

**Building a Professional Support Program  
for the Beginning Teacher**

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## **Building a Professional Support Community for the Beginning Teacher**

Martha Ann Stallings

(Abstract)

This qualitative study described the development and implementation of a professional support program for beginning teachers in a school division for the 1997-98 school year. The community members including mentor teachers, principals, and central office staff, supported specific needs in a structured program to assist beginning teachers to learn how to teach. The study involved 25 beginning teachers with no years of experience who were paired with mentor teachers from their elementary schools. The study focused on the experiences and perceptions of the beginning teachers and mentors in the program building process. Phase one description includes components of program planning and development including design, collaboration, and resources. Identified beginning teacher needs, professional support community needed to provide support for the beginning teachers, program contents, and a timeline of activities, complete the description. The description of phase two of program delivery includes specific activities for beginning teacher meetings, recommendations for school-based activities between beginning teachers and mentor teachers, mentor teacher meetings, and connections to school principals.

Methodology included a combination of questionnaires, participant observation and field notes from program planning meetings, beginning teachers meetings, and mentor teacher meetings, research journal, and collection of documents. Text was created from these methods looking at larger themes and issues that emerged to allow for an understanding of beginning teachers and what is involved in their necessary support.

This study suggests that there are several key program essentials for providing support for the beginning teachers. Program essentials include: (1) building program awareness; (2) establishing goals; (3) determining beginning teachers' needs; (4) having a broad-based program participation; (5) preparing participants for their support roles; (6) identifying benefits to

program participants; and (7) providing a program structure. A program structure includes: (1) a kick-off of the program and orientation for beginning teachers; (2) a recommended school-based activity schedule of times and topics for a collaborative relationship between beginning teachers and mentor teachers; (3) beginning teacher meetings held three times during the year for beginning teachers to meet together; (4) and mentor teacher meetings for mentor teachers to meet together. Time is an important issue for beginning teacher support with time needed to plan and develop the program and to build trust among program participants. While mentor teachers find the process of supporting beginners satisfying, they also appreciate receiving tangible benefits such as stipends, release time to work with beginning teachers, and program training. These rewards provide verification of the school division's valuing of the enterprise. An ongoing program evaluation system contributed to program planning decision making and assessment of program effectiveness.

With a support program designed to meet individualized needs, beginning teachers feel supported and appreciated in their first year of teaching. In addition, a school division gains an understanding of what is needed to build support and community building for the beginning teachers and how to assist the mentor teachers as they support the beginning teachers.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and friends. My beloved father Bourbon Elliott always encouraged me to do my best. He would have enjoyed my success. My mother Maxine Elliott continues to support and encourage me in every way. My brothers Mike and Mark have always been there for me and continue to be very special.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

“To make a life in teaching is largely to find your own way, to follow this or that thread, to work until your fingers ache, your mind feels as if it will unravel, and your eyes give out, and to make mistakes, and then rework large pieces. It is sometimes tedious and demanding, confusing and uncertain, and yet it is as often creative and dazzling...”  
(Ayers, 1993, p.1).

Many beginning teacher stories have been told. Vivid memories still exist of my own first year of teaching. However, not until I worked with three beginning teachers in three years did I come to understand the true “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984) for beginning teachers. I was assigned to support beginning teachers but without a district wide support network and spent three years of answering questions, giving direct and indirect support, and of feeling responsibility for their success and failures. My intention was to make “finding their own way” a bit easier for these teachers. However, without a division-wide mentoring program I found that I had to “find my own way” in providing useful assistance.

“It is amazing how much there is to keep up with. I had no idea it would involve so much planning, organization, and extra time after school,” said one of the beginning teachers I was working with after the first few weeks of school. “Parents seem to think I have all the time in the world. The paperwork just keeps piling up and I get notes almost daily from parents asking for extra assignments or permission to turn in late assignments. Is anyone ever happy? No one quite prepared me for this,” she continued.

It became clearer to me after hearing these words just how the complexity of teaching can become overpowering. As the experienced teacher beside her, I wondered what I must do for her. How much time would I have to do what needed to be done? Would she think that I had all the

answers? I knew there were certain things she needed to hear, but was she ready to really hear them? I, too, felt overwhelmed!

Complexity of teaching exists for teachers both experienced and non-experienced. Ayers (1993) tells of his own misunderstanding of teaching before he stepped into his first classroom. He originally thought teaching to be mainly instruction, performing, and being in the center of the classroom. He later learned of the wide range of actions including such areas as instructing, advising, counseling, organizing, assessing, managing, coaching, and inspiring. He described teaching with its pain, conflict, joy, intelligence, uncertainty, and ambiguity. “It requires more judgment and energy and intensity than, on some days, seems humanly possible. Teaching is spectacularly unlimited” (p. 5).

Teaching is complex. Teachers often work in difficult situations. Teachers are expected to be knowledgeable and ready to teach, before the first year of teaching ever happens. Isolation from adults can be common with one of the biggest surprises of teaching for many beginners is how isolated they are (Ryan, 1992). “In teaching, the novice assumes essentially the same job responsibilities that the 20-year veteran does, but on the first day of employment. Teachers are isolated from their peers for nearly all of the work day...” (Huling-Austin, 1989, p. 7). In addition, the lack of gradual induction and the isolation that beginning teachers experience frequently cause them to learn by trial and error (Lortie, 1975). There are needless and arbitrary demands with expectations of covering everything without neglecting anything. Ayers (1993) continues by describing complexity of teaching to be excruciating. He tells of students coming to us with specific backgrounds with unique desires, abilities, intentions, and needs. We somehow must reach out and met each student’s needs.

More specifically, for the beginner, complexity is reality. Veenman (1984) describes such reality in complexity of teaching for the beginner. “Reality shock” and changes in behaviors and attitudes are considered. He describes the “reality shock” concept as the collapse of ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of the everyday classroom life. The transition from teacher training to the first teaching job is often dramatic and traumatic. The “reality shock”

is both personal and situational. Such causes as inadequate professional training, problematic school situations, inadequate professional training, shortage of materials and loneliness in the work place contribute to the these difficult teaching situations.

Veenman (1984) further explains that research shows that complexity exists for the beginner because many times they are under-trained for the demands of their work. He identified 24 problem areas and classified these according to their importance and rank order. Classroom discipline was perceived as a serious problem area. It was followed by motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' work, and relationships with parents. The list was a powerful one in terms of identifying the demands of all teachers, but especially for the beginner. Without experience it is difficult to face such demands. Knowing what is most important or the best way to tackle the complexity of teaching can be overwhelming to the beginner.

#### Focusing on the Problem

According to Veenman (1984) the socializing process of becoming a teacher focuses on the interplay between individuals' needs, capabilities, intentions, and institutional constraints. Understanding the beginner, and recognizing how much help, support, and training is needed, is crucial to this social organization theory.

Hartzell (1990) explains that becoming a member of an organization involves socialization to learn the norms, values, and required behavior patterns of the new group. Teaching is no exception with the most widely recognized experiences of socialization taking place during the first year of teaching. Peers are seen as perhaps the most important factor in helping newcomers adjust and feel effective. Peers have the power to give or withhold social acceptance. Louis, Posner, & Powell, (1983) offer evidence that informal communication with colleagues is perceived by employees to be a major contributor to adjustment.

Ayers (1993) describes teaching as relational and interactive, requiring dialogue, give and take, and back and forth. “Like friendship, good teaching is not something that can be entirely scripted, pre-planned, or pre-specified.” (Ayers, 1993, p. 18). He states that socialization of teaching takes time for these relationships and for such growth and development.

Griffin (1985) and Lacey (1977) have found that new teachers are quick to respond positively to the norms of schools in which they are teaching. They found that beginners many times abandon expectations of the pre-service teacher preparation programs from which they come. Studies show that new teachers are often influenced by persons in their school settings. Feeling abandoned and needing to adjust to the teaching environment are problem areas for the beginners. Therefore linking new teachers with excellent mentors and other professionals can increase the likelihood for quality performance in new teachers.

### Mentoring

Several studies have shown that first year teachers without organized induction programs are often left to fend for themselves. Niles, Wildman, McLaughlin, and Magliaro (1989) for example have found that teachers require special conditions for learning to teach. “...very little is done in education either to specifically prepare teachers for the beginning experience or to help them through it. For the most part, the responsibility for getting through the first year of teaching has been shouldered almost totally by the beginning teacher” (p. 5). Lortie (1966) described beginning teaching as a process of self-socialization, involving trial-and-error learning. Dollase found (1992) that Lortie’s still holds true today. “Teachers remain largely autonomous in the classroom and often are left to “wing it,” he continued. “Beginners face most major decisions on their own” (p. 129).

Brown and Petersen (1991) revealed that a two-fold problem results from meager assistance provided for the beginning teacher. The first problem occurs when beginners only ask for help when they are sure their competency will not be questioned. The second part occurs because

experienced teachers are reluctant to offer assistance for fear of appearing as though they are interfering.

Mentoring is one strategy for assisting new teachers with specific activities in a planned outline. Mentoring has become a national educational reform showing significant and positive impact on the beginning teacher and his or her mentor (Dollase, 1992). The experience of mentoring was cited by Schein (1989) in describing the term mentor in the educational setting to mean teacher, coach, trainer, positive role model, developer of talent, opener of doors, protector, sponsor, and successful leader. Matching role expectations with responsibilities of the mentor has become a current educational system's attempt to meet the needs and concerns of the beginner. This is a complex task and one I believed important in defining a mentor's role for our division.

### Getting the Turf Right

Barth (1990) began his foreword of Improving Schools from Within describing his trust for teachers. He told of the trust of energy, commitment, imagination, and potential of teachers and principals. "Get the setting - the teachers' turf - right," he tells us, and the changes for good schooling will occur (p. xi). Assisting with getting such turf right for the beginner is the essence of my study. Developing teacher trust and building honest relationships where teachers can develop needed confidence with the help of their colleagues is crucial to beginning teacher success. When teachers work in a place where colleagues listen well and take one another seriously, an expectation can develop where everyone can make a difference in the daily lives of each individual and the overall life of school. A problem in my district is that a support system is not in place to develop this community and get the "turf" right for the beginning teachers.

### Statement of Problem

My school division, similar to numerous others, does not have a formal, comprehensive district-wide support system for beginning teachers. Even though I believe the central office

recognizes that beginners need extra time, support, and resources, a support plan does not exist. A number of years ago a part-time position for the district, provided by state funds, provided some program coordination for beginning teacher support. However, when the funds were no longer available, the position was eliminated. At that time, the commitment needed to provide support for the beginning teacher was not apparent. Therefore an organized centralized support system did not continue and the mentoring for beginners became the responsibility of individual schools. The result was an unevenness in the socialization process for beginners in the system.

Since then, it has appeared that the mentoring of beginners remained a lower priority and did not emerge as a major concern. The typical strategy for providing support has been to place a beginner beside someone who does a good job and has the willingness and altruism to provide assistance. Beginners are encouraged to ask for help around them on their team or grade level. Principals realize more support is needed but they too are at a loss as to assist with that task. “Everyone knows the first year is the hardest. Just do the best you can,” commented a principal to a beginning teacher recently. The problem continues - survival of the fittest.

### Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the development and implementation of a process to create a professional support community for beginning teachers in my school district. In addition, the study focused on describing needs and experiences of beginning teachers and mentors in the community building process. The description also includes delineation of the planning and context of the program, perceptions on the process of beginners and mentors, and an analysis by the program’s facilitator.

### Rationale

The theoretical and practical grounding for this study comes from the literature in the area of professional community, mentoring support in that community structure, collegiality,

collaboration, and reflection. These research areas support and describe the necessary interactions for building professional community for the beginning teachers.

### Professional Community

Professional community among teachers is regarded as an ingredient needed for the restructuring and improvement of teaching. Louis, Kruse, and Raywide (1996) contended that when schools are seen as learning organizations and professional communities, teacher involvement is valued. By emphasizing needed change in the culture of schools, the reform movement can concentrate on the heart of the school - the teaching and learning process. Conditions such as reflective dialogue, shared values, collective focus on student learning, and collaboration thus become important and valued for the teachers. Structured in a timely fashion, a professional community that focuses on the beginning teacher can increase learning and community.

Duckworth (1996) emphasized that most teachers need the support of some nearby co-workers who are trying to do the same thing, and with whom they can share notes. Even more important she says is the presence of an experienced teacher to whom the beginner can go with questions and problems. This assistance and encouragement needs to be in place for the support.

Barth's (1990) conception of a community involves a good school and healthy workplace. For him, a community of learners describes a place where students and adults are engaged in active learning in matters of importance and where everyone is encouraging everyone else's learning. He suggests a climate of risk taking and collegiality in which people genuinely want to participate. In such a community of learners, learning is simultaneous. They think critically and analytically and solve problems that are important to them. Barth's stories of school environments apply to the development of a professional learning community.

In professional learning communities, learners are committed to discovering conditions that elicit and support human learning while providing the needed prerequisites. Barth (1990, p.39) summarizes by saying a community of learners seems to work from the following assumptions:

- 1) Schools have the capacity to improve themselves if the conditions are right. A major responsibility of those outside the schools is to help provide these conditions for those inside the schools.
- 2) What needs to be improved about schools is their culture, quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences.
- 3) With the need, purpose, and right conditions in place, adults and students alike learn while energizing and contributing to the learning of others.
- 4) School improvement is an effort to determine and provide, both without and within, conditions under which those in schools can promote and sustain learning among themselves.

Taken seriously, these assumptions can lead to some fresh thinking about the culture of schools and what people do in them. Colleagues helping one another can provide a powerful source of recognition and respect for all involved. When teachers engage in serious learning about themselves, they find their students also take learning more seriously.

Barth (1990) says that teachers can become learners and also be effective in stimulating and promoting the development of other teachers. These kind of practices can have a significant influence on the culture of schools and suggest that it is possible for schools to make strides toward becoming communities of learners.

Recent research (Clark and Clark, 1996) describes instructional practices that facilitate involvement of teachers in increasing community. They maintain that there are several challenges in developing the learning communities. These challenges can easily be transformed into principles that guide development of professional community.

- A strong sense of purpose will define the vision for the program in collaboration with all the stakeholders.
- A knowledge base drawn from the world of practice will help define program content.
- Instructional practices that facilitate involvement of real-life problem-solving will increase the quality of mentoring.

As these researchers summarize, there are many challenges for implementing community development. The need is just too crucial to be ignored. Mentoring is one way of assisting with this need of providing support for the beginning teacher.

### Mentoring in the Professional Community

The concept of mentoring (Brown & Petersen, 1991) can provide educators with a vehicle for professionalizing the system of education. Such concepts as sharing, collaborating, and raising individual self-esteem through the pride of nurturing another adult can lead to the development of professional community. Blank and Sinclair (1992) describe mentoring as a means of renewal for the mentor and as survival for the beginner. School systems are becoming more aware of the critical role mentors play in nurturing the potential of their new teachers and helping them develop in their teaching.

Mentoring is not only essential in helping to establish a beginning teacher as a successful educator but also critical in providing a means whereby master teachers can grow, be rewarded, and share competencies (Brown and Petersen, 1991). Mentors often find positive benefits regarding their own performance as learning expands with their beginning teacher mentoring activities. When mentor teachers internalize and perform mentoring, job satisfaction is often a personal and professional by-product. A mentoring relationship can have a significant influence on the thinking, practice, and attitudes of experienced teachers (Niles, McLaughlin, Wildman, and Magliaro, 1989). Jacobsen (1992) reported that mentor participation in a support program for beginning teachers

enhanced their skills and caused them to reflect on their performance, finding a positive impact on their teaching.

Mentoring then can be a powerful staff development vehicle (Hofsess, 1990). Teacher choice and ownership through self-analysis offer the greatest chance for growth. Involvement as a mentor benefits the beginning teacher, the mentor, and the school district. By creating a cadre of teachers working together who become supportive and caring about each other, benefits occur for all participants. Hofsess (1990, p. 24) recommends the following: (a) that mentors meet three times during the year in cluster groups to provide ongoing support for each other, (b) that mentors receive some training in the concepts they will be dealing with, and (c) that opportunities for beginners to observe their mentoring teachers be provided. These recommendations were considerations for this beginning teacher project.

Importantly, for the beginning teacher, mentoring can increase the prospect that they continue in the profession while maintaining a feeling of confidence. Mentoring programs can provide needed structure and support in helping new teachers learn to teach, and therefore promote such high levels of reliance. They want to remain a teacher!

Research has shown that the way learning occurs during the first years greatly influences how learning will continue in subsequent years (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles, McLaughlin, and Drill, 1988), thus establishing a foundation for career-long professional growth. In addition, because mentoring makes schools more satisfying for teachers, it follows that schools are better places for students. The positive effects are significant.

Wildman, Magliaro, McLaughlin, and Niles (1990) showed the significance of the “beginningness” of teaching along with the recognition of learning that needs to take place during the first several years of teaching. These authors used longitudinal studies of the Virginia Teacher Assistance Programs and looked at the beginning teacher and the experienced collaborator in the mentoring role. They found that mentoring is a natural function for teachers. The idea that most teachers wanted to use their experiences and expertise to help the beginner is important. In

addition, they found that mentoring is one of the easier non-controversial interventions to gain universal support for our schools. Most people recognize and support a better induction environment for beginning teachers because of the acknowledgment that much of learning to teach occurs during the first several years of teaching.

Finally, with the conclusion that many mentors believed that being a mentor helped them grow as a teacher and forced them to reflect on their own teaching, the mentors experienced both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Mentors related a new appreciation for the complexity of teaching and found themselves rewarded when involved in the complex interactions of beginning teacher socialization and community building.

### Collegiality

I believe collegiality to be important in schools. Little (1981) described collegiality as a presence of four specific behaviors in schools where adults talk about practice, observe each other, work on curriculum, and teach each other about what they know about teaching and learning. Servioianni (1992, p. 86) commented that “There is a widespread agreement that collegiality among teachers is an important ingredient of promoting better working conditions, improving teaching practice, and getting better results.”

Barth (1990) viewed collegiality as key to the school becoming a community of learners while improving schools. He explained that collegiality evokes a high level of morale and trust among adults. Three specific behaviors found present in collegiality were practice talk, observation, and teaching each other. These are behaviors that need to be considered in the development of professional community. Mentoring is a special brand of collegiality. Enz et al. (1992) identified how a mentor can directly influence a beginning teacher’s instructional development through classroom observations, conferences, and providing feedback.

As important as it is, collegiality can be extremely difficult to introduce into the culture of schools. It may actually be easier to introduce to the beginner than to the experienced teacher. Collegiality, as described by Barth (1990) requires that everyone be willing to give up something without knowing in advance just what that may be. Cooperation can be common among teachers but collegiality not as easily achieved. As teachers, we become focused on what is important in our own classrooms, but many times neglect the good of the entire school. It is a constant struggle but an important feature of developing community.

### Dimensions of Collaboration

Developing collaboration relationships, such as in a professional community project, is essential for success. People learn best from active engagement with others. Christiansen, Goulet, Krentz, and Maeers (1997) have shown that collaboration does not just naturally occur. It requires practice to mature. These authors maintained that if a group is to develop trust, members must be given time to get to know each other on a personal basis. All parties must have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and competence. Teachers involved in a professional community project must understand the nature of the proposed change and be willing to invest time and resources into making the project work. Having an understanding of the perspectives and needs of each other is essential.

True collaboration occurs within a climate of caring in both a personal and professional sense (Christiansen et.al., 1997). It must become evident that group members recognize they have professional and other responsibilities outside of the group. This means that one will not always be able to give one's entire attention to collaborative tasks and that time will be needed to regenerate. In addition, once roles and levels of commitment have been negotiated, if an individual does not fulfill a personal commitment, actions need to be dealt with openly and honestly.

Lieberman (1986) found many benefits of teacher collaboration for research and development. She found that the collaborative process yielded a method for reflection and action.

In collaborative relationships when a teacher's definition of a problem is respected, a structure for cooperation and strategies is formed. Lieberman found that the following benefits for teacher collaboration can assist with the building of a beginning teacher professional community: (a) structure for teachers that facilitates reflection and action on the messiness of teaching; (b) interaction that encourages greater professional talk and action related to teaching, learning, and school problems; and (c) possibilities for teachers to assume new roles and exhibit leadership which lead to a greater sense of empowerment.

Firestone and Pennell (1993) clearly defined the extent to which teacher-to-teacher collaboration interaction enhances the meaningfulness of teaching. Collaboration can help overcome uncertainties about the means and ends of teaching. These researchers described good teaching as a complex act that requires intrinsic motivation. With opportunities where teachers can provide common goals and discuss useful methods of teaching, teaching certainty can be facilitated. Professional community interactions should provide these needed opportunities.

Griffin (1986) suggested that important features of collaborative programs include analysis and reflection. Assessment of satisfaction with relationships, perceptions of mentor functions, and the frequency and purpose of the communication between the beginning and mentor teachers was viewed as important.

Collaboration among teachers is crucial to beginning teacher learning. When teachers are given the opportunities to interact with colleagues, learning among beginners and mentors can take place. To assist with the development of interaction among colleagues, and to encourage such collaboration, reflection and teacher voice must be addressed.

### Teacher Reflection

Learning to reflect, a role in the process of developing teacher's voice, is powerful. Gaining a sense of self and assisting each other through reflection are essential in the development of a mentoring professional community.

James (1996) tells of the importance of reflection in teacher education by citing an action research project with technology studies teachers. What emerged from her research was the power of the learning group culture in assisting both learning and reflection. Through use of role play, reflective exercises, case studies, and small-group problem-solving, she found people were asked to take control over their own learning. She concluded: (1) group process was found important with feelings of support; (2) positive people started to adopt a humanistic approach to working with their students; (3) the challenge of being consistently aware of others' feelings was expressed with the importance of mutual support and recognition; (4) people learned that others "were in the same boat" and became more aware and self-accepting; and (5) discussion of narrative enabled people to establish intimate relationships with each other, which were crucial in influencing the differences between the group members. The development of necessary conditions for reflection and empowerment in the building of community will be important.

According to Dollase (1992), becoming more reflective and thoughtful about one's teaching is an area of need for beginning teachers. Dollase calls this "on-the-run-teaching" (p. 147). Because of the hectic nature of the school day, beginning teachers do not have adequate time to reflect on their practice or to revise plans for more effective instruction. Dollase stated, "The norms of the teaching profession work against assessing, revising, and improving one's daily on-the-job performance. There is just too much to be done. Yet, reflection-on-practice has been found to be the mark of professionalism and the principle way to bring about improvement in teaching" (p. 147). He maintains that beginning teachers need to be encouraged and given time to reflect on practice which leads to professional growth. A professional community should help with this reflection.

Brookfield (1995) maintains that there is a need to encourage critical reflection for beginning teacher survival. One of the important purposes of critical reflection is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests. This process can happen when teachers discover and examine their assumptions by viewing their practice through: autobiographical reflection, students' eyes, colleagues' perceptions and experiences, and readings around our area of practice.

In the area of reflection, Wildman, Niles, Magliaro, and McLaughlin (1990) described how to promote reflective practice among beginning and experienced teachers. The forces found important in stimulating reflection are crucial in the development of a professional community. Some basic conditions were: (a) shared conceptions of teaching; (b) common beliefs about students; (c) available time to think and work together; (d) physical proximity in the school; and (e) shared personal and professional respect. This research found that mentoring teachers can learn to be systematically reflective and use reflections on a day-to-day basis to inform their own teaching as well as that of the beginner when the conditions are right.

Recognizing that reflection, although difficult to develop, is an important tool in teachers' growth, leads to the belief that both the beginner and the mentor can make the commitment to model critical reflection. Trust and true relationships can develop in a professional community.

### Summary

The major research areas involved in this project are valuable components of developing professional community for the beginning teacher: (1) Professional community, with joint ownership and participation, can provide the sense of belonging, support, and encouragement needed for the beginning teacher. (2) Mentoring, as a major part of the community structure, can provide the guidance and assistance with those beginning teacher tasks, that somehow just seem impossible. (3) Collegiality can help build that needed morale and trust in the school culture needed for all teachers, but especially for the beginner. Recognition that there is a need to feel a sense of belonging, and a need to understand what it means to be a beginning teacher can lead to the importance of collaboration. (4) Working collaboratively can assist with these important beginning teacher needs. (5) Finally, learning to reflect can be crucial in developing interaction among colleagues and sensing empowerment in a group learning situation.

Use of these components in assisting new teachers can support the education and development of the beginning teacher. Through such significant areas, the development of a

professional learning community, where group members encourage everyone else's learning, becomes reality.

### Overview of the Study

This qualitative action research project was focused on building a professional community that identified and addressed the needs of twenty-five beginning teachers. The study involved the K-5 beginning (0 experience) teachers at eleven of the thirteen district's elementary schools.

