, 2003).

New teacher mentors need continuous, organized training (Desimone et al., 2014) to not only orient the new hire to school procedures (Delaware Department of Education, 2010) but also to begin the continued practice of reflective teaching (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Martin et al., 2016; New Teacher Center, 2019). Reflection practices require a different skillset from the

mentor than orientation-type discussions typically found in mentoring relationships (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011). Mentoring should become the norm—embedded in professional development for all educators beyond the 1st year (Gordon, 2020). If these research-based activities continue for years to come, mentoring programs must become part of professional improvement initiatives (Onchwari & Keengwe, 2010).

Reports from previous studies state the most substantial influence in successful induction programs was matching the beginning teacher with a mentor of the same content area who has received appropriate training in becoming a strong guide (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Moss, 2010). Transparency and input from all stakeholders allow the mentor-mentee match process to contribute to the development of trust and professional relationships (Cook, 2012). Wasburn et al. (2008) confirmed personality differences, expectations, and time to build a reliable, professional relationship are required to start a successful mentor-mentee association. Whether formal (assigned by the school system) or informal (naturally developed relationships with other teachers), both have an impact on novice teachers (Desimone et al., 2014). Productive communication is critical for professional relationships to progress (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020).

Further, new teachers wanted their mentors to initiate communication and not wait for the beginning teacher to reach out to them (Desimone et al., 2014). New teachers spend more time with mentors located in the same school, and these mentors can provide insight into the school's unique population (Desimone et al., 2014). Four of five teachers in a recent study stated they had a mentor situated within their school, but they still needed more support to reach their personal and professional goals as a beginning teacher (Martin et al., 2016). This individualized approach to a new teacher's professional development plan is essential to an induction program and,

subsequently, the mentoring relationship (Beane-Katner, 2014; Gordon, 2020). Although formal mentors may be effective educators, even if they were in the same school building, they “were not as convenient as the teacher next door” (Desimone et al., 2014, p. 15), as reported by new teachers in a study analyzing mentoring models. New teacher mentors are frequently other teachers, master teachers who have additional duties at the school or within the system, or retired teachers (Public Education Network, 2003). Not always considered, retired educators, recognized as experts in their field, can be employed as mentors, offering expertise and experience and flexibility in scheduling meetings and observations (Zembytska, 2015). Beginning teachers stated trust in the mentoring relationships, knowledge of the school's daily operations and culture, and constructive communication with various stakeholders were benefits of a successful mentoring program (Kostadinova & Gruncheva, 2020).

During the induction period, mentors assume many additional responsibilities, such as discussing specific guidelines and responsibilities unique to the school, helping the new teacher develop and use assessment strategies and classroom techniques, or other needs identified by the beginning teacher, the mentor, or the school administrators (Delaware Department of Education, 2010; Glazerman et al., 2010; Public Education Network, 2003). Martin et al. (2016) identified a collaborative review of student work samples to establish a norm for quality work appropriate to content and grade level as a valuable mentor-mentee exercise. Because it is ideal to recruit trained mentors for full-time service, the most commonly used mentors are retired teachers, more experienced teachers on site, master teachers without teaching responsibilities, or consultants (Glazerman et al., 2010; Public Education Network, 2003). Ensuring new teachers are familiar with the content can also improve new teacher retention (Desimone et al., 2014).

## Summary

Beginning teachers bring various experiences and knowledge to the classroom, but they need induction support to continue their professional growth (Podolsky et al., 2019) and increase retention (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong & Wong, 2012). The longer teachers remain in the profession, the more likely they are to become highly effective educators who can impact student learning positively (Glazerman et al., 2010; Podolsky et al., 2019) and contribute to their peers' professional development (Zembytska, 2015). Replacing teachers who leave, whether involuntarily or through natural attrition, is costly to school systems across the country (Heller, 2004; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Using a more updated model of supporting new teachers with a multiple component induction program including mentoring is more cost effective and strengthens the collaborative partnerships between veteran teachers, new teachers, school leaders, school system leaders, and other stakeholders (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; New Teacher Center, 2019; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong, 2004; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). Retaining highly effective teachers builds a school culture of higher student achievement (DeCesare et al., 2016; Glazerman et al., 2010; Hornick-Lockard, 2019; Kelly et al., 2019; Long, 2018).



### **Chapter III: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of 1st-year teachers as they participated in a teacher induction program in a West Central Georgia school system and to compare the theory of teacher induction with practice. This study revealed any inconsistencies in an induction program being offered in a single county in the southeastern United States by comparing induction theory with actual praxis. Implications of this study include a guide to best practices that will strengthen teacher induction programs in the state, which would not only help retain strong teachers in the classroom but save school districts money that would otherwise be spent recruiting and replacing teachers who leave the profession. Chapter III includes descriptions of the research design and questions, the roles of the researcher and participants, the instrumentation, the data collection, and the analysis.

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the retention-supporting mentorship needs and experiences of new public-school teachers in a rural West Central Georgia school district. Study participants described their experiences as they completed the 1st year of a teacher induction model in Georgia, and I compared the theory of teacher induction with practice. Also, an examination of the induction program materials developed and used by the school system was used to compare expected induction program components with actual implementation as reported by beginning teachers. Research questions for this study were designed to discover the state of the school system's new teacher induction program and the retention-supporting needs of beginning teachers.

### *Research Questions*

1. How do beginning teachers in selected West Central Georgia K-12 classrooms describe their induction programs?
  - a. How do 1st-year teachers describe the induction program purpose and procedures?
  - b. How do 1st-year teachers describe the induction support they receive from system-level administrators?
  - c. How do 1st-year teachers describe the induction support they receive from school-level administrators and mentors?
2. What retention-supporting services do 1st-year teachers report they need as part of a successful induction program?

The method of qualitative research was case study. Qualitative research was appropriate because I described the retention-supporting needs of beginning teachers and the induction supports these same beginning teachers received in great detail to seek meaning and a better understanding of the experiences beginning teachers had during their introduction to the statewide induction program (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Eisner (1998) stated field-focused studies, particularly those involved in education and observations of schools and teachers are best researched with qualitative methods. This type of inquiry must be made in a “natural setting” because the events of the study “take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 189).

The case study is fitting as it is an “in-depth description and analysis” of a program or “bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40) and “reality constructions cannot be separated from the world in which they are experienced and that any observations that might be made are

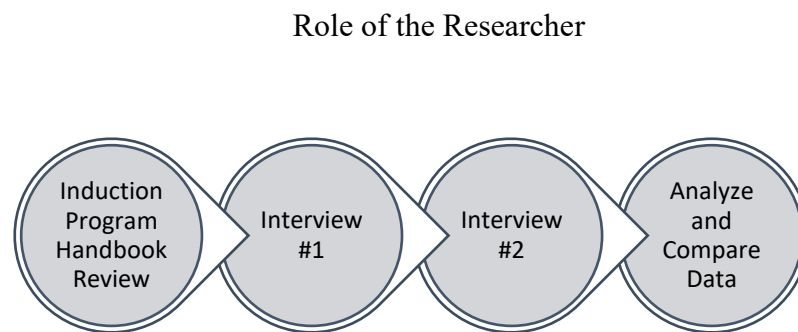
inevitably time- and context-dependent” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 189). Contextual information, such as each participant’s school type (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) and grade level is included to describe the setting for the cases, and I gained access to information about the cases to provide a detailed picture of it (Creswell, 2007). Because these beginning teachers were part of an established induction program that reportedly followed state-provided guidance, the case study fits the needs of this descriptive analysis. Further, a case study is appropriate as the beginning teachers participating in the induction program will be employed within one school system in the state as Merriam (2009) defined. Consistent with Yin (1994), “a case study of a specific program may reveal (a) variations in program definition, depending upon the perspective of different actors, and (b) program components that existed prior to the formal designation of the program” (p. 22).

Yin (1994) stated the importance of interviews is to confirm what is found through document review and observations, and subsequently more information can be learned about what is discovered during document review and observations by engaging in topic-directed and open-ended question interviews while still following the preestablished protocol. “The interview is a powerful resource for learning how people perceive the situations in which they work” (Eisner, 1998, pp. 81–82) and is frequently the “major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding” (Merriam, 2009, p. 114) the study. Rather than using a formal, quiz-like approach, which may cause the respondent to feel constrained and unlikely to answer outside the question’s domain, “good conversation” should preside, “asking questions that focus on concrete examples and feelings” (Eisner, 1998, p. 183) and having the person recall “things they have done” (p. 183). A balanced interview approach using a semistructured format was used, so I could ask questions designed to gather predetermined information from each respondent but

could also “respond to the situation at hand” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90) to explore “new ideas on the topic” (p. 90). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) outlined seven stages to effective interviewing: (1) developing expected themes to clarify the purpose of the study; (2) designing interview questions with interdependence and letting knowledge take its own course; (3) actual interviews of subjects at a time when it is convenient to the subjects; (4), transcribing; (5) analyzing the data so they focus on meaning, language, and general analyses; (6) verifying the data; and (7) reporting what has been learned. Figure 2 describes the role of the researcher for this study.

## Figure 2

### *Research Flow Chart*



Using multiple sources including interviews, recording of data, description of settings, and artifact review is essential for case study reporting (Creswell, 2007; Eisner, 1998). Therefore, I became the key “instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 39), and the final creation is beneficial for its unique description of the cases. My primary role in this study was that of an observer. I ensured all participants were comfortable speaking openly about their experiences in the induction program by verbal checks and by noticing participant behavior during the interviews. Anonymity of the information gathered during the interviews was assured; my identity with responding data will not be shared with school system personnel to protect participants’ employment status. I asked each participant to review their interview transcripts to

ensure accuracy in the information they had shared and to better the chance that their responses correctly reflect their perceptions of their experiences in the induction program. Because I was employed at an institution of higher education geographically located near the selected school system, participants may have known me professionally in my current role. Participants may have completed college-level coursework where I was the instructor of record and/or was assigned as the participant's academic advisor. Because participation was voluntary and there were neither external benefits nor consequences relative to the relationship with me dependent upon said participation or what was discovered during the study, any existing relationship did not impact the study.

### **School System Profile**

The school system where the teachers for this study were employed is in a rural county in West Central Georgia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), there were 69,426 residents living in almost 25,000 different households in this county of 414 square miles in 2020. Over 86% of these households have a computer, and a little more than 77% of these residences had broadband internet subscriptions (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Further, the 2020 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates places this county as having 16.4% persons living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

During the 2020–2021 school year, the most recently available reported data stated there were 12,467 K-12 students enrolled in the school system (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement [GOSA], n.d.-c). These students attended 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, three high schools, and two career-focused academies. Approximately 63% of the student population was eligible for free or reduced meals, and 11% of the students had a disability (GOSA, n.d.-c). Black students made up 43% of the system population, and White

students were 42% of the total system population (GOSA, n.d.-c). Total revenue for the 2020–2021 school year was \$163.6 million, with \$140 million in expenditures. More than 92% of the expenses was spent on instruction, instructional support, and pupil services (GOSA, n.d.-c).

Regarding academic performance, 40.5% of third-grade students were reading at or above grade level, 55.3% of eighth-grade students were reading at or above grade level, and 43.5% of the high school graduates were college and career ready (GOSA, n.d.-a). The school system published a graduation rate of 85.9% for the entire population in 2021, with 81.7% of economically disadvantaged students graduating, and has established a 4-year graduation rate of 86.6% (GOSA, n.d.-a). With 3,475 reported total discipline incidents during the 2021–2022 academic year, 62% of these incidents resulted in in-school suspension (ISS), and 37.3% yielded out-of-school suspension (OSS; GOSA, n.d.-b). Even though males were 51.8% of the entire student population, they accounted for 65.2% of the disciplined population (GOSA, n.d.-c).

In this school system, there were 786 certified PreK–12 teachers (GOSA, n.d.-c). There were more female teachers (622 or 79.13%) than male teachers (166 or 21.11%) and more White teachers (619 or 78.75%) than Black teachers (147 or 18.70%) in the school system (GOSA, n.d.-c). The number of PreK-12 teachers for each certificate level was as follows: 4-year bachelors – 254, 5-year masters – 459, 6-year specialists – 153, and 7-year doctoral – 19 (GOSA, n.d.-c). For 2021–2022, there were 29 teachers in their 1st year of teaching, 299 with 1–10 years of experience, 242 with 11–20 years of experience, 180 with 21-30 years of experience, and 38 teachers with more than 30 years of experience (GOSA, n.d.-c). The average length of teaching experience for this system’s teachers was 14 years. PreK-12 teachers made up 84.28% of the employee population, the administration was 7.7%, and support personnel was 7.94% of the workforce (GOSA, n.d.-c).

For academic year 2021–2022, 40 teachers in this school system (5% of the total school system teacher population) were identified as “teachers teaching out of field,” which is defined as “teachers who are not teaching in the subject or field for which the teacher is certified or licensed” and all these teachers were teaching students of high poverty (GOSA, n.d.-c). Teachers with “less than four consecutive years” of teaching experience were labeled inexperienced teachers (GOSA, n.d.-c). In total, there were 218 (29%) inexperienced teachers in this system, which was higher than the state average of inexperienced teachers in all state schools of 23% (GOSA, n.d.-c). This school system aligned with the state average of inexperienced teachers assigned to classrooms with high poverty students, 30% and 29%, respectively; however, this means all the inexperienced teachers in this system were teaching in classrooms of high-poverty students (GOSA, n.d.-c). Additionally, 14 teachers in this system had emergency or provisional credentials teaching in this system, and all were assigned to teach high-poverty students (GOSA, n.d.-c).

### **Participants**

A sample from new teacher hires who had been identified as beginning educators for a West Central Georgia school system were participants in the case study. Sampling must be purposeful and should use as much variation as possible to represent diversity in the cases selected and to describe the many different perspectives about the cases (Creswell, 2007). When determining the group to be analyzed through case study research, I distinguished those who were included in the analysis from those who were not included by providing context and clearly defining the beginning and end of the case (Yin, 1994). The beginning was at the end of the 1st semester of school to give participants ample time to become familiar with their classrooms, the school culture, and the induction program. The end was several weeks prior to the conclusion of

the academic year, as this gave those involved with the induction program sufficient opportunity to fulfill their role in the induction program, to describe the program's effectiveness based on individual needs, and to identify any areas where additional supports were needed.

The sample included six newly hired beginning teachers in a West Central Georgia school system who had no prior teaching experience. The participant number of six was chosen to have two participants from each grade band (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) to obtain differing perspectives while seeking a constructivist approach to research. Yin (2018) stated a constructivist (or relativist) case study approach is "attempting to capture the perspectives of different participants and focusing on how their different meanings" (p. 16) explain this school system's new teacher induction program. If each grade band only had one participant, implications would be severely limited. This system was selected as I had a close working relationship with system employees of all levels (e.g., teachers, administrators). I am a former educator of almost 10 years in this school system and had a personal desire to improve teacher retention and, hopefully, student achievement. Further, I lived in the same community as the school system and frequently worked with employees in the system's Human Resources Department to identify potential hires and teacher leaders who will serve as mentors to teacher candidates.