The beginning teachers and mentors met together on-site periodically throughout the year with a recommended time schedule provided. Separate sessions were held for the beginning and mentor teachers. Both groups participated in conversations and activities that helped the beginners specify and act on their needs and provide the mentors with ideas on how to help their new colleagues. Support was provided to the mentors in developing helpful strategies of assistance. All program professional community members engaged in reflective activities on the process of community building to provide the basis for future program development.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

#### Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a professional community for beginning teachers in our school division during the 1997-98 school year. The community was needed to provide a network of educators who would support specific needs of beginning teachers. A case study focused on the lived experiences of the participants in this community building. This inquiry revealed the essential features of the planning and implementation of the community building process. It also produced insight into the experiences and needs of beginners and mentors.

#### Research Perspective

A qualitative approach was selected for this research project. The complexity of teaching, including the needs of the beginning teacher, demanded the use of different techniques. A qualitative approach was the most compatible for this inquiry. According to Hitchcock & Hughes (1995), a qualitative method places individual actors at its centre. They maintained that with such interaction among participants, there is “qualification of actions, ideas, values, and meanings through the eyes of participants rather than quantification through the eyes of an outside observer” (1995, p.26). In building this program it was the actions, ideas, values, and meanings of the participants that were most critical for creating the “right turf” (Barth, 1990) for the beginners.

### Action Research Implementation

#### Rationale for Action Research

According to Hitchcock & Hughes (1995), the principal features of an action research approach are change (action) and collaboration between researchers. They maintained that action researchers are concerned about improving a situation through intervention and in collaboration with participants. Clearly the situation in my school division for beginners demanded change and created an ideal setting for such an action research project.

According to Calhoun (1994), a school division can engage in establishing a common goal, collecting and sharing information about that goal, and making collective decisions. She advocated group work as part of the action research project because of the power of group discussion and interaction in producing commitment. The support for changes in attitude and behavior provided by group interaction and involvement can build awareness of the importance of building a learning community. In addition, by creating environments and situations where teachers learn from each other, networking and community building became a natural occurrence while acquiring this new knowledge. With the power of group interactions and decision making in this program, it was assumed good things could happen for teachers, by teachers. I believe that teachers are professionals and appreciate professional growth. This action research process was intended to focus the power of teacher collaboration on the problem of helping beginning teachers.

As described by Calhoun (1994), in order to conduct school-wide action research, I structured routines for continuous confrontation with data on the beginning teacher support community. The routines were guided by phases of inquiry including the selection of a problem, collection and organization of data, and interpretation of the data related to the problem of providing support for the beginning teacher. The last step of the action research cycle was taking action on the data. The phases overlapped, I retraced my steps, and revised as needed throughout

the process. This collective inquiry into beginning teaching was a cyclic process and served as a formative evaluation of initiatives being taken.

In order to support the major initiatives and to benefit from wisdom of other educators, the action research model included a study of available professional literature in the field of beginning teaching, mentor teaching, and building learning communities. I combined the information from both internal and external information into a collective decision-making process. The internal information was gathered from the on-site project involving the community groups. The external information was gathered from the study of literature and research and was found very relevant throughout the study. Information from other school divisions providing support programs became a valued resource.

I recognized that in order for change to take place with the division's support of beginner teachers, a person internal to the division, needed to be involved. Putting myself into the role of facilitator, I involved educators from my school division. I depended on them in the collaborative action research project. As teachers, principals, and central office staff, the action research team focused on the problem of support for beginning teachers. Through collaborative efforts, many team members became skilled observers and evaluators using inquiry in the building process.

### Selecting the Problem

My past experiences with beginning teacher issues, division needs, and desires of beginning and mentor teachers, helped me frame the problem for the first step of the action research project. My personal experiences included the knowledge of support needed in my beginning years of teaching and the lack of assistance provided for me in my division as I worked as a mentor with many beginning teachers. I also heard teacher stories from colleagues and parents about known experiences of the struggles of beginning teaching. The needs of the school division included assisting beginning teachers to become confident and skilled in the teaching profession, and building a formalized support program preparing and giving support to the experienced mentor

teachers supporting the beginning teachers. Finally, inadequate support being provided to the beginning teachers was a major problem for all first year teachers in our division. Huling-Austin (1989) reported, “beginning teachers enter the real world of teaching and find that the challenges are more difficult than their collegiate study suggested. New teachers are suddenly on the spot to carry out full professional responsibilities. For many the first year is a sink-or-swim experience” (p. 5). Providing assistance and support to the beginning teacher was the framework selected to design and establish the program.

### Design

In this qualitative study, some of the research design emerged over time. Being tuned in to the participants and being acutely tuned into experiences of others, is to indwell (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and was an important aspect of this study. I became involved within the community-building activities, served as a facilitator and participant observer at other times. Gaining an understanding of the community members actions and roles in particular situations aided in developing a rich description of the experience.

The study was built on an action research model with a case study format to report the findings. The study was divided into two time phases that included planning and development of the program, and delivery and evaluation. Phase one provided the planning and development of the program. Phase two included the establishment of conditions for program delivery. Beginning teacher meetings, school-based mentoring meetings, and mentor teacher meetings were part of phase two. The two phases are explained below.

- **Phase 1: Planning and Developing the Program**  
Involved planning activities and securing resources for entry into the project.

- **Phase 2: Program Delivery and Evaluation**

Included providing opportunities for beginning teacher meetings and on-site mentoring meetings with the following four sessions:

### **Division-wide Beginning Teacher Meetings**

#### **Meeting 1: Orientation Week for 1997-98 School Year**

This included three beginning teacher sessions to kick-off the program and to address the needs of the beginning teachers, the division, and of the program

#### **Meeting 2: Reflecting and Making Changes**

This meeting which provided a time to share uncertainties and questions about teaching became important.

#### **Meeting 3: Policies and Problem Solving**

This meeting provided time to reflect difficulties and problems of beginning teaching and techniques and solutions for solving them. Policies around division testing, school law, and student retention became important..

#### **Meeting 4: Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past**

This meeting focused on recognizing successes in teaching and making changes for the next year. Public recognition of the program participants was also provided.

### **Division-wide Mentor Teacher Meetings**

#### **Meeting 1: Beginning of the Year Kick-Off**

A meeting took place to introduce the program goals and expectations to mentor teachers. Reflection among participants about program development also occurred.

#### **Meeting 2: End of the Year Reflection**

Opportunity was provided for program feedback and reflection from mentor teachers. Recommendations for future programs

programs were made at this time.

### Data Collection

There were special needs of the beginning teachers and conditions that needed to be created to effect and address the needs. Using professional literature, the decision was made on what data should be collected and under what conditions. There was a constant interplay between the literature and participation. The data procedure of collection, analysis, and recording was regular and frequent so that changes and trends could be seen.

Identifying ways that the data could be recorded and organized was important for the project. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) described three basic processes which constitute the main ingredients of any qualitative research technique. Observation, interrogation, and data collection were all considered important and are described below.

- observation - listening and looking at what the people in the research setting are doing
- interrogation - talking to those subjects about the meanings they attach to their actions
- documentary and oral data collection - interpretation of meanings from written or oral data

Because the development of the program depended on feedback from participants, data sources were determined important from the planning and development phase and through the program delivery and evaluation. Table 1 gives the outline of the data sources accessed for Phase 1 of planning and development phase. Table 2 gives the data source accessed for Phase 2 of the program for delivery and evaluation.

Collecting and organizing information as it related to the research questions led to a discovery of the phenomena of beginning teacher community development. The major data sources used are described below in more detail.

Table 1. Research data sources design for Phase 1

<b>Phase Title</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Questionnaires</b>	<b>Field Notes and Observations</b>	<b>Research Journal</b>	<b>Audio Taping</b>	<b>Documents</b>
Planning and Development	Summer 1997		X	X		X

Table 2. Research data sources design for Phase 2 of delivery and evaluation

<b>Phase 2 Meetings</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Questionnaires</b>	<b>Field Notes and Observations</b>	<b>Research Journal</b>	<b>Audio taping</b>	<b>Documents</b>
1) Orientation Week	Mid-August - Nov. 21, 1997	X	X	X		X
2) Reflecting and Making Changes	Nov. 21- March 12, 1998	X	X	X	X	X
3) Policies and Problem Solving	March 12 - May 11, 1998	X	X	X		X
4) Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past	May 11, 1998	X	X	X		X

### Questionnaires

Any good questionnaire according to Suskie (1992) is an undertaking that involves considerable time and resources. Questionnaires were an important source of information during my project. They were an efficient and useful way to keep a steady flow of information regarding the relevance and direction of the program. Asking questions all throughout the project, allowed for program direction. I kept the questionnaires confidential so that individual responses could not be identified. I emphasized the value and importance of the questionnaires to assist with a project goal of determining how mentors and beginning teachers see their role in this community building project.

I surveyed all the school division's new teachers during the orientation week to determine teacher needs. I individualized and identified the questionnaires for the beginning teachers from the experienced teachers and from elementary to secondary. The format I used were open-ended or free-response questions with a blank space where the respondents could compose their own answers. A similar questionnaire instrument was used with the mentoring teachers and beginning teachers at the group meetings during the year. Questionnaires were used with beginning teachers four times during the year (see Appendixes A, B, C, and D), mentor teachers two times during the year (see Appendixes E and F), and principals two times during the year (see Appendixes G and H). With the design of the longitudinal questionnaire, I analyzed needs and changes of beginning and mentor teachers. I believe these were significant in describing the process throughout the project and providing formative feedback for the various activities.

In order to begin identifying and analyzing teacher needs, so that appropriate and responsive support could be given, the first questionnaires were issued during orientation week to beginning teachers and experienced teachers new to the division. At the end of the first week of school questionnaires were issued to beginning teachers, mentor teachers, and principals. Knowing what kinds of problems the teachers were having locally and what kinds of assistance beginning teachers needed, was important feedback. For the mentor teachers and principals I wanted to build awareness to the importance of building a supportive environment. I believed by asking these two major support groups to reflect and to analyze what roles they had played to-date with beginning

teachers, it would encourage them to think about the importance of their relationships. Qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) allowed these study participants to focus on naturally occurring events in their specific situations. This action research provided feedback in the initial part of phase 2 that helped design the direction of the program.

Timing of questionnaires was an important issue to consider. For example, questionnaires were issued during that important time of the school year, after the work week and during the first week of school. So many of the issues of providing support for the beginning teacher take place during these two weeks of school. Teachers are becoming familiarized with building and division operating policies and procedures, curriculum development and timetables, and to social structure of the school. The purpose of the questionnaires was to collect and organize judgments of beginning teachers, mentor teachers, and principals. Responding to questions about what support was being provided and what questions were being asked at the beginning of the school year allowed the participants to reflect and respond while it was fresh on their minds, giving specific examples. In addition, program needs were analyzed by identifying the amount of time being spent in mentoring the beginning teachers and specific types of activities being provided. Such program information questions further developed program delivery.

Questionnaires were given to all K-5 beginning teachers at each of the three beginning teacher meetings. The responses served the purposes of conducting a continuing needs assessment, monitoring program operation, and determining program effectiveness (Kay, 1989). Data focused on such things as job difficulties and needs, successes, and school-based support being provided. Questionnaire results were read through several times, summarized, analyzed, grouped by theme, and reported by frequency. Questionnaires allowed the beginning teachers to reflect on school-based activities taking place between them and the mentor teachers. Questionnaires and teacher dialogue from the meetings were my only connection to school-based activities.

The second set of questionnaires for mentor teachers were issued three weeks before the end of the school year. Specific on-site mentoring activities were summarized and reflected upon. Principals received their end-of-the-program questionnaire in early summer. With the large amount

of paperwork that has to be done by principals at the end of the school year, I believed that waiting two weeks later would give them more quality time to respond. The purposes of the questionnaire were to connect with the principals at the end of the program and for the principals to rate the beginning teacher support program effectiveness with supporting statements. The information was used to analyze program output.

### Participant Observations

The purpose of participant observation was to experience activities directly and get the feel of certain events. While facilitating, I also recorded my own perceptions of these events. Spradley (1980) says that the use of introspection allows using ourselves as a research instrument. My observations focused on meetings at the central office, at the four beginning teacher meetings and two mentor meetings. In the meetings, group dialogue served as a principle source of data. Group discussion was focused around identified issues such as classroom management and meeting diverse needs of students but other themes developed. The participant observations allowed group interactions to be created that were more natural and less controlled. The meeting topics demanded relatively uncontaminated statements of the participants' experiences and perspectives, thus participant observation was a close approximation to naturalness (Morgan, 1997).

As a participant observer, I came to the meetings with two goals as described by Spradley (1980): (1) to participate fully in activities appropriate to the situation; and (2) to observe and record the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation.

By being a participant observer I had the difficult task of becoming both an insider and an outsider. It was important to serve in the role as a facilitator to help establish routines for the project and group activities and to be patient and supportive throughout. There were times that I was asked to join a group for a particular activity. When it was grade level driven, I joined my appropriate grade level group.

During the beginning teacher meeting activities, teachers were encouraged to share their stories about learning to teach. Teachers' stories are very important and looking through the eyes of first-year teachers was a major part of the process of developing community for the beginning teachers. The personal account stories edited by Ryan (1992) and Kane (1991) were important in aiding my understanding of the power of sharing beginning teacher stories. "There is so much happening during the first year of teaching that even the most intellectually agile beginner has trouble sorting it all out. For most, it is data overload" (Ryan, 1992, p. 247). With such data overload, there is little time to sort out incoming information and then reflect on it before more pours in. Having time at meetings to talk about teacher stories allowed individual teachers to share and reflect on their experiences. Sharing of stories also allowed others to ask themselves whether or not they would have responded to various situations in similar ways and learn things to do and avoid. The important lesson is that the beginning teachers learn they are not alone. Many beginning teachers become disappointed in themselves, feeling they have failed their students. Knowing that others have problems similar to their own can be reassuring (Ryan, 1992).

### Field Notes

The field notes contained what was seen and heard by the researcher. "The keen observations and important conversations one has in the field cannot be fully utilized in a rigorous analysis of the data unless they are written down" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 73).

The task of preparing useful field notes involved ideas described by Maykut & Morehouse (1994). I gathered field notes throughout this project of relevant actions and activities. Such activities involved planning meetings, beginning teacher meetings, and mentor teacher meetings. I captured the exact words of participants as often as I could. These field notes allowed me to locate meanings people placed on events and process of their lives and to

their perceptions, assumptions, and connections of meanings to the social world around them (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Jotting down some of the observations such as terms and ideas heard or behaviors that were unusual were important to be recalled later. I also noted and then interpreted the hunches I had. Field notes were expanded upon shortly after each meeting. Since it is humanly impossible to record everything that is said, taking the time to reflect and elaborate on recorded notes became valuable. Field notes were dated and reread several times. I eventually analyzed the notes, coding for identification purposes of themes and frequency.

Data reduction, the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) became part of the data analysis of field notes. After writing summaries of dated meetings and conversations, I read and reread the notes, looked for themes, identified clusters, and made interpretations and some conclusions on program direction.

### Research Journal

A research journal was a continuous process which allowed me to recognize personal insights to words and actions during the research project. I became able through this personal side of field work, to describe experiences, successes and failures, fears, confusions, and ideas. Such entries included notes made primarily after meetings with central office staff members, connections with other school districts, and conversations with teachers. I followed with my subjective feelings after objective statements were made. I found the research journal especially valuable at the beginning of the project during the planning phase. I wrote about my initial entry of the program into the division with the assistant superintendent. I responded to central office support team meetings as we were developing program goals and planning orientation week activities. I wrote about casual conversations with both participants and non-participants, that involved beginning teacher stories and descriptions of support needed. I found it helpful to go back and reread my journal several times during the year. It assisted me with valuing the goals and direction of the program. I also reread the journal for assistance in making program recommendations and planning for future programs.

### Audio Taping

I projected the use of audio taping for beginning teacher meetings to increase the accuracy of my data collection as a researcher. I asked for permission from participants and received no objection to taping the first beginning teacher session. I taped the introduction to the meeting and the parent speaker activity. However, I sensed in the question and answer period of that activity, that the teachers were uncomfortable. Some of the teachers spent a great deal of time looking at the tape recorder. At the break I asked a beginner teacher about her feelings on the use of the audio taping and she felt it made some teachers uncomfortable. Even though it was early in the program and some of the nervousness could have been from the program comfort level yet being established, I eliminated the use of audio taping as a data source at that point in the program. Audio taping was not a crucial data source for my program analysis. It was not worth making beginning teachers anxious about sharing experiences about their first year of teaching.

### Documents

The task of collecting documents was on going throughout the project. Document collection included meeting agendas and materials, shared documents found important either to the beginner or mentor, questionnaires, and division-wide notes such as staff development opportunities. Documents were dated, then filed by type of event and activity. In November, I continued to analyze documents by rereading, recording, and coding the types of documents into a new format. I coded them not only by descriptions of the activities or actions such as meeting at central office or connection to an advisory committee, but by time periods of the program such as planning, orientation week, and program kick-off. I summarized important information from file folders of information onto index cards. I coded the cards appropriately by type of activity and time period and grouped them into several ways. Grouping was around time phases, type of activity, and themes. Important contextual components and factors were determined from such documents. I also coded participation communication received throughout the program. This process of redocumenting information enabled me to summarize the types and

amount of work and contacts that actually went into the planning and development of the program. The use of these cards to quickly review the past events processes assisted in reviewing research questions and designing the program timeline. It became a quick check on program events.

Duplication of file folder information took place when needed. For example information from a beginning teacher meeting provided by the parent speaker was filed in a parent communication folder and also in the second beginning teacher meeting folder. My reflection of the parent activity appeared also in dated field notes and research journal. Several letters and notes were received from teachers and principals during the program. I coded this type of communication, in addition to summaries of teacher phone conversations, into themes and program time periods.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis began before the problem was even identified. Analysis on my personal impressions and observations regarding support for beginning teachers has been ongoing since I became a teacher. Analysis continues to this day to make sense of what happened in the program building. As a qualitative researcher I concentrated on the instance, using analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation (Stake, 1995). I searched for meaning through formation of patterns and consistency. I looked for patterns immediately while reviewing documents. I coded the documents and summaries of observations. Often the patterns were known in advance, and sometimes the patterns emerged unexpectedly from the analysis. After quickly reviewing the documents, whether they be questionnaires or research field notes, I tallied results and preestablished codes. However, after documents were reread and reviewed over again, some new or additional ones emerged. There was a great amount of data collected and I selected what was most relevant. Literature findings provided concepts and relationships that could be checked against actual data. When concepts turned up over and over again, it appeared significant and I looked for evidence in the program (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Program evaluation was both formative and summative. Formative evaluation was the primary activity of my evaluation, aimed at the improvement of the program throughout the delivery. “The purpose of formative evaluation is to improve human intervention within a specific set of activities at a specific time for a specific group of people,” described Patton (1990). Such evaluation supported the implementation of the program. Summative evaluation incorporated the judgments about the program from the participants’ provided information about whether it should be continued, and what changes should be incorporated.

From the onset of program entry into the division and shortly thereafter with program planning, I began to identify primary issues and questions about the program. Shortly after program meetings and activities, I wrote up field notes and/or research journal entries. I reread these data after a short period of time and began chunking the information by patterns and themes. In program delivery I continued taking field notes from program meetings and participant observations. As I rewrote the field notes into summaries, I reflected on some of the remarks made. Field notes were coded and transferred into themes by frequency. Since this project was designed to focus on specific needs of our division’s beginning teachers, participants were involved in gathering information and studying themselves as teachers and learners. At beginning teacher meetings, as facilitator of group activity feedback, I recorded information on chart paper as it was reported by individuals. In order for the beginning teachers to be active participants, they were not asked to be recorders except in small group activities. I thus became the whole group facilitator and recorder which was difficult but necessary. After the meetings I summarized information from the chart tablets into a typed format of field notes.

Giving program feedback was a major part of the verification process. I provided participants descriptions of the feedback at various times of the program using the program newsletter. Since a newsletter had been identified as an important component for program delivery, I found that using the newsletter for summarizing beginning teacher meeting information became a time saver. The beginning teachers needed and asked for information from the meeting activities. In addition, other program participants received the newsletter and were provided with program information and delivery. Once feedback on the program was provided, my role as the facilitator

became more intense as the evaluator. I believed my presence in the meetings became clearer with participants recognizing the importance of the feedback they were providing.

Coding of meeting activities became part of my data analysis. Activities were written up in field notes and summarized and rewritten into notebooks. After the information was read and reread, key words and phrases were circled. I grouped and coded the information into several different ways. Data were broken down and then put back together in new ways (Strauss and Corbin). I compared for similarities and differences and grouped into ways that seemed logical as it related to the data. Many of my concepts came from professional literature. Group activities, where feedback was requested, were analyzed the same way. Information was summarized, reread, and finally coded into themes by frequencies. Some coding identified types of mentoring support such as providing resources and planning. Other coding recorded types of problems such as meeting the needs of students and parent involvement. After rereading through summaries, I predetermined codes and symbols such as P = parent support and org = organization. I made lists of the information grouped by coding of similar identity. There were times after grouping by codes, that further analysis determined changes. I found it necessary to put some items on more than one list. Questionnaires were analyzed in similar ways. Requested comments helped to illustrate the diversity of opinions. I summarized comments into themes or common key words, going question by question. I grouped and regrouped. I coded the frequency by x's for each time the key words or themes appeared. Summaries were listed by the question asked, key themes found, and frequency. I often recorded quotes from the summaries I thought to be most meaningful. I found quotes to become very powerful in the analysis process.

### Case Study Development

The importance of organizing the data for in-depth study became evident in the program planning. I analyzed gathered comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth information for each meeting that took place (Patton, 1990). Meetings for beginning and mentor teachers, and questionnaires from the program participants were developed into a program case study. Information gathered on each meeting included observational data, documentary data and

questionnaire data when available. The raw case data were then pulled together and organized into a chronological and topical analysis form.

As a researcher I generalized my conclusions around the three major components of the program case study. The first was the planning and development of the program. Delivery of the program was second and evaluation and program recommendations concluded the case. The data were then converted from raw data to the written case study for the summary. The description of the program and individual cases allowed me better understanding of the program and participants better. The narrative is intended to enable others to better understand what it was like to be in the program.

The case study is presented in a format that begins by introducing and focusing on the problem. The purpose of the study is followed by a description of community members and a description of the planning and context of the program. The next two chapters include the activities of planning and developing the program, and delivery of the program. In order to tell the story in a way that made sense to the reader, I have included my reflection as the facilitator and participant observer throughout these two chapters following the descriptive information. This format of including reflection with the descriptive was selected because it tells the story of the program more clearly. By integrating the description of the program and the experiences of the participants with my reflections as facilitator, the reader is able to see what happened and how it was related to my thinking.

### Recommendation for Improvement

Summaries of findings and recommendations of planning, development, and delivery will be provided in an executive report format to the division's central office. The results will be used for discussion of future programs and to improve upon what we are currently doing. Descriptions of the major components of planning and development, and delivery can be found later in this report.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Planning and Development**

#### Introduction

Building a support program for beginning teachers began with planning a program designed to actively engage individuals with honest professional relationships in worthwhile activities. Schools have the capacity to improve themselves if the conditions are right and communities of learners are committed to providing these conditions (Barth, 1990). The conditions and components for the community building had to be just right and my task as facilitator was to identify and engage others in identifying and developing these conditions. Planning for the community building project began with the development of program components the spring before the school year. Table 3 shows the project planning scheme creating a design, building collaboration, and securing needed resources.

The design aspects of the program are the primary tasks that shaped the directions of the program. The first task, identification of beginning teacher needs, provided the basis for program goals. Identification of the professional support community members to provide support for the teachers became another part of the design, including their involvement during development and delivery of the program. Finally, determining what contents to include and the timing of the support were the third major issue.

Successful mentoring programs depend on extensive collaborations. The needs for individual, school, and division issues were important to consider. Understanding the division's history and commitment to the program, gathering information from other successful programs, and asking for advice of others, became significant parts of the planning process. Finally, identifying, developing, and obtaining the necessary resources for the program allowed for program preparation. Resource planning involved collaboration efforts with numerous people including colleagues,

Table 3. Components of program planning

<b>Design</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Identification of beginning teacher needs in school division	Assistant superintendent of schools: knowledge of previous program; agreement of division needs	School division: staff development materials; 1997-98 school calendar
Identification of professional community members to be involved in program	Central Office: personnel office and curriculum and instruction team - hiring procedures and updates; combined agendas; discussion of school politics; development of orientation week	Development of new teacher notebook and mentoring notebooks
Development of program contents and time periods	Connection with another school division; general information; problems and successes	Department of Education mentoring grant
	Organization of Advisory Committee of parents, teachers, and principals	Materials from other school divisions and the Department of Education

division central office staff, and other school division personnel to gather and develop the resource materials.

Understanding program design, collaborative needs, and necessary resources to guide the program planning, were important steps in development of a support program for beginning

teachers. During this planning phase, such program understandings as identifying beginning teacher needs and how to provide the support for the needs guided the program.

There was an essential need to design a program that would be a positive experience for providing adequate support. With the number of new teachers projected to enter U.S. schools, the challenge of supporting them effectively has become a critical issue (Halford, 1998). “Education leaders who understand the typical realities of new teachers can anticipate and address the needs of these novices” ( p.34). Within this design was the identification and understanding of beginning teacher realities and recognizing that all new teachers are learners. “Much of learning to teach occurs after the new teachers assume their first full-time position” (Niles, Wildman, McLaughlin, and Magliaro, 1988, p.1) . School leaders and veteran teachers often fail to recognize just how much novices are shaped by their experience. Our design included recognition of the need for teaching and learning development in the first year of teaching.

Identifying community members and their needed involvement were important in the design. Having leaders who are committed to the notion of helping beginning teachers find success can make a difference (Halford, 1998). I recognized that beginning teachers, mentor teachers, and principals would be the primary participants. Beginning teachers being connected to experienced colleagues and principals of the schools was needed throughout the program. The focus on mentor teachers and principals supporting the beginning teachers and providing program feedback became significant. Being a member of a collaborative research team is a means for teachers to establish greater collegial relationships with other teachers (Lieberman, 1986). Relationships became an important part of the mentor teacher and beginning teacher mentoring experience.

School-based experiences early on allowed for relationships to develop. “Getting together to plan out the first week and share ideas was helpful. Eating lunch just to talk and relax was also important,” said a beginning teacher after the first week of school. A mentor teacher shared, “Prior to the opening of school, the beginning teacher and I attended a meeting with other elementary art teachers and attended the division-wide group meeting together. It was also important to meet briefly the Friday afternoon of the kick-off reception.”

Designing a systematic support system for the beginning teachers was important. Providing program contents with a timeline of activities guided the structure of what to provide in the program and when. The overview was helpful both to me as the facilitator for program organization and to participants for program expectations.

Next, collaboration became an important component in providing opportunities for collaboration. The collaborative processes involved working with several community groups. “People learn both individually and collaboratively, and the interactions with others can be a powerful force for learning” (McCaleb, 1994, p. 44). As a group we worked to resolve the problem of what it takes to provide beginning teacher support. As we identified the task of identifying program needs and how to assist with the needs, we began to appreciate knowledge and effort of each group member. A democratic community of learning in which everyone’s voice was heard and responsibilities were shared, led to an equal opportunity to learn and to participate.

Finally, obtaining resources for the program completed a program design. Division materials, beginning teacher and mentor teacher notebooks, materials from other school division, and opportunities provided by the mentor grant, gave assistance in program support. The planning for the notebooks was crucial early on since they were needed for orientation week. Grant money allowed for program incentives such as release time and refreshments for beginning teachers in the afternoon meetings and stipends for mentor teachers.

### Building Community

Community building was an essential activity for this program from the onset. Sergiovanni (1994) identified community building as the heart of any school improvement effort. Sergiovanni said, “Building community in schools is about a shared quest to do things differently, to develop new kinds of relationships, to create new ties, to make new commitments.” (p.153) Beginning a conversation in our division and involving others in learning about beginning teaching enabled me to share my quest in the building of community. The planning involved connections with the

central office, connections in schools, the development of an advisory committee, and associations with other school divisions. A professional culture had not previously existed in the school division to provide beginning teacher support. Knowledge was at a minimum of what was involved to organize and plan the support. Extensive dialogue, collaboration and active decision making took place. The understanding of what it took to support beginning teachers began to develop within the division.

### Connections with Central Office

The introduction of any division-wide program must be authorized by the central office. In my school division in the summer of 1997, the assistant superintendent was in charge of the central office administration until the new superintendent would begin late summer. In addition, as assistant superintendent of instructional services, he was responsible for programs affecting teacher development. We had worked on other projects together and developed a relationship based on mutual trust. He was enthusiastic about the possibility of expanding the division's support of beginners and he reacted favorably to my initial proposal. "I, too, understand the need of support for beginning teachers and will support you and the program in any way that I can," he said at our first meeting. "Let's continue on with this worthwhile project for the division."

His valuing and authorizing of the program gave immediate credibility. He connected the program to the division by releasing information about and promoting the program with other key personnel. He communicated with central office staff, school principals, and school board members about the program and my needs as the facilitator. He assisted in connecting me with the curriculum team and personnel office staff. I was given information about teachers hired through the office of personnel and updates as they occurred. The curriculum team began to consider needs of the beginning teachers while planning for staff development activities for orientation week. The importance of working with all central office staff was recognized and continued throughout the program.

The assistant superintendent empowered me to make program decisions. He entrusted me to plan and involve other participants in the goal formation and to create the structure of the program. He allowed me to use my own judgment in scheduling and planning sessions and selecting the needed resources for the program. He continued to be a champion for the program and to be a participant in the process of establishing goals and shaping the structures.

Another critical contribution of the assistant superintendent was his work in helping to secure funding with a grant from the State Department of Education. We were granted a substantial amount of money for the development of a teacher mentoring program as part of a statewide project for the 1997-98 school year. These funds, in conjunction with provided local division funds, created a solid foundation for building a program structure including release time, stipends, refreshments, and resources. Clearly, his value of commitment to teachers to be involved with the program, and actions on its behalf, were essential factors in getting the program started.

Upon his arrival, the new superintendent of schools also took an interest in the program. He affirmed his value of the program by showing support and understanding of beginning teacher learning. His past experiences had included working in a school division with a beginning teacher support program and providing staff development for teachers. Thus, he was well aware of the benefits of such a program. The superintendent was invited to be involved for the duration of the program. He participated in several sessions and on occasions, publicly expressed appreciation for beginning teachers. His active support and participation became another essential element in the program.

The central office curriculum team was instrumental in assisting with integration of division needs and needs of support for the beginning teachers. This team was comprised of the curriculum director and curriculum area supervisors. Their responsibilities for beginning teachers were to provide staff development activities and guidance in curriculum implementation. Together we formed program goals that integrated such division needs as state Standards of Learning, explanation of division-developed curriculum guides, and staff development opportunities. The curriculum director and supervisors provided resources and workshops. Workshops were provided

on guided reading and content area reading, review of social studies standards, and ideas for hands-on activities in math and science curriculum. The new teachers also became acquainted during orientation week with the various curriculum supervisors. The teachers were made aware of the willingness of the supervisors to provide curriculum support as requested.

Four meetings took place during the summer before orientation week for the purpose of program planning. An initial meeting and a follow-up meeting happened early in the summer between the assistant superintendent of schools and me. After these two meetings, he connected me with the curriculum team and empowered us to continue with planning. During two additional meetings, we planned activities for orientation week. The need was established to have a session with all new teachers in order to gather data on K-12 teacher needs. It was determined I would meet separately with the beginning K-5 teachers to have the first beginning teacher meeting and kick-off the program. The curriculum team made decisions on specific orientation week staff development offerings and the supervisors took the responsibility of planning the workshops. The personnel office identified beginning and new teachers and the schools to which they were assigned.

The importance of connecting with central office cannot be overlooked. Having a champion for the program in the central office was instrumental in beginning the program. Without the support and recognition, the program would never have happened. The central office provided curriculum knowledge essential in starting the beginning teachers in the right direction. The curriculum team informed the new teachers of important curriculum issues early in their teaching career in our division. The personnel office provided teacher information otherwise difficult to obtain. Having the cooperation of the personnel office, and not having to depend on the individual principals of identifying hired teachers, became helpful.

### Connections in Schools

Building community in schools involved connecting with principals, mentor teachers, beginning teachers, and an advisory committee. Principals, as school leaders, were seen as the

critical force for change and determining program support within the schools. I believed the principals would be key to the improvement of support for beginning teachers. Barth (1990) found that a key to improvement of critical school issues involved the principal. "Somehow, the school principal must assume more of the burden of protecting the best interests of teachers and liberating more of the constructive power of which teachers are capable," he stated (p. 28). Edelfelt and Ishler (1989) recognized the importance of the principal's participation in providing support. "Much of the way in which a principal responds may be influenced by what the school division expects of the building leader" (p. 107).

Principals were informed of the program at a division-wide staff meeting the spring before it began. They received additional information throughout the summer. As facilitator, I informed principals about program goals, my role as facilitator, and possible ways for them to participate. Principals were given guidelines to identify mentor teachers for beginning teachers in their schools. In addition, two principal representatives took part in an advisory committee for making program recommendations and consulting on issues concerning the program as they occurred. The involvement of principals was needed throughout the building process and later proved to make a difference in constructing community and providing beginning teacher support.

After mentor teachers were identified, they were connected to the beginning teacher program during the summer before the school year began. Mentors received my letter (Appendix I) acknowledging their identification as a mentor teacher by the school principal. They were invited to become involved in an action research model process during the 1997-98 school year to build a support system for the beginning teachers. They were invited to attend the kick-off reception for the beginning and mentor teachers during orientation week. I had determined that with summer obligations and vacation time, waiting until the orientation week for distributing specific mentoring information would be best. In addition, they were provided a recap of the program's plans including on-site mentoring sessions, mentor teacher sessions, sessions for the beginning teachers, and plans for an end-of-the-year celebration.

Beginning teachers, after being hired, received my letter (Appendix J) inviting them to participate in the program of building community for beginners. They were informed of the assignment of a mentor teacher by their principal prior to the opening of school. Having already been informed of the orientation week schedule from the personnel office, I announced the program introduction to take place during orientation week. I offered them the opportunity to call me, as the facilitator, for additional information and several teachers called telling of the excitement about the support system being developed and their involvement in the project.

Most principals recognized the need for support and gladly accepted assistance with building support for beginning teachers in their schools. “There is need for a support system for beginning teachers - that beginning teachers feel they have people around them (especially a mentor) to help them through difficult situations and to celebrate successes with them,” wrote one principal at the beginning of the program. As the program proceeded the principals continued to be instrumental in providing support. Arranging for substitute teachers, giving feedback to the beginners, encouraging mentor teachers, and giving program evaluation proved vital in program development and delivery.

The plan of how to involve beginning and mentor teachers went smoothly. Beginning teachers were identified easily through the assistance of the personnel office. Letters were sent with program information to the beginning teachers. The structure of the orientation week provided the necessary opportunity to connect with the beginning teachers before they began the work week in their schools.

Mentor teachers were also identified without difficulty. My worries about the assignment procedure of beginning and mentor teachers soon ceased. I learned that a great deal of thought was going into the decision making by the principals. Two principals asked that they delay their choices until more considerations had been made. In some cases, mentor teachers were chosen from a different grade level of the beginning teacher when a different teacher was viewed as a more appropriate mentor. I was pleased to see that the selection of mentors for the beginning teachers was seen as an important component of the program planning.

Communication between principals and mentors varied from school to school. Some mentors knew they had been assigned by their principal and others were unaware until they received my letter. Some principals involved teacher choice in the process, and some did not. Principals' leadership styles surfaced during this planning process.

### Advisory Committee

An advisory committee, which would include school staff as well as parents school was viewed as crucial for the organization of a new program. Two veteran teachers, three teachers with one to two years of experience, two principals, and two parents were invited (Appendix K) to participate as program advisors. All accepted and expressed enthusiasm about serving in their advisory roles. "I knew more support needed to be provided to the beginning teachers," was a comment of one of the parent members to me upon acceptance of her role. Her interest in teacher support had been one reason I invited her to participate on the committee. Committee members met during the planning period to discuss and provide input for beginning teacher needs and program development.

The selection of an advisory committee to assist in the planning proved beneficial. The committee collaborated in planning for the program by making program and resource suggestions. I discovered that this group continued to feel empowered throughout the program. Committee members, particularly principals, made suggestions and answered specific questions upon request. Asking one principal how to deal with a specific situation was helpful. For example, a beginning teacher with a previous one-half year experience of teaching, chose not to attend the kick-off or beginning teacher meetings. She was assigned a mentor teacher and sent a beginning teacher notebook and on-going program information as it developed. While talking to this teacher at a November division-wide workshop, as she shared some typical first year frustrations, I sensed she was struggling. She commented that there were too many adults in her room because of inclusion, that parents were being demanding, and that she had frustrations on meeting student curriculum

needs. I sent her some social studies units from my grade level team and encouraged her to come to the next beginning teacher session. Upon asking a principal on the advisory committee for her opinion on the beginning teacher's lack of involvement, it was suggested that teacher choice was more important. I understood this, but had become frustrated with the teacher's unwillingness to accept the support of beginning teacher colleagues.

Committee members sent articles, ideas for beginning and mentor teacher notebooks, and specific web sites for teachers (Appendix L) to be shared. Such contributions provided a range of interest and collaborative efforts. Kapuscinski (1997, p.9) states, "... because collaboration takes considerable time and energy, participants must perceive some advantage of their involvement (Yopp et. Cl. 1993-94). This implies an understanding of the perspectives and needs of the other. Then exchange between the two parties can be genuine, not merely action that looks like help (Erickson, 1989). The willingness of the advisory committee participants to be active in providing teacher support became evidence for the role of collaboration in program development.

### Program Design and Resources

The school division calendar became an important resource in planning topics for beginning teacher meetings and school-based activities. Program resources such as school division curriculum guides and beginning and mentor notebooks were needed for orientation week and had to be planned early on. Information from other school divisions described what other support programs looked like and assisted with program design. Literature review assisted in the identification of beginning teacher needs along with on-going program inquiry.

The importance of evaluation in the continuing development of beginning teacher assistance programs was acknowledged. "Specifically it is important to engage in evaluation that continuously tracks the changing needs of the new teachers as they develop. Such evaluation permits the support offered to beginning teachers to be consonant with their need for assistance"

(Odell, 1989,p. 36). The recommended calendar of school-based activities for the beginning and mentor teachers also gave guidance for program participation.

### Program Development

Program development involved numerous processes. Developing goals, designing program structure, establishing focuses, creating a resource plan, and reshaping orientation week were included in the development of the beginning teacher support plan. As program facilitator it was determined that I would be the primary administrator and program decision maker for the activities throughout the year.

### Program Goals

The goals provided the direction for the program. A number of resources were used in forming these goals. Personal experiences determined some needs for beginning support such as assisting and preparing the beginning teacher through the first year of uncertainty in defined school-based mentoring opportunities. The review of beginning teacher program goals from other school divisions was another resource. Collaboration efforts determined the division needs of developing a program for continuous growth and the integration of division curriculum issues such as state Standards of Learning development and assessment. Finally, we were influenced by the idea of DeBolt (1992) that the professional development of experienced teachers was an essential benefit of such collaborative school-based programs for mentoring projects. Thus, we selected it as one of our goals.

The beginning efforts of goal formation began with personal experiences. My first teaching experience was in an elementary school where no support was provided. Teachers in the school were unaware I was a beginning teacher for several months because of my need to appear well informed and prepared to do the job. Asking many questions was not part of my plan. Perhaps a

formal support program would have assisted with my needs as a beginning teacher in a legitimate way. In addition, I had provided a vast amount of support and assistance for many first year teachers over the years. I recognized more support was needed for the beginning teachers than what I was able to provide. I realized also that support was need as a mentor teacher. “The support for support teachers” is an important dimension in collaborative teacher induction programs (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). As a mentor teacher, I was never prepared to serve in a support capacity. Expectations were that I would be a support teacher, recognize on my own the needs of the teachers, and do the best I could. No questions were asked as to the progress of my professional relationship with the beginning teacher or of my needs as a mentor teacher. DeBolt (1992) found in a New York State Mentor Teacher-Internship Program the importance of mentoring activities. “Participants noted that it was of great importance to provide mentor training programs that assisted them in preparing for their new roles as mentor,” DeBolt reported. “...informal meetings with other mentors, ...reading about mentoring, point to ways of increasing knowledge of the process of mentoring for mentors...” (p. 186).

Materials from other school divisions were reviewed and compared to my review of research findings. I found similar needs for providing beginning and mentor teacher support. Providing support and minimum training had been integrated into the goals to assist the mentoring teachers during their year of providing support for the beginning teacher.

In addition, the needs of the division that emerged from collaboration with the assistant superintendent and curriculum teams, were integrated to provide support in order to prepare the beginning teachers for their teaching profession, and assist the teachers to become confident and skilled, and choose to stay in the profession and in our division. There is evidence that without support and assistance many potentially good teachers become discouraged and leave teaching (Ryan et al., 1980). Huling-Austin (1989) contended “...a profession has a responsibility for the well-being of its members as well as its clients and that not providing beginning teachers with personal and professional support when it is needed is professionally irresponsible” (p. 8). The division wanted the support program in a systematic organized structure that could be built on in future years.

The program goals that were developed were (a) to provide support and assistance to beginning teachers during the induction process, (b) to provide support and assistance to mentors during the mentoring process, and (c) to protect the investment in new teachers in preparing for the profession by increasing the likelihood that the school division's beginning teachers will become informed and skilled, and choose to stay to make teaching their career in our division.

Goals were developed through collaborative effort. I continued to recognize how close connections were helpful. Collaboration with the central office allowed me to understand how the program could fit into the overall school division structure. The division's goal to have a program developed around organizational needs was an important one. As proven in the division organizational structure for this upcoming school year, changes are on-going. The people you work with this year may not be part of the organization the next. The goal became to develop and document a program built around general beginning teacher needs, both for the program and the division, not around individuals.

The goal to provide support and assistance to beginning teachers was instrumental in planning the program. Seventy-seven percent of the beginning teachers felt the mentor teachers were extremely helpful and supportive at the first of the school year. Providing support and assistance to the mentor teachers was also valued. "All materials provided helped me in my mentoring relationship this year," said a mentor. In addition, the support to encourage teachers to stay in the profession and with our division was recognized as important by principals. At the end of the year a principal wrote, "A teacher shortage is coming - even though it's not apparent yet in our county, we need to keep adding new teachers who have made a life choice of teaching each year."

### Program Structure

Structuring the program for assisting the beginners is always problematic. The use of time for teacher development is a critical issue because there is never enough. As program facilitator,

my role was to develop a structure to organize the program around the needs of the beginners and to build feedback opportunities to make changes and additions to the program as it progressed. There were three major components to the structure of the program that involved teachers including beginning teacher meetings, mentor teacher meetings, and school-based meetings between mentoring and beginning teachers (Appendix M). Issues were determined for all meetings including school-based and division-wide activities. These issues were based on predetermined beginning teacher needs, division needs, and program needs. The focuses became keystones for planning of all the program meetings. The number of contacts with principals were designed to inform them of the program activities and secure their participation. Table 4 provides a summary of the major components.

The timing for all meetings were determined using the division's school calendar. Since the division uses six six-weeks grading periods, we decided to use 12 week intervals for the meetings. This created four opportunities to meet with the beginners at key times during the year.

- Kick-off in August during orientation week
- First twelve weeks of school in mid-November
- Second twelve weeks of school in mid-March
- Last twelve weeks of school in mid-May and celebration

The first meeting sessions were held during orientation week in August. There were three sessions provided during this week. Two of the three sessions included all new K-12 teachers to the district during orientation week. The first session was more informational. The beginning teacher notebook was distributed, the curriculum director gave an overview of the division's primary direction with curriculum, and a panel of teachers provided a sharing time that included a question and answer period. The second session provided an opportunity for teachers to be grouped by teaching level. The elementary teachers met in small groups by grade levels and shared experiences and ideas for the coming year. The secondary teachers met with curriculum supervisors by subject area they would be teaching. The third session during orientation week was only for K-5 beginning teachers. Introductions were made and I gave an overview of the new support program describing some of the activities planned.

Table 4. Activities timeline

<b>Program Time Periods</b>	<b>Beginning Teacher Meetings</b>	<b>School-based Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher Activities</b>	<b>Mentor Teacher Meetings</b>	<b>Principals Connections</b>
August	Meeting 1: Orientation Week  Session 1: Teacher Panel Session 2: Materials & Small Group Sharing Session 3: Program Kick-off	Activity 1: beginning teacher needs  Activity 2: report cards; parent-teacher conferences  Activity 3: beginning teacher needs	Meeting 1: mentoring kick-off	questionnaire
November	Meeting 2: Reflecting and Making Changes	Activity 1: reflection on practice; making changes in teaching  Activity 2: Teacher evaluation; curriculum planning  Activity 3: Preparing for the end of the school year		newsletter
March	Meeting 3: Policies and Problem Solving	Activity 1: school closure; end of the year expectations  Activity 2: reflection on the first year of teaching; thinking about changes for another year		newsletter
May	Meeting 4: Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past		Meeting 2: program reflection	newsletter; questionnaire

The second beginning teacher meeting took place early in November during an afternoon release time, at the end of the first twelve week period of school. It focused on topics of teacher reflection and making changes in teaching. The third meeting was provided in mid-March, with the same afternoon format, at the end of the second twelve weeks of school. This meeting covered school division policies and problem solving. The fourth meeting opportunity for the beginning teachers was in mid-May, during the third twelve weeks of school, during an afternoon of release time, and revolved around planning the future and celebrating the past. A celebration that included mentor teachers and principals took place the same afternoon following the last beginning teacher meeting.

Feedback was gathered from each meeting and used to determine future program needs. In addition to encourage school-based mentoring, a calendar of recommended on-site beginning teacher/mentor teacher activities (Appendix N) was provided to all teachers and principals. The calendar provided recommended school-based meetings with meeting times, topics, and activities.

The mentor support meetings took place twice during the year. The first meeting occurred after the first two weeks of school at the end of the school day. Program goals and mentoring materials were described. Dialogue on mentoring needs and experiences to date occurred. The second mentor meeting took place at the end of May. This was a time for reflecting on mentoring experiences and providing feedback to the program. The mentors also participated in the program celebration.

The school-based mentoring activities between the beginning teachers and mentor teachers were recommended for three separate periods of time. There were three school-based activities recommended during the first twelve weeks of school, three additional activities during the second twelve weeks of school, and two final activities during the third twelve weeks of school. The activities were designed to address issues to the beginning teacher, school division, and program needs. These issues are described in detail later.

The school division calendar proved most beneficial in organizing structure for the program. The important cycles to consider in building a program were typical to the teaching culture. Timing of sessions was crucial for both the out of school and on-site activities. There were specific needs at particular times of the year which were developed into four beginning teacher meetings and eight school based activities throughout the program. Such items as report cards, parent-teacher conferences, division-wide testing, and end of the year responsibilities were important to consider in structuring timely meeting topics and activities. Feedback from the various meetings and activities were effective in providing future program needs and structure.

It was determined that school-based mentoring was continuous and that mentoring took place in addition to the eight recommended activities. Dialogue at the last mentor teacher meeting described the continuous mentoring. “A great deal of mentoring takes place on a daily basis based around problem-solving,” said one mentor. “Meeting with the beginning teacher on a regular basis made mentoring more effective,” shared another.

#### Meeting One: Orientation Week Sessions

While our division did not have a formal support structure in place for beginning teachers through out the year, it has had an orientation week. This full week takes place the week before the entire faculty begin their school year.

The planning of this week was important for a number of reasons. This was the first official introduction of the beginning teachers to their division, schools, and programs. Not surprisingly, in this week there was much to include and to accomplish. This week is also a symbol of how much the division values new teachers. However, the need of the teachers to start preparing for their first year and to spend as much time as possible in their own classroom in their new schools created tensions that affected program effectiveness. Thus, planning for the orientation week had to consider the multi-layered agendas of all the participants. Orientation week ideas and questions began to surface during the program development. Some of the issues are presented in Table 5.

Collaboration with the central office staff created a scheduled matrix of activities for the new employees. Table 6 shows the matrix. New teacher orientation activities were scheduled for all K-12 teachers. Division-wide staff development curriculum workshops had been developed for specific grade level and subject areas and were offered this week and included as a part of orientation. A lack of planning time and resources for the secondary teachers did not allow separate sessions.

New teacher orientation sessions were scheduled for teachers K-12. Even though I had a concern about the sessions covering such a broad range of grade levels and content areas, time nor resources were available to provide separate sessions. One session provided an opportunity for the K-12 teachers to meet the special education and gifted education personnel and to participate in a discussion around division philosophies of educating special needs children. Our division has a national reputation for providing inclusive educational needs for students by accepting and valuing children with disabilities exactly as they are (Van Dyke, Stallings, and Colley, 1995) Although inclusion is well known and has been established in our division for seven years, this philosophy is not as well developed in most other school divisions, and is unfamiliar to many new teachers in our division.

Table 5. Issues of orientation week

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**Questions about Planning of Orientation Week**

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How many teachers are involved, what will they be teaching, and how should they be grouped?