To ensure representation from different school settings, two teachers from each grade band were selected: elementary, middle, and high school. The original research proposal sought participants for the study who had earned or were currently seeking state teacher certification through a traditional preparation program including coursework focusing on developmental stages of the PreK-12 learner, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and extensive field experiences with supervision. However, due to lack of eligible participants in varying grade



bands who had completed teacher certification, one participant was enrolled simultaneously in a traditional preparation program while participating in the study and completing her 1st year of teaching, and two participants were hired for their 1st year of teaching without certification and were not enrolled in an alternative teacher certification program. Consequently, the only support these two beginning teachers received was from school personnel. Certification pathways were affirmed by the school system's human resources officer. I contacted the human resources manager at the school system who then identified potential participants who met the criteria for the study. I emailed potential participants as an introduction and to extend an invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix A). Using stratified sampling, those potential participants were categorized into subgroups depending upon the school level where they had been hired to teach (i.e., elementary, middle school, or high school). Then, two participants from each subgroup were selected using simple random sampling and were invited to participate. A follow-up email was sent to potential participants outlining the procedures of the study. Participants were not compensated, and participation was voluntary.

Once participants were identified and had agreed to be part of the study, informed consent was obtained, and I contacted each participant via email to plan for the first interview. The second interview occurred 12–14 weeks after the start of the second semester and was arranged with convenience to the participant. Each participant was assigned a code to ensure anonymity. The code key is kept in an electronic document and stored on a flash drive with passcode entry.

### **Instrumentation**

To deepen our understanding during case study research, multiple data sources should be used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yin (1994) stated, "Evidence from multiple cases is often

considered more compelling” (p. 45), and this study used six participants as part of a single case of the school system’s new teacher induction program. The instruments (i.e., induction handbook analysis, demographic survey, and two interviews) will highlight the process, procedures and components of the induction program to “understand the case” (Stake, 2006, p. 2).

For review of the school system’s new teacher Induction Program Handbook, the document review protocol was used (see Appendix B). I designed this protocol to best answer the research questions and to align with the conceptual framework. I completed the document analysis for the school system’s new teacher Induction Program Handbook prior to the first interview. Additional analyses occurred after each interview as participants provided information that led me to revisit the school system new teacher Induction Program Handbook for accuracy or clarification.

The interview protocol (see Appendix C) and the demographics survey (see Appendix D) were followed to gather data regarding the perceived experiences and support needs from participants. The demographic questions were used before the first interview to confirm eligibility to participate (e.g., identification of pathway for earning teacher certification, varying grade bands), and again before the second interview to determine if the responses had changed. The demographics survey also confirmed each participant’s knowledge about the induction program purpose and processes. The interview protocol was used for the first interview and the second interview. Five interview questions, with follow-up questions as needed, attempted to gather information about the perceived operation of the school system’s induction program including supports from system– and school–level personnel. The follow-up questions were included to provide information about participants’ opportunities to engage in induction activities that have been proven by research to contribute to teacher retention. I aligned the

interview questions with the study's research questions and the concepts measured as determined in the conceptual framework for this study in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Concept Measured, Interview Questions, and Research Questions Alignment*

Concept measured	Interview questions	Research question
Understanding of induction program and processes	1	1A
Current support from school system personnel	2	1B
Current support from school-level personnel	2	1C
Perceived supports needed that are research proven (conceptual framework)	3	2
Perceived support needed from school system personnel	4	2
Perceived support needed from school-level personnel	4	2

**Data Collection**

Two interviews and document review of the Induction Program Handbook were used to gather data. For document review of the school system's induction program plan, I requested all training materials and handbooks related to the school system induction program from the induction program coordinator via personal communication by email. Reviewing the Induction Program Handbook allowed me to examine the school system's intent in supporting beginning teachers. This allowed a comparison of those practices as participants in the case study population reported and helped obtain the viewpoint of an actual insider; however, I remained aware of the potential biases produced by working too closely with those being studied (Yin, 1994). These electronic materials were stored on a flash drive to aid access. Additionally, all induction program materials were available in printed format for ease in examination among several documents (e.g., Induction Program Handbook and interview transcriptions). Use of the

document review protocol ensured consistency in collecting data from the school system's new teacher Induction Program Handbook. Case study protocol was followed to strengthen reliability measures during data collection procedures (Yin, 1994).

After collection of informed consent and prior to the first interview, a survey was given to each participant and was used to gather demographic information and initial knowledge regarding receipt of the school system's Induction Program Handbook and mentor assignment (see Appendix D). Data from participants were collected during two interviews: one at the end of the first semester and a second interview 12–14 weeks later during the 2nd semester. Each participant was interviewed in a one-on-one setting. Compared to group interviews, individual interviews were better suited for this case study to obtain specific details and viewpoints while encouraging participation that can at times be overlooked due to group dynamic. Individual interviews occurred during a time and location convenient to each participant. Interviews were semistructured; I used a prepared list of interview questions with each participant and audio recorded the interview. At times, I and/or the participant engaged in conversation that deviated from the list of interview questions but was still focused on the study's research questions. Each interview was transcribed by a transcription service and both the audio recording and interview text were coded for anonymity and stored on a secure flash drive with passcode entry in a locked file drawer in my home office. I was the only person with access. Each interview took approximately 30–45 minutes. After transcription, each participant was given an opportunity to review their transcribed interviews for accuracy and to ensure what was shared accurately reflected their experiences in the induction program.

## **Data Analysis**

To ensure construct validity as Yin (1994) suggested, data collection for this study originated from several sources of evidence to describe the process of the newly implemented statewide teacher induction program. Those sources include analysis of the school system's new teacher Induction Program Handbook and two participant interviews that occurred at the end of the first semester and again 12–14 weeks later during the second semester. I considered the program definition and components when describing and analyzing the program, and data analysis of the three sources of data (two interviews and induction program review) will provide triangulation of data to include multiple sources of evidence, addressing issues of construct validity (Yin, 1994). Systematic storage of the evidence gathered (interviews, transcriptions, and induction-related documents) was created and maintained so I could discuss the data in the future with others without identifying participants (Yin, 1994).

Demographic data collected were analyzed to confirm each participant had received the system Induction Program Handbook and had been assigned a mentor, and to make certain they met the requirements for participation (e.g., teaching pathway and grade level assignment). Also, demographic data allowed me to analyze the level of involvement with the induction program's components each participant had experienced at the start of the school year. Analysis of the school system's Induction Program Handbook offered a comparison and contrast with data received during the two interviews. I created a chart to better visualize the information gathered from the demographics survey.

During the interviews, I attempted a rudimentary categorization of themes that emerge from each participant. This allowed me to ask follow-up questions to better understand the induction program experiences, as “the analysis of interviews may also, to varying degrees, be

built into the interview situation itself” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 190). Doing this made the final analysis more manageable and more meaningful “but also rests on secure ground” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 190). Further, validity was tested (Yin, 1994) by identifying patterns that emerged during data analysis. Merriam (2009) stated conducting data collection and rudimentary data analysis simultaneously forces the researcher to revisit the study’s purpose and can refocus collection procedures to best address the problem. Creswell (2007) and Merriam (2009) agreed, to analyze data in case study research, the researcher must use themes or categories. Merriam (2009) stated the researcher must also “sort the categories and data and name the categories to be responsive to the research questions” (pp. 178–183). The categories must also be (a) sensitive to the data, so a person understands how it relates to the study; (b) exhaustive, so all relevant data were included; (c) mutually exclusive, so data do not overlap and fits only in one category; and (d) conceptually congruent, so data work together to make meaning (Merriam, 2009).

Coding of the interview data was conducted in two stages for each set of interviews. Data gathered from the interviews during the collection period were analyzed using a chronological structure method to establish events that occurred during the early and middle phases of participation in the induction model’s 1st year of employment (Yin, 1994). First, I transcribed the recorded interviews after each set of interviews was complete. After receiving confirmation from each participant that their transcription accurately reflects their beliefs, I read each transcript and made notes based on emerging themes and common phrases. Coding in the practice of categorization was used; this is defined as “the meaning of long interview statements is reduced to a few simple categories” (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009, p. 203). I followed Kvale and Brinkman’s (2009) suggestion to code in this manner using a confirmation or disconfirmation method to determine which research-based practices were reported in the interviews as being

used in the induction program by creating a chart with themes aligned to the study's conceptual framework. Second, I practiced two rounds of coding at two different times to best perform identification of relationships and themes among all the interviews.

## **Summary**

Beginning teachers bring various experiences and knowledge to the classroom, but they need induction support to continue their professional growth (Podolsky et al., 2019) and increase retention (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong & Wong, 2012). The longer teachers remain in the profession, the more likely they are to become highly effective educators who can positively impact student learning (Glazerman et al., 2010; Podolsky et al., 2019) and contribute to their peers' professional development (Zembytska, 2015). Replacing teachers who leave, whether involuntarily or through natural attrition, is costly to school systems across the country (Heller, 2004; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). It is valuable to understand what supports beginning teachers report needing as they complete their 1st year of teaching. Using a more updated model of supporting new teachers with a multiple component induction program including mentoring is more cost effective and strengthens the collaborative partnerships between veteran teachers, new teachers, school leaders, school system leaders, and other stakeholders (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; New Teacher Center, 2019; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wasburn et al., 2008; Wong, 2004; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). Retaining highly effective teachers builds a school culture of higher student achievement (DeCesare et al., 2016; Glazerman et al., 2010; Hornick-Lockard, 2019; Kelly et al., 2019; Long, 2018).

For this chapter, I stated the research questions, described the data collection process for a qualitative case study consistent with Yin (1994), and listed the procedures used for analyzing and storing the data. Participants were six newly hired teachers in a West Central Georgia school

system who had either been traditionally prepared for certification or were employed through nontraditional certification means. Document analysis of the school system's Induction Program Handbook and individual interviews at two points in time (end of first semester and 12–14 weeks later during the second semester) provided triangulation of data for the study. Also, I provided a transcript of each interview to each participant for member check to ensure the transcribed words reflected their thoughts and ideas accurately. The committee members also reviewed and approved the analysis procedures for all data sources. An analysis of data was used to answer the study's research questions.



## **Chapter IV: Results**

The specific problem examined in this study is that although the State of Georgia has issued recommendations and guidelines for beginning teacher induction programs, not all school systems have created and implemented induction programs that meet the needs of their beginning teachers. Successful induction programs can lead to higher retention rates among beginning teachers, which typically yield stronger academic gains for students and will often save funds as the school systems do not have to replace leaving teachers. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of 1st-year teachers as they participate in a teacher induction program in a West Central Georgia school system, and to compare their experiences with best practices as outlined by research and with the school system's Induction Program Handbook. Chapter IV includes a description of the Induction Program Handbook provided by the school system, participant responses to the demographic survey, participant profiles, analysis of the Induction Program Handbook, findings organized by research question, and findings based on this study's conceptual framework which includes research-proven best practices for successful induction programs.

### **Document Review: Induction Program Handbook**

The chief human resources officer with the West Central Georgia school system where this study was completed provided the Induction Program Handbook to me. The human resources officer reported to me that this handbook was made available to all stakeholders, including teachers in the induction program, school and system administration, and those teachers selected as mentors. Before the first interview, I examined and analyzed this Induction Program Handbook using the document review protocol (see Appendix B). For the analysis, I made note of the induction program's purpose and procedures, the mentor/mentee matching

process, stakeholder roles and responsibilities, evaluation of the induction program, and to determine if activities that have been identified through research as beneficial to teacher retention (i.e., this study's conceptual framework) are a vital component of this school system's teacher induction program.

### ***Table of Contents***

The school system's Induction Program Manual, referred to as the Induction Program Handbook for this study, is a 19-page document including a table of contents. Each page in the handbook is labeled as page 19. The table of contents, found on (actual) page 2, includes sections for the mission statement (of the school system), introduction, definitions, selection of mentors, role of the induction phase teacher team, role of the building representative, role of the mentor, role of the induction phase teacher, role of the system-level representative, monthly focus topics, release time support, and program evaluation. There is also a table of contents for the appendix which contains program verification forms. However, there is no appendix included in the handbook given to me. When I inquired about the missing appendix, I was told by a human resources representative that the handbook was sent in its entirety and that items from the appendix are often updated and had been removed from the handbook. The appendix table of contents for the program verification forms includes the mentor teaching essential traits and skills rubric, teacher induction school orientation checklist, teacher induction program individual induction plans (one for each of the three scheduled meetings), induction phase teacher and mentor time log, induction phase teacher and mentor observation form, and directions for financial compensation.

### ***Introduction and District Mission, Goals, and Beliefs***

In the introduction section of the Induction Program Handbook, there is a brief description calling for the system to “retain and train the best teachers” and that the school system recognizes supporting beginning teachers “improves quality of instruction for all students.” The induction program should be served “through quality professional learning aimed at the needs of teachers.” There is mention that professional learning for mentors *may* occur alongside new teachers and that new teachers should be supported with “academic, emotional, and social needs.” The procedures of the induction program are not explicitly outlined (i.e., there is no sequential listing, diagram, or flow chart showing a beginning teacher’s progression through the induction program) but the procedures can be inferred through suggested activities listed in the handbook. Although there is a mission statement along with goals and beliefs for the district outlined in the introduction, these are not specific to the system’s induction program. There is no separate mission statement, goals, or beliefs for the school system’s induction program.

### ***Definitions***

Page 5 of the school system Induction Program Handbook is dedicated to definitions of the four groups of stakeholders involved in the school system induction program. The Induction Phase Teacher (Year 1) is a teacher in the 1st year in the teaching profession. Induction Phase Teacher (Years 2 and 3) is a teacher in Years 2 or 3 of the teaching profession. A mentor is “a qualified, interested, experienced teacher who matches the needs of the Induction Phase Teacher.” The Induction Plan Team consists of the principal, a mentor teacher, the induction phase teacher, and a system-level representative.

### ***Selection of Mentors***

The Induction Program Handbook stated “a mentor must be assigned to any teacher . . . who holds induction certification.” The handbook stated all mentors must have at least 3 years of teaching experience, agree to serve as support to the induction phase teacher for no more than 3 years, score satisfactorily on a school system rubric that assesses their skills and abilities, and complete yearly mentor training assigned by the school system. As needed, mentors should complete professional learning on topics ranging from the needs of beginning teachers, to classroom management, to methods of mentoring and teaching adult learners. In bold print at the bottom of page 6, the statement reads, “A mentor **MUST** be assigned to any teacher . . . who holds induction certification.”

### ***Induction Program Support Team Role and Responsibilities***

The Induction Program Handbook states the chief human resources officer (and/or his designated representative) should work with school building administration to identify, recruit, and support each member of the induction phase teacher’s induction program support team. This support team should include the induction phase teacher, the school principal, the mentor, and a designated system-level administrator. The principal may appoint additional school-level administrators to coordinate schedules and daily activities. The support team “will regularly assess progress using multiple sources of data such as self-assessment, observations, and documentation,” although there is no schedule of the timing of these assessments or materials that are recommended be used to document assessment included in the Induction Program Handbook. There are mentions of checklists and meetings with reference to items in an appendix, but the handbook provided to me does not include the referenced appendix. Professional learning for the induction phase teachers may be identical to the professional

learning for all school system teachers, but other professional learning opportunities should be “differentiated based on the needs” of the beginning teacher. The support team should create an individual teacher induction plan for each beginning teacher that must be aligned to the Teachers’ Assessment on Performance (TAPS). Further, this plan should inform the plans for any professional learning for the beginning teacher. The Induction Program Handbook dictates assessments should follow the TAPS handbook assessment system. The individual teacher induction plan should be created based on formal and informal classroom observations, and the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System Self-Assessment. For 1st-year teachers, the induction program support team should meet at least three times each year (before September 30, February 1, and May 30). Each meeting includes a reference to completing an item found in the appendix, but the appendix is not included in the Induction Program Handbook. Two goals aligned with the needs identified through the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System should be written as part of the individual teacher induction plan.