How should beginning teachers and experienced new teachers to the division be dealt with?

How much time should be spent in division-wide activities vs. time in schools?

What staff members should be involved?

What resources do the teachers need to begin the school year, including how to use The First Days of Schools?

What are the expectations for teachers entering the division with a one year contract yet having .5 - .99 experience?

Table 6. Matrix of orientation week schedule

Monday, August 11	Tuesday, August 12	Wednesday, August 13	Thursday, August 14	Friday, August 15
a.m. Breakfast and personnel issues	a.m. Curriculum overview	a.m. New teachers orientation	a.m. Curriculum overview	a.m. New teacher orientation; school
p.m. School sites	p.m. School sites	p.m. Meeting with personnel and office staff	p.m. School sites	p.m. School sites K-5 program kick-o and reception

Principals determined which teachers with a one-year contract but less than one year of experience should participate in the beginning teacher support program. Of the two teachers in this category, one teacher fully participated and the other was linked with a mentor. She was given program materials, but did not attend meetings.

Two days of the orientation week were provided for school based orientation. Mixed feelings from principals developed on this issue. One principal felt division-wide sessions would relieve principals in providing a full week of orientation on-site when most teachers are not in the building and the principals are planning for their opening of the school year. Another principal felt more time should be allowed for teachers in schools to prepare for the opening of school and to meet informally with those teachers available. It became obvious early that this issue would not be solved for all.

Resources were developed both for the beginning and mentor teacher notebooks. The beginning teachers received their notebooks during the first new teacher orientation session and the mentor teachers received their notebooks at the Friday kick-off reception. Selected information from The First Days of School, a book that has been purchased for all new teachers by central office, was integrated into the notebook.

Finally, a Friday afternoon session provided a one hour introduction to the beginning teacher program for the K-5 beginning teacher participants. A reception followed allowing the beginning and mentor teachers to meet for the first time.

### Kick Off Meeting

For the school division, familiarizing beginning teachers with division operating policies and procedures, orienting teachers to instructional services available through programs and personnel, and introducing beginning teachers to the timetable of division curriculum with an understanding of division philosophies were essential. The program needed an initial meeting to address these division issues in addition to program issues and immediate questions and needs of the beginning teachers.

Topics for orientation week sessions were:

*beginning teacher issues* - questions; needs and concerns

*division issues* - curriculum, division philosophies; policies and procedures; staff development; parent-teacher conferences; report cards

*program issues* - feedback; connection to mentors; communication to participants

Development of the orientation activities involved collaboration of many individuals. All division and program needs had to be considered in the organization of the week's activities. Such questions as which principal would let us use their building for sessions and what time period of the week were best for personnel and payroll staff, had to be answered. The complexity of developing the matrix with the specific activities and time periods continued. In the end, there had to be some "give and take" and willingness to accept some limitations. I accepted the need to be flexible in this undertaking of developing and accomplishing a very involved week. The week's activities even changed within the week. Time was needed for the superintendent to talk to the new

teachers. A need became evident to shorten the last day's teacher orientation activities to provide more time in schools. Changes were included to prepare for the orientation week.

Typical school bureaucracy and mentor teachers not beginning their school year until the following week, prevented the orientation week from being a significant time for mentor and beginning teacher to begin building relationships. In addition, deciding the appropriate and most convenient time for the teachers' initial connections was difficult. No time is ever good in asking for time in cases such as the beginning and end of the school year. The predetermined needs took up major orientation week time periods. Inviting mentor teachers to meet with the beginning teachers could only involve a short period of time and was voluntary. For example, do you ask mentor teachers to meet before school starts when several are unable to attend or do you wait until the next week when time is just as tightly scheduled with division and school needs? If additional time were provided in schools that week, I believe more voluntary mentor teacher and beginning teacher connections would have been possible. Time other than the one hour kick-off reception of orientation week would have been helpful. The time issue was a continuing concern.

I became cautious about creating work for other people in the program development. However, in regard to providing separate elementary and secondary orientation sessions, an additional facilitator to assist with secondary needs was needed. Separate programs for elementary and secondary beginning teachers could not be provided at this time.

As I expected, new teachers expressed a concern of not being in their schools enough during orientation week. This time issue is always a difficult one. Compromising of program needs and numerous division needs was addressed during orientation week.

School Year Beginning Teacher MeetingsSecond Meeting: Reflecting and Making Changes

The first twelve weeks of school came at a time when sharing uncertainties and questions with respect to teaching became important. Thinking and reflecting about struggles would lead to making needed changes in teaching. Hogan and Flather (1993) describe teaching becoming a collaborative inquiry through using reflections to become aware of knowledge and strengths. Through such inquiry, I believed teachers could learn to identify their successes and determine changes they may need to make at this time of their first year of teaching. “If teachers are to improve their skills beyond the entry year, in which they may receive considerable feedback through an assistance program, they need to learn the tools of analysis and reflection so that they can become self-monitors and continue to grow,” said Ishler and Edelfelt (1989, p. 61). The topics of parent communication and classroom management developed from the needs assessment at the end of the first week of school from both beginning and mentoring teachers. Details will be described later. It should be noted that the topics of classroom management and dealing with students have been categories found (Niles et al., 1989) to be a high source of difficulty during the first year of teaching. Both student management and working with parents were found to be categories of support most often appropriate for the beginning teacher (Odell, 1989).

Division issues were built around the recommended time for the initial teacher evaluation completed by the principal. Curriculum planning was seen as an issue both by the curriculum team, because of the new Standards of Learning curriculum, and by teacher and mentor feedback provided after the first week of school. It had been noted by the director of curriculum from the onset of our program planning that curriculum planning for beginning teachers was a division issue. Feedback and making connections to program participants continued to be important program issues. The first twelve weeks of school meeting topics were:

*beginning teacher issues* - need for reflection with recognition of strengths and needed changes in teaching; parent communication; classroom management

*division issues* - teacher evaluations; curriculum planning

*program issues* - feedback; communication to participants

### Third Meeting: Policies and Problem Solving

The third beginning teacher support meeting focused on the need for developing problem solving techniques. The importance of reflecting on practice about beginning teacher difficulties and problems was emphasized in this meeting. In addition, the program responsibility of providing problem solving around identified concerns was included. Teachers had reported that they needed discussion regarding policies such as student retention and obtaining information about school law.

With new state testing and guidelines being developed, the division had a need to inform the beginning teachers of testing specifics. Even though most of this information would be available through principals' guidance within the individual schools, there was a division concern of more detailed information being needed by beginning teachers. My perception was that in a small group setting of beginning teachers only, the questions and concerns would be more likely to be expressed. It was also time for beginning a conversation about school and division needs for school closure.

In addition to the feedback on changing needs of the teachers and reporting of program data, documentation of mentoring responsibilities for stipends and teaching recertification points was needed. The division set a deadline of the end of March for paperwork to be completed in order for the stipends to be paid by the end of the school year, which I perceived as being important. Mentor teachers, principals, payroll personnel, and I were all involved in the process. The next meeting topics identified were:

*beginning teacher issues* - problem-solving techniques; retention; school law;  
sharing of teacher ideas

*division issues* - division testing; Standards of Learning; end-of-the-year  
expectations

*program issues* - feedback; stipends to mentors; recertification points to  
mentors; communication to participants

#### Fourth Meeting: Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past

The last twelve weeks of school focused again on reflection of practice in recognizing successes in their teaching and making changes for the next year of teaching. The superintendent wished to provide a closure at the last beginning teacher meeting and to recognize the beginning teachers completing their first year of teaching.

School-based grade level planning for the following year is usually a focus during the last several weeks of school. The topic of planning was an important beginning teacher task that would assist with meeting their schools' goals. In addition, there was a need for summative information to evaluate the program. Feedback was solicited on the usefulness of materials provided, role responsibilities of participants, and program goals. A continuous variety of program feedback was important in program development. A comprehensive evaluation plan was found to be an integral component of a project in a New York school division. "Both qualitative and quantitative types of data were obtained through the project in an attempt to judge the project's impact and overall effectiveness" (Stupoansky and Wolfe, p. 75). The fourth beginning teacher meeting topics were:

*beginning teacher issues* - successes; changes in teaching for next year

*division issues* - superintendent session; closing the school year; planning  
for the 1998-99 school year

*program issues* - feedback of resource materials; advice for future beginning teachers and mentor teachers; end of the year connection to mentors; communication to program participants

The final activity of program celebration was seen as a chance for additional public awareness of the program. The public recognition and positive view of the beginning teacher assistance program showed appreciation to program participants including beginning and mentoring teachers and principals. Increasing pride in the profession and in their own competence, would especially benefit the beginners.

The last celebration activity was included as a part of the fourth beginning teacher meeting. I saw the opportunity to have the celebration activity at the conclusion of the meeting as a time saver for the beginning teachers. They were already at the central office for the last beginning teacher meeting, where the celebration was to take place, and an additional meeting date and time would not have to be chosen. The last session's topics were:

*beginning teacher issues* - recognition of job well done and completion of first year of teaching

*division issues* - program completion; recognition through certificates

*program issues* - reception and public recognition of program participants including beginning teachers, mentor teachers, and school principals

The planning of the many program focuses developed from the school calendar events. Such topics as knowing when a principal was going to conduct a teacher evaluation and recognizing the fears of that first parent-teacher conference were important. The routine of school events needed to be considered for the program topics and enabled the program to address beginning teacher specific needs when they required it the most. It also helped in avoiding the overload phenomenon that exists in many orientation programs.

### Resource Plan

A successful beginning teacher support program needs a wide range of resources. Teacher time, materials, and money are three essentials. I began by reviewing beginning teacher program materials from other school divisions. Many of the materials reviewed were adapted to meet our specific program needs. Such items as beginning of the year checklists were included (Appendixes O, P, Q, and R). Selected journal articles on the power of mentoring and cooperative learning were included. Additional resources were provided from professional libraries, colleagues, principals, central office staff, and advisory committee members. Materials were developed into beginning teacher and mentor teacher notebooks.

Funding from the Department of Education grant and division funds provided assistance with purchasing some materials, developing materials, providing refreshments, substitute pay for beginning teacher release time, and stipends for mentor teachers. The division-wide beginning teacher sessions with release time would not have been available without the state grant.

There was a desire to communicate with program participants on a continuous basis. Thus, as facilitator, I wrote and published a program newsletter (see Appendix S for one example) three times during the year for all participants. Other school divisions with similar programs had provided newsletters as a communication tool and I saw it as an important part of program implementation. The newsletter provided on-going connection of program participants and activities taking place. Program information of future meeting dates and information, and recapped data from previous sessions were included.

I discovered early on that previously developed and tested materials from other beginning teacher programs could be readily adapted for our specific program needs. After checking with the school divisions, they sent teacher checklists and articles on mentoring that they had found useful for their needs and could be applicable for our program. The beginning and mentoring teachers viewed their notebooks as important resources. Upon asking, I did discover that some beginning teachers found the information overwhelming. I believe providing less of the beginning of the year

material and building on the additional resources provided throughout sessions, would be more beneficial.

Outside program resources, such as invited speakers for the beginning teacher meetings, were well received. The topics of parent communication, testing, and school law were identified as important by the beginners. Thus, the guest speakers were able to clearly address the special needs in their areas of expertise and to cover the topics. The State Department of Education grant allowed resources that would have otherwise been unavailable. Grant funds assisted with the release time and provided opportunities for the beginning teacher to have proven worthwhile session time. I came to appreciate the uninterrupted time of afternoon beginning teacher sessions out of school that provided dialogue and reflection time that would have been otherwise unavailable.

The planning of the newsletter as a major communication tool proved to be invaluable. It served as the main source of program information and beginning teacher meeting feedback for all the participants. It particularly assisted principals' without beginning teachers, to better understand the program for future years. It became the on-going connection to participants and program development.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Program Delivery**

#### Introduction

Program delivery involved many events of various groups to support beginning teachers. An activities timeline found in Table 7 describes the program time periods and the program events taking place with the beginning teachers meetings, school-based activities, mentor teacher meetings, and principals. A complete description of these beginning teacher support connections are found in this chapter.

#### Orientation Week

The activities for orientation week were developed to introduce beginning and new teachers to schools, division-wide school culture, and opening school traditions. The first activities for the beginning teacher support program took place during this week. Through planned activities, community members connected for the first time. The orientation breakfast, curriculum workshops, a session with the superintendent of schools session, K-12 program sessions, and a beginning teacher and mentor teacher program kick-off session were the components of orientation week.

#### Breakfast

Orientation week began with a kick-off breakfast that introduced new teachers to the many community members connected to schools. Introduction of central office staff, school principals, teacher organizations, and school board members took place. It was intended to be an occasion to begin developing the support systems and networks that the new teachers would need.

Table 7. Orientation week activities.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Community involved</b>
<b>Division-wide Orientation</b>	Breakfast; introduction of staff; school board members; new superintendent session; personnel matters; curriculum workshops; new teacher sessions; site-based orientation	Central office staff; curriculum and instruction team; special education and gifted staff; principals; teacher panelists; program facilitator
<b>Connection to Mentors</b>	Kick-off reception to connect beginning and mentoring teachers	Facilitator; all beginning teachers; several mentoring teachers; local newspaper reporter
<b>Connection to Local Businesses</b>	Letter sent to local businesses requesting door prizes for orientation week for publicity	Twenty local businesses made donations
<b>Questionnaires</b>	During orientation week teachers were asked to tell about needs, worries, questions and staff development needs	K-5 new teachers; 6-8 new teachers; 9-12 new teachers
<b>Questionnaires</b>	After the first week of school questions were asked about progress made, areas of concern and need, assistance given, and time spent in mentoring	Beginning teachers; mentoring teachers; principals
<b>Connection with School Board Office</b>	Discussion of grant funding; stipends and recertification points; resources needed; beginning teacher sessions; secondary teacher needs	Assistant superintendent of school; program facilitator

### Division Commitment

The first address by the new superintendent of schools was made. He introduced himself as one of the newest community members of the division. He confirmed the importance of supporting each other as new employees and of learning the school division culture together. The welcome by the assistant superintendent continued the acknowledgment of the division's commitment to the beginners. "Your adventure is about to begin and we care enough about you to help you make it," said the assistant superintendent. The personnel director gave an overview of new teachers hired and concluded by introducing the beginning teacher program.

The commitment from the division to provide a warm and constructive welcome is important. It is symbolic and practical. It serves as an intimate opportunity for beginning teachers to connect with principals and central office staff before the busy week that follows. Returning teachers would not be involved in most of the week's activities. Some experienced teachers participated in or helped facilitate the curriculum workshops, but they were not involved in the other sessions. It was an ideal time for the introduction of the beginning teacher support program in a week devoted to new and beginning teachers.

The teachers seemed excited to be in their jobs. They were seen congratulating their new colleagues on securing jobs. Some of the beginning teachers were becoming reacquainted having served as instructional classroom assistants the past year or having met others through student teaching experiences in the school division. They were smiling and appeared invigorated. Their teaching career was beginning and now a support system had been described.

Orientation week activities were viewed as being successful. However the issue of time in schools vs. time in organized activities will never go away. I began to see that as the week progressed, the tension increased. The first few days were more social and less anxious. As the week progressed, the reality of wanting to have the classroom ready took over. Teachers began to ask if more time could be spent in schools. Individual time became more valued toward the end of the week.

The participation by the central office staff, including the superintendent and assistant superintendent, was valued by the program participants. The teachers recognize the appreciation shown by the division through central office participation. Several teachers expressed in their orientation feedback that it was nice to get to meet the central office personnel before the beginning of the school year. One teacher said it is worthwhile to know who to go to for specific curriculum questions. Several people expressed to me in person that they were pleased the superintendent was interested enough to meet separately in a session with the new teachers to the division.

The opportunity to kick-off the beginning teacher support program on Friday of orientation week proved to be important. The small group session, with the K-5 beginning teachers only, was the first opportunity to begin developing relationships for the upcoming school year. Teachers began introducing themselves, sharing phone numbers, and starting relationships. This beginning teacher session was meaningful prior to getting in their schools the following week with their new mentor and colleagues.

The kick-off reception included mentor teachers and produced positive side effects. This time provided a chance for some mentors and beginning teachers to connect for the first time. This was also seen for some as time to share information. Some teachers sat down and became involved in planning for the following week.

This reception also was a valuable time for me as program facilitator to connect with mentors. I met informally with those in attendance and talked about materials they would need for the mentoring for the opening of the school year. Although only about half of the mentors were able to attend, it initiated our first stage of cooperative involvement in the building of the program together.

### Curriculum Workshops

New teachers were introduced through workshop sessions to curriculum area supervisors, curriculum goals, and specific teaching strategies. Opportunities were given to discuss new standards of learning and the current status of state testing. The uncertainty created by these issues created some apparent concern. The social studies workshop revealed the division's need to complete material development for the new social studies standards. Teachers expressed concern in the social studies meeting but it became known that these were division-wide issues. One beginning teacher expressed relief to me that even her experienced colleagues would be starting over on curriculum development in social studies. "It will be nice that we are starting on new social studies curriculum together as a grade level team," she shared.

In addition, school division philosophies of special education and gifted education were introduced and integrated into the workshops. A special education video was shown discussing inclusion of students with special needs. The director of gifted education emphasized the need for differentiation of instruction without a pull-out program. The new plan for gifted education was described involving increased staff and restructuring program support around grade level needs. Several questions developed around inclusion of both groups of students. Questions were about available resources for identified gifted students and assistance provided for special education students classified with special needs.

### The Superintendent of Schools Session

The superintendent facilitated a one hour workshop for the new teachers. He told of past experiences and his excitement of being a superintendent for the first time. During his remarks about being a complete professional he emphasized the importance of doing the following: a) love students with the desire to be with young people; (b) have the passion for the 'what' of teaching; and (c) have a commitment to the craft. His knowledge of the learning of teaching was

powerful and teachers expressed excitement about his commitment to them as professionals. One teacher wrote, “It has been great getting to know such people as the superintendent in our school division. What a joy to be so welcomed and honored.” He then led a cooperative group and modeled how to be actively involved in the learning process. His connection to the beginning teachers would continue throughout the program.

### New Teacher Program Sessions

Two sessions took place involving all new teachers. For one of the two sessions, elementary and secondary teachers were put into separate sessions. The curriculum team conducted the secondary session and I conducted the elementary session. Both sessions provided small group activities with elementary teachers being grouped by grade or subject area. Notebook items were discussed and participants shared personal goals for their upcoming year of teaching.

The new teacher notebooks provided numerous materials (Appendix T). Curriculum planning sheets, problem-solving information, assessment checklists, classroom management strategies, differentiation strategies, technology facts and tips, and journal articles were included.

A teacher panel discussion took place during one of the sessions. The teachers with one to three years of experience were from a variety of grades. They shared their beginning teacher stories and gave advice for the new teachers. “Get to know the people who can help you the most,” said one teacher. She elaborated by saying that the school custodian and secretary were very helpful in assisting her when settling in to a new school. Another teacher shared the value of asking questions. She told of asking numerous questions to those around her the first year because she wanted to know everything possible. “People will help you in many ways if they know you need the assistance,” she remarked. An additional question was asked about the demands of the first year. The new teachers were reminded to take care of themselves. “You have to create time for a personal life,” said one teacher. “Having some time for yourself will make you a better teacher.”

Questionnaires were issued to all teachers who were identified as new K-5 teachers, new 6-8 teachers, new 9-12 teachers, and beginning K-5 teachers. Questions asked were centered around teaching needs, fears, questions of the new school division, and orientation week feedback.

### Orientation Week Feedback

Identifying fears, worries, and needs of K-5 beginning and new teachers was provided in feedback during orientation week. A summary is found in Appendix U. Themes of parent communication, meeting student needs, and being prepared for the first day of school were among primary fears. Questionnaire results revealed beginning teacher needs and worries. Table 8 shows a summary of results. This group recognized early on the need for support, resources, assistance with student needs, and communicating with parents. Such key words as support, guidance, feedback, and sharing, showed the need for mentoring. “A supporting community with open and productive communication is a need I have,” said one beginning teacher. Differentiation of instruction was another concern made through comments about special education needs and meeting general student needs. “I worry that the ability and knowledge I have will be insufficient to meet the needs of my children,” expressed one beginning teacher and reveals the concern for meeting such student needs.

Appendix V shows fears and questions of teachers in grades 6 - 8. The top rated fear was dealing with the issue of time. Meeting individual student ideas was also a frequent concern. Teachers in grades 9 - 12 expressed some different fears and questions. Appendix W shows their fears of working with other teachers and dealing with challenging student behaviors. Monetary compensation for orientation week was a group concern gathered not only from this questionnaire but from teacher dialogue during the week.

Table 8. Questionnaire summary of K-5 beginning teachers during orientation week.

Questions	Summary of themes	Frequency
<b>What needs do you have as a beginning teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Basic Instructional Information</li> <li>• Special education needs</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Organizational skills</li> <li>• Time management</li> </ul>	11 6 5 4 4 3 2 2
<b>What are your main worries as a teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Meeting student needs</li> <li>• Covering SOLs)</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Paperwork</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Grading</li> <li>• Being overwhelmed</li> </ul>	8 4 3 3
<b>What benefits do you hope to gain from working with a mentor teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction and guidance</li> <li>• Sharing of ideas</li> <li>• Routine duties and responsibilities</li> <li>• Learn from his/her past experiences</li> <li>• Listening ear</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Keeping on track</li> <li>• Develop a friendship</li> </ul>	6 5 5 4 4 3 2
<b>What questions do you still have about our school division?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Teacher evaluation</li> </ul>	

Feedback about the content and activities of specifics of orientation week were detailed by all the teacher participants. They liked such things as getting personnel paperwork done, meeting other new teachers, becoming acquainted with curriculum area personnel, being supported in a new position, being provided materials and the new teacher notebook, and the involvement of the new superintendent and the teachers on the panel. There were also ample changes suggested. They recommended more time in schools, additional separate elementary and secondary teacher sessions focused on specific grade level needs, additional small group sessions, and information on teacher recertification.

The orientation week questionnaires revealed the following:

- K-5 beginning teachers have the primary concern of being supported
- K-5 new teachers have the concerns for parent communication and meeting student needs
- 6-12 teachers have fears based around time concerns, student needs, and classroom discipline issues

An elementary teacher summarized her feelings about orientation week by sending the following note, “I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the events of the New Teacher Orientation. You did a wonderful job of organizing the week. It was helpful to talk to other new teachers about their fears and concerns. I really appreciate all of the work you did to make new teachers feel comfortable. Have a good year.”

#### Beginning Teacher First Program Meeting

A one hour session took place the last day afternoon of orientation week for all K-5 beginning teachers. This was the first time that only beginning teachers met as a group. The program was specified and individual introductions were made. As facilitator, I described my role,

the role of the mentors, format of beginning teacher sessions, and the need for their participation in program feedback and program development. Even after a long and engaging week, teacher dialogue indicated they were excited about the program and their participation. Some teachers were anxious to be informed about their mentoring teachers. Others already knew of theirs.

### Beginning Teacher and Mentor Teacher Reception

The first formal connection with beginning and mentor teachers was made with the reception that followed the program introduction session. Approximately 50% of the mentor teachers were able to attend on this day before the start of the following teacher work week. Mentor teacher information packets were provided to those in attendance. Included were mentor teacher checklists, mentoring articles, the list of K-5 beginning teacher needs developed from orientation week, and a quick review of the program. People unable to attend this reception, notified me earlier and received their packets at their schools.

The purpose of this reception was to connect the beginning teachers with their mentors and to initiate the program with a celebration. Therefore, very little time was spent with the issue of mentoring other than distributing of the mentor notebooks. Some mentor teachers did bring materials to share with their beginning teachers at the reception. It was a first meeting for these particular teachers. Mentoring is founded on a solid personal relationship and this session was intended to promote such relationships.

Appreciation packets filled with donated goodies were provided for the mentor teachers. Refreshments and decorations assisted in creating the festive mood. A newspaper reporter covered the story of the creation of the beginning teacher program. The newspaper reporter had contacted the central office about school news during the opening of schools and had been directed to talk to me about this program. Pictures of participants were taken and interviews conducted. The information about the program appeared as a cover story the following day for the local section of the newspaper (Appendix X). This newspaper article created a great response for the program

through communication received from community members. I received numerous copies of the article in the mail accompanied by notes of encouragement from division teachers and parents. The visibility gained from the article was an important factor in communicating the existence of the program to the school division and community in general.

### Beginning Teacher Orientation Feedback

An elementary beginning teacher summarized her feeling about orientation week by sending the following note, “I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the events of “New Teacher Orientation.” You did a wonderful job of organizing the week. It was helpful to talk to other new teachers about their fears and concerns. I really appreciate all of the work you did to make new teachers feel comfortable. Have a great year!” Orientation week was shown to be a nice time to introduce the new teachers to our school division and program. Another teacher wrote, “I feel much better about starting my new job and career into teaching. It was a good time to meet other new teachers.”

### Beginning Teacher Connections

There were four opportunities to connect with the beginning teachers after orientation week and the opening of school. The first opportunity was by sending a questionnaire to the beginning teachers at the end of the first week of school. The next three opportunities were large group beginning teacher meetings that took place in November, March, and May of the 1997-98 school year. These three meetings allowed beginning teachers division wide to come together for specific planned program activities.

### Beginning of the Year Questionnaire Connection

The beginning of the year questionnaire was developed to assess the beginning teachers' feelings, solicit perceptions of teaching successes and struggles, and to monitor mentoring activities and timing of assisting at the end of the first week of school. Table 9 summarizes the successes and struggles. The data provided a snapshot of initial needs of the beginners after the first week of school. Issues of planning and relationships with students and colleagues were successes. "I am establishing a good relationship with my students. There is respect going both ways and it shows," said one beginning teacher. Student discipline was the top issue of concern. Interestingly, this topic had not occurred in the school orientation week for the K-5 teachers. Dealing with students and classroom management had become a reality.

### Second Beginning Teacher Meeting: Reflecting and Making Changes

There was the need to connect with the beginning teachers at the end of their first twelve weeks of teaching. Although informal mentoring had existed in our division, the opportunity for new teachers to gather and collaborate about their experiences had not. Olson (1997) examines the newness of collaborative relationships to the educational landscape. She says, "When we understand knowledge as socially constructed, we need to make spaces for the conversations which are essential in order to tell, hear, and respond to the stories of ourselves and others. Through this opportunity for conversation we can hear a variety of views and experiences which may awaken us to new ways to story our experience" (Olson, p.22). I knew creating and maintaining safe spaces for the teachers to share their experiences and needs would not be an easy task. I understood however the strength that would develop from such collaborative relationships in the beginning teacher meetings.

Table 9. Completion of first week K-5 beginning teachers questionnaire summary

Questions	Summary by theme	Frequency
<b>What are some things you feel the most successful about so far as a teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Developing a positive relationship with students</li> <li>• Establishing a positive and friendly learning environment</li> <li>• Developing a positive relationship with colleagues</li> <li>• Delivering quality instruction</li> <li>• Parent communication</li> <li>• Being assertive</li> <li>• Helping students get to know each other</li> <li>• Determining student needs</li> <li>• Learning my way around the school</li> </ul>	<p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p>
<b>What are some areas you have struggled with so far?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Wide range of abilities</li> <li>• Dealing with parents</li> <li>• Transitions</li> <li>• Time issue</li> <li>• Respect from colleagues</li> <li>• Assessment</li> <li>• SOLs</li> <li>• Students with severe disabilities</li> </ul>	<p>7</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p>

The first of three beginning teacher meetings took place in mid-November at the central office. Release time was given for the program's activities. This was a practical and symbolic gesture by the school division to underscore the valuing of the collaboration. The assistant superintendent assisted in arranging for the release time and informed the principals the need for obtaining substitute teachers for the afternoon meetings. However, leaving their classrooms was not an easy task for the beginning teachers. My task was to make the afternoon a worthwhile one. This was the first time the group had been together since the opening of school. Refreshments were

provided with built-in social time. The meeting was planned with a parent speaker, group activity, and feedback opportunity. The focuses were making changes in teaching, parent communication, curriculum planning needs, and classroom discipline.

### Parent Speaker Activity

The invited speaker was a parent I had worked with at my school. She was familiar with the project of assisting beginning teachers and had shared with me her own experiences and frustrations as a beginning teacher at the university level. She began the activity by giving examples of teacher stories from a parent perspective. Success stories of beginning teachers were told. She told of one beginning teacher who opened the door for parent volunteers. “She made me feel welcomed in her classroom, even though that could have been difficult as a first year teacher,” she shared. She advised of the wisdom of working with veteran teachers. “You can’t buy that experience,” she said, “and when difficult decisions are to be made, don’t be afraid to ask those with experience,” she continued.

Her overall theme focused on the importance of parent-teacher communication with the following thoughts: (a) education now is really a partnership between teachers, parents, and community members, (b) communication is the key - important are the backpack flyers, newsletters, weekly work and behavior sheets, notes, and even phone calls are important, (c) the need to provide scheduled opportunities for parents to help in the classroom is important, (d) don’t be afraid to show your human side, (e) join the PTA and meet many wonderful parents, and (f) always remember that as uncertain as you may feel about some things in your classroom, parents too need assurance they are doing the right job. She provided an article from a PTA bulletin on the importance of parent-teacher partnerships. The teachers responded positively to her remarks through questions and statements made. It was a successful opportunity to build on parent communication skills.

### Group Activity

Small group activity time was provided to create dialogue around beginning teacher issues. Teachers, grouped by grade level and subject area, discussed topics of curriculum planning and pacing, classroom management, and teaching changes that could take place at this time of the year. Discussion among the group members was exhilarating. Teachers were laughing, telling stories, and beginning to develop collaborative relationships.

Highlights of discussing and reporting curriculum planning were many. Ideas recommended for curriculum planning were to participate in year-long planning while thinking of children's on-going interests and needs, planning with other teachers, and using Standards of Learning checklists for unit planning. In addition, the ideas of doing what you could and not feeling badly about what couldn't be done, specialty teachers asking classroom teachers for themes and concepts to reinforce, and writing notes in a plan book for further suggestions were shared.

Discussion of classroom management focused around both successes and areas of concern. Using positive reinforcement, showing consistency, showing respect, and providing relationships with students were given as successes. Consistency, organization, keeping things moving smoothly, helping students stay on task, and conflict management, were classroom management areas listed as areas in which the beginners needed assistance. Making changes in teaching were focused around parent communication, organization, unit curriculum planning, differentiation, using and organizing classroom volunteers, long term planning, and following through with ideas.

### Beginning Teacher Feedback from First Twelve Weeks of School

Individual questionnaires were issued at the end of the meeting to examine perceptions regarding issues discussed in the meeting. A summary of the data is found in Appendix Y. When

asked about the one thing the beginning teachers were most proud of at this time, one teacher wrote, "I am really proud of my take home journals. They go home every week with a personal letter from me about each child's week. I am also pleased that I have been able to use an emergent curriculum (like at the university lab school). I can meet the Standards of Learning and follow their interests. I really like it." Another question asked for guidance in classroom management areas. "What happens when few cause many to fall short of classroom goals? How do you balance giving them choices when they always make improper ones?" wrote another. The focus of changes in teaching generated a number of responses. "I would like to be able to let students learn more independently instead of as a group. I do this some but need to work on doing it more often," said one teacher. "I need to be more organized and creative. Not being afraid to try and possibly fail is important and finding a better system to communicate to teachers," remarked another.

A meeting evaluation form was also completed by the participants. Feedback indicated that the participants enjoyed conversing and collaborating with other new teachers, sharing of ideas and strategies, parent presentation, and hearing what others have to say, were important to the beginners. Further evaluation provided evidence of key ideas that the teachers focused on such as communication, parent communication, pacing, differentiation of instruction, making changes at any time, not beating up yourself, looking for what is working, and being honest with your mentor. The idea of being honest with one's mentor probably occurred because of a discussion that began with a beginning teacher saying her mentor was not giving her the support she needed but perhaps was not aware of her needs. Suggestions were given by other beginning teachers to be more proactive with the mentor requesting assistance with teaming and planning curriculum together.

Topics suggested for future meetings were sharing of teacher ideas and school law issues. The beginners also asked to follow a similar meeting format. One participant described, "I liked how this session was done. I liked how we had a speaker at the first who knew both sides of teaching and parenting a child in the schools. Also, I liked how we broke into groups. It's always helpful to do that. I get more out of things like that rather than listening to one person speak for hours. I learn best "hands on" and this meeting allowed that. I found this meeting very interesting."

### Third Beginning Teacher Meeting: Policies and Problem Solving

The third of the large group beginning teacher meetings took place during mid-March, at the end of the second twelve weeks of school. Substitute teachers were provided for the beginning teachers to provide release time for the afternoon meeting. The agenda for this meeting was developed from the feedback from the beginning teachers on their needs. Division-wide testing, school law, instructional problem-solving, and the sharing of teaching ideas were selected for emphasis.

A speaker from the school division and teachers' association were invited to participate. A small group activity took place around the issue of problem-solving. Feedback was requested through a questionnaire regarding testing needs, focuses from last meeting, mentor assistance being provided, and projected needs for the end of the school year.

#### Division Testing Coordinator Activity

The division testing coordinator was thorough in her remarks about the importance of following procedures and guidelines carefully with upcoming testing. She conveyed division-wide expectations of the testing procedures. She summarized information on criterion-referenced testing vs. norm-referenced testing, non-standards accommodations vs. exemptions for testing, security issues, coding of materials, and dealing with irregularities. These issues were important since much of the information was new to the division as a whole.

#### Group Dialogue Activity

The group activity for this meeting focused around brainstorming, identifying, and generating solutions for common problems. Because of its relevance, this activity generated

interest and active participation. The beginners generated problems for this activity related to student retention, teachers having to move from one grade to another the following year because they are the “new” teacher, identifying end of the year responsibilities, meeting the needs of struggling students not yet identified for special education services, and getting parents more actively involved. Since the issue of retention was identified by each group, it was selected to be used for this activity. The problem stated was student retention - what standards should be used to determine retention and how does one communicate with the parents about the issue with their child. Many suggestions were given. “Put together a positive package as soon as possible of the true benefits of retention for your students such as more time and reinforcement,” said one teacher. “Turn around it’s a bad thing and show how it can truly benefit the child,” said another. Additional advice was, “Look at the retention issue carefully. Retention is not always the answer since a child may not learn particular skills no matter how long they are on a particular grade level. Retention may do more harm than good. Look at each case individually. What may work for one student may not work for another.” The problem, issues, and suggestions, were reproduced in the next newsletter.

### School Law Activity

The Uniserve director of the local teacher association was invited to address the needs of the beginning teacher related to school law. He is known to be an expert in this area because of his experiences in his association, leadership role. He recapped many relevant legal issues of teaching, the many risks of teaching in general, and gave specific examples of teachers being accused of psychological abuse.

He concluded the session by giving characteristics of teachers who have fewer than the average number of legal problems. The characteristics confirmed those of good teaching and included such items as keeping good records, developing good classroom practices, looking for ways to collaborate with other teachers, communicating with parents, and issues regarding classroom management. His session generated many questions and dialogue

around issues of teaching risks. “What does a teacher do if you are attacked by a student?” asked one teacher. The speaker suggested that if you are confronted by a student, do only what is necessary to protect yourself. Another teacher addressed the issue of being wrongly accused. Examples of teachers being accused of psychological abuse in our own association area included taping a child’s hands together, excessive yelling, setting a child in the hall, and putting a child in a janitor’s closet. He summarized this area by saying, “Be careful. Calling any extra attention to students is a risk.”

### Idea Sharing Activity

The beginning teacher participants brought in copies of their best teaching ideas and the sharing of the ideas with a quick explanation were well received. There was a wide range of ideas that included such suggestions as writing topics, paired reading strategies, and adapted social studies tests for the students needing accommodations. Teachers seemed appreciative of the packet of teaching ideas made available to them from their colleagues for future use. “I am excited about having some new teaching ideas to take back and try,” said one teacher. In addition, many expressed pride in sharing their ideas. Teachers appeared confident in their sharing and answered specific questions about how to implement the activity.

### Feedback from Beginning Teachers

Information about the current beginning teachers’ needs was again requested. Questions dealt with Standards of Learning testing assistance, focuses from last session, mentoring assistance being provided, and needs for the end of the year. A table summarizes these needs in Appendix Z. A teacher wrote, “I feel like my classroom management skills have gotten better. I have implemented several new teaching strategies and they worked well. I’m glad I took the time to try them out. I think my students will benefit from them.” Improvement in parent communication was demonstrated by the following success story, “I started sending home behavior report cards on

Friday. This worked out well. I told the parents strengths and weaknesses of their child. I used a set form and simply filled in the blanks. If needed, I added personal comments at the bottom.”

Some areas continued to be identified as concerns throughout the program as needs of the beginners. Parent communication, curriculum planning, and classroom management continue to surface as areas that need attention.

#### Fourth Beginning Teacher Meeting: Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past

The last of the large group collaborative meetings for the beginning teacher group took place about mid-May, in the same format of previous beginning teacher meetings. An afternoon was spent, with release time from the classroom, on dialogue and the sharing of teacher stories. The superintendent brought closure to the program and led the beginning teachers in a hands-on activity. The last small group dialogue session took place recapping the year’s successes, teaching changes to be made for the coming year and advice for future beginning teachers. A time for celebration followed the last meeting.

#### The Superintendent Activity

The superintendent’s activity began by asking teachers to think about their feelings concerning their first year of teaching. When one teacher brought up the fact she thought teachers were not always appreciated by parents, he reacted in the following way. “What do we do to help parents know about what we are doing?” he asked. “As you move into your second year of teaching, what can you do to help folks connect to the classroom? How do we provide opportunities to help parents?” He continued by suggesting changes the teachers may want to make in their teaching by being more in tune to student needs. He concluded by doing a hands-on activity with Cheerios which involved the inquiry approach to teaching and learning. His advice of journaling to help remember the important teacher stories was influential in the importance of

reflection. It reemphasized a program focus of reflecting and thinking about one's teaching. "Don't forget those wonderful stories," he reminded the beginning teachers.

### Small Group Dialogue Activity

The small group dialogue began with teachers having the opportunity to discuss their first year successes. The most frequent responses were building a class as a community, using resources well, and planning a good academic program for their students. "I taught a challenging math class and brought them up," said one beginning teacher. "I took the time to get to know my students well, and I believe that was important," said another.

When speaking of changes they would like to make in their teaching, ideas such as being better organized, keeping better documentation, providing for more meaningful parent communication, fine-tuning classroom management, and providing more and better differentiation of instruction were disclosed.

Finally, giving advice for future beginning teachers focused around not being afraid to ask questions. It was viewed that seeking assistance from colleagues should not be a sign of incompetence. The beginners added "feel confident" and "don't worry so much during the first year of teaching," added another.

### Feedback

The final feedback opportunity took place with individuals taking the task of completing a questionnaire seriously. They were very thoughtful and thorough in their responses. Individual successes, changes they would make in their teaching, and advice for future teachers was requested. "I have learned as much as possible about classroom management and emotion control, and implemented information to work with the students," stated one teacher. "I have supported the efforts of my colleagues in various situations, both in my classroom as well as county-wide," said

another. Teaching changes covered many areas. “I will try to introduce a larger variety of materials in order to account for individual learning styles,” commented another. “I hope to focus on community building, especially at the beginning of the year but also throughout the year. I want to be more consistent with my students and improve communication with other teachers.” A table summarizing the reflection of teaching is found in Appendix AA.

In addition, they were asked to brainstorm a list of resources provided to them during the year and to rate the effectiveness of the materials. The list of materials and ratings are found in Table 10. The beginning teacher notebook and sessions were considered the most valuable resources. Having an opportunity to talk to other first year teachers in the beginning teacher meetings was also viewed as important.

### Connections with Beginning Teachers

The time and conditions of connecting with the beginning teachers prior to the opening of school proved to be valuable. The beginning teachers expressed freely their concerns and fears which allowed for future program goals to be set. Involving them in the decision-making about the needs of the program put a greater emphasis on the program being needs driven.

The time, throughout all the sessions, was helpful for the community building. Teachers became open after the first session and relationships began to develop. The time within the session was seen as important to give participants the opportunity to say what they were thinking. At the first session, dialogue gradually expanded. As the time progressed, an opportunity was given for small group activities, the exciting dialogue began. With needed time, trust developed for real collaboration.

With group session conversations, I observed important dialogue that was not necessarily topic driven. Participants were many times off the topic, but issues were current to their beginning teacher needs. The dialogue time became seen as an opportunity to express only dissatisfaction

about certain matters. As the beginning teachers developed trust in one another a risk free environment within the dialogue groups began to develop. This environment provided an opportunity to disclose many thoughts that are a necessity in teacher talk.

Table 10. Beginning teacher materials rating scale summary

Question	Rating Received	Frequency
Brainstorm a list of materials provided to you this year and rate the materials on the scale of (very important 5...4...3...2...1 unimportant)	5	
	• Beginning teacher notebook	7
	• New teacher meetings	3
	• Information from principal	3
	• Lesson plans	3
	• Activities and resources from mentoring teacher	3
	• <u>The First Days of School</u>	
	4	
	• New teacher meetings	5
	• School handbook	4
	• Beginning teacher notebook	2
	• District in-service days	
	3	
	• <u>The First Days of Schools</u>	9
	• Beginning Teacher Notebook	
	• Title 1 Professional Library	

I found that tape-recording of beginning teacher sessions created anxiety. Participants did not understand the confidentiality that existed in the meetings, and I came to believe that the taping, as took place in the first session contributed to apprehension. I believed that the elimination of such audio-taping assisted with furthering the risk-free atmosphere.

Finally, communication with beginning teachers beyond the three meetings was limited to mailings. I had visions of electronic mail being a valuable communication tool. It was not. I

suggested trying to obtain e-mail addresses. Many teachers were not connected with this type of communication. I received a total of two e-mail addresses. I came to believe that with the major responsibilities of first year teaching, time to make electronic connections did not exist or at least it was not an easily accessible way to communicate.

### Beginning Teacher Understandings

The beginning teacher questions and feedback guided program development. They took their roles in the development very seriously. They were active participants willing to facilitate, record, and report for group activities. As a risk-free environment developed, they discussed, shared, and identified their needs and desires to assist with the program.

There were issues that needed to be addressed immediately for the beginning teachers within the program. At one session for example when the issue of non-supportive parents was brought forth, the superintendent immediately dealt with the issue proactively. He gave reasons to turn it around into a discussion that ended positively and yet dealt with the current concern. The beginning teachers had specific needs throughout the program. Parent communication, curriculum planning, and dealing with classroom management were identified early and continued throughout. The recognition that changes needed to be made in these areas indicated their willingness to improve in their craft.

### School-based Activities

The importance of mentoring in school settings is well documented. Halford (1998) explains how teachers without a built-in support system or opportunity to discuss a school's vision, often feel failure and leave teaching. She further describes how creating a positive induction experience between the beginning teacher and the teacher providing the support is an essential component. She stated, "As instructional leaders and master teachers, mentors can be a professional lifeline for their new colleagues" (Halford, 1998, p. 35).

In addition to the large group meetings with the beginning teachers a series of activities between the mentors and their respective beginning teachers was recommended throughout the year. There were three sets of activities designed for each activity period focusing around important teaching issues. The school-based activities, described below, were designed to allow the mentor teachers to focus on the day to day needs of the beginning teachers.

#### First Set of School-based Activities

The first activity period was suggested to occur around the beginning of the third week of school. The focus was to check in with teacher needs, concerns, and questions. This was important because of the teaching routine and the problems and tasks of teaching beginning to take shape after two weeks of school.

The second recommended activity focused on division-wide issues. The first report card is sent home at the end of the first six weeks. This is a major expectation requiring detailed information on students to be shared with parents after a very short period of time in school. This responsibility is the first major connection with parents on individual children's needs and the process needs to be explained and considered carefully. The first parent-teacher conference will probably take place at the end of October. Since our division's schedule requires only two conferences a year, this too is an important event to plan. Problem solving involving parent-conferences includes tasks such as informing parents of conference schedule times, developing a schedule for time needed in the conferences and time needed to complete all conferences, preparing for the information to share in the conference, and how to accommodate parents unable to attend. I believe this to be one of the most important and complex parent contacts of the year. Thus the second school-based activity occurred about the first week of October and focused on the first report card and parent-teacher conference preparation.

The third activity meeting during this 12 week interval occurred toward the end of the first twelve weeks of school and focuses on individual teacher needs. At this point mentoring can

successfully begin to assist the beginning teachers in thinking through their own problems. There are an array of ways for mentors to provide assistance to beginners (Wildman, Magliaro, R.A. Niles, and J.A. Niles, 1992). One category, encouraging reflection, showed a concern for beginners becoming interested in and developing the ability to think through their own problems. This mentoring strategy would be one way of assisting the beginners to think and problem solve through their individual needs as the teachers end one third of their teaching year.

### Second Set of School-based Activities

Three additional activities between the mentoring teacher and beginning teacher were recommended to take place during the second twelve weeks of school. Important events on the school calendar and dates were considered. For example, the beginning teachers need to know what holiday traditions the school has and what expectations there are during the month, such as special programs and gifts to be made for parents by students. In addition, they need to know what to expect after the students and teacher have a holiday for a two week period. Thus, the first activity recommended for this period focused on encouraging reflection on experiences and discussion of holiday expectations.

The next on-site activity was suggested for the midpoint of the school year. At this point, at the beginning of February, principals do their first formal evaluation of the beginning teachers. Expectations for observation scheduling, procedures for the observation, and how to be prepared to share lesson plans are all issues that need to be discussed with the beginning teacher. This is also a time when planning of curriculum needs to be evaluated. Such questions as what curriculum needs will need to be covered before spring testing? How much time will testing take? and What additional curriculum needs to be covered before the end of the year? are essential at this time. This is also a good time of the year for the mentor to focus on the beginning teacher's feelings. There are many ups and downs in a teaching year, and support is needed in preparing for the tension of the second half of the year.

The last school-based activity for this 12-week-period was recommended for the first week of March. The school year is beginning to come to an end, and the beginning teachers need to be thinking about what is involved with ending a school year. Usually field trips and time out of the classroom become more frequent. Evaluating needs of students is another important issue. Student retention can be a concern along with communication with parents on student progress at this time of the year. Thus, the focus of this beginning teacher and mentor teacher activity is thinking about the issues related to the school year coming to an end and student assessment.

### Third Set of School-based Activities

The need for commitment and a supportive role from mentors was very important for the last set of the recommended on-site meetings. There were two recommended activities during this period. The first meeting took place the third week of April with six weeks of school left. There are procedures, guidelines, and expectations for the end of the school year with which the beginning teachers need assistance with. Such things as textbook inventories, ordering of materials for the following year, and end-of-the-year student recognition activities need attention. There are both school and division expectations for student records and student recommendations for the following year as well. Major responsibilities exist for all teachers at this time of the year and mentoring continued to be emphasized. Thus, the on-site activity in late April focused on what's needed for the end of the year.

The last school-based activity gave the mentor and beginning teacher a chance to reflect on the experiences of the year together. Recognizing the complexity of teaching and celebrating success is important both for the beginning teacher and mentor teacher. One study showed that mentors appeared to have a better understanding of new teachers' problems with more tolerance and patience generally (Taharally, Gamble, and Marsa, 1992). Thinking about changes for the following year is important not only for the beginning teachers but also for their mentors if they are teaming. This time period is important in planning for the following year. Thus, the recommended focus was to recap the year's activities and design changes for the coming academic year.

The school-based activities were seen as the component that made a difference for the beginning teachers. Mentor teachers having the opportunity to check in with the beginners as needed and addressing the individual needs on-site, created key relationships that provided beginning teacher support.

### Mentor Teacher Meetings

Mentor teacher meetings took place twice during the year. The first meeting took place after the first two weeks of school. The second meeting took place mid-May, toward the end of the school year. These opportunities to have large group mentor meetings were important in discussing the program goals, establishing role responsibilities, and gathering feedback of the program.

#### First Mentor Teacher Meeting

Information about the program had been provided in written form but the need for teacher dialogue among the group of mentor teachers existed. The purpose for the meeting was to raise awareness about the needs of beginners, provide ideas about mentoring and establishing a network among mentors. Mentors were invited to attend the first official mentor teacher meeting of the program. Since only about half of the mentor teachers were able to attend the kick-off reception, the opportunity to meet with all of the mentor teachers at the end of the second week of school was provided.

Mentors were asked to remember that beginning teachers not only have the role of starting their teaching career but of learning to teach. The beginning teachers were at the start of their careers and the mentors could contribute greatly to the success of the teachers. Program goals and expectations were shared. Information on the Department of Education Mentor Grant described the beginning teacher session format that would take place with afternoon release time and the stipends to be paid to mentor teachers. The first beginning teacher questionnaire results were shared in

order to focus on current beginning teacher needs. A request was made for the mentor teachers' to stay involved and assist in the development of the program. Mentor materials were described. Information such as the recommended on-site mentoring calendar was reviewed. Discussion regarding future mentor meetings occurred.

Teacher dialogue concluded the meeting with discussion of mentoring experiences to-date. Numerous ideas were shared on such issues as planning of curriculum, parent communication, and time management for meeting beginning teacher needs.