### ***School-Level Administration Role and Responsibilities***

Expectations of the school-level administration are outlined on page 9 of the Induction Program Handbook. The handbook states the principal should meet with each induction teacher once a month, either individually or in a group setting. It is also the principal’s duty to direct professional learning for each induction phase teacher based on individual needs to build relationships and to improve their teaching performance. Monitoring the induction phase teacher and communicating needs of the mentors and 1st-year teachers to the chief human resources officer concludes the principal’s responsibilities. At this point, the principal may designate another building administrator to oversee the induction program for the beginning teacher. Those duties are also outlined on page 9 of the Induction Program Handbook. If not the principal, this

designated administrator is “required to” follow procedures of the induction plan, attend all induction teacher team meetings, support the planning for mentor and induction teacher observations and opportunities for collaboration, serve as a conduit of information for mentors and induction phase teachers, and complete and submit all documentation to the chief human resources officer as requested. The building administrator should coordinate observations and collaborations for the mentor and the beginning teacher, including arranging class coverage for the mentor (when observing the beginning teacher) and for the beginning teacher (when observing the mentor or other teachers). Class coverage should be handled by other educators within the school, and there is a reference to completing a document found in the appendix. The appendix is not included in the Induction Program Handbook.

### ***Mentor Role and Responsibilities***

The Induction Program Handbook states each mentor should be held to the school system’s mission, vision, and goals and will be required to provide support to the induction phase teacher through interventions and learning experiences to support the development of each 1st-year teacher. As a member of the teacher induction support team, the Induction Program Handbook states the mentor leads induction team meetings and should complete continuing training programs designed for mentors. It is the mentor’s responsibility to orient the 1st-year teacher to the school building, its norms and schedules, and location of various personnel within the campus. Using professional dialogue, the mentor should ensure the induction phase teacher is learning to become a reflective practitioner. An activity log should be maintained by the mentor to showcase time spent on all induction practices.

The mentor should observe the beginning educator teaching twice during the first semester. A conference should be held before and after each observation giving the mentor and

1st-year teacher an opportunity to discuss rationale and feedback for the lesson. After the mentor has observed the beginning teacher at least once, but before the end of the first 9 weeks of school, the mentor should model at least one lesson for the beginning teacher. The Induction Program Handbook does allow for the mentor to designate another teacher to model this lesson, if appropriate. This may occur if the mentor and 1st-year teacher teach different subjects or are in different grade levels. In the handbook, there is no limit listed as to how many lessons can be modeled for the beginning teacher, but additional modeled lessons should be provided, if needed.

### ***Induction Phase Teacher Role and Responsibilities***

The beginning teacher, or mentee, is identified in the Induction Program Handbook as the “induction phase teacher.” This term also applies to second- and third-year teachers in the induction phase. Induction phase teachers must attend the school system’s new teacher orientation, be prepared to accept direct feedback from their mentors and administrators, and partake in all aspects of the new teacher induction program, all in an effort to promote effective instruction and positively impact student learning. As a member of the teacher induction support team, the beginning teacher should meet with their mentor once a week during the months of August, September, and October, and then monthly for the rest of the academic year. The beginning teacher should prepare to be observed by their mentor during the first month of the school year and then a second time during the first semester. Each observation should include a conference before and after the teaching, and the beginning teacher should expect written feedback for each observation. The beginning teacher should also observe the mentor or another designated teacher at least one time during the first 9 weeks. The Induction Program Handbook states the beginning teacher should confer with mentors to discuss monthly topic suggestions

provided in the handbook, and attend any meetings organized by the school administrator or the induction phase teacher support team.

### ***School System Administration Role and Responsibilities***

The role of school system administration is primarily discussed on pages 7 and 8 of the Induction Program Handbook. Because a system-level representative should be part of the induction program team for each induction phase teacher, the handbook states a system-level representative should meet with each induction phase teacher during the first month of school. Although not required to meet with the induction phase teachers after the first month of school, they should remain open for contact as a resource to the beginning teacher and attend future induction meetings, if invited. The school system representative should also provide further support, as needed.

### ***Suggested Topics for Monthly Meetings***

The Induction Program Handbook includes suggested topics for monthly meetings for the induction program support team. For example, preplanning activities include an orientation to the building (e.g., setting up the classroom, demographics of the student population, introduction to support staff, and location of materials and supplies). Other suggested monthly topics include classroom management, curriculum, assessment, working with students with special needs, technology and time management, and communication and professionalism. The suggested topic for March and April is to reflect upon personal and professional growth, with May focused on the last weeks of school (i.e., expectations and traditions, paperwork, closing the classroom, and summer goals). The topics listed for each month are only suggestions and should be tailored to meet the needs of the individual school while considering the teaching situation, and the induction phase teacher's areas for needed improvement.



### ***Release Time Support***

The Induction Program Handbook includes one paragraph stating the school administrator should provide support so the induction phase teacher, the mentor, and/or other designated teachers can engage in teaching observations and collaboration. The mentor, or other designated teacher, and the induction phase teacher “should have time allocated with class coverage” to be available to teach and observe each other. The school “administrator should make every effort to handle class coverage within the building” but can refer to a document in the appendix titled “Directions for Financial Compensation” for guidance if coverage within the building is not possible. The Induction Program Handbook did not include documents from the appendix.

### ***Evaluation of the Induction Program***

The Induction Program Handbook includes a brief description for evaluation of the induction program. Assessment of the program should be conducted through “data collection, analysis of the data, and action based on the analysis, and it occurs within a framework of continuous improvement.” Documentation of all meetings between the mentor and the beginning teacher should be provided to school administration for review. Focus group discussions with the mentors and beginning teachers to “determine the success of the learning experience” should take place to yield data that should “improve and extend future mentoring programs.” Surveys may also be used to gather this information. Lastly, results from the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and the beginning teacher’s “two teacher goals” in the induction plan should be analyzed as part of the program evaluation. This evidence should also include “participant reactions” and a comparative discussion between program expectations and the impact of change in practice. All these data “will be used to determine needed changes.” There are no forms,

timelines, nor rubrics included in the handbook related to the assessment of the induction program.

## Participants

Before the first interview, each participant completed a demographic survey (see Appendix D). Table 2 shows the demographics of each participant. There were two participants in each grade band (elementary, middle, and high school) teaching a variety of grade levels. Three participants held bachelor's degrees, two participants had already earned a master's degree, and one participant was currently enrolled in a master's degree teacher certification program.

**Table 2**

### *Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Teaching assignment school level	Assigned grade level(s)	Highest degree earned
E1	Elementary	3	BA
E2	Elementary	K	BA
M3	Middle	7	BA*
M4	Middle	6, 7, 8	BA
H5	High	9, 10, 11, 12	Master's
H 6	High	9	Master's

\* currently enrolled in master's degree teacher certification program

To assess each participant's initial understanding of the induction program, the Induction Program Handbook, and mentor assignment, the demographic survey required participants to answer three basic questions (see Appendix D). These results show not all participants had received the Induction Program Handbook and not all participants had been assigned a mentor. Table 3 shows participant responses to the Induction Program Handbook and mentor assignment.

**Table 3***Participant Responses to Induction Program Handbook and Mentor Assignment*

Question	Yes	No
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Have you received the school system induction handbook?	5	1
Have you been assigned a mentor in the school system induction program?	4	2
Have you met with your mentor at least once?	4	2

Additional statements on the demographic survey (see Appendix D) asked the participants to use a Likert scale to determine their agreement related to their impressions of the induction program purpose and processes, and their interactions with their assigned mentor.

Table 4 shows participant understanding of the induction program and mentor responsibilities.

**Table 4***Participant Responses to Understanding Induction Program and Mentor Impressions*

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
I understand the school system's induction program <i>purpose</i> .	1	1	4	0
I understand the school system's induction program <i>processes</i> .	1	1	4	0
I have read the school system induction handbook.	2	1	1	2
My mentor and I have made a plan to support me during the induction process.	1	1	3*	1
My mentor wants to meet my professional needs.	1	1	2	2

\* Plans and goals are made with administration (E2).

Two interviews were conducted for this study. The first interview occurred at the end of the first semester in December. The second interview took place 12–14 weeks after the first interview in mid-March. Five of the six participants completed both interviews for the study. M4 did not participate in the second interview and exited the school system at the end of the school year without further contact despite my efforts. Even though H6 resigned from the school system 2 weeks after the first interview, a second interview was conducted virtually as she had moved to another region of the country.

### *Participant Profiles*

**Elementary Teacher 1 (E1).** E1 completed her initial teacher certification during her undergraduate college program of study prior to employment. The traditional teacher certification program offered coursework focused on pedagogy and content, and she completed supervised field experiences in all state-required elementary certification grade bands (i.e., PreK-K, 1-2, and 3-5). The school where E1 was hired to teach was the same school site where she completed yearlong student teaching the year prior to this 1st year of employment. She indicated she did receive the school system Induction Program Handbook online, was assigned a mentor, and she had met with her mentor at least once before the end of the first semester. E1's mentor taught the same grade level, was on the same team, and her mentor's classroom was located next door to her classroom. Although she stated she had not read the Induction Program Handbook, E1 indicated she "agreed" in understanding the school system's induction program purpose and processes. She also "agreed" her mentor had made a plan to support her and wanted to meet her professional needs. E1 also worked closely with an informal mentor who served as her cooperating teacher during her yearlong student teaching experience. E1 chose to return to this school system to teach for her 2nd year but did change school sites.

**Elementary Teacher 2 (E2).** E2 completed her initial teacher certification during her undergraduate college program of study prior to employment. The traditional program offered coursework focused on pedagogy and content, and she completed supervised field experiences in all state-required elementary certification grade bands (i.e., PreK-K, 1-2, and 3-5). The school where E2 was hired to teach was the same school site where she completed yearlong student teaching the year prior to this 1st year of employment. She indicated she did receive the school system Induction Program Handbook, was assigned a mentor, and she had met with her mentor

at least once before the end of the first semester. Her mentor's classroom was located across the hall from her own classroom, and she had identified an informal mentor who was also on her teaching team. Although she had not read the Induction Program Handbook, E2 indicated she "agreed" in understanding the school system's induction program purpose and processes. E2 stated plans and goals were made with administration, not her mentor. She also "agreed" her mentor wanted to meet her professional needs. E2 chose to return to this school to teach for her 2nd year.

**Middle Grades Teacher 3 (M3).** M3 completed her initial teacher certification during her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program of study while completing her 1st year of teaching. She holds an undergraduate degree in the content area she was teaching. The teacher certification program offered coursework focused on pedagogy and content, and she completed supervised field experiences in all state-required middle grades certification bands (i.e., 4–5, 6–8). M3 indicated she did not receive the school system Induction Program Handbook and had not been assigned a mentor before the first interview. During the second interview, M3 stated, in early January, approximately 3 weeks after the first interview, she received an email from administration asking for her to identify a teacher she would choose as her mentor. She submitted two names and was then asked to "pick one." She returned the email with the name of one teacher, but she had not met with this person at the point of the second interview (mid-March). She had not read the Induction Program Handbook as she did not know it existed, and she indicated she "disagreed" in understanding the school system's induction program purpose and processes. M3 stated her school administration hosted a meeting monthly for all new teachers and most of the support occurred then. M3 chose to leave this school system after her

1st year of teaching. She gained employment in another school system for her 2nd year of teaching.

**Middle Grades Teacher 4 (M4).** M4 was hired as a provisional educator. He completed an undergraduate degree in the content area he was teaching, but he had not completed coursework focused on pedagogy and had not completed supervised field experiences. M4 is the only teacher of his content area at his school site. M4 stated he did receive the Induction Program Handbook, had been assigned a mentor, and had met with his mentor at least once. His mentor was located at another school but due to an upcoming employment change, a member of his school's administration team became his mentor at the end of the first semester. M4 stated the duties of this administrator are of "both" a school administrator and a mentor. He stated he was working with another teacher of the same content area at another school, but that support was severely limited due to schedules and proximity. He indicated he "agreed" to understanding the purpose and processes of the school system's induction program; he and his mentor had planned to support him during the induction program. M4 also indicated he "strongly agreed" his mentor wanted to meet his professional needs. He did not participate in the second interview during the second semester, and M4 did not return to this school system to teach for his 2nd year.

**High School Teacher 5 (H5).** H5 completed her initial teacher certification during her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program of study the year prior to employment. She holds an undergraduate degree in the content area she was teaching. The teacher certification program offered coursework focused on pedagogy and content, and she completed supervised field experiences in all state-required secondary certification grade bands (i.e., Grades 6–8, Grades 9–12). The school where H5 was hired to teach was the same school site where she completed semester-long student teaching the semester prior to this 1st year of employment. Also, her

induction program mentor served as her cooperating teacher during her semester-long student teaching experience prior to employment. Her mentor is located in proximity, and they teach the same content. H5 indicated she did receive the school system Induction Program Handbook, had read the Induction Program Handbook, and that she and her mentor had met at least once before the end of the first semester. She indicated she “agreed” in understanding the school system’s induction program purpose and processes. H5 stated one member of her school administration holds small meetings for all new teachers and a lot of support occurred then. These small group meetings stopped after the administrator’s employment change at the end of the first semester. H5 also “strongly agreed” her mentor had made a plan to support her and wanted to meet her professional needs. H5 chose to return to this school to teach for her 2nd year.

**High School Teacher 6 (H6).** H6 was hired as a provisional educator. She completed an undergraduate degree and a master’s degree in a field related to her assigned teaching content area. She had not completed coursework focused on pedagogy and had not completed supervised field experiences. Although H6 stated she received the school system Induction Program Handbook, she was not assigned a mentor. She indicated “strongly agree” when asked if she had read the handbook. H6 indicated “strongly disagree” to understanding the school system’s induction program purpose and procedures. Because H6 had not been assigned a mentor, and she reported having no knowledge of a plan to support her or a way to meet her professional needs, she had been proactive in seeking informal mentors through organic socialization activities she had pursued, particularly during lunch breaks. From those professional relationships, she reported finding some support from teachers of the same students but different content areas. The content area leader for the school did not have a common planning time with H6 and he did not serve as a formal or informal mentor to her. H6’s classroom location was isolated from teachers

in the same content area and from teachers who taught the same students. H6 chose to leave this school system 1 week after the first interview, at the end of the first semester. She gained employment with an institution of higher education in another state.