### Feedback

Mentor teacher questionnaires were turned in. Focuses for the questionnaire involved time spent, resources provided, tasks completed, questions of the beginning teachers, and feelings as a mentor teacher. Very specific beginning teacher questions were documented such as how to get children through the lunch line faster, how to begin handwriting instruction, and the procedure involved with administering with student medication. A table summarizing questionnaire responses is found in Appendix BB.

The meeting and questionnaire results indicated that good mentoring was already happening in schools. Mentors were willing to take ownership of the program and its needs. One teacher for example listed her mentoring activities with the beginning teacher to include setting up the classroom, deciding units for the first month of school, developing a daily schedule, organizing class supplies, and making class lists. Another teacher wrote, "The teacher I am mentoring has worked in schools for three years and has not needed much help. I have made sure she knows I'm there if she needs me for anything and I've tried to give her lots of positive feedback." The reported amount of time spent with mentoring ranged from three teachers each spending 30 minutes a day during the first week of school, to another teacher spending ten hours during the first week. As expected, teacher obligations and dedication to the beginning teachers was distinct and

personal. It was difficult to arrange other mentor meetings because of other teacher obligations. An additional mentor meeting at the end of the program was agreed upon.

### Second Mentor Teacher Meeting

The opportunity to meet with the mentor teachers for the second time took place toward the end of the school year in mid-May. Refreshments were built into an after school session in order for the teachers to have an opportunity to have some social time at the beginning of the meeting. Reminders were given related to the stipend and recertification points paperwork. Group reflection took place around the issues of successes in mentoring, changes they would make in mentoring, and advice for future mentor teachers. Finally, individual questionnaires were completed about their mentor role experiences, advice for future mentors, and a brainstorming of materials used and rating of the materials provided to them during the program.

### Group Dialogue Activity

Group dialogue and reflection generated an opportunity to share their mentor stories. The dialogue was celebratory and festive. Teachers were talking with each other and talking about support they had provided the beginning teachers. One teacher brought an example of a “goodie bag” she provided to a beginning teacher. She thought it might be a good program idea for next year. Another teacher told of how appreciative the beginning teacher was of her help. “She really appreciated everything I did for her,” she expressed. The amount of conversation was greater than at the beginning of the year session. The allotted time ran out for the meeting but several teachers stayed around to continue conversations with one another.

Mentoring successes included being a support person; second, being available to listen; and third, answering questions. The other top responses included sharing information, giving specific examples, providing resources, and assisting with record keeping and management skills. Overwhelmingly, the mentor teachers said a change they would make in their mentor role

would be to meet on a regularly scheduled basis. They would be more organized, stay in contact more, and compliment the beginning teacher more frequently on the good job being done. The advice given for future mentor teachers was plentiful. They suggested being available, aware, and open. One teacher remarked, “Be careful and try not to miss something important. When you stand back and look, you might see a beginning teacher need that you missed earlier.” Another teacher said, “You need to know when to mentor and when to back off. If you come across too forward, the teacher’s professionalism may be threatened.”

### Feedback

Individual feedback was gathered about the year’s experiences. A table summarizing the experiences for the mentor teachers is found in Appendix CC. The average rating for the professionally rewarding experience for mentors was 4.8 on a scale from 5 to 1 (5 being strongly agreed to 1 being strongly disagreed). One teacher wrote, “After teaching several years, I’ve forgotten beginning fears and questions new teachers encounter. With the involvement of the program, I’ve focused on some issues that should be considered important every year. It has also required me to be more updated on educational issues. As always, we learn new things everyday and I have learned and been refreshed from my beginning teacher.” Another teacher said, “This is a way that I can give back to the profession. I enjoy sharing what I have learned from experience, and if I can help someone from going through a painful situation, I want to do this.”

The top change that the mentor teachers said they would make would be with scheduling meeting times. Scheduling a time to talk and recording how often the formal talks took place, were determined important by teachers. “I would meet at a regularly scheduled time and stay in contact more with the beginning teacher.” “I would make a scheduled time to talk - or at least to be sure I recorded how often we formally talked to be sure too much time doesn’t lapse.” Table 11 contains the mentoring teacher materials summary. The recommended on-site calendar of mentoring activities proved useful. The calendar appeared to provide the needed guidance for mentor topics and meeting dates. One teacher wrote, “I sincerely learned from everything! I particularly liked the

calendar format for the second semester. It was a good guideline for me to utilize with the beginning teacher.” Another teacher wrote, “The recommended schedule of items to focus on at beginning teacher and mentor teacher on-site sessions was very important. It guided me to think about what was important to the beginning teacher and was very helpful.”

Table 11. Mentoring teacher materials list and rating scale

Question	Material item listed	Average rating	Frequency
Brainstorm a list of materials provided to you this year and rate the materials on the scale of (very important 5...4...3...2...1 unimportant)	• Calendar of recommended mentoring activities	4.5	10
	• Mentoring notebook	4.4	5
	• Mentoring meetings	4.2	4
	• Program newsletter	4.0	9
	• No materials needed	-	3
	• Everything provided	-	3

### Connection with Mentor Teachers

On-going program connections with mentors were seen important and valued for the gathering of information. They expressed that they liked being informed beginning teacher meeting activities through the program newsletter.

Group meetings between facilitator and mentors were difficult to arrange. We met twice during the program and an additional mid-year session would have been beneficial. When together, the mentors enjoyed sharing and storytelling among themselves. The second meeting provided a greater amount of dialogue because of their year’s experiences. They seemed proud of their role in assisting the beginning teacher and took the responsibilities seriously. With the meetings taking

place after school without release time, the number of teachers participating was difficult to assure. Although advance notices were given, after-school obligations for teachers were evident for the veteran teachers. This time issue of having the responsibility of meetings will continue to exist as long as sessions for mentors take place in after-school hours.

### School-based Mentoring in Schools

Mentoring responsibilities in schools provided positive side effects for both the beginning teachers and the mentor teachers. Informal mentoring had happened in the schools without the existence of the program, but the formalizing and organization of the support program, gave mentoring the recognition it deserved.

Mentor teachers saw themselves as primary program developers. With the beginning of the year mentor meeting providing limited training, it was somewhat left open for mentors to invent mentoring for themselves. Mentors were provided some materials and guidelines, but the majority of the mentor training happened on the job. Program feedback of assessed beginning teacher needs was provided but exactly how to assist with those needs was not.

In terms of mentoring happening on-site, only assumptions can be made. Calendar and focus suggestions were provided for mentoring opportunities to assist with the development of the beginning teachers. The sharing from the beginning teachers and feedback at the beginning teacher sessions revealed that good mentoring was happening.

### Mentor Teacher Understandings

The questionnaire results and end of the program dialogue session led me to some new understandings about mentor teachers. At the beginning of the program I had underestimated the value of mentoring for the mentor in the process of assisting the beginner.

Mentors believed that their program involvement led to major professional development. They expressed renewed views on teaching and understood the personal benefits of improving their own teaching. They were inspired by new ideas. “It has been a great experience. It has motivated me to try new ideas and different strategies,” said one mentor. It provided an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own teaching. “It has helped me reevaluate my methods and appreciate my experience,” wrote another mentor teacher. School leadership development was also shown. Teachers found themselves providing an important need through the mentoring process. A mentor said, “This has been a worthwhile program. It is very hands-on and an effective way to help new teachers. I am now seeing my job in a total different light.”

Mentors learned to be sensitive to the changing needs of the beginning teachers. As beginning teacher issues were suggested and introduced throughout the year, the need for adapting to current and sometime urgent issues took place. Such issues as dealing with the parent who showed up at the door every morning was described by one mentor teacher as an urgent need. That mentor and beginning teacher came up with a plan immediately.

The time issue with school-based mentoring also was addressed. Some mentors struggled with following the recommended schedule and/or creating one for their own needs. The number one mentor change recorded was to build in regularly scheduled meeting times. I came to appreciate that this mentoring responsibility was one of many tasks they were being asked to perform. Priorities had to be made, and mentoring was not always at the top. It was a struggle for many mentor teachers. I learned from the time issue a need for on-site flex time for beginning and mentoring teachers to collaborate.

Mentors found themselves giving both direct and indirect assistance. They provided direct assistance with checklists, lesson plans, parent letters, and Standards of Learning planning. In addition, indirect assistance was provided by offering support of encouragement and just being there to listen. All types were found important for the success of the beginning teacher.

Mentors believed a very important job of mentoring had to do with promoting school traditions. Understanding practices and customs that had been developed as already important for their school, proved worthwhile. Mentors learned to be sensitive to the changing needs of the beginning teachers. As beginning teacher issues were suggested and introduced throughout the year, the need for adapting to current and sometime urgent issues, took place. Such issues as dealing with the parent who showed up at the door every morning was described as an urgent need.

Mentors saw proximity and teaming important in their supporting roles. Some mentors felt they were not successful because of distance between them. During some dialogue at the second mentor teacher, a mentor described the difficulty of providing support for a teacher with whom she was not teaming. It was unknown to me why this teacher had been asked to mentor from a distance but for this mentor, it created a difficult situation.

Another issue dealt with placing mentor teachers with specialty teachers. Most of the schools in our division have one specialty teacher for each area of music, physical education, library, and art. Identifying appropriate mentoring teachers seemed two-fold. One mentor was therefore identified from the specialty area, usually at another school, and one was a mentor identified by the principal within the school building. It was discovered for one of the specialty teachers, mentoring within the building was the most valuable. She expressed limited connection with her specialty mentor teacher. For another teacher, the specialty relationship was more rewarding. Effort was made by the specialty mentor teacher to drop by and check in by phone from time to time. The mentor was invited to and attended a special event at the school of the beginning teacher. These stories told me that mentoring can take place by other specialty teachers at other schools, but a great amount of effort needs to be made. The need for two mentoring teachers existed for these unique cases. This issue of splitting mentor responsibilities between two schools was a difficult one.

Mentors became advocates for their beginning colleagues. The job security issue at the end of the year made that clear. The mentors believed in supporting the beginning teachers during this difficult time.

Mentor stipends were seen as a positive benefit. Mentors expressed in the last meeting that being paid a stipend assisted in seeing themselves as valued in their support role. I thus determined that a monetary compensation gave additional credibility to mentoring responsibilities.

### Secondary Level Teacher Needs

Needs of the secondary beginning teachers had not been addressed by the program since orientation week. Available funds from the grant and school division could provide some necessary resources. As facilitator, I felt the need to provide some services to secondary teachers. Newsletters had been sent to the secondary principals of what was happening in the program. A secondary teacher needs summary from orientation week had been sent to the principals, but I knew because of the size of the schools and after checking with a secondary beginning teacher, information was probably not being transferred.

A meeting with the assistant superintendent in November confirmed the division's value in recognizing needs of the beginning secondary teachers. It was determined from our discussion that secondary building mentor coordinators could be selected by principals and be responsible for transferring mentoring ideas and information. Stipends would be offered to the building coordinators. A letter was sent immediately to the six secondary principals explaining the building coordinator responsibilities and the need to select the teachers in a short period of time. Explanation was given concerning coordinators not being responsible for mentoring all beginning teachers in the schools but providing a system for checking that support was being provided. All principals selected the coordinators and a mentoring information was sent to the coordinators. The information sent described their role in beginning the support system for secondary teachers, general information about being a mentor teacher, and the hope that this year's experiences could be used for future program development. This was the beginning of a K-12 support system for beginning teachers for our school division.

### Secondary Level Mentor Coordinators Meeting

The opportunity to meet with the secondary level mentor coordinators took place at the end of May. The desire and need to expand the secondary program had been explained and now feedback for support that was provided this year was needed for future planning.

Although difficult to schedule with secondary teachers, four of the six on-site coordinators attended the meeting. I explained for the first time in person the program goals and wishes for the secondary program to be better formalized and valued as a program. All attending participants expressed their interest in participating as coordinators for the next year's program.

### Feedback

Feedback for the year's program was provided in both a questionnaire and dialogue format. A table in Appendix DD shows the specific concerns and questions that were distinctive from the elementary needs and important in developing future secondary teachers' needs.

### Principals

With the need established for staying connected with principals, it was determined to immediately check in with principals after the beginning of the school year, and to stay connected during the school year. It was important to communicate with principals about their role of supporting new teachers in their schools and helping build a support network for the beginning teachers.

### First Connection with Principals

A questionnaire was designed for the principals to identify how they saw their role in assisting the beginning teachers and to identify their perceptions of the needs of beginners. specific

beginner needs. Principals' ownership in building the program would be a vital element in the program's success. The survey indicated that principals were supporting their beginners. One principal gave consistent encouragement to the individuals the first week of school, met with each beginning teacher individually during the summer, and met with the beginners as a group during the first week. Another principal said he had a welcoming party at school for the new teachers and checked in daily with them to see if anything was needed. Another principal wrote personal notes to each beginning teacher and attempted to decrease fears and concerns.

One conversation with a principal indicated he lacked a clear understanding of program goals. He expressed concern that I would be meeting with the mentors through the first weeks of the school when they would be more needed in their own schools. His concern was teacher time out of the building. I shared that after the kick-off of orientation week I would meet only once with the mentors during the first weeks of school. I further explained that important mentoring time would be between beginning and mentoring teachers and that time would need to be scheduled for that. Several principals approached me during the orientation breakfast and gave words of appreciation for beginning a support program for their beginning teachers.

Appendix EE shows how important the principals viewed their role in assisting the beginning teachers. In addition, it summarizes questions asked, strengths and areas of concern seen with the teachers, and principals' hopes for the program. Indeed the principals saw their role in assisting the beginning teachers as being very important. Many took the time to meet with the teachers individually and reviewed school policies and issues. They were also able to recognize early on a variety of strengths in the beginning teachers. "The beginning teachers in my building have adjusted to the school environment very well," wrote one principal. Another shared, "The beginning teachers are showing leadership, confidence in their teaching positions, and positive attitudes." Expectation of support for the teachers through the program was clearly viewed. "I hope to see timelines, consistency, and a handbook for beginning teachers in this program," wrote one principal. Another said, "Continue to support the new teachers and make them feel special and wanted."

These results verified that some principals were taking ownership early on in the program for the success of the beginning teachers in their schools. I determined at this point that there was a need to connect with the principals throughout the program to emphasize the importance of their role in the process and to assist the principals needing a clearer understanding.

### Second Connection with Principals

The need existed to connect with the principals. The first beginning teacher session led me to understand that communication was occurring in the schools and support being provided. I needed to ensure that the growing ownership of the principals continued.

The first program newsletter was distributed to beginning teachers, mentor teachers, principals, and central office staff members. It provided a recap of the beginning teacher meeting and outlined the needs of beginners based on their feedback. It also included information on mentor stipends and recertification points. A reminder of recommended on-site mentoring activities was also included.

Participants responded positively about the newsletter format of information. They liked being informed. Positive notes and comments were received from a variety of the group members. One principal wrote, “Many thanks for sharing beginning teacher mentoring notes. I passed copies along to my teachers because of the good ideas included in the newsletter. Good luck as you continue the project.”

### Third Connection with Principals

Program association continued with the principals during this important last session of the school year. Important things are happening in the schools, decisions are having to be made about such identified issues as retention and job future, and the support for beginning teachers is as

important as it has ever been. The second program newsletter was distributed to the participants. It recapped the second beginning teacher session, gave summer staff development opportunities, and plans for the end-of-the-year program celebration. In addition, a personal invitation was sent to principals to attend the celebration.

#### End of the Year Connection with Principals

There was a need to recognize the principals and their role in supporting the needs of the beginning teachers. Taking part in the end of the year program celebration was a way to provide such recognition. Principals were invited to participate and to be a major part of the program celebration at the central office. They were asked to introduce the beginning and mentor teachers from their schools during the ceremony.

In addition, the principals received the last program newsletter with the feedback from the last beginning teacher session. In a group dialogue activity, teachers expressed being pleased with being appreciated by their principals. “It means a great deal to be encouraged and appreciated by your principal,” said one teacher. I felt that communication of principals being valued was crucial for future programs. The support of the principal will always be important in the beginning teacher program.

Finally a questionnaire was sent to K-5 principals that asked for two things. First, they were asked to rate how worthwhile the program was viewed and why. Secondly, they rated their support for the program continuing in the division with additional comments.

#### Feedback from Elementary Principals

Questionnaires were returned by 60% of the elementary principals. They showed that they felt strongly that the program was a worthwhile program and should continue in the division. On a

scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagreed and 5 strongly agreed), the rating for both statements was 4.8.

Supporting statements for agreeing that the program was worthwhile included (a) “I think the beginning teachers in our building felt more supportive and more a part of a larger system because of the program,” (b) “Even though an informal buddy system has always been used, formalizing the mentor responsibilities and the addition of a stipend, elevated the importance of the stipend,” and (c) “Both the new teachers and mentor teachers had positive professional and personal rewards.”

Supporting statement for continuing the program in the division included: (a) “We need to continue to provide the support to help beginning teachers so that they can be better teachers for our students,” (b) “A teacher shortage is coming - even though it’s not apparent yet in our county. We need to keep adding new teachers who have made a life choice of teaching each year,” and (c) “As an administrator of a large school, it is difficult to be all things to all people. It is only ‘after the fact’ that you realize that misconceptions prevail. Knowing that these persons new to our division are receiving expert TLC is a great reassurance.”

Both beginning and mentor teachers were shown appreciation for their year of effort and hard work. A principal wrote, “The mentors provided excellent guidance and advice. This program helped to formalize this process. Good job.”

### Connections with Principals

On-going communication with principals through out the year proved valuable. As school leaders, I knew principals would be instrumental in recognizing the need for beginning teacher support and understanding the importance of maintaining that support.

I learned from this communication concern, that the higher percentage of teachers and schools involved, the greater understanding of the program. In schools where there were minimum beginning teachers, less interest and more unknowns existed. Communication with principals led me to greater understand the need for acceptance of different opinion and school cultures. Upon inquiring, there were different opinions from principals on the same issues. In similar situations, as in the placement of mentor teachers, processes were handled very differently. All differences were important to be recognized.

Communication including providing feedback and clarity of program needs. Principals of schools where there were several beginners took a more active role in the program development. Advance planning for principals with arrangements for teachers to be out of their buildings for the sessions became necessary. Principals needed advance notice and specific details in order to maintain the necessary substitutes. The assistant superintendent helped me understand that this initial program request would be responded to the best through his direction. After that initial contact from the assistant superintendent, future communication came from me.

There were difficulties in communication at times. Notification of new teachers being hired during the year did not automatically happen. I learned that unless I heard about beginning teachers hired through personal connections, beginning teachers hired were sometimes not connected to the program. Upon checking with the identified schools, names of the mentor teachers to work with the beginning teachers were given. In one case, when a stipend form was sent to the new mentor teacher, she was surprised to hear of her role. She told of giving support to the new teacher but was surprised with being identified a mentor. I learned then, the knowledge of the support program was not understood by all division teachers. This revealed the need to improve communications with personnel office and principals regarding the notification of beginning teachers being hired.

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Communication with principals led me to understand the need for acceptance of different opinion and building cultures. Upon asking different principals about the same issue, there were different opinions from principals. One principal thought time during orientation week for beginning teachers should be spent as much as possible on school site not needing a great amount of division-wide activities. Another principal thought a large amount of division training should be provided to the beginning teacher during orientation week. In similar situations, as in the placement of mentor teachers for example, processes were handled very differently. All differences were important to be recognized and demanded that the program be flexible enough to accommodate these.

### Program Celebration

Personal invitations were issued, decorations purchased, food ordered, and certificates created. The time had finally come to celebrate the good things that happened in the building of community for the beginning teachers. All program participants were invited to participate in the recognition of the beginning teachers. In addition, school board members were invited to hear about the new program for our division. During the celebration time, a ceremony took place that allowed for the principals to introduce the beginning and mentor teachers in their schools. Kind and complimentary remarks were made by the principals. Their role too was seen as important in the building process. They told of the many successes of the beginning teachers. Certificates were signed by the facilitator and superintendent and given to the beginning teachers announcing the completion of the first year program. With seventy people in attendance, and numerous conversations happening at one time, it was clear the event was a huge success. It indeed took the whole community to celebrate the success.

### Summary of Program Delivery

Recognizing early on the importance of connecting the various community groups in the necessary program structure led to the delivery of the many program activities. Connecting with the beginning teachers, mentor teachers, principals, secondary building coordinators, central office

staff, and outside speakers, led to collaboration, dialogue, and reflection that would have otherwise unlikely occurred. Delivering the sessions, both in and out of schools, provided opportunities for all participants to think about the first year of teaching, in a creative and different way. Through these collaborative experiences meaningful lessons were learned about the program.

Program development became very needs driven. I continued to be amazed how the needs of the beginning teachers could be easily developed into teacher session focuses. Some issues had been predetermined and proved to be worthwhile. Others had been less predictable, but were built in future session. It was truly a program development that included on-going decision-making.

The program was affected by other issues. This particular school year division issues were evident with the new Standards of Learning and state-wide testing changes. I saw opportunities for cooperative learning among all teachers. Both experienced and non-experienced teachers were struggling with the same issues. Such issues became tasks that non-experienced teachers could be involved in from their inception. On the negative side, a higher stress level overall existed for teachers within the school division. Experienced teachers, accustomed to being well informed, were among those without answers. It felt like the beginning year of teaching for many in some respects.

Any previous knowledge on providing beginning teacher support and established programs proved beneficial. The research provided a basis for understanding general needs of both beginners and of program building. Information from other school divisions was significant in knowing how to begin with developing necessary materials and program components. Realizing such things as keeping the beginning teacher group small with only K-5 teachers and providing release time for teacher sessions, was valuable information. Grasping established beliefs and understandings assisted considerably with the program planning.

The elementary support program functioned nicely under the guidance of one facilitator connecting with both groups of beginning and mentoring teachers. As facilitator, I met with the group of twenty-five beginning teachers and mentor teachers at the different sessions.

The secondary program however began with a different structure. School coordinators connected with the mentor teachers in their schools. As facilitator I therefore met and communicated only with the six teacher coordinators. This same secondary format has been chosen to be used again next year. A separate facilitator, to guide the secondary program, has been recognized as a need to lead the much needed 6-12 beginning teacher support program.

Administrators of the larger schools believed they had a more difficult time of following through with specific beginning teacher support. With all division elementary schools functioning without the additional leadership of assistant principals, principals have many responsibilities. Having a beginning teacher program to assist schools of all sizes with support needs, was an appreciated boost for the principals.

Data analysis throughout the program provided relevant data that could be categorized into themes. These patterns and themes were generated into program assertions. Without the reporting of feedback, and on-going data analysis, program design would not have been needs driven and valuable.

Celebration of the completion of the program was seen as worthwhile. The participants felt valued for their roles in program development and were shown appreciation by the school division. The opportunity to recognize the hard work publicly was felt necessary.

It is believed that the documentation of program successes and major understandings of building support for beginning teachers will be important for future program building. Seeing the results, and recognizing the growth and development, made the process more complete.

Several major themes occurred through the described program reflections. Time was one issue that turned up throughout the program building. Time was needed in providing a change of the school division culture needed to provide support for the beginning teacher. Time was a continued need for participants to develop relationships in order to establish the needed trust for

openness. More time was needed in schools to provide the support of on-site mentoring opportunities with the beginning teachers. Time was needed to provide more mentor sessions to assist with training of offering beginning teacher support. Adequate time is a concern for all school needs, and this program was no exception.

Recognition of program needs versus. division needs continued throughout. Both needs were important and the merging of the two for the benefit of the beginning teachers was valued. The importance of program evaluation and feedback was felt throughout the program. Opportunities to ask program participants through dialogue and questionnaires about their successes, concerns, and program understandings, proved beneficial in program design.

Finally, the value of program recognition was not overlooked. Recognition began with program valuing by the assistant superintendent, which opened many doors of opportunities, to the program culmination of a successful celebration at the central office, that provided closure. Recognition was insightful and made a difference.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Reflections and Recommendations

#### Introduction

The need for providing a beginning teacher support program in our division was shown throughout the program planning and development, and in the delivery of the program. Both assistance and evaluation were essential activities to carry on the program. Based on activity summaries of providing support for K-5 beginning teachers in this program, and evaluation in the continuing development of the program, the following program conclusions and recommendations are made.

#### Reflections

##### Recognition of Need from Central Office and Collaboration

There are several key program essentials for providing support for beginning teachers. The need for providing support to beginning teachers has to be recognized at the central office level. Having a key central office administrator who has the belief of supporting beginning teachers as they learn how to teach, with the understanding of what it takes to develop such a program, and willingness to be a promoter of the program, is essential. The key administrator being an active participant, at least at the planning phase, will be beneficial. The program developer or facilitator may need to document some first-hand experiences, such as stories and experiences from recent beginning teachers of the division, to assist in the gathering of support for the program.

Developing program goals collaboratively with central office staff is important. There are needs on a division level to consider when developing program goals. Time is needed for

dialogue between program developers and central office personnel in the position to make essential decisions. Information on division policies and procedures and curriculum are important division issues that cannot be overlooked. However, including goals for initiating a program and building a foundation for the continued study of teaching while teachers analyze and reflect on their teaching within a support system are also important.

### Recognition of Needs of Beginning Teachers

All beginning teachers have essential needs as they begin learning to teach in their first year. There are several underlying assumptions about beginning teacher needs (Odell, 1989). Beginning teachers still have much to learn about putting their knowledge to work. Providing new teachers with guidance, support, and assistance in analyzing teaching and developing knowledge and skills enhances their teaching effectiveness. There are unique individual teaching needs. Each case is different and should be treated that way. Learning to teach involves reflecting on one's teaching. When provided an opportunity to analyze and reflect on their teaching, a foundation can be built for beginning teachers to become lifelong students of the teaching-learning process. The selection of mentor teachers for beginning teachers can provide support needed. School and district policies and procedures, classroom procedures, and teaching activities for the first days of school can be primary focuses at the beginning of the school year. On-going mentoring allows for current beginning teacher needs to be addressed.

It takes time for beginning teachers to reflect on teaching and to develop a relationship with a mentor teacher. Time is also needed to build trust within the relationship. The idea of mentoring in everyday activities is justified through a theoretical account of how beginning teacher learning occurs through social interaction and cooperative activity. It implies that learning is the product of a professional community which the novice is joining (Feiman-Nemser, 1983).

### Broad-based Program Participation

Support personnel, such as mentors and principals, will have to be selected, provided training and assigned responsibilities. A variety of personnel are needed to plan and develop, deliver, and evaluate the program. Having a collaborative support team, such as the facilitator, central office personnel, and an advisory committee, to plan the program is essential. Using colleagues promotes credibility of the program and builds trust among participants.

The essence of the program is the identification of the mentor teacher to serve as a support person for the beginning teacher. No matter what the program structure, the mentor teacher is the key individual in implementing the program (Odell, 1989). Mentor teacher selection for the beginning teacher is a critical issue. Characteristics such as an excellent teacher, working well with adults, sensitive to another's needs, willingness to be an active learner, may serve as criteria of selection and should be provided to principals to assist in the selection process. Some recommended guidelines also include assignment by grade level or content area, physical proximity, and teaching styles. It needs to be recognized that in some smaller schools, where there may be only two teachers on a grade level, the selection has limitations. Ultimately, the decision will be left up to the principal.

Important in delivering a support program is preparing a mentor teacher to serve as support person. Training, support, and preparing the mentors for their new roles is important in each program. Working to support an adult colleague is very different from teaching children and preparing for this role is essential (DeBolt, 1992). Meetings and materials need to be provided to assist in creating opportunities to increase their knowledge about mentoring support.

The principal is an important participant in a beginning teacher support program because of the need for his or her participation and support (Edelfelt and Ishler, 1989). The most important role of the principal is in selecting an appropriate mentor for the beginning teacher. Suggested guidelines should be provided to the principal. Principals also need to recognize the importance of the beginning and mentor teachers having a professional relationship and the

importance of their role in helping facilitate the collaboration. The principal needs to be informed about the needs of the beginning and mentor teachers and given program feedback as it is developed.

### Beginning Teacher and Mentor Teacher Relationships

There are many benefits for teacher collaboration teams (Lieberman, 1986). A team, such as a beginning teacher and mentor teacher, encourages collegial interaction. It encourages professional talk and action related to teaching, learning, and school problems. A collaborative team allows teachers to assume new roles and exhibit leadership.

It should be recognized early on that the role of the mentor is not to evaluate the beginning teacher, but to study together learning to teach. Research has shown that it is important to separate teacher induction support from the evaluation of teaching. This should relieve anxiety on the part of the beginning teacher. Beginning teachers are often uncomfortable with those in evaluative positions and are reluctant to discuss their concerns, thereby denying themselves the assistance they need (Odell and Ferraro, 1992). The mentor however, can serve many other roles (Enz, Anderson, Weber, and Lawhead, 1992). The mentor can provide support by informing the beginner of division expectations, policies, procedures, and organizational structure. On the personal side, the mentor can provide moral support and encouragement, acceptance, and friendship. Instructionally, the mentor is a role model, demonstrating lessons and sharing instructional plans, materials, resources, and classroom management skills. By providing instructional feedback and support, the mentor can enhance instructional development.

Activities need to be carefully considered within the beginning teacher and mentor teacher relationship. Encouraging, counseling, and modeling have been found to be helpful (DeBolt, 1992). “The elements of interpersonal relationships, were judged to be very helpful because they created a foundation for the professional give and take which develops over time with colleagues” (DeBolt, 1992, p. 179).

Important features of successful collaboration are analysis and reflection (Griffin, 1986). Much of the school-based mentoring is based on daily problem solving of beginning teacher needs. Feedback of satisfaction with the beginning teacher and mentor teacher relationship and mentor activities provide program feedback.

### Building Time for Program Components

There are several critical time issues in building a support program for beginning teachers. Program building takes time. Time is needed for the program facilitator to begin dialogue about program needs with a central office key administrator who makes program decisions for the school division. Dialogue needs to begin at least six months before the program is to begin. Any school program changes take time. Real change can only come as a result of the commitments of both the minds and hearts of the total school community (Sergiovanni, 1994). With central office dialogue and careful identification of deeply and commonly held values, change can be achieved.

Relationships among program participants take time to develop. An initial important relationship is the one among the program support team including central office personnel. It takes time for trust to develop and numerous meetings to plan and agree upon program goals and program development. Time is needed to deliver program components. The support program needs to be provided time within the division orientation, to kick-off the program both for the beginning teachers and mentor teachers. Program participants need to understand program goals and role expectations from the onset. Time needs to be provided to principals to have program goals introduced and time to develop understanding of program support needs for beginning teachers. Particularly time needs to be given to principals to make careful selections of mentor teachers for their beginning teachers.

Time is needed in schools for beginning and mentor teachers to develop a relationship. A great deal of on-going mentoring takes place between the two groups of teachers. Time is needed for mentor teachers to provide school-based mentoring activities at least eight times during the year. A structured schedule of activities is recommended. In addition, time is needed for both groups of teachers to collaborate with division-wide colleagues. Meetings for beginning teachers should be structured around identified beginning teacher needs, division needs, and program needs. Time is needed for the meetings to take place during the school day, with released time provided. Beginning teacher meetings will provide time for the teachers to reflect about their teaching practice with other beginning teachers. Time needs to be provided within the program for beginning teachers to provide program feedback to determine on-going program needs. In addition, time for mentor teacher meetings needs to be provided to allow opportunity for teachers to discuss and gain ideas from each other about mentoring. The opportunity for teachers to get together to think about learning to teach is rare but an added benefit of the program.

### Program Recommendations

Based on this program's feedback and analysis, I learned a great deal about building support for beginning teachers. Recommendations will be summarized in four different categories. The first category will be program adjustments, things I'd do differently from what was done during this year's program. The second category is program enhancement, things I would add to the program. Program elimination is the third category, describing things I would not repeat in the program. Finally, essential program components will list components I believe necessary to provide adequate support to beginning teachers.

### Program Adjustments

In order to better inform principals of program goals and recommended activities, I would request time to talk to the school administrators in a division-wide meeting. All of the

information provided was through mailed correspondence, casual conversations, and involvement of two principals in the advisory committee. Better informing the principals in person about the importance of the program and the need for their support and involvement would benefit program development.

I would advocate more for the program manager. The role is a huge responsibility and one that determines a great deal of the program success. The amount of time spent and different tasks performed need to be documented and described to the school division. A job description would assist in describing the role for possible future program managers.

I would try to involve program participants in contributing to the newsletter. Such information in a column about “what’s happening in our schools” or “a tip from a principal” would be a way of sharing some school-based mentoring activities with other participants. Greater ownership of the newsletter could develop from wider participant involvement.

Materials provided in the beginning teacher notebooks would be better utilized during the program. Even though several teachers viewed the materials as being helpful, others seemed overwhelmed about the amount of material provided at the beginning of the program. The material would still be provided in the notebook from the beginning of the program but would be reviewed and discussed at the beginning teacher meetings using a more gradual approach and highlighting strategy.

### Program Enhancement

A major addition I would make to the program would be additional training and resources for the mentor teachers during the school day. It is worthwhile to consider the transition being made by experienced teachers who are mentoring for the first time. Preparation for this new role is essential and helpful to mentor teachers (DeBolt, 1992). My limited resources did not allow for mentor meetings to take place with release time from the school day.

Scheduling a time good for participants after school became almost impossible. With more time established in mentor teacher meetings, more time for resources to be provided and time for discussion and reflection would benefit the mentoring activities taking place within the schools.

The addition of a program facilitator on the secondary level would assist in providing support services to secondary beginning teachers with both time and resources. Beyond activities provided in orientation week, and the identification of secondary level mentor coordinators to assist with mentoring within the schools, program development on the secondary level was limited. This program addition would provide assistance to all K-12 beginning teachers at the division level.

### Program Elimination

I would eliminate more than one outside speaker at each beginning teacher meeting. Meetings that had one invited speaker were found less rushed and more successful in time for small group discussion.

### Essential Program Components

#### Build Program Awareness

In order for a beginning teacher support program to function well, all of the people in the division who will be involved in the program should become sensitive to the importance of building a supportive environment for the beginning teachers (Edelfelt and Ishler, 1989). Once the program has received recognition and promotion from the division, collaboration with as many different school community groups as possible, will assist in building program awareness.

### Establish Program Goals

The first step in designing a program to assist beginning teachers is to establish program goals. The core of all programs is an emphasis on providing assistance to new teachers entering the profession. The assumption is that teachers will become continuously more knowledgeable in skills and concerns of teaching if they are given the opportunity to become lifelong students of the teaching-learning process (Odel, 1989). Teachers becoming knowledgeable about division philosophies, and policies and procedures, will assist in including division program needs.

### Determine Beginning Teachers' Needs

There are a predictable set of problems faced by all new teachers (Ryan, 1992). Some are more severe than others, some more common. By reviewing the literature, identifying the predictable problem areas can lead to building support around those needs. The work of teaching has become a great challenge because of such issues as the wide range of children in classrooms, the extensive curricula, and the great variety of instructional tools available in our classrooms (Mager, 1992). In addition, recognizing that there are unique needs for all individual teachers and that such needs need to be addressed by the mentor teacher, is important. On-going assessment and time for reflection should assist in identifying areas of need.

### Choose a Program Manager

A program manager or facilitator responsible for planning, developing, and delivering the program needs to be selected. Collaboration with many community groups is needed, but there needs to be one individual responsible for final decision making and implementation. The role of the program decision maker is a huge responsibility, taking a great deal of time throughout all phases of the program. Having a teacher in the manager role can give value to the program through involving someone who understands the needs of teaching.

### Determine Costs for Program Building

There are several costs to consider when building a support program. The planning phase will include determining the number of meetings needed, substitute pay for release time, materials and resources, refreshments, and stipends for mentor teachers. Determine if the division can support the program needs including the cost of the program. If necessary, seek alternative ways for funding such as obtaining grant funds.

### Select Program Participants

A variety of personnel are needed to develop, implement, and evaluate a beginning teacher support program (Odell, 1989). In addition to the program facilitator role, collaboration with central office staff, and an advisory team of principals, teachers, and parents, can assist with program planning and development. Mentor teachers, who have agreed to assist beginning teachers, chosen by principals, provide the primary support within the program. Recognize that it is not possible to predict with assurance how successful the relationships will be. Guidelines can assist with the selection process such as assigning by grade level, by physical proximity, and by teaching style and ideology (Odell, 1989).

### Prepare Participants for Responsibilities

In order to accomplish program goals, many tasks by participants will need to be successfully completed. Management and evaluation responsibilities will belong to the program facilitator. Central office participants will be responsible for assisting with division needs. Principals need to be informed of their responsibilities of providing the selection of the mentor teachers and assisting in the collaboration efforts between the beginning and mentor teachers. Beginning teachers need to feel free to express their needs and desires for beginning teaching support, and mentor teachers need to provide assistance and feedback unique to the beginning teachers' needs. Conducting some training and identifying resources in these areas will help prepare participants with their responsibilities.

A systematic preparation for mentor teachers should be a high program priority (Odell, 1989). Meetings should be provided to offer opportunities to increase knowledge about ways to assist beginning teachers, and to obtain ideas from other teachers. Mentor teacher meetings that can be offered during release time from school will be the most successful. Meeting topics should be needs driven, from program analysis. Materials should be provided to aid in mentoring information.

### Identify Benefits to Program Participants

Benefits to all program participants needs to be promoted. Beginning teacher benefits can be summarized in improved teaching performances, accelerated development as professionals, less stress, more positive attitude, enhanced leadership skills, and teacher empowerment (Stupiansky and Wolfe, 1992). Participation in mentoring relationships can have a significant influence on the thinking, practice, and attitudes of experienced teachers (Niles, McLaughlin, Wildman, and Magliaro, 1989). Mentor teachers find the mentoring experience rewarding, revitalizing, and informative with increased professional self-concept. In addition to the teacher benefits, principals, schools, divisions, and students benefit from the formalized program support provided to beginning teachers (Stipiansky and Wolf, 1992). Orientation for new teachers to the division is enhanced by integrating the program and division needs at the beginning of the school year. Collaboration among program participants increases with continued relationships beyond the first year. Communication within the division is improved through concentrating on the needs of the beginning teachers. Finally there is an increased amount of professional expertise with benefits to students with skills and knowledge developed.

### Provide Program Structure

A method for combining resources and methods will be needed to achieve program goals. Arrange for participants a timeline of recommended events, including division-wide and school-based activities. Include a special kick-off of the program before the beginning of school for participants. Facilities for beginning teacher meetings and mentor teacher meetings will

have to be arranged. Provide a meeting format that gives content information and asks participants to work in small groups for exchange of ideas. Arrange and build in time for refreshments and social time at all meetings. Build in time for school-based activities to have time for teacher observation with feedback provided from the mentor teacher. After beginning and mentor teachers begin to feel comfortable with each other, beginning teacher needs can be determined and mentors provide the appropriate support. Provide a structure throughout the program that allows for on-going feedback. Keep participants well informed by summarizing and reporting program feedback throughout the program. Conclude with a special celebration and recognition for all program participants at the end of the program.

#### Provide a School-based Recommended Activity Schedule

Mentors found the recommended schedule of school-based mentoring times and topics very helpful in their delivering of support. It was viewed as their number one resource provided. Arrange recommended activities around known beginning teacher needs and division needs found throughout the year. In addition, include time for individual needs to be assessed and provided for. All teachers have unique needs and the program design needs to allow for such support.

#### Encourage Regularly Scheduled School-based Activities

Overwhelmingly, the mentor teachers in this year's program said a change they would make would be to meet on a more regularly scheduled basis. They added they would be more organized and say in contact more with the beginning teachers. I recommend that mentor teachers to use the program's suggested schedule to plan and establish an individualized activity schedule that better suits the needs of the beginning and mentor teacher.

### Encourage University Collaboration

If available, collaboration between public schools and universities can work well and should be encouraged (Odell and Ferraro, 1992). Beginning teacher learning can further be developed by using theoretical and research expertise of university faculty. Assistance with program feedback can also benefit the program.

### Use of Program Consultants

Program consultants, both available within the division and outside of the schools, should be consulted throughout the program based on identified needs of the beginning and mentor teachers. In group meetings, consultants, such as a parent speaker, or the division testing coordinator, can provide valuable information, otherwise unavailable. Flexibility of obtaining consultants needs to be established early on so that as needs are determined, contacts and requests can be made.

### Establish Incentives for Mentor Teachers

In addition to intrinsic satisfactions, it is important to provide mentor teachers with tangible benefits. Such benefits as stipends, release time from teaching, and training on working with beginning teachers, are essential since mentor teachers carry the responsibility for passing on knowledge of accomplished teachers.

### Recommend Scheduled Release Time

One issue that will surface is the scheduling of time for beginning and mentor teachers to participate in school-based activities. Because of the many teacher obligations setting aside time, on a once-a-month-basis, for beginning teachers and mentor teachers to collaborate would be beneficial. The flexible scheduling of substitute teachers, throughout the day in one school,

could allow for several mentoring activities to be scheduled for different groups of teachers. As many as three separate activities could be scheduled. In addition, time for both division-wide K-5 beginning teachers and mentor teachers to get together separately in meetings to talk about their experiences and share ideas is needed. Release time from the classroom is needed for a recommended one-half day session for each of the beginning teacher and mentor teacher meetings to take place.

### Design a Program Evaluation System

In order to plan program outcomes and operation and to oversee program operation careful monitoring and evaluation needs to take place (Kay, 1989). Evaluation is a process that is a major function of providing information for program effectiveness and for program decision making. Design procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting information. Collect, analyze, summarize and report the information. Look for patterns in participant behavior. Comments, questions, and suggestions made in the data collection can assist with future program decisions.

### Provide Program Newsletter

Writing and distributing a program newsletter can assist in the communication with program participants throughout the program. A beginning of the year, mid year, and end-of-the-program newsletter is recommended. The newsletter can be written by the program facilitator with assistance provided from participants. Information about upcoming program events and procedures can be included along with providing helpful tips for beginning and mentor teachers.

### Identify Program Name

Through collaboration efforts with program participants, identify a program name. A name will assist with the necessary identity of the program among teachers and community

groups in the division. The program participants will change from year to year, and familiarity with the program name will assist in future participation.

### Recognize Different Needs for Elementary and Secondary Programs

If the beginning teacher support program is going to take place across grades K-12, recognition of different needs should be established. Although some initial activities can be K-12, separate activities will eventually need to take place for the elementary and secondary participants. There are separate division needs, curriculum needs, and school procedures. A program structure that allows for identifying and training program participants, asking for specific needs of the beginning teachers still needs to be provided, and including program feedback still needs to take place. Having a separate program facilitator for the two programs can assist in program development and delivery.

### Program Recognition Valued

Professional recognition is valued by all program participants. Beginning teachers need to be recognized during their beginning year for making the dramatic transition into learning to teach and making changes in their teaching. Mentor teachers need to understand that their contributions of providing knowledge, skills, and values to the beginning teachers (Mager, 1992) gives a framework for the advancement of teaching. Principals, too, need to recognize that without their support within schools, the program would not be successful. Providing an end-of-the-program celebration, with public recognition, gives recognition of the needed program assistance.

### Recognize Need for Program Changes

As with any worthwhile program, program needs will change not only within the year, but in future years. What might be recognized as an important need division wide one year, such as assessment of Standards of Learning, might be better addressed on the school-site level the following year. As new division-wide or school-wide programs are established year to year, specific needs will be established. Although broad program goals or the program structure do not have to change from year to year, the activities within the program should be adjusted as needed. In addition, program funding within a division and from outside sources will most likely change in different years. The program facilitator should request what funding is needed from a division to provide adequate support making adjustments depending on resources available. Program perimeters may vary with the level of division funding and auxiliary support. It needs to be recognized however that funding is not the most crucial component of this program but adequate funding for such items as stipends and release time raises the program to a higher level of participation and recognition.

### Design a Program Action Plan

There are many tasks and responsibilities involved in planning a beginning teacher support program. Designing a program action plan such as found in Table 12 should assist in the implementation of a program.

Table 12. Beginning teacher support program action plan

Tasks	Target Dates	Responsibility
1. Establish entry into the school division by having dialogue with key central office administrator	Six months before the start of the school year	Facilitator
2. Develop program goals	Early summer	Program support team including central office and facilitator

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3. Inform key school division staff members and principals of program planning	Early summer	Key central office administrator; facilitator
4. Develop beginning teacher program kick-off sessions	July	Facilitator
5. Notify principals to identify mentor teachers with their beginning teachers	Mid-July	Facilitator; Principals
6. Send letter to beginning teachers and mentor teachers about beginning teacher support program for the next school year.	Late July	Facilitator
7. Collect specific beginning Teacher needs in data-collection process	Orientation Week	Facilitator
8.. Kick-off beginning teacher program in a program session; provide beginning teacher notebook	Orientation Week	Facilitator
9. Provide reception for mentor teachers and beginning teachers to be introduced to each other	Orientation Week	(table continues) Facilitator
10. Provide mentor teacher notebook	Prior to the opening of school	Facilitator
11. Collect data on beginning teacher needs from beginning teachers, mentor teachers, and principals	End of the first week of school	Facilitator
12. Implement first mentor teacher meeting; collect program data	End of the second week of school	Facilitator
13. Recommend school-based activities between beginning teachers and mentor teachers	During the first twelve weeks of school	Facilitator

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14.. Implement second beginning teacher meeting; collect program data	End of the first twelve weeks of school	Facilitator
15. Send out first program newsletter	End of the first twelve weeks of school	Facilitator
16. Implement third beginning teacher meeting; collect program data	End of the second twelve weeks of school	Facilitator
17. Recommend school-based activities between beginning teachers and mentor teachers	During the second twelve weeks of school	Facilitator
18. Implement fourth beginning teacher meeting; collect end of the program data	Mid-May	Facilitator
19. Provide celebration of beginning teacher program for beginning teachers, mentor teachers, principals, central office; and invited guests such as school board members	Mid-May	Facilitator
20. Recommend school-based activities between beginning teachers and mentor teachers	During the third twelve weeks of school	Facilitator
21. Implement second mentor teacher meeting; collect program data	Mid-May	Facilitator
22. Send out last program newsletter	Late May	Facilitator
23. Implement second mentor teacher meeting	Mid-May	Facilitator
24. Send out last newsletter	June	Facilitator
25. Connect with principals and Central office staff with program feedback	June	Facilitator

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## EPILOGUE

It is hard to believe that just a year ago this week I was initiating the building of the first program of support for beginning teachers in our school division. Today, August 10, 1998, exactly a year later, I again attended the orientation week breakfast for all new teachers to our division. As with any school program some things will never change and some things will vary from year to year.

As always teachers seemed excited about their first day on the job with introductions being made, people becoming reacquainted, and welcoming speeches delivered by our superintendent and assistant superintendent. I sat at a table with three beginning teachers who appeared somewhat nervous yet pleased to begin their teaching careers. Two beginning teachers hardly spoke a word as we had our breakfast together. They appeared oh so nervous. Yet another beginning teacher dominated the conversation by sharing her excitement of having her room almost ready for the opening of school and being excited about meeting her students. She appeared ready to conquer her third-grade classroom.

With the program in place, principals seemed more eager to approach me today than a year ago. "I'm still interviewing," said one principal, "but I will be in touch with you as soon as the new teacher is hired. I'm glad this program is continuing." Another principal remarked, "I just got back from vacation and haven't chosen the mentors, but I will soon." Some things never change.

One obvious change today was the evidence of the secondary-level, mentoring program. The recently chosen secondary program facilitator was going table to table handing letters to all beginning secondary teachers. She wanted to tell them about the program and about a mentor being selected for them by their principals to assist in their daily teaching. She has a meeting scheduled next week with her secondary school coordinators to discuss the program goals and their roles for this school year. One high school assistant principal approached me and said, "I have sixteen new teachers in my school and mentor teachers have been assigned to all of the

teachers. My mentor school coordinator has already prepared a handout for the mentor teachers and she is very excited about her involvement this year.”

The annual speeches seemed somewhat different this year. All speeches addressed more of a recognition of beginning and new teachers needing support. The superintendent began by saying, “Don’t be afraid to ask questions. There will always be someone to answer your questions.” The assistant superintendent told of the division’s goal to provide support for beginning and new teachers. He said, “You will find in our division that there are primary support people to assist you. Your principals are the primary persons to work with you in your schools. They want you to succeed. Work with them. Secondly, teachers in your schools are there to help you. Get to know and work with your colleagues. The support is there for you.” He continued by telling of the support program and specific activities planned for both the elementary and secondary level throughout the year.

Orientation week activities are scheduled differently this year. Separate sessions are taking place for the elementary and secondary programs with teacher panels provided for both sessions. There will be experienced teachers, several just completing their first year, to meet with all beginning teachers in grade level and subject area groups to talk about what is needed to prepare for the first few days of school. A whole morning of sharing among the teachers will take place. There are several curriculum workshops being directed by the curriculum team and invited presenters. Topics such as handwriting, vocabulary development, and a new math curriculum are different from last year and yet timely with the current direction in curriculum in our division.

It is exciting to think about how far our division has grown in recognizing, communicating, and planning for the needs of the beginning teacher. Just last week a cooperative learning workshop took place at the central office with a principal, teacher, and parent representative from most schools. One of their activities was to brainstorm a list of ideas on how to assist the beginning teachers in our division. Some suggestions made were to encourage active mentoring, avoid assigning additional responsibilities, provide beginning

teacher meetings, ask last year's first year teachers for advice, allow for release time for beginning teachers to work with other teachers, and provide time for beginners to observe other teachers. This powerful list says a great deal about our division's understanding of what is needed to assist our beginning teachers.