Of the six participants, three (E1, E2, and H5) remained employed with this school system for their 2nd year of teaching. Of those three, one teacher did change school sites for her 2nd year of teaching. All three of these individuals were hired to teach their 1st year at the same school site where they had recently completed student teaching, and all three of these individuals continued a professional, mentoring relationship with at least one educator from their student teaching experience. The three participants (M3, M4, and H6) who did not return to the school system left voluntarily, but two confirmed they remained in the field of education. The third participant did not indicate his future plans. All three 1st-year teacher participants who left the school system had not completed a teacher certification program that offered coursework focused on pedagogy and content, nor completed supervised field experiences before starting their 1st year of teaching. One of the three teachers who left the school system was completing her program of study while completing her 1st year of teaching.

## **Findings**

The analysis of the Induction Program Handbook is described, followed by a description of the findings organized by research question.

### ***Induction Program Handbook***

Even though 5 of the 6 participants indicated on the demographic survey that they received the Induction Program Handbook and half marked either “agree” or “strongly agree” to having read the Induction Program Handbook, knowledge about the handbook and its contents were not evident during the interviews. All participants were asked about the handbook at the



second interview in mid-March. E1 had not discussed any of the suggested topics listed in the Induction Program Handbook with anyone at her school or within the school system, but was aware of the handbook. E2 admitted she had not looked at the Induction Program Handbook and had not even seen it before this interview. M3 stated that outside of our interviews, she had “not been told about the Induction Program Handbook.” When asked about the Induction Program Handbook, H5 recognized some of the suggested topics for each month but stated she and her mentor had discussed those items but not because they were in the handbook; they were discussed naturally as she had different issues arise during the teaching day. M3 and H6 had no knowledge of the Induction Program Handbook.

### **Research Question 1**

How do beginning teachers in selected West Central Georgia K-12 classrooms describe their induction program?

#### ***Induction Program Purpose***

Despite four participants marking “agree” on the demographic survey about understanding the induction program purpose, during the interviews, no participants could identify the school system’s induction program purpose. In response to the question, “Do you know anything about the induction program purpose?” E1 stated, “No, not really” and H6 said, “I don’t know what their purpose is.” E2, M3, and H5 made guesses about the induction program purpose. E2 said, “I think the purpose was, is to make sure that we feel like we’re supported and that we don’t feel like we’re kind of out here drowning as a 1st-year teacher.” M3 echoed E2’s guess, saying, “I would think it was to adequately prepare new teachers for the start of the school year and throughout but I have not experienced that.” M3 explained further, “I don’t know any formal thing” for the purpose. In mid-March, M3 stated, “The school level and school system

have been slacking a little bit. It's because we've only met new teachers once this year and I haven't received any induction program type things." She made a possible connection between the induction program and the teachers she knows who were not returning for the next academic year, saying:

I would have liked to see them like staying on top of their new teachers because I feel like that's...might be some of the reason why so many teachers are leaving, because of the way the induction program has been implemented.

H5 stated, "They try to be supportive, but it's also a little bit vague as to what the expectations are." Although H5 acknowledged you cannot learn everything you need to know about teaching from your teacher preparation or college program, she stated the induction program was "a bunch of unwritten rules that they expect you to know which you really don't know. You just kind of figure it out as you go along."

### ***Induction Program Procedures***

Participants also could not discuss the induction program procedures. When asked to discuss the induction program procedures, E1, M3, and H6 stated they did not know the procedures of the school system's induction program. When asked about the induction program, H6 stated, "There's just a lack thereof. It's not a very good one. I don't know what their purpose is." H6 stated the induction program is "a bad process, because it didn't help me at all to prepare for actual students coming in. The process is just very 'throw you to the wolves' kind of." After stating the induction program was "surface level," H6 stated, "There wasn't really much guidance . . . I don't want to teach ever again."

E2 and M4 both referred back to the system wide new-teacher meetings from before the school year began when describing the induction program procedures. E2 stated those two earlier

meetings and email communication with her school mentor is the extent of her knowledge about the induction program procedures. However, in mid-March, E2 stated she felt the current school system induction program did not qualify as an actual program. She said:

I don't necessarily think I would call it a program. It wasn't really like a program. And my mentor has talked about before how, like, when she came into the program, how what they did and how they did it, and it's completely different now. It's nothing compared to what she did. I know some people that are struggling, that haven't, you know, been okay with the way that it's been done. So, I think that it's kind of like loosey goosey.

M4, who also described the system wide new-teachers meetings to describe the induction program procedures, said, "I think it's a great way...to introduce us at the school. I love the meeting, because you got to meet everyone. You got to meet the (school) board."

However, H5 seemed to have a better understanding that the induction program should be comprehensive, stating, "No program is perfect...I think so far, the induction program has been pretty good to me, in my experience." Also, H5 referred to the progression teachers make through the school system's induction program. She said, "There's like tiers to it as far as how many years you're teaching. So this is just year one, but so far, I think it's pretty great." She expressed concern about the amount of information given at meetings, saying, "The process seems to be a lot of information being thrown at you at once, which if you don't organize it well, you tend to forget a lot of what was thrown at you." H5 stated during the second interview that the induction program procedures were "kind of like a loose framework of a plan, just that they were just going with the flow of things." When asked about the induction program during the second interview, she said, "I wouldn't call it a waste of time. It could do with more structure and being more specific in their goals and the information that they provide." In thinking back to

the initial new teacher meeting held before the school year started, she said, “I think it’s nice to be welcomed into the school system, but like, being a lot more organized would be helpful, also.” She continued, “So they weren’t really focused on us getting to know each other, because we would probably never see each other again. It was mostly just to introduce us to the powers that be, I guess.” H5 stated, after that first meeting at the beginning of the school year, there had not been a whole-county meeting for all new teachers, and she had not seen most of the other new teachers in the school system since then.

### ***Support From System-Level Administrators***

Before the start of the school year, the school system administration held a meeting for all new teachers to the county. M3 stated they met at a conference center and “the head-honcho people” (i.e., school system administrators) were introduced and there was a formal “welcome to the county” program. A second meeting in September “seemed like just a meeting to meet,” according to M3. According to participants E2 and M3, at this whole-county meeting, a slideshow was used to present advice, including “Rest” and “Stay Hydrated” along with “10 Best Teaching Practices.” E2 stated, “It was helpful, but not in the right way. I would have rather they tell me about (a specific reading curriculum).” M3 described the meeting information as “weird, like stuff that I would have rather received it as like a weekly email, like, here’s your motivational” reminder and “how it can help you.” She explained she would have liked to have interacted with other teachers at this meeting rather than being lectured. She said, “I would have much rather seen, like, had conversations with other middle school teachers (in her content area) at a different school in the county, like bounce off ideas and actually, like grow.” M3 also said another similar meeting was planned for January, but as of the second interview in mid-March, this meeting had not occurred, and new teachers had not met as a whole group since the

beginning of the school year. M4 described the induction program purpose as if this meeting was the complete induction program. He said, “I understand what they went for . . . we want you to be a part of us.” H6 also referenced this meeting and stated, “I’m not sure what their goal is . . . telling us like this is gonna be the worst year of our lives. It made me not want to start in the first place. I was already nervous to start.” She stated she received some advice about “tips to keep kids under control in the classroom and how to set up your desks for appropriate-like learning.” Because she had not completed a teacher certification program, she reported finding some value in this information.

In addition to the system-wide new teacher meeting, when asked about the support received from school system administrators as part of the induction program, H6 stated she had received no support, and E1 concurred, “Not a whole lot really, just kind of been thrown in.” E1 replied similarly during the second interview, saying, “There really is none.” E2, M3, and H5 each stated they had not received any support from school system administrators other than the “new teacher meetings” at the beginning of the year. E2 reported the human resources director “was really trying to make it personable . . . I feel like he really cares . . . that we’re doing okay in the school.” H5 elaborated:

I know that was their translation of support. But, I didn’t really feel very supported. I just kind of felt like I was sitting in a very large classroom listening to someone talk *at* us, and not really *to* us, and ask us for specific questions.

During the second interview, both E2 and H5 explained they had no communication with anyone from school system administration since the meeting that occurred at the beginning of the school year. E2 elaborated, “I haven’t heard from them . . . no meetings, no calls, no emails, nothing.” She went further, saying, “I don’t necessarily think that at this point (mid-March) in

the year, it (induction program) is helpful.” M4 reported the “support from the system isn’t bad” but was concerned about the lack of supplies and materials (e.g., Smartboard) needed for his classroom and that the system was not responsive to those needs.

### ***Received Support From School-Level Administrators***

There were differing levels of support from school-level administrators reported by participants. Both M3 and H5 reported their school administrators organized their own new teacher support programs within their schools, although those supports changed after December for both. M3 stated her administrator had planned monthly new teacher meetings for her school, and she did “feel like we do get extra attention from administration.” In mid-March, M3 stated school-level support included “very vague interactions.” She continued, “We don’t ever actually meet and like talk about what actually happened and what I could do better, what I did well.” M3 explained feeling as if she received “the same support as all the other teachers,” veterans, and beginning teachers.

H5 reported one administrator planned regular check-ins with new teachers, but other than those scheduled biweekly meetings, “I don’t have any interaction with administration, unless it’s a behavioral issue that I’m trying to get corrected. Other than that, I don’t see or speak to them, ever.” However, this one administrator changed employment status at the end of the first semester, and according to H5 during the second interview, “As soon as she left, the entire new teacher support program went away. We don’t get checked on, we’re kind of just left to our own devices to just figure things out on our own with our mentor.” At this point, H5 described the induction at her school as “moderate, at best . . . but definitely, the level of support is noticeably different in a lacking way.” Because her mentor was also responsible for two other 1st-year teachers but had served as her cooperating teacher the year prior during student teaching, she

recognized “their relationship with her is not the same experience as mine . . . she offers the same support across the board.” During the second interview, when asked about support from anyone else in the school, H5 stated:

I don’t really leave my hallway. So, to this day, I still don’t really know the names of any teachers outside of my department. But the ones in my department, I would say are pretty supportive. And, we all make ourselves available to each other whether we’re on the same planning team or not.

Because E1 completed her yearlong student teaching experience in the school where she is employed for her 1st year of teaching, E1 stated her school administration “don’t really do a whole lot, because they don’t see me struggle. So, they don’t think I need support, I guess.” She continued:

Student teaching here and then getting my first job here, they don’t really see me as a new teacher, because I’ve been here for a year. So, a lot of times, I’ll just kind of get swept under the rug as far as the new teacher things.

During the second interview, E1 said “there is a little bit” of support from school administrators. She continued, “It really just kind of comes down to who you know in the school and who is willing to help you.”

E2 completed student teaching in this school system but at a different school, and said her administration is “very supportive in anything I need” regarding supplies and materials, and said, “We have a good relationship. . . I don’t feel like I’m, you know, stepping on their toes or anything to ask questions. They are always willing to help.” She further explained her administrator would hold meetings for new teachers in her school and “she will come up to me, and she’ll ask, you know, how I’m doing.” At these meetings, E2 stated they would discuss what

was working well and what was not working and there would be open dialogue to work through issues. Discussions from these meetings also facilitated prompt ordering of supplies (e.g., a curriculum package) as there were suggestions and questions about how to deliver commercial curriculum programs. During the second interview, E2 stated, “I feel like I’m really supported here.” She described the supports she receives from school administrators and other teachers:

Anytime I have a question, or I feel like I’m not doing something right, I can go next door to my team members, or I can go up to the front office, and they’ll help me do anything else I need, or like, if I have a student that I’m not sure how to discipline or how to support them best, and they are really helpful in helping me do that.

M4 described the support he received from the school administrator who also served as his mentor, as “tough love.” He stated, “They want you to be the best and they’re here to help us, but sometimes we might not see it.”

However, H6 reported receiving no support from school-level administration. She stated, “The assistant principal keeps telling me she has all this material for me, but never, never gives it to me and never meets with me to do anything about it.” She also stated:

Administration is making decisions based on things that they think are right, but aren’t in the classroom to see how not right the decisions are . . . I don’t know what direction they’re going in, but it’s not in the favor of teachers.

H6 said, “I told them (school administration), you set me up for failure. You gave me no common planning period. I’ve had to make all of the lessons by myself.”

### ***Received Support From Mentors***

Even though not all participants reported having a formal mentor, all participants had identified at least one other educator to serve as an informal mentor. E1 completed student



teaching at her 1st-year teaching school site and had developed an informal mentoring relationship with the teacher who served as her cooperating teacher during student teaching, saying, “I do work very closely still with her . . . that helps me a lot.” Although E1 stated there is not additional support from anyone else in the school or system, both her informal mentor and formal mentor assisted her with providing student feedback and had “been helpful of how to approach certain situations and things that I could be able to say that would encourage that student and kind of keep pushing them forward.” Regarding her formal mentor, E1 said:

She gives me a lot of resources and just any kind of support I need. If I ever go ask her, she’s always there to help. She’s really just there for me to talk to any kind of issues I have with my students. Like, she’s always there to give me solutions, things that I can try that might work. She’s been great. She’s really just (a) good listening ear for me.

Although E1 continued to work with her mentor at the time of the second interview, she stated she “never actually met with her on a mentor basis. It’s more just like, if I have a question, I’ll go ask her. She’s on my team.” She described her mentor as teaching the same grade level and recognized “that helps a lot” and she explained “any of the curriculum that I don’t understand.” However, E1 acknowledged knowing “a lot of people who don’t . . . have somebody like that, that they can lean on and they, they don’t have any help.” In mid-March, E1 described receiving support from another educator who was assigned to assist with several children with special needs who come to her class for small blocks of time. Even though she realized the educator was there to assist the students, her support made a positive impact on her teaching day. She said:

I have her in my room because I’ve got a lot of resource students. So, she helps a lot with them. Since there’s just one of me and I . . . those students tend to need a lot more one-on-one attention that I do still have to give to the rest of my 24 kids.

Like E1, H5 had a mentoring relationship with the teacher who served as her cooperating teacher during her student teaching experience the year prior. H5 valued her mentor, who was assigned to teach in the classroom next door to her, saying, “I do like the mentorship as being part of the process, because that helps a lot to have that one-on-one relationship with a veteran teacher. That is what I found the most helpful in the process.” Because H5 was “anxious” about a new teaching schedule, her mentor helped her to organize and design lessons and worked with her on time management within lessons after moving to blocks of instruction instead of shorter-time periods. H5’s mentor provided a lesson template for her to guide this process. H5 also received other supports from her mentor in addition to professional support. “She has been an emotional support for me, like, we hang out outside of school . . . we’ve known each other for a while now. So, we’ve become friends outside of school, so I appreciate her a lot.” H5 stated her mentor was “assertive and does not sugarcoat things” with her. She valued that her mentor provided the supports she needed then “pushes you out of the nest and lets you go” because it built her self-reliance. She said, “[Her] assertiveness and willingness to let me just go help built my confidence as a teacher. She goes above and beyond.” H5 also found support in building relationships with her high school students. She frequently attended events outside of school hours, and in “building that bond and that camaraderie” supported her as she worked to improve those relationships as part of her classroom management style. H5 continued to speak positively of her mentor during the second interview, saying, she was “awesome. Over the top, really. She’s available at all times. She makes herself available to me with all of my seemingly dumb questions.”

Like E1 and H5, E2 also identified an informal mentor with another teacher who was “always in there and we’re always talking and bouncing ideas off of each other and she supports

me just as much as my mentor does.” E2 stated she and her mentor planned together weekly, and she was “always able to go over there and ask her how this is going.” E2 stated, “I don’t think she could support me any better than how she is now.”

M3 stated she was not assigned a formal mentor, but she had received support from her content leader and the people she “spends the most time with” at school who were other teachers on her hall. She would ask them for advice and “how to handle situations that come about because it’s so unpredictable” but she stated she always had to initiate with questions, that no one ever came to her first and said, “You might need to know this.” She continued, explaining they were not “preparing me or giving me a heads-up about things.” During the second interview in March, M3 continued to feel she was not prepared by the school system for the upcoming school year. She said:

I guess looking back what I think would be most helpful would . . . I mean I’m still a new teacher and I will be for a few more years. But at least for like my 1st year, definitely, more like heads-up about things. I feel like it’s just been a whirlwind and I’ve just been thrown things at me between trainings, just random. . . . Learning more about the school, the children who attend the school, just preparing us for that school, not just preparing us by a slideshow that is very broad...’How am I going to do my best at this school?’ would be very beneficial.

M3 felt her informal mentors, the teachers on her hall, had supported her by telling her, “This is how that’s actually going to go” when new procedures or curriculum were introduced. However, she thought this information should have been provided by her mentor (if she had one) or the administration, as there was no responsibility on anyone to ensure she received this important information that directly impacted her daily duties. She also said some of the

professional training she was required to attend was not efficiently executed. For example, M3 said she attended three sessions of training for i-Ready but two of the sessions were identical, which she viewed as a waste of time. M3 also expressed a desire to have someone help her prioritize her duties, between lesson planning, teaching “and then all this other stuff on top of that.” M3 stated she had received an email from her administrator approximately 3 weeks prior to the second interview asking for the names of two teachers she would have liked to have served as her mentor. She submitted two names via email, but then was asked to “pick one.” M3 replied to the email with the name of her content lead teacher, but nothing else was discussed about this person serving as her mentor. M3 mentioned this email exchange to her content lead teacher, but she said the content lead teacher “hadn’t heard anything about it.” This interaction lead M3 to suggest “they’re trying to cover their tracks . . . because we’re at the final 9 weeks of school and this is the first thing I’ve heard about a mentor (chuckles).” Other than these interactions, M3 stated she had not received any additional support from anyone else in the school or system.

M4’s assigned mentor changed before the end of the first semester due to the mentor’s employment status change, and although he found her support extremely beneficial, it was difficult to form a true relationship because she was not in the same school building where he was located. M4 admitted he did not “know a lot of stuff yet” and admitted he wished “they would just take it easier.” Like M4 who described her mentor as “assertive, M4 further explained this “tough love” approach had made him “push harder” and he felt “they do everything they can.”

H6 stated she had not been assigned a formal mentor. However, she had organically “made friends with teachers” from a different content area, during her lunch, who served as informal mentors, but to a limited capacity. Although these informal mentors taught the same

students and there were discussions about addressing and handling student behavior, H6 said she did not have anyone to talk with about her content area. She stated another teacher in a similar content area had emailed her occasionally with ideas about how he teaches, but she felt it was not applicable because her students were not like his student population and the content was not a close enough match.

## **Research Question 2**

What retention-supporting services do 1st-year teachers report they need as part of a successful induction program?

### ***Specific Training for Expected Student Population and Curriculum Programs***

Both elementary and both high school teacher participants mentioned a need for specific training before and during their 1st year of teaching. E1 expressed a desire for training and support when teaching students with exceptional needs. She stated she wanted “a lot more teachers coming in and giving me feedback on specific areas.” She elaborated:

(After) being with a cooperating teacher all last year, I have found it very difficult being by myself all day long. I have several special needs students in my room that only get pulled out for certain areas of the day, and other than that, they have no support. They have no paras (paraprofessionals) that come in and sit with them. They have no other support. And, so it’s just me in here trying to support them and that’s extremely difficult with 23 students in my room, having six that need extra, extra support. That’s what I think stresses me out the most. I think a lot of training in like the special ed(ucation) department for all teachers would probably be very good.

E2 also stated she would appreciate additional training on curriculum programs the school system had adopted. E2 mentioned a reading and writing literacy curriculum and shared they

“didn’t get proper training on the curriculum, and you’re kind of flying blind and so it’s hard, you know, to teach the kids when you don’t even know it yourself.” Even though E2 completed yearlong student teaching at this school the year prior, the school did not use Bookworms curriculum until this year. In mid-March, E2 reflected, saying, “If I could have changed something at the beginning, I think I probably would have wanted more training on how to give assessments and how to . . . what I’m even giving this assessment for, what’s the point of it.” Even though she completed her yearlong student teaching at this school the year prior, she still felt as if she did not completely understand all the assessments she was asked to administer to her students. H5 also requested specific training and to have had “the opportunity to ask specific questions to someone that has answers.” She explained the large group meeting “setting is just intimidating . . . because you feel dumb” and “a one-on-one opportunity, or even in a smaller group” would be better to address new teachers’ individual concerns.

Like E1, E2 and H5, H6 also reported a lack of training, especially for curriculum materials, saying, “I didn’t learn how to do Odysseyware, they threw me into that, and they’re like, here, you’re doing Odysseyware now. So, I had to figure that out for myself.” She expressed frustration in missing other training meetings due to work responsibilities without adequate coverage, saying, “I knew a little bit about Canvas from undergrad and graduate school . . . but I didn’t know how to do like teacher stuff on Canvas.” In addition to needing specific training, H6 stated she “needed someone to be real with me about what type of kids I’m gonna like be teaching. They didn’t prepare me at all for it.” Because H6 did not have an assigned formal mentor, H6 said she wished she had a mentor who would teach the same content she taught and “help me lesson plan and help me learn how to deal with behavioral issues with the kids that I have.”

### ***Classroom Resources***

During the interview in mid-March, E1 had concerns about resources in the classroom. She stated not all the materials purchased by the school system for use in the classroom were useful. To supplement instruction, she understood veteran teachers had “stacks of other things on that same concept that would work” but she did not have the same access to similar resources. She explained, “It can be kind of difficult to pick and choose and see what I actually still need after looking at a curriculum when it doesn’t provide you the things that you need.” E2 also indicated a need for materials, especially “the right amount of materials, and the right materials.” She explained if she was missing part of her curriculum materials, then she could not teach that part of the lesson. “So then I’m in trouble because I didn’t do all of the curriculum,” which is frustrating. M4 also had issues with receiving supplies and materials in a timely manner. He said, “It took 13 weeks for that Smartboard to come in my room and I needed that the whole semester. I needed my materials. I still don’t have all of them.”

### ***Opportunity to Meet With Other Professionals More Often***

E2 shared a desire to meet with teachers from other grade levels so she can know what would be expected of her current students during the next academic years, to “kind of frame what I’m doing after what they are doing” so her students would be ready for the next grade. She stated, “It helps me to see how they’re working things . . . these kids need to be ready to go there next year.” E2 reflected, saying having this knowledge with opportunities for vertical planning at the elementary level was important to see the “bigger picture” for her students.

M3 requested to meet more frequently with her school administrators, saying “once a month, I think isn’t . . . for 45 minutes is not that much.” She also felt the topics addressed at the meetings were “not the most effective” and even though her administrators asked new teachers

for topic suggestions, “when the meeting came about, we weren’t covering that topic.” Even though M3 felt new teachers at her school received “extra attention” from administration, she said, “I don’t want to sound like an infant, I guess like a baby, but like, I don’t know, check on us” and immediately started crying. M3 also expressed frustration about her understanding of metacognition about her professional needs. She said, “I feel like I’m in this state where ‘I don’t know what I don’t know’, so it’s kind of hard to like . . . there could be a million things (I need to know).”

### ***A Need to Understand the School System and Administrators***

During the second interview, M3 expressed a desire to know more about the school system administration and its operations, saying, “I would love to learn about services that they provide, or what they actually do over there.” During the second interview, like M3, H5 also suggested the school system administration provide “a list of names and email addresses, and who is . . . who does what and if I have a system-level question, who exactly do I need to contact.” Referring back to the new teacher meeting held before the start of the new academic year, she remembered, “It was all very vague and very fast. They could be more specific.”

### ***Student Behavior***

Four of the six participants expressed a need for guidance and assistance in handling various student behavior issues in their classrooms. E1 stated, “Behavior is a big thing in our school. It is insane sometimes, and they (administration) don’t really do a whole lot to help.” E1 expressed frustration about repeated, misbehaving students who were often removed from the classroom for 5–15 minutes and then were allowed to return to the classroom where the misbehavior continued to occur.



Even though M3 did not mention student behavior and discipline during the first interview, she expressed concerns about her school's discipline protocol in mid-March. She stated, "I think the most difficult area that I've had to deal with is classroom management and dealing with discipline. I don't think that the school's discipline process is very effective." She continued:

It almost feels like I'm babysitting them for an hour rather than teaching them and it makes it difficult to do my job effectively when I'm having to deal with these issues when none of the consequences or the process...the discipline process is not working the way it should be.

M3 attended a professional development workshop at her school's Regional Educational Service Agency site for classroom management. She explained it "was kind of helpful" but felt it was "geared more toward elementary school" and all the strategies they learned were not applicable to middle or high school students.

M4 admitted not being enrolled in a teacher certification program probably caused gaps in his knowledge about handling student behavior in the classroom. However, he had relied on teachers in classrooms close to his by either asking for advice on how to handle student misbehavior or by observing their methods of disciplining and correcting student behavior. M4 admitted he needed more guidance in working with adolescent students. Because he was a provisional teacher and had not been enrolled in a teacher certification program, he said:

I think there needs to be a whole class in college and when you come into the school system of how to do proper true classroom management or what to expect per schools, because what we experience at this school is not the same at other schools...We all need

that equal training from the beginning before we enter...I just wish we would have got heads up. That would help.

He also expressed a desire to have more guidance about working with parents, especially those guardians of students who repeatedly missed class, failed to submit assignments, or were disruptions to the learning environment. He said:

I know one thing I'm bad about is they say you got to call and email parents. I'm not good at talking to parents over the phone. I've never . . . I think it's a fear I have and it is something I gotta work up to do. But when it comes to the email part, I'm fine with, I'm fine with that, and relaying information to them.

Echoing M3, H5 agreed dealing with student misbehavior was challenging. She was firm while stating, “It would be a lot more helpful if they (administration) backed up their teachers better (when students were disruptive). After explaining fights by high school students inside the classroom can cause more than just a quick disruption, she said, “It would just be nice for administration to have their response time be faster, and for them to back up your account of what happened. That would be appreciated.” During the second interview in mid-March, H5 explained that her school administration team had changed and that the way student misbehavior was being handled was “a noticeable difference, and it’s not very positive.” She expressed concern about students being aware of getting away with misbehavior and were “laughing, joking” about it, replying, “it’s just a talking to” they were receiving, nothing more. She said, “It causes friction. Explanations as to why they choose to handle behavior problems the way they do, or just taking more responsibility for the behavior problems would be more helpful.”

Using the conceptual framework I created for this study, as described in Chapter II, several research-proven induction program activities that led to higher rates of new teacher

retention were discussed by participants. Although some of these activities were implemented for some participants, all six were not pervasive or consistently practiced for any participant.

### ***Opportunities to Observe Other Teachers***

Five of the six participants had an opportunity to observe other teachers during instructional time, although these experiences were limited. One participant initiated this practice herself. E2 initiated visiting teachers in the grade level where her students would be next year, but this was not during their instruction time. M3 observed another teacher once as part of her school's new teacher support program. During the second interview, M3 reported, during the second 9 weeks, she conducted "two classroom walkthroughs" where they would "stay only about like, 5 or 10 minutes in each classroom." M4 observed a teacher of the same content area at another middle school once and remarked about the experience, "He helped me out a lot. It gave me the chance to see how at least someone with experience runs a classroom versus someone who has no experience in a classroom."

H5 had the most impactful experience observing other teachers. Her administrator arranged for all teachers to observe other teachers and asked them to take notes for a subsequent conversation about the strategies and techniques they witnessed. She said:

I'll be honest, before we went...I kind of thought it was a waste of time. But after it was over, I actually learned a lot and there were several techniques that I brought back to my classroom that I saw worked for them and I wanted to try.

In mid-March, H5 stated her administrator had continued the practice of "team walks" every other month, where small groups of teachers would "observe other teachers and other departments and how they do things in their classroom." These classroom visits always

concluded with a discussion afterwards and how what they viewed could be applied to their own classrooms.

H6 spoke with her administrators and requested class coverage or a substitute so she could observe another teacher in her content area. They honored her request, and she observed three different teachers during their instruction time in 1 day. Although they were all teaching the same material and she recognized “they’re all teaching it in different ways,” she still found this unhelpful because of the varying content being delivered and the type of students in the classroom.

Although E1 had not had the opportunity to observe other teachers, she recognized the value in the practice. She said:

I feel like the opportunity to push into other teachers’ classrooms and see how they’re teaching things would be very helpful. I can meet and have questions all day long, but then if I don’t actually see how somebody else is doing it, sometimes I get lost.

With regard to a specific curriculum designed to support reading instruction, E1 stated:

This is my 1st year teaching (that) and it’s hard. . . . Seeing some of the other grade levels that have been doing it for several years, how they’re teaching it, and then, like the different strategies that they’re using to make it make sense. I feel like that would be very helpful.

### ***Opportunities to Be Observed by Other Teachers***

Two of the six participants had regular opportunities to be observed by other teachers during their instructional time. E1 and M3 stated only their administration leaders had observed them teaching. E2 pointed out that only her administrator had observed her and provided feedback, but another new teacher watched her teach a small group math lesson once. M4 stated

his mentor observed his classroom instruction “a few times” for short periods of time (less than 10 minutes) and focused mainly on classroom management during their post-observation discussion. H5 stated she had also been observed by her mentor, but all other observations had been conducted by administration. H6 stated she received verbal praise such as, “You’re doing such a good job” but she felt these comments were meaningless, saying, “I’ve never been observed even. So, I don’t know how they know I’m doing a good job.”

In mid-March, no participants reported they had been observed by other teachers since the start of the second semester. However, E1 placed value on her co-teacher who is present in her classroom for writing instruction and gives feedback informally. E1 also said she wanted “a lot more of other teachers coming in” to her classroom to assist, provide support to her students, and to give her feedback about her teaching techniques.

***Dedicated, Trained Mentor With Same Certification and Content Area(s)***

Each participant was asked about the qualities of their mentor that supported them as a new teacher. E1 stated having a mentor on her team was “the biggest thing” as she taught next door. She stated, “If I ever have a question, even if it’s in the middle of the day, I can just pop right over there and ask her and she’s just always available to help me.” However, E1 admitted to seeking out her informal mentor more often, even though she was located “all the way at the other side of the school,” as they already had a relationship because she served as E1’s cooperating teacher the year prior during her yearlong student teaching experience. During the second interview, E1 explained she had begun to rely on her formal mentor for assistance with her math instruction. She said:

She gives me a lot of really good resources to use to just sharing like good strategies, things that she does in her classroom that work, things that she's done in the past that did not work for her, shares those with me as well so I don't make the same mistakes.