I continue to be challenged in assisting with program building for beginning teachers. I want to stay engaged in conversations with beginning and mentor teachers and other community members who care about beginning teachers. The professional community building continues. A professional community where everyone encourages everyone else's learning has finally become a reality.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Beginning Teacher Questionnaire: Beginning the School Year**

September 1, 1998

**After the first week, how would you rate how things are going for you?**

**Extremely difficult 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Extremely easy**

**How helpful has your mentor been for you with pre-opening and first week activities?**

**Not very helpful 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 Extremely helpful**

**How much time would you estimate your mentoring teacher spent with you prior to the opening of school?**

**During the first week of school?**

**What are some things you feel the most successful about so far as a teacher?**

**What are some areas you have struggled with so far?**

**What mentoring activities have been the most helpful for you so far?**

**What additional kinds of help do you still need or would you like to have as a beginning teacher?**

**Do you have any beginning teacher story you would like to share?**



**5. What did you find most valuable about this afternoon's session?**

**6. What are some key words or idea you will be taking with you?**

**7. Any ideas for our next session?**







**6. List any concerns and/or questions the beginning teacher had once school started.**

**7. List any resources/items shared during the first week?**

**8. Any specific story you can tell about your mentoring experience?**

**9. At this point, how do you feel about being a mentoring teacher?**

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Mentoring Teachers Questionnaire Feedback Session**

May 28, 1998

**1. Think back and tell about the most successful thing you did as a mentoring teacher.**

**2. What will you do differently next time you become a mentoring teacher?**

**3. What advice do you have for future mentoring teachers?**

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Beginning Teacher Support Program Principal Questionnaire September 1, 1997**

**1. How important do you see your role in assisting the beginning teacher?**

**Unimportant 1....2....3....4....5 Extremely Important**

**2. What are some things you have done so far to assist the beginning teacher?**

**3. Any particular questions you remember from the beginning teacher(s)?**

**4. What strengths do you already see with your beginning teacher(s)?**

**5. What area(s) of concern do you have about your beginning teacher(s)?**

**6. Is there anything you would do differently with your beginning teacher(s) now that they have experienced the first week of school?**

**7. What do you hope to see from the building of the beginning teacher support program for our division? What should the program look like?**

**8. Any suggestions?**

**APPENDIX H**

**End-of-the-Program Principal Questionnaire**

June 20, 1998

- 1. Statement: The 1997-98 Beginning Teacher/Mentoring Program for our school division was a worthwhile program.**

Please rate the above statement by circling the appropriate number.

**Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree**

**1.....2.....3.....4.....5**

Why did you make the statement in the way above?

- 2. I believe the program should continue in MCPS.**

Please rate the above statement by circling the appropriate number.

**Strongly Disagree      Strongly Agree**

**1.....2.....3.....4.....5**

Why did you make the statement above?

- 3. Any additional comments you would like to make. (please use back)**

**APPENDIX I**

August 1, 1997

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

You have been identified by your school principal as a mentor for a beginning teacher in your school. I congratulate you on being selected to this important area of assisting a beginner in the complexity of teaching. How fortunate for the beginning teacher that you are willing to take on this commitment of support. Currently a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at \_\_\_\_\_, I will be serving this 1997-98 school year as the facilitator of this new program for our division. As I am a doctoral student, I hope that together in this action research model process we can build a support system needed for the beginning teacher.

I invite you to attend a reception at \_\_\_\_\_ Library on Thursday, August 14, 1997, beginning at 2:30 p.m. The beginning teachers will be attending a session earlier in the day and this will be an opportunity for the beginning teachers and mentor teachers to meet together as a group for the first time. I realize this is the last week of vacation, so please do not change any plans you may have. You obviously will meet your beginning teacher the following week and will need to build in time to address the his or her needs.

I have a division-wide meeting scheduled for September 4, 1997, with all elementary mentor teachers, so mark your calendar. I believe that as a group we can plan some worthwhile activities for the 1997-98 school year. Details of the meeting will be sent to you once we are back in school. A quick summary of the year's plans include mostly school-based meetings between you and your paired beginning teacher. I hope that as a group the beginning teachers will meet several times during the year, that mentor teachers will meet another time in the year, and that a celebration will take place for all involved at the end of the program. We will then make recommendations to the division on what is needed to build a beginning teacher support model. I look forward to working with you this year. My goal is to not create work, but to enhance those things we are already doing in the classroom and with other teachers. If you see this involvement as more than you want for this year, please contact your principal. Have a nice rest of the summer.

Sincerely,  
Martha Ann Stallings  
Facilitator, Beginning Teacher Program

c.c. elementary principals  
Assistant Superintendent

**APPENDIX J**

August 1, 1997

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

Congratulations on your new position with \_\_\_\_\_ Schools. I have been notified by the school division's personnel office that you are a beginning teacher with 0 experience. As a beginning teacher you will be provided a support program to assist you in your first year of teaching.

I am a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at \_\_\_\_\_. I will be facilitating the building of a beginning teacher support program for our division. You will be assigned a mentor teacher by your principal. The mentor teacher will assist you with your needs as you begin your first year of teaching. In addition, I hope to have some afternoon meetings for all elementary beginning teachers to get together to talk about your experiences. As activities finalize, you will be notified.

There are several division-wide activities planned for you during the upcoming orientation week of August 11 - 15<sup>th</sup>. You will be provided materials and receive more information about the program during the week.

I look forward to meeting and working with you. I have worked for our school division for a number of years, and have always felt a tremendous amount of support for the development of teacher professionalism. If you have any questions, please call me at \_\_\_\_\_. Have a wonderful rest of the summer.

Sincerely,

Martha Ann Stallings  
Facilitator, Beginning Teacher Program

**APPENDIX K**

July 17, 1997

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

I hope you are having a nice summer. August 25<sup>th</sup>, when we open our doors to our students, will be here shortly. As you may know, I am currently working on a beginning teacher project for our school division. I will be facilitating an action research project during the 1997-98 school year involving K-5 beginning teachers along mentor teachers who have been identified by the principals. The beginning teachers and mentor teachers will be involved in school-based activities throughout the year. In addition, there will be opportunities for division-wide K-5 beginning teachers to meet during the year and for division-wide K- 5 mentor teachers to meet during the year.

I would like to invite you to be a member of the advisory committee for the beginning teacher program. I know you as someone who understands the strengths and needs of the beginning teacher, and I hope you will become involved in the process of building a needed support program. I see our small group of eight to nine people, including teachers, principals, and parents, to meet a few times during the year. Our first meeting will take place on Wednesday, August 13, 1997, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at \_\_\_\_\_Elementary. I have attached a list of the people invited to become a member of this committee. If this is something you cannot commit to, please let me know.

Thank you for your continued love for teaching and learning. I look forward to our involvement together in this project for this school year. Have a nice rest of the summer.

Sincerely,

Martha Ann Stallings  
Facilitator, Beginning Teacher Program

(1) attachment

**APPENDIX L**  
**WEBSITES OF INTEREST TO TEACHERS**

**Carol Hurst Children's Literature Site**

<http://www.carolhurst.com/>

**Debi's (Lesson plans/ideas) Homepage**

<http://www.widomaker.com/~flowers/#top>

**Teachnet Tools for teachers**

<http://www.teachnet.com/>

**Read to Write Project**

<http://www.itdc.sbcss.k12.ca.us/projects/kreider/>

**Discovery School**

<http://school.discovery.com/>

**Social Studies Bookmarks**

<http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/bookmarks.html>

**Bill Nyc the Science Guy**

<http://nyelabs.kcts.org/>

**Scholastic Place**

<http://www.scholastic.com/>

**Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators**

<http://www.capecod.net/schrockguide/>

**Teachers Helping Teachers**

<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/TopicoftheWeek.html>

**The School Page-The Educator's Resource** <http://www.eyesoftime.com/teacher/>

**Math Magic**

<http://forum.swarthmore.edu/mathmagic/>

**Elementary Teachers' Place**

<http://forum.swarthmore.edu/teachers/elem/>

**The Children's Literature Web Guide**

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/>

**Teaching, Learning, Technology**

<http://www.nea.org/cet/>

**NEA free educational resources**

<http://www.nea.org/resources/free.html>

**PBS on-line**

<http://www.pbs.org/>

**Global Schoolnet Foundation**

<http://www.gsn.org>

**inQuiry Almanack**

<http://www.fi.edu/qanda/qanda.html>

**SchoolHouse Rock**

<http://www.schoolhouserock.com/index-h.html>

## APPENDIX M

### Summary of 1997-98 Monthly Planned Activities for Beginning Teacher Program

Month	Planned Activities
August	Kick-Off for beginners b/m reception division-wide advisory group
September	m division-wide b/m on-site
October	b/m on-site
November	b/m on-site b division-wide
December	b/m on-site program newsletter
January	b/m on-site
February	b/m on-site
March	b/m on-site b district-wide program newsletter
April	b/m on-site
May	Celebration: all community members program newsletter m division-wide
June	b/m on-site

b = beginners only; b/m = beginners and mentors; m = mentors only

**Summary of Mtgs.: Advisory = 3; b = 3; b/m on-site = 8; b/m division-wide 2; m = 2**

## APPENDIX N

### 1997-98 Beginning Teacher Program Recommended Schedule

#### Kick-Off:

- August 13, 1997 Advisory Group
  - Orientation to beginning teacher program
  - Brainstorming and planning
  
- August 14, 1997 Beginning Teacher Group Meeting  
Beginning Teacher/Mentor
  - Kick-off and overview to beginning teacher program
  - Introduction of beginning and mentor teachers
  
- September 4, 1997 Mentor Teacher Meeting
  - Brainstorming and planning for year-long activities
  - focus: How do we get started?
  
- Week of September 8, 1997 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - Beginning the third week of school
  - focuses: check-in with beginning teacher needs; any major concerns or questions
  
- Week of October 6, 1997 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - End of the first six weeks
  - focuses: first report card; preparing for the first parent-teacher conference
  
- Week of November 3, 1997 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - End of nine weeks of school
  - Professional Staff Development Days

#### Reflecting and Making Changes

- Week of November 21, 1997 Beginning Teacher Meeting
  - End of second six weeks
  - focuses: making changes in teaching; parent communication; classroom management

- Week of December 8, 1997 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-based Activity
  - focuses: teacher reflection; holiday time
- Week of February 2, 1998 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - School year is half over
  - focuses: principal evaluation; curriculum planning
- Week of March 2, 1998 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - focuses: end-of-the-year responsibilities; division-wide testing

### **Policies and Problem Solving**

- Week of March 12, 1998 Beginning Teacher Meeting
  - End of fourth six weeks
  - focuses: division-wide testing; end-of-the-year responsibilities
- Week of April 20, 1998 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - End of fifth six weeks
  - focuses: What's expected at the end of the year?

### **Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past**

- May 12, 1998 Beginning Teacher Meeting Program Celebration
  - Three weeks of school left
  - focuses: planning for next year; reflection on this year's successes; advice for future beginning teachers; celebration of the completion of the first year
- Week of June 1, 1998 Beginning Teacher/Mentor Teacher School-Based Activity
  - focuses: how to close out a school year; team and school-wide planning for the next school year

**APPENDIX O****BEGINNING TEACHER'S  
SURVIVAL KIT**

## Suggested List of Contents

- \_\_\_\_\_ Checklist for first day activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson plans for first day activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson plans for first week
- \_\_\_\_\_ Check sheet that lists teacher and administrative tasks for preschool days, first week, first month, and/or all year!
- \_\_\_\_\_ An already-prepared bulletin board for the new teacher to use at the beginning of school
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ideas for Back-to-School Night or Open House
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checklist for end-of year activities and routine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checklist for:
  - Fire drill procedures
  - Report cards
  - Routine procedures
  - Field trip policies and procedures
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of specialists within the school area and county
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of staff development activities
- \_\_\_\_\_ Map of the school
- \_\_\_\_\_ Map of the school's enrollment boundaries
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sample report card comments
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checklist of things to do before the first day
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checklist of things to do the first week
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wish list.. .things BT needs to start off the year
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of volunteers/student aids and how they can be of assistance

- \_\_\_\_\_ Ideas for classroom rules
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of standardized tests given by county
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explanation of special education referral process
- \_\_\_\_\_ Samples of letters to send home every nine weeks to parents Sample of personal inventory lists
- \_\_\_\_\_ “Neat” holiday activities folder
- \_\_\_\_\_ How-To Packets for:
  - Ordering supplies
  - Ordering audio-video materials
  - Getting parent volunteers
  - Planning field trips
- \_\_\_\_\_ List of supplies students need on the first day
- \_\_\_\_\_ Grade level supply list
- \_\_\_\_\_ Subject area supply list
- \_\_\_\_\_ Description of any “system” that works (ways to keep grade book, how to keep track of tardies, make-up work, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Substitute folder

Source:  
Colleague Lead Teachers, Fairfax County Schools

**APPENDIX P**

# Beginning the School Year Checklist

The following is an adaptation of a checklist developed by the Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 12500 East Cliff Street, Suite 201; Aurora, Colorado 80014. Write them for the complete list or use these categories as guidelines to create your checklist.

**Beginning Class**

- A. Roll call, absentees
- B. Tardy students
- C. Get-ready routines
- D. Distributing materials
- E. \_\_\_\_\_
- F. \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Requirements**

- A. Heading papers
- B. Use of pen or pencil
- C. Writing on back of paper
- D. Neatness, legibility
- E. Incomplete work
- F. \_\_\_\_\_
- G. \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructional Activities**

- A. Signals for students' attention
- B. Signals for teacher's attention
- C. Student talk during seatwork
- D. Activities to do when work is done
- E. Student movement in and out of small group
- F. Bringing materials to group
- G. Expected behavior in group
- H. Expected behavior of students not in group
- I. \_\_\_\_\_
- J. \_\_\_\_\_

**Ending Class**

- A. Putting away supplies, equipment
- B. Cleaning up
- C. Dismissing class
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

**Interruptions**

- A. Rules
- B. Talk among students
- C. Turning in work

- \_\_\_ D. Handing back assignments
- \_\_\_ E. Getting back assignments
- \_\_\_ F. Out-of-seat policies
- \_\_\_ G. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ H. \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Procedures**

- \_\_\_ A. Lunch procedures
- \_\_\_ B. Student helpers
- \_\_\_ C. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_

**Room/School Areas**

- \_\_\_ A. Shared materials
- \_\_\_ B. Teacher's desk
- \_\_\_ C. Water fountain, bathroom, pencil sharpener
- \_\_\_ D. Student desks
- \_\_\_ E. Learning centers, stations
- \_\_\_ F. Playground
- \_\_\_ G. Lunchroom
- \_\_\_ H. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ I. \_\_\_\_\_

**Communicating Assignments**

- \_\_\_ A. Returning assignments
- \_\_\_ B. Homework assignments
- \_\_\_ C. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_

**Checking Assignments in Class**

- \_\_\_ A. Students exchanging papers
- \_\_\_ B. Marking and grading assignments
- \_\_\_ C. Turning in assignments
- \_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ E. \_\_\_\_\_

**Grading Procedures**

- \_\_\_ A. Recording grades
- \_\_\_ B. Grading criteria
- \_\_\_ C. Contracting with students for grades
- \_\_\_ D. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ E. \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Feedback**

- \_\_\_ A. Rewards and incentives
- \_\_\_ B. Posting student work
- \_\_\_ C. Communicating with parents
- \_\_\_ D. Students' record of grades
- \_\_\_ E. Written comments on assignments
- \_\_\_ F. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ G. \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX Q

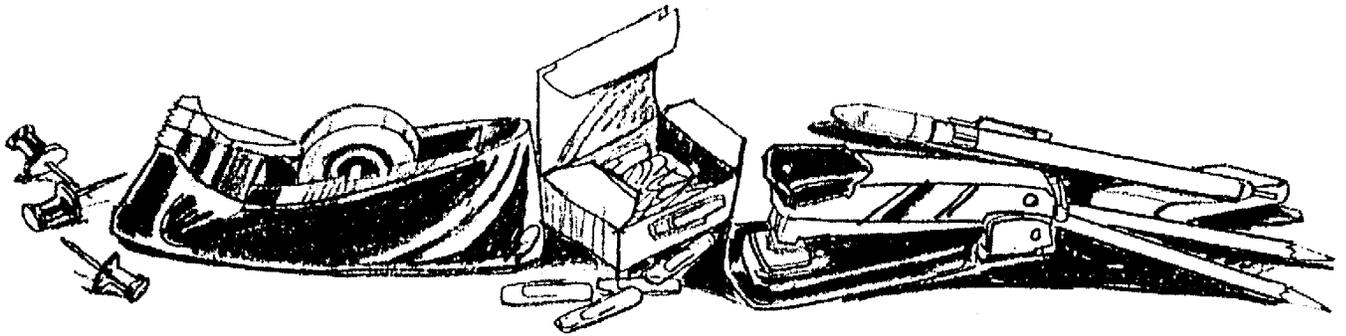


# Must-Do List

*Before the first day...*

- \_\_\_ Make bulletin board decisions: where to post announcements, menu, and calendar; what kind of welcome-back display to make: which boards will be for subject area stress; where to display children's work; which boards you will let students design
  - \_\_\_ Set up learning centers
  - \_\_\_ Make signs for room
  - \_\_\_ Prepare class rolls and permanent records
  - \_\_\_ Make class list to post on door
  - \_\_\_ Put your name outside the door
  - \_\_\_ Make student name tags for desks or have them make their own
  - \_\_\_ Find out schedules for lunch, gym, art, music, library
  - \_\_\_ Obtain supplies
    - \_\_\_ plan books
    - \_\_\_ attendance materials
    - \_\_\_ paper clips
    - \_\_\_ duplicating paper and masters
    - \_\_\_ construction paper
    - \_\_\_ manila folders
    - \_\_\_ different kinds of tape
    - \_\_\_ extra writing paper
    - \_\_\_ grade book
    - \_\_\_ rubber bands
    - \_\_\_ stapler and staples
    - \_\_\_ thermal masters
    - \_\_\_ handwriting paper
    - \_\_\_ receipt book
    - \_\_\_ straight pins
    - \_\_\_ spare pencils/pens
    - \_\_\_ tissues
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- \_\_\_ Prepare packets for students to take home the first day. Include:
    - \_\_\_ emergency forms
    - \_\_\_ school rules
    - \_\_\_ supplies
    - \_\_\_ bus or transportation rules
    - \_\_\_ note to parents/request for room parents
- 
-

- \_\_\_ Check to see which students may be going to special classes (Locate testing and psychological files)
- \_\_\_ Get textbooks from book room; do paperwork needed to issue them
- \_\_\_ Secure materials that accompany texts
- \_\_\_ Gather appropriate supplementary materials
- \_\_\_ Check out library books
- \_\_\_ Set up a folder for a substitute to use in case of emergency
  - \_\_\_ daily schedule (fill in as soon as possible)
  - \_\_\_ seating chart (fill in as soon as possible)
  - \_\_\_ reproducible activities (change monthly)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ Prepare a file for correspondence from parents
- \_\_\_ Prepare a file for faculty bulletins
- \_\_\_ Write tentative lesson plans for the coming week
- \_\_\_ Duplicate materials needed the first few days
- \_\_\_ Write your name and other important information on the board
- \_\_\_ Make a checklist for returned forms (can be used later for report cards and other items)
- \_\_\_ Other



Developed by Rhoda London, original appeared in INSTRUCTOR, August 1984.

**APPENDIX R**  
**Planning for the Year**

Grading Period	Curriculum Units
First	
Second	
Third	

Fourth	
Fifth	
Sixth	

## Beginning Teacher Program Newsletter: January 6, 1998

### *Welcome Back from Martha Ann*

With the 1998 new year comes the reality of our school year being almost half over. I hope that we can think about the many successes we have had with our students to date while planning for the remainder of the school year. From the comments I have heard from your colleagues, mentors, and principals, you should be proud of your accomplishments and wonderful teaching you are doing. Congratulations to each of you. I am proud to be involved with such a wonderful group of educators in \_\_\_\_\_ County Schools.

### *First Beginning Teacher Session Recap*

I feel very good about our first Beginning Teacher session. I appreciate your willingness to share with each other about your beginning teacher experiences. As promised, I will follow with a summary of the feedback received with the individual and group questions:

#### Ideas for Curriculum Planning/Pacing (group)

- Year-long planning while also being an emergent child interest planner
- Using SOL checklist for unit planning
- Doing what you can - picking the projects you want to emphasize
- Planning with others to broaden the students' learning
- Specialty teachers asking teachers for themes and concepts to reinforce
- Using notes in lesson plan book to improve for next lesson, next unit, and/or next year

#### Classroom Management Areas Needing Assistance (group)

- Learning individual differences/needs
- Time management
- Effective communication with other teachers
- Conflict management (what to do when a student comes to school with problems from home)
- "Seeing" everything (tattling by students on things you haven't seen)

- Dealing with children who don't respond to classroom management techniques
- Consistency and following through

Changes that Could Now be Made (group)

- More parent communication
- Better organization
- Pacing with other teachers on units and school schedules
- Differentiation
- Organizing volunteers and using more volunteers
- Long-term planning
- Following through with ideas

Management Strategies/Ideas (group)

- Positive reinforcement - being fair!
- Consistent plan
- Using contracts (plan, consequences, explanations)
- Temperature check
- Earning whole class choice time
- Tickets, stickers, and point system
- Focus desk - folder with letter to parents
- Respect and relationships with the children
- Choosing behaviors for the next time
- Students choosing their own consequences
- Lists
- Stoplight: green, yellow, and red

Classroom Management Areas you Still Need Assistance With (individual)

- Consistency
- Organization
- Packing up at the end of the day and keeping things moving smoothly
- Having students stay on task
- Having the struggling students finish work in an appropriate amount of time
- What to do when few students cause many to fall short of classroom goals
- How to balance giving student choices when they always make improper ones
- Finding time to get a week ahead
- Finding time in the week to meet SOL's
- Conflict management

- Gaining and maintaining focus

Successful Classroom Management Strategies Used this Year (individual)

- Focus desk letters - once a child has gotten a reminder and a warning, they go to the focus desk and write a letter home explaining what has happened: parents must sign and return the letter
- Clear rules and expectations; being consistent
- Rewarding good behavior with privileges
- Relying on children to be role models and setting the example both in and out of the classroom
- Varying activities
- Movement breaks
- Engaging activities
- Good parent communication
- “all-stars” - motivational for behaviors
- Incentive sticker charts
- Positive reinforcement
- Contacting parents when problem continues
- Using songs for transitions to catch students’ attention in a positive way and to set the tone
- Not using a behavior plan but encouraging students to solve problems and to develop their own consequences
- Changing name cards
- Appropriate tone in teacher voice
- Allowing children to be independent and responsible
- Having students to use their words to work out their problems with others
- Giving a “quickest quietest” packer award

Changes You Would Like to Make in Your Teaching Now (individual)

- Writing process
- More ideas to making reading fun while covering strategies
- Ways to meet needs in multi-level groups
- Using newsletters to tell what we have been doing
- Flowing through content areas and bridging the gap
- Improving abilities to apply more conflict management in my classroom
- Better long term planning
- Clarity for planning
- Time management for 30 minute sessions while feeling as though I have accomplished something
- Assessment techniques

- Following through with classroom management techniques
- Letting students learn more independently instead of as a group
- Differentiating more and more
- Reading groups
- More communication with parents; letting parents know what we are doing and learning each week
- Being more organized and creative
- Not being afraid to try and possibly fail

#### The One Thing You Are the Most Proud of in Your Teaching Experience To-Date (individual)

- Doing newsletters
- As a reading teacher finding strategies that help individual students
- The ability to show children that I am a real person too
- Math baseball; math class
- Language arts lessons
- Allowing students to love reading
- Relationships developed with my students, parents, and other teachers
- Discovering that my reputation in the community is that I am a good teacher who is fair with high expectations, and willing to work with parents and students
- Take-home journals that go home weekly with personal letters about each child's week
- Using an emergent curriculum while meeting the SOL's and following students' interests
- Varying lessons to meet different abilities
- Enthusiasm
- Ability to inspire students to try new things
- Emphasis on cooperative learning without competition

#### What Was Found Most Valuable About the Beginning Teacher Session

- Talking and collaborating with other "new" teachers at my grade level or specialty area
- Sharing of ideas and strategies
- Parent presentation
- Group discussion and brainstorming regarding difficulties I am experiencing
- Hearing how others are doing

Key Words and/or Ideas Taken from the Session

- Communication
- Parent Involvement
- Pacing and long-term planning
- Differentiated Instruction
- Making changes anytime
- Don't beat yourself up; look for what is working!
- Focus