E2 echoed E1's appreciation of having her mentor near her classroom who also taught the same grade level, saying, "It's convenient to have her right here. So, I can always just go across the hall when I'm teaching something, and I'm like, 'What in the world is this?' . . . easy for me to go to." E2 stated her mentor was very organized and had a depth of content knowledge plus a variety of teaching strategies that worked for multiple topics. She stated, "She's a good person to bounce ideas off of." During the second interview, E2 appreciated that her mentor is "very organized" and valued that she had more teaching experience. She explained her mentor was current with knowledge about teaching strategies and techniques and "knows what she's doing," which enabled her to "explain it to me in a way that I can understand and that we're comfortable like talking about." Now that E2 had grown more comfortable in her classroom and with her mentor, she stated about her mentor, "We're like besties now. She is awesome." Of asking questions of her mentor often, she said:

We have conferences next week. And I went in there, and I was like, 'I know I've already done conferences one time, but what do I need to do? Like paperwork, what do I need? What do I need to ask?' And so, I went in there, and she just laid it all out. So I think she's really helpful.

Because her mentor had been teaching for approximately 5 years, E2 felt her mentor still remembered what it was like to be a new teacher, which helped her support her this year.

Although M3 had not been assigned a formal mentor, she stated about her informal mentors that they were "good listeners" and had patience with her questions and concerns. One

of her informal mentors was her content lead teacher. She also recognized this role had a heavier workload, so being responsible was important. M4 stated his mentor was “very strong, determined, (and) she will tell you like it is. And, if it hurts your feelings, well, okay.” He called this method “tough love . . . that’s all it is.”

H5’s mentor taught the same grade level and content, and was located next door to her classroom. “I basically see her (mentor) every single day. I pretty much ask her every single question that I can possibly throw at her that I do not know the answer to.” H5 stated, “I love her very much” when she explained how her mentor was available for her to “lean on during my lesson planning process to kind of throw out ideas to her and she tells me what would work and what wouldn’t, and why.” During the second interview, H5 shared her value of her mentor being “very knowledgeable about different texts that will work for different units, different activities to teach a standard that I’ve never even heard of but are interactive and fun for the students.” H5’s mentor also provided guidance about classroom management and offered emotional support. She said, “She’s just supportive all around like emotionally, mentally, and professionally.”

### ***Practice Becoming a Reflective Practitioner***

E1, M3, M4, and H6 reported during both interviews that they had not had an opportunity to practice becoming a reflective practitioner as part of their induction program experience with the school system. M3 was simultaneously enrolled in a teacher certification master’s program during this 1st year of teaching and she stated she completed reflective practices as a requirement for her degree program, but not with the school system. E2 reported each Tuesday was reserved for team planning. To prepare for planning, they met each Monday to discuss “what went well in our classrooms the week before and what didn’t go well.” There was then open discussion about what could have been done differently for future lessons. She said, “We’re thinking back on

what we've done and seeing what worked and what didn't work and what we need to change and things like that." H5 stated reflection also occurred during planning meetings at her school. Planning teams were organized by class subject and they met weekly. During that planning session, H5 stated:

We plan formatives, common summatives, and we talk about what worked and what didn't work, what activities worked and didn't work, or what texts really interested students and what we would drop next time because they just did not work and that happens sometimes."

### ***Discussions About Student Work and Providing Feedback to Students With Other Teachers***

E1 talked about student work and giving feedback to students with both her formal mentor and informal mentor. She said, "They have been helpful of how to approach certain situations and things that I could be able to say that would encourage that student and kind of keep pushing them forward." During the second interview, E1 said they "have had several data meetings . . . looking at all their diagnostic scores that they have to take...and kind of see where all the students were." They also discussed having conferences with individual students rather than addressing issues with the whole class. E2 discussed student work and giving feedback during her Monday and Tuesday planning sessions with her team members. However, most of her specific student feedback discussions had been with her mentor. She also talked about student work and feedback with other new teachers in her school, acknowledging although it was not structured, it was helpful. E2 reported this was still occurring during our second interview.

M3 explained how her professional learning community, consisting of all teachers of the same content and grade level at her school, met once a week to discuss "what progress we're making, or the students are making." She then reflected, "But feedback? We're not doing a good



job of giving feedback.” M3 continued, as she explained she felt the curriculum and pacing structure were unrealistic and automatically discouraged a teacher because they know, “obviously, we’re behind.” She stated feeling so rushed in teaching the curriculum on schedule made it difficult to provide adequate feedback to the students because the teachers were constantly moving forward with the content to try to stay on schedule as close as possible. She said, “I guess the only feedback that we’ve been able to give, or I’ve been told to give is the grade and then going over like, big issue areas, and then just chug along . . . that’s a disservice to everybody.” During the second interview, M3 stated discussions about giving student feedback had not occurred since the end of the second semester. M4 stated he tried to give students feedback but he had not engaged in conversation with anyone about student feedback.

H5 remembered discussions about giving students feedback the year prior during her initial teacher certification program, but stated she had not had similar discussions during her 1st year of teaching. During the second interview, H5 stated they had discussed giving student feedback during their common planning time. She said, “We’ll ask each other questions...’How would I explain to this student what they got wrong and how to do better?’ Because sometimes, it’s just, it’s hard to explain a skill . . . not everything is taught the same way.” H6 said giving student feedback was often discussed at the lunch table with her informal mentors who taught a different content area, so the discussions were never specific to her content area, and were more generic in nature. She said, “So, 30 minutes a day we all try new things every single day, but nothing works.”

### ***Collaboration With Other Professionals***

E1 stated that she had attended two meetings for new teachers and that they were able to “gather and talk” then. She also reported she and two other 1st-year teachers, along with several

experienced teachers new to the system, talked to be sure they were “all kind of on the same page.” However, E1 stated she would like to have had “more opportunities to talk with other new teachers in other schools and just see how it’s going.” She said:

Because there have been times this year where I just am not sure if this is what I want to do. And I don’t know if it’s just this school or if it’s the entire profession and I think being able to talk to other people from other schools and see the things that they have in place for those teachers and see what they’re able to do and how it compares to my situation (would help).

E1 reported opportunities to collaborate with other professionals in her school through her weekly planning meetings with her team. During the interview in mid-March, she stated, “I feel like group planning has definitely been beneficial. . . . You don’t just have one person’s point of view, you get a lot of different people.” Participating in vertical planning approximately once a month with teachers of other grade levels was also helpful, according to E1. She said vertical planning “opened my eyes a little bit” because she realized if her students could not perform a task in future grades, then she needed to make changes in her classroom now. Although she had worked with other teachers, she had not collaborated with other beginning teachers this semester.

E2 had attended “three, four” meetings for new teachers at her school by the end of the first semester. She said a lot of discussions occurred at these meetings, offering collaboration for her and the other teachers. She said both new teachers and administrators brought up topics to discuss and methods and solutions were always part of the conversation. E2 stated much collaboration occurs during her team’s weekly planning sessions. For example, she said they “will talk about like a specific lesson” and they would discuss it fully, from planning and

implementation, to feedback and assessment. She stated collaboration also occurred organically as teachers gathered for various events and duties (e.g., book fair, bus duty). She said, “If we see each other, we’re talking.” E2 reported during the second interview that all new teachers in her building had one meeting with administration and discussed a variety of topics focused on what was working well and what areas needed attention.

Because M3 did not have a mentor, she said “some people have taken me under their wing” and this provided limited collaboration. These were the “people I happen to spend the most time with; we’ve gotten to know each other, but that’s about it.” Even though there were other new teachers in her building, M3 reported there was “not much collaboration; we’re all from different fields. So, it’s hard to exchange ideas.” In the second interview, M3 stated she had one meeting with other new teachers but it was a lecture presentation, not true collaboration or open discussion.

M4 collaborated with two teachers of the same content area from two different schools because he was the only teacher of his content area at his school site. Most of this collaboration occurred via email. He also collaborated with another 1st-year teacher on his hall and felt a kinship to him as they were both “the two youngest teachers in the school.” He also expressed appreciation for all the teachers, saying, “But when it comes to people that truly will help you and are worried about you, it is here. And, that’s what I appreciate the most.”

At the end of the first semester, H5 reported her professional learning community provided collaborative opportunities. She said, “They’ve all been supportive and we support each other. And, we lesson plan together and brainstorm together.” She also stated there was one other new teacher in her content area and they “collaborate a lot, because we teach the same class.” However, she admitted that outside of her department, she did not “really interact with anyone.”

During the second interview, H5 stated the only time she collaborated with other new teachers at her school were during informal gatherings, such as while serving at parking lot duty or while gathered in the communal room. She said, “You just start talking and hanging out. It’s very informal. So, there’s never any planned, structured opportunities for new teachers to actually interact with each other.”

H6 stated she had only met with other new teachers on one occasion, for approximately 30 minutes. Approximately 9 weeks into the new school year, H6 requested class coverage so she could work with other teachers in a similar content area as hers during their planning time. She said, “Our planning is him emailing me things that he did before and like we didn’t have the same students.” This was why H6 sought out informal mentors as teachers of a different content area during her lunch time. She said, “We have the same students, same level of students, and we try to talk about how, like, where we should sit certain kids in the class to who not to sit them by because they’ll fight each other.”

### ***Commitment to Teaching and This School System***

Three of the six participants, or 50%, returned to this school system for their 2nd year of teaching. E2 and H5 remained at the same school site. In the first interview, E1 questioned her ability to remain in the profession. However, during the interview in mid-March, E1 admitted she “struggled a lot before Christmas” and she attributed her recent adjustment to the school as “getting used to everything and the expectations that were set for all teachers and kind of unspoken expectations that they don’t really tell you.” She stated she had “figured most of it out” and it was “a little better than it was before Christmas.” Although E1 remained employed in the same school system, she transferred to a different elementary school for her 2nd year in the profession. M3 resigned from the school system and accepted a teaching position in a school

system located in a county surrounding the Atlanta suburbs. In March, when asked if her experience in this school system's induction program had influenced the decision to leave the school system, M3 said:

I think there was a lot higher chance that I would have stayed, but I kind of checked out last semester. I knew that I wasn't coming back. But, if I had that support, it would have made that decision a lot harder to make.

M4 stated he was struggling with adjusting to his new career. During the first interview at the end of the first semester, he said, "So, we got what, 6 more months? Then I'll make my decision" (about returning next year). M4 did not participate in the second interview, and did not return to this school system for his 2nd year of teaching. H6 stated, "So, they didn't prepare me at all basically for this. I don't want to teach ever again. We're almost done with the first semester." H6 resigned from the school system 2 weeks after the first interview, at the end of the first semester. During a follow-up virtual interview in mid-February, she stated the principal of her school requested she write a resignation letter, but she had no additional contact with anyone with the school system or her school about her departure, even though it occurred mid-year. She accepted a position aligned with her master's degree with an institution of higher education in the northern part of the United States and reported, "I quit my teaching job immediately when I could and things are going really well."

### **Summary**

Even though the school system has an Induction Program Handbook, based on the responses from participants in this study, the Induction Program Handbook was not viewed as a valuable document. No participants referred to the handbook during interviews and most participants had not read the school system's Induction Program Handbook. However, the

Induction Program Handbook does outline roles and responsibilities and gives suggestions for topics of discussion, but there is no assessment plan for the induction program, its components, or stakeholders. Although only four participants had an assigned formal mentor, all participants had identified an informal mentor who they relied on for assistance during their 1st year of teaching. All participants had at least one idea for how they would like to be supported as a beginning teacher.

Participants were not aware of a defined purpose of the school system's induction program. Several made assumptions based on their own knowledge of the role of an induction program and their own experiences as beginning teachers. One participant explained some of the procedures, including the varying supports for teachers in Years 1, 2, and 3, but five participants could not discuss the procedures.

Most participants only had communication with system-level administrators during a county-wide meeting for all new teachers held before the start of the school year. This meeting was described as lecture-format with generic motivational suggestions and no participants described it as directly applicable to their new teaching assignment. However, two participants mentioned they would benefit from having more knowledge about school system administration, their roles, and responsibilities.

The administration at the schools of four participants enacted their own new teacher support team. Although most participants described school-level administration involvement as limited, all reported being observed by their administrator which is expected for all teachers in the building. Although four participants had a formal mentor, all participants had identified other teachers as informal mentors who could provide support based on their needs, availability, and

proximity to their classroom. Having a mentor in proximity who taught the same grade level and same content area was important to participants.

Participants were somewhat unclear about how to receive the supports they need to be successful as a 1st-year teacher. Although at least two acknowledged feeling overwhelmed and were unaware of what they did not know, most provided ideas for support they would find beneficial. Specific training on a variety of topics (i.e., special education information, technology programs used by teachers, and commercial curriculum programs) were mentioned. All participants mentioned a desire to collaborate with other professionals including other new teachers, teachers across the school system, teachers in different grade levels for vertical planning, and teachers in their content area. Participants explained collaboration allows them to see the “bigger picture” of their daily work. Student behavior and handling discipline in the classroom was also mentioned by all participants. Having support from administration and understanding discipline procedures is important to participants. Lastly, all participants expressed a need to have school administrators check-in with them more often and to ask about specific teaching practices (e.g., What standards did you teach today? What went well with the lesson? How can I support you for your next unit of instruction?). Most felt a generic check-in or email does not invite conversations for growth.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

The problem is that almost 30% of all beginning teachers leave the classroom within the first 3 years and this is costly to school systems—both economically and with a potential decline in student achievement. Even though the State of Georgia had issued recommendations for all state-supported school systems to offer a new teacher induction program, not all induction programs in school systems across the state included research-based strategies and activities for the beginning teachers and there was no state oversight of these induction programs.

### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the retention-supporting needs of new teachers in a West Central Georgia school system and to gain a thorough description of their perceived experiences in this school system's induction program as a beginning teacher. This qualitative case study consisted of me completing a document review of the school system's induction program handbook and learning about the perceived experiences of six 1st-year teachers in three grade bands (elementary, middle, and high) through two interviews at two different points in time of the 2021–2022 academic year (at the end of the first semester and again 12–14 weeks later).

Results discussed in Chapter IV revealed although there is a school system induction program handbook, there is little reference to the handbook during the actual implementation of the induction program. Not all requirements listed in the induction program handbook are followed, including the assignment of a dedicated mentor for each 1st-year teacher and monthly meetings for the beginning teacher and their mentor. Only 4 of the 6 teachers (66%) had a formal mentor. Each of the six new teachers identified strategies, activities, and ideas about how they would like to have been supported during their 1st year of employment with this school system.



Further, 3 of the 6 participants (50%) did not return to this school system for their 2nd year of teaching, which is greater than the published national average of 30%. Lastly, several participants recognized although they were unaware of effective research-proven activities for induction programs and most had not participated in such activities regularly, all were eager and willing to receive more support as a beginning teacher.

### **Analysis of the Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how beginning teachers in a West Central Georgia school system describe the system's induction program, the supports they have received in that program, and to identify what supports they said they needed as part of a successful induction program. Analysis consisted of a review of the school system's Induction Program Handbook and data collected from two interviews with six participants who agreed to participate in the study. Both interviews were transcribed and themes were identified from that data. The analysis of the findings is organized by research question and themes, based on the conceptual framework of this study. Recommendations based on the findings of this study were:

1. The induction program purpose and procedures need to be clearly defined. (RQ1)

Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated an induction program needs to have a clear purpose. Even though the school system has an Induction Program Handbook and the introduction section of the handbook includes references to the goals of the program, most participants in this study were unsure of the purpose and procedures of the induction program. Including a clearly defined induction program and purpose in a comprehensive Induction Program Handbook along with outlined steps progressing new teachers through the induction program would be beneficial for the success of the program. Further, dissemination of this information to all stakeholders would serve as a reference guidepost for the first 3 years of newly hired teachers. Some participants in

this study knew where to access the Induction Program Handbook online, but most were not familiar with its contents. All participants need to use and refer to the Induction Program Handbook so it becomes a useful tool in supporting new teachers. Because several participants referenced “unspoken expectations and unwritten rules” of working within the school system for their 1st year of teaching, a comprehensive Induction Program Handbook could alleviate some confusion for 1st-year teachers. Designing, sharing, and implementing an assessment system of all induction program components and participants (e.g., administrators, mentors, induction phase teachers) would allow the school system to better prepare for funding and request resources instrumental to the implementation of the induction program. This assessment and accountability plan could become part of participants’ professional development, using resources that can be made available to all teachers (Penuel et al., 2016).

2. Consistent communication about the roles and responsibilities of the school system’s administration and clear leadership about the induction program establishes the framework for the new teacher induction program. (RQ1)

A successful induction program starts with strong leadership (Kelly et al., 2019; Wong, 2004). Other than an initial system wide meeting for new teachers that occurred before the start of the academic school year, all participants reported a feeling of disconnect between their roles as a new teacher in the school system with the school system’s administration. However, two participants expressed a desire to learn more about the roles of school system administrators. Because they were not knowledgeable about operations at the school system central office, they were unsure what supports could be made available for them. Involving school system administrators into the purpose and procedures of the induction program would strengthen the

induction program, because creating an induction program that can be sustained while serving all stakeholders is the goal (Kelly et al., 2019).

3. School-level administrators offer varying levels of support through new teacher programs within their schools. New teachers want regular communication from school-level administrators. (RQ1)

Even though a school system may employ a system-wide induction program, each school's administrators set the tone for actual daily operations for the teachers and students including new teacher induction supports. Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020) stated, within the school, administrators should create an organization that encourages and supports all personnel (i.e., other school administrators, school leaders, and all teachers). Because the administration of some participants' schools in this study enacted their own new teacher support program, induction program experiences of these beginning teachers in the study varied across school campuses. School administrators for the other participants chose to only rely on the system's induction program without supplementary activities. Unfortunately, all participants noted a decline in new teacher support from their school-level administrators after the start of the second semester, with at least one decline being due to personnel changes.

Ingersoll (2012) stated the most common practice of an induction program is consistent communication with an administrator. Although analysis of the Induction Program Handbook did not indicate a requirement for system or school administrators to reach out to new teachers, but they should be available if the new teacher needs them, all participants stated they wanted to be checked on more often by school administrators. Consistent with research, participants in this study preferred more frequent initiation of communication by school leaders and mentors instead of waiting on the beginning teacher to seek them first (Desimone et al., 2014). Additionally,

instead of asking vague questions (e.g., “How are things going?”) during a check-in or walk-through, participants desired for administrators (and mentors) to ask specific questions, such as, “What went well with your lesson on fractions?” Being asked a vague question was often translated as the administrator not really wanting to dive deep into conversation about what is happening in the classroom, and participants believed they would rather hear an automatic response, such as “fine” with little to no follow-up discussion. These productive communication examples from the study’s participants support research from Kostadinova and Gruncheva (2020) stating such conversations are critical to improve professional relationships. Lack of productive communication seemed to compound the supports given to two participants who completed their student teaching experience at the same school site where they were hired. Subsequently, they felt the school administration assumed they needed fewer supports as they were already familiar with many school policies. Although these participants admitted they liked having that previous year of knowledge, they still needed mentoring in a wide variety of areas but were not asked about the supports they needed by their school administrators and did not participate in productive conversations differently from other teachers.

4. Not all participants were assigned a formal mentor but all identified an informal mentor at their school. (RQ1)

As part of a successful induction program, mentoring should be embedded in professional development for all educators (Gordon, 2020). All participants in this study agreed having a mentor matters. Even though not all participants reported being assigned a formal mentor, all had identified at least one other educator to serve as an informal mentor. This rate is higher than prior research stating over half (51%) of 1st-year teachers stated they work with both formal and informal mentors (Desimone et al., 2014) as informal mentoring relationships are often naturally

created through active participation in the workplace. Desimone et al. (2014) reported new teachers would rather receive classroom management techniques from informal mentors as they do not complete evaluations for them, but participants in this study did not distinguish a preference between formal or informal mentors; they just wanted a mentor.

Additionally, participants agreed mentor characteristics are important. Participants in this study who had mentors of the same certification and content area were found to be most helpful as they navigated the challenges of daily instruction, managed student behavior, and provided instructional feedback. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated the most significant influence was having a mentor who taught in the same content area and had been appropriately trained to mentor the beginning teacher. It did not matter to participants in this study which mentor (formal or informal) taught the same content matter, but they valued having a mentor who could partner with them to discuss content-specific questions. Similar to the desire to have school administration initiate communication and not wait for the 1st-year teacher to seek out the mentor, new teachers in this study wanted mentors to ask them specific, guided questions to encourage professional discussions about their teaching and growing as a professional (Desimone et al., 2014).

5. Mentors should be selected and trained to serve as a guide for new teachers. Mentors should teach the same content area and the same students, and be located in close proximity to the beginning teacher's classroom. (RQ2)

The single component of new teacher induction programs that positively impacts teacher retention was working with a mentor of the same content area who had received appropriate training in how to serve as a mentor (Desimone et al., 2014; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Martin et al., 2016; Moss, 2010). Even though 4 of the 6 participants in this study reported having a formal

mentor, and only three described consistent support from their formal mentor, each participant shared a desire to have a formal mentor assigned by the school system who held the same certification and taught the same content. This is consistent with Ingersoll and Smith (2004) who stated best practices require mentors to teach the same content area and Kostadinova and Gruncheva (2020) who stated more than one third of new teachers do not receive supports from their mentor and 8% of all new teachers have no mentor. However, I was unable to learn details about the selection, training, or assignment of mentors through participant interviews or from the analysis of the Induction Program Handbook.

Each participant in this study wanted to have a dedicated, experienced teacher to work with them through student behavior challenges, questions about grade-level and content-specific curriculum, and navigating school culture to best serve their students. Of the four who had an assigned formal mentor, only three of these participants (half of the study's participants) had a mentor of the same content area. Because formal mentors are frequently better able to respond to new teachers' curriculum standards' needs more effectively than informal mentors, the mentor-mentee match is important (Desimone et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016). Participants in this study wanted a mentor who had been trained to meet their needs and who could individualize the induction practices through goal setting to best meet their needs. Kostadinova and Gruncheva (2020) mentioned providing professional encouragement and practicing goal setting as an important skill for mentors, as desired by new teachers. This is further supported by Zembytska (2015), who defined mentoring to include assisting the new teacher in transitioning from beginning teacher to the reality of the classroom, working with the new teacher to increase their motivation and encourage a positive professional attitude, and to facilitate collaboration between the new teacher and other professionals.

In this study, identifying and working with informal mentors provided essential supplemental supports for all six participants, especially because not all participants had an assigned formal mentor. For most participants, these informal mentors were located close to their classrooms and a natural friendship had occurred. Lozinak (2016) and McIlheran (2018) both agreed mentors and beginning teachers should be in classrooms close to each other to naturally progress consistent communication. This was supported by one participant who recognized the unpredictability of the day and how having a teacher nearby to talk with about any topic was especially helpful. Those participants with mentors who were assigned to teach in proximity to their classrooms reported a stronger relationship with their mentor. One participant reported a strong relationship with her formal mentor, but because she was located across the school campus, she had a much better mentor-mentee relationship, although informal, with a teacher across the hallway. Two other participants agreed they had a stronger, informal mentoring relationship with a teacher located near their classroom than their formal mentor who was either an administrator or was assigned to teach on another hallway at the school. Therefore, because 3 of the 6 participants reported a stronger mentor-mentee (informal) relationship with another educator who was assigned to teach in proximity to their classroom than with their assigned, formal mentor who was not located near their classroom, proximity was more important to these participants than the role of the mentor. Considering the other two participants had no formal mentor, this means only one participant felt a stronger connection to her formal mentor than her informal mentor, and her formal mentor happened to be located across the hall from the participant's classroom.

6. Induction program teachers need to observe other teachers teach and need to be observed by other teachers while they teach. (RQ2)

Most participants had not been observed by anyone other than their school administrator who is tasked with observing all teachers. Other than administrators, mentors are more likely to have observed other teachers teaching the content (Desimone et al., 2014; Martin et al., 2016) and should have experience in facilitating this activity for induction purposes. Of participants who reported having a mentor, none of them reported being observed by their mentor. The most common reason they stated they had not been observed by their mentor or another teachers is due to scheduling and lack of class coverage for their mentor to leave their own classroom to come observe them. Being observed by other teachers and observing other teachers teach are authentic activities that should be part of a successful induction program that allows the beginning teacher to study instruction techniques, practice in professional reflection, and share information and teaching strategies (Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon, 2020; Moss, 2010). Although some participants had completed walkthroughs or brief observations for approximately 15 minutes, these opportunities had occurred fewer than three times. Only one participant reported leaving her classroom to observe another teacher more than once.

After observing or being observed, the mentor can then offer specific scaffolding supports to the beginning teacher, tailoring these supports to fit the individual needs of the new teacher. Through repeated practice and reflective professional discussions, these supports can be removed once the beginning teacher has mastered that skill. Participants of this study indirectly referred to these types of scaffolding supports by discussing the benefits of having specific skills to look for during an observation with ample time for discussion to talk through what worked well and how to improve in other areas. However, because observations of or by other teachers rarely occurred, they recognized mentoring conversations seldom focused on specific teaching strategies they could try in their own classroom.



7. Beginning teachers need and want regularly scheduled consistent professional collaboration with veteran teachers, other new teachers, and administrators. (RQ2)

Wong (2004) stated asking beginning teachers to become active participants in the school's collaborative workforce with an overarching common goal of student achievement, leads to higher teacher retention rates for the entire school system. Participants of this study agreed one of their favorite induction program activities was being part of a professional learning community. Other than working individually with either a formal or informal mentor, this practice is where participants saw the most professional growth. Most often, working with their professional learning community occurred during common planning time, but for at least one participant, schedules changed midyear and this was no longer possible.

In the Induction Program Handbook, the role of the mentor states they "ensure that the Induction Phase Teacher is participating in the reflection process through professional dialogue." Although through collaboration participants in this study found opportunities to reflect about their planning and lessons, they still wanted consistently scheduled meetings when this could occur, along with other collaborative discussions. Included in the conceptual framework for this study, completing exercises to practice becoming a reflective practitioner is an effective component of teacher induction programs (Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon, 2020), but this study's participants did not feel as if enough attention was given to this topic as part of their induction program. Examining their own current teaching skills and abilities and using that information to plan for future goals is part of becoming a reflective practitioner (Delaware Department of Education Program, 2010), but, oftentimes, new teachers need guidance from other professionals (e.g., a mentor) in doing this effectively. Unfortunately, reflection activities may involve skills all mentors are not prepared to implement effectively (Cohan & Honigsfeld,

2011). In this study, participants felt although their mentors had not held in-depth conversations with them about their teaching practices, they had assisted them with daily tasks and procedural questions, as needed.

As evidenced by participants in this study, collaborating with different professionals had a positive effect on teacher retention. Of the three participants who remained in this school system for their 2nd year of teaching, all three reported having multiple teachers supporting them including a formal mentor and/or an informal mentor, and at least two other professionals in the school who provided assistance, depending on the needs. The three participants who did not return to this school system reported they had no mentor and had no opportunities to work closely with anyone other than informal mentors they had identified.

Having common planning time with a collaborative network of other teachers is a component of new teacher induction programs leading to higher rates of teacher retention (Desimone et al., 2014; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Martin et al., 2016; Moss, 2010). New teachers in this study wanted to collaborate with other professionals, including veteran teachers, school leaders, and other new teachers. They wanted to plan with teachers of the same grade level and same content area, and with teachers of different grade levels and different content areas, which is supported by research indicating new teachers need to work with multiple professionals on multiple professional learning activities (Picucci, 2016; Public Education Network, 2003; Wong & Wong, 2012; Zembytska, 2015). Meeting with other teachers to discuss samples of student work and how to give feedback is an important component of an induction program as it best familiarizes the beginning teacher with appropriate grade-level content (Martin et al., 2016). A few participants stated this does occur during grade-level planning meetings, but, overall, participants wanted guided conversations about curriculum planning, rationale and instructions

on delivering assessments, and giving feedback to students. Engaging the beginning teachers and empowering them to become an active participant in their induction program showcases the knowledge and skills they bring to the school culture (Beane-Katner, 2014). Ingersoll (2012) agreed regular collaboration with other educators increases the likelihood that the beginning teacher will remain in the profession, as they feel they are a valuable contributor to the school environment.

8. New teachers want to have a voice about the training they receive and need specific training related to their school, their student population, curriculum programs, and technology applications. (RQ2)

Induction teachers need a voice in what training they need. At the time of the first interview at the end of the first semester, all six participants had at least one idea on specific training they needed to be better equipped to teach their students and complete their duties. However, no participants reported having a voice in the topics discussed during any meeting with their mentor or school administration. Although one participant stated she was asked for ideas for discussion to help her grow professionally, she reported her suggestions were never mentioned again.

Induction program supports need to be tailored to meet the professional goals and needs of each beginning teacher (Cohan & Honigsfeld, 2011; Public Education Network, 2003), capitalizing on the uniqueness of each 1st-year teacher (Gordon, 2020). Like this study's participants, all teachers have varying backgrounds and have been prepared to teach in a myriad of ways, if they have been prepared at all. Rather than treating all new teachers as the same, school system's induction programs could better bridge the transition from the teacher certification program to the 1st years of teaching (Gordon, 2020). All beginning teachers need

school-specific training, including student population-specific training. New teachers in this study were often overwhelmed about what they do not know, but most felt having this background knowledge before entering the classroom could better position them for success. Participants reported there were numerous curriculum programs and technology applications being used in their schools, but they did not feel adequately prepared to deliver instruction, did not have appropriate materials, or did not know enough about the operation of the program to use its benefits fully. Darling-Hammond and Hyler (2020) stated, to meet the 21st century learner's needs, all educators, including 1st-year teachers, should participate in training to best use technology in the classroom in a variety of ways.

In considering new teachers' educational background, rather than focusing on the highest degree earned, induction program administrators could direct supports toward the teachers' specific needs and requests. Interestingly, two participants had earned a master's degree and one was currently enrolled in a master's program; the other three participants held bachelor's degrees. Two of the three teachers who did not return to this school system for their 2nd year of employment held master's degrees. This is consistent with research showing whether the teacher holds an undergraduate or graduate degree does not predict retention (Nguyen et al., 2020).

9. First-year teachers who have been hired as a provisional educator and have not completed a teacher certification program with coursework for pedagogy and/or content and supervised field experiences need additional supports as compared to those who received certification through a preparation program. (RQ2)

Although it is impossible to replicate all that can be learned in a teacher certification program for provisionally hired teachers, the three provisional educators who participated in this study reported they needed additional guidance about classroom management with the students

they were assigned to teach, pacing of the curriculum, and working with parents, among other topics. Research showed beginning teachers who completed coursework in pedagogical practices and had at least one semester of supervised student teaching were half as likely to leave the profession as those who did not have that experience in a teacher preparation program, like provisional educators (Podolsky et al., 2019). Because these provisional educators in the study had not completed pedagogical coursework and supervised field experiences, they requested induction supports that would include components that may or may not be included for all beginning teachers, depending upon their needs. Findings of this study showed there were no differences in supports planned or implemented for provisional educators as compared to those supports offered to teachers that held full certification. An induction program with a customized approach for its beginning teachers' professional development plan is important to an induction program (Beane-Katner, 2014; Gordon, 2020). Consequently, the three 1st-year teachers who did not return to this school system for their 2nd year of employment were all provisional teachers and had not yet completed a certification program, and all three stated they had requested specific supports from their mentor and/or school administrators.

10. Induction program teachers need to have ongoing conversations with school leaders and mentors to ensure all goals and practices are mutually beneficial and that the new teacher's satisfaction in the profession remains high. (RQ2)

I acknowledge it was difficult at times to hear about the concerns and challenges these new teachers were experiencing during their 1st year of teaching, but not being able to intervene. Darling-Hammond and DePaoli (2020) stated promoting teachers' self-efficacy impacts their attitudes and dispositions toward teaching and increasing retention rates for beginning teachers can be achieved. The three participants in this study who did choose to return to this same school

system completed their student teaching experience in this school system, with two being hired at the same school. All three stated their familiarity with the system's processes, school culture, and student population helped them decide to initially seek employment in this school system and to return for their 2nd year of employment.

During this study, 4 of 6 participants discussed their own changing beliefs toward the teaching profession and their uncertain commitment to remaining in the PreK-12 classroom. Three of these four participants did not return to this school system for their 2nd year of employment and they had not completed coursework and supervised field experiences prior to this 1st year of teaching. In agreement, Darling-Hammond and Depaoli (2020) stated learning theory and completing extensive field experiences with constructive feedback can be a predictor of those teachers who remain in the classroom. None of these three participants were assigned a formal mentor and only one had identified an informal mentor, but it was an inconsistent relationship. Of those three, two admitted they would have more than likely returned for their 2nd year of employment with more support from the system's induction program.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because this study was conducted in a single school system in West Central Georgia, I did not attempt to describe perceived experiences and retention-supporting needs for all 1st-year teachers. Therefore, the study was limited to the reported experiences and perceived supports received from these six 1st-year teachers who agreed to participate in the study who were employed in this school system. The sample size of six is a limitation as the results may not accurately reflect the larger population of 1st-year teachers in this school system, in this state, or located elsewhere. Through contact with the school system's human resources employee, I found there were not two teachers in each grade band (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school) who

had earned teacher certification through traditional certification programs and were eligible to participate in the study. Therefore, one participant was completing her 1st year of teaching while simultaneously completing a teacher certification program that offered coursework focused on pedagogy and content and required supervised field experiences. Further, two other participants were employed without any prior or current support from a teacher certification program and only held provisional certification. This limitation affirms not all six participants entered their 1st year of teaching with a state-recognized baseline of previous teacher training.

All six participants completed the demographics survey and participated in the first interview. Even though I attempted numerous times to schedule a second interview with M4, and although he responded via email that he wanted to complete the second interview, he did not respond to repeated requests to schedule this second interview. Of the 6 participants, 5 were female and 1 was male. This may suggest a limitation to transfer the experiences of the lone male in his 1st year of the school system's induction program to other male 1st-year teachers.

I felt all participants were honest and forthcoming about their experiences in the school system's induction program for 1st-year teachers during both interviews. However, results were limited due to the 1st-year teachers' overall understanding of the school system's induction program. Despite the fact the Induction Program Handbook lists an appendix in its table of contents, those documents were not included in the handbook and were not provided to me. It is unknown how or if these documents play a significant role in the operation of the induction program. Although these limitations exist, Creswell (2013) stated recognizing these concerns may inform future studies.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study examined the teacher induction program in one school system for a limited number of participants. The following recommendations are made after considering this study's findings and limitations.

1. The study can be extended to include beginning teachers in the system's teacher induction program in their 2nd and 3rd years of employment. Examining perspectives of these 2nd- and 3rd-year teachers may provide more evidence of successful induction program components in this school system. Over the course of 3 years, teachers who successfully exit the induction program while remaining employed within the system would be an asset in identifying the strongest supports they received, leading to their retention.
2. I was aware that this school system has changed several school system administrators in the Human Resources Department, and subsequently, the induction program has changed. The system may want to examine how the changes made in the program have impacted new teacher retention. Because this study did not examine teachers in the 2nd and 3rd years of employment, those teachers would not be biased about successful induction program components discussed during the interviews. Further, an inclusion of components presented in this research that leads to higher retention rates could assist in identifying resources needed to increase supports already being provided. Such resources might include financial or time (e.g., class coverage for observations and mentor training, classes for specific curriculum program instruction or technology applications).



3. An examination of beginning teachers who are hired provisionally, with no coursework focused on teaching pedagogy or supervised field experiences in a teacher certification program, could occur to determine the specific supports needed to increase teacher retention for that population. With the current teacher shortage, hiring nontraditional educators is prevalent and may continue soon. Because this study indicated they need different supports, measures to retain these new educators should look differently than those used to retain traditionally prepared teachers.
4. The study could be extended to include perceptions of all stakeholders, including school system administrators, school-level administrators, and both formal and informal mentors as they participate in the new teacher induction program. This extension could occur in this school system or replicated in other school systems. Having insight into how administrators and mentors perceive induction program components could also facilitate the acquisition of additional resources.
5. A more in-depth examination of induction programs within each school type (i.e., elementary, middle, and high) would better highlight needs specific to those populations. For example, some middle and high schools only have a single teacher teaching a subject (e.g., marketing or band). Supports for new teachers in these content areas vary greatly and supplying needs for these new teachers may be very different. Conversely, elementary teachers seem to form tighter bonds with their students and other teachers as they rotate classes less often, if at all, and stronger relationships tend to yield higher satisfaction rates among teachers.

## **Implications of the Study**

Research has shown retaining teachers is more cost effective and typically translates to higher student achievement within a school, especially if they are adequately supported during their first 3 years of employment. Because I observed variances in how induction programs were being administered in different schools within her community's school system, she found value in examining the school system's intentions and practices for their induction program. This study described experiences of six 1st-year teachers, as they completed the 1st year of their school system's induction program, and outlined practices these beginning teachers identified as supports they found valuable in an induction program. One implication of these results is for this school system's administrators to examine their induction program's purpose and practices, guidance materials, and stakeholder roles and responsibilities, along with an assessment of all components to structure its existing induction program to increase retention rates of current educators. Seeking and using input from each year's cadre of new teachers to assess their areas of strengths and weaknesses to tailor induction supports should be practiced. A clear assessment system of the induction program and each of the contributing participants (e.g., administrators, mentors, new teachers) would strengthen the program's purpose, procedures, and practices.

This study's interviews can provide insight as to how participants in their 1st year of teaching perceive intended practices of support by the school system. Interview results, analysis of the Induction Program Handbook, and this study's conceptual framework provided an understanding of supports positively contributing toward teacher retention. Further, there are implications for other school system and state leaders as they create, evaluate, and redesign existing induction programs for 1st-year teachers. Providing monetary support to enable some of the research-proven practices outlined in this study's conceptual framework may be necessary to

retain new teachers successfully. As many school systems have begun to employ educators with no teaching experience or certification program supports (e.g., content and pedagogy coursework, supervised field experiences), separate attention should be given to those 1st-year teachers as their needs may vary greatly from traditionally certificated 1st-year teachers.

### **Dissemination of the Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explain how beginning teachers in a West Central Georgia school system described their experiences in the induction program and to identify the retention-supporting services these 1st-year teachers reported needing as part of a successful induction program. I wanted to provide understanding to the school system's superintendent, school board, administration, and induction program administrators about their system's induction program procedures in practice while protecting the identity of these 1st-year teachers and their mentors. Also, I wanted to provide a comprehensive list of research-proven services and 1st-year teacher requested activities needed as part of an effective induction program. Therefore, a summary of the study's findings will be shared with appropriate stakeholders with this school system. I also plan to present a summary of the findings at applicable statewide higher education organizational meetings, such as Georgia Association for Teacher Educators and the Georgia Field Directors Association. With publication, this study will add to other current research studies on effective induction program components, retention-supporting needs of 1st-year teachers, and the role of mentors in a school system's beginning teacher's induction program. For that reason, I will pursue publication of the study's results in academic, peer-reviewed journals.

## Conclusion

This purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the perceived supports 1st-year teachers in a West Central Georgia school system reported as they participated in a new teacher induction program, and to identify what retention-supporting services these new teachers needed as part of a successful induction program. Research has shown retaining teachers is more efficient—both financially and in measures of student achievement—than replacing new teachers every year. I found varying descriptions of the induction program by the six participants, but none found value or relied upon the school system’s Induction Program Handbook, which did not contain a clear program purpose. Because the Induction Program Handbook analysis found an ambiguous plan of progression through the induction program, participants were also unsure how to move through the induction program successfully. Further, the school system followed the state’s lead in only providing suggested themes for each month, rather than required topics of discussion. Because there was no follow-up or an assessment system of the program, participants were unfamiliar with these suggested monthly topics.

Participants wanted more structure in the teacher induction program and needed transparency about stakeholder roles and responsibilities. Because of this, participants reported limited support by the school system administrators or school-level administration. Reported supports from a mentor were mixed, because not all participants had an assigned formal mentor, but most had received support from an informal mentor they identified themselves.

Although one participant agreed she was unaware of what she does not know, she and the other participants all had ideas about the supports they needed to complete their 1st year of teaching successfully. Aligned with research, these beginning teachers wanted an assigned, formal mentor who had been trained in coaching and who held similar content and grade-level

certification. They also wanted their mentors to be familiar with the students they teach, and to be located near their classrooms so questions could be answered immediately and assistance was readily available. These participants wanted to collaborate with other educators about student work and curriculum needs, to observe other teachers and to be observed by other teachers, and to engage in conversations to become better reflective practitioners. Because school system administrators are struggling to fill classrooms with teachers, it is vital they recognize the diversely trained population applying for educator positions and support them through individualized training and mentorships. Retaining beginning teachers through successful induction programs is the first step in building our teacher workforce, all to impact student achievement positively.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

### Recruitment Letter

Hello,

I am a current doctoral student at Columbus State University. Currently, I am working to complete a study titled: “A Case Study of the Retention-Supporting Needs of Beginning Teachers in a West Central Georgia School System.” The study will examine the school system’s induction program and will seek to identify the retention-supporting needs of beginning teachers.

As a new teacher in the school system, you are invited to be a part of this study by participating in two separate one-on-one interviews. One interview will occur during the first semester of the school year and the second interview will occur during the second semester. Each interview is estimated to take 45 minutes. I am also asking that you complete a brief demographics survey (5-10 minutes) before the first interview. Each interview will be transcribed and I will ask that you review your interview transcript for accuracy. Your identity and all information you share will be confidential.

There is nothing you need to do to prepare for the interviews. Your participation is voluntary and your identity will be protected.

Should you have any questions, please let me know. I hope you will agree to be part of this study. Your experiences as a beginning teacher are important!

Please let me know at your earliest convenience your willingness to participate. I will then be in touch to schedule the first interview that is convenient to your schedule.

Thank you,

Vicki T. Pheil  
xxxxx@columbusstate.edu  
cell: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

## Appendix B

### Document Review Protocol

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Induction Program Handbook	Description
Purpose of induction program	
Procedures of induction program (e.g., assessments and/or feedback)	
Role of school system administration	
Role of school level administration	
Mentor qualifications	
Mentor role and responsibilities	
Mentee role and responsibilities	
Suggested timeline for activities	
Opportunities to observe other teachers	
Opportunities to be observed by other teachers	
Opportunities to practice to become a reflective practitioner	
Discussions with other teachers about student work discussions (e.g., giving feedback to students)	
Collaboration with other professionals (e.g., new teachers, veteran teachers, and leaders)	

Other Notes:

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol

Participant Code \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Introduction: Hi, my name is Vicki Pheil. I appreciate your willingness to help complete this research project focused on your experiences in the school system's induction program and in identifying the needs of support for new teachers. I want to remind you that this interview is confidential, and the recordings and transcripts will be stored in a secure location. Your name or other identifying characteristics will not be shared with school system personnel and will not appear in the final report. This interview should take approximately 45 minutes. After I have transcribed the interview, I will ask that you review the transcription within 7 days so I can be sure your thoughts and ideas have been correctly recorded. Are there any questions before we begin? May I begin the interview and start the recording?

Opening: Before the interview, have participant complete the Participant Demographics Survey (approximately 5-10 minutes). Review demographic survey information with participant.

#### Interview Questions:

1. How would you describe the school system's induction program?  
If needed, specific follow-up questions for #1:
  - a. How would you describe the induction program purpose and process?
  - b. How would you describe the induction program procedures?
2. How would you describe the support you receive as part of the induction program?  
If needed, specific follow-up questions for #2:
  - a. How would you describe the support you receive by the school system administrators?
  - b. How would you describe the support you receive by the school level administrators?
  - c. How would you describe the support you receive by your mentor?
  - d. How would you describe the support you receive by others in the school or system?
3. What activities have you engaged in that support you as a new teacher?  
If needed, specific follow-up questions for #3:
  - a. What opportunities have you had to collaborate with other new teachers?
  - b. What opportunities have you had to observe other teachers?
  - c. What opportunities have you had to be observed by other teachers?
  - d. What qualities does your mentor have that support you as a new teacher?
  - e. What opportunities have you had to practice becoming a reflective practitioner?
  - f. What opportunities have you had to discuss student work and how to give feedback to students with other teachers?
4. What other supports do you need during the induction process to become a successful teacher?  
If needed, specific follow-up questions for #4:
  - a. What other supports do you need for school system administrators provide you during the induction process?

- b. What other supports do you need for school level administrators to provide to you during the induction process?
  - c. What other supports do you need for your mentor to provide to you during the induction process?
5. What other information would you like to tell me about your experiences in the school system's induction program?

Is there any other information you would like to tell me about the induction program or what supports you need as a beginning teacher?

Thank you again for your participation.

## Appendix D Participant Demographics Survey

### Demographics

1. What is your name? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where did you earn your teaching degree? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your highest degree earned? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your current teaching position (grade/content)? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your current school? \_\_\_\_\_

### Induction Program

6. Have you received the school system induction handbook? (*yes or no*)
7. Have you been assigned a mentor in school system induction program? (*yes or no*)
8. Have you met with your mentor at least once? (*yes or no*)

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I understand the school system's induction program <i>purpose</i> .				
I understand the school system's induction program <i>processes</i> .				
I have read the school system induction handbook.				
My mentor and I have made a plan to support me during the induction process.				
My mentor wants to meet my professional needs.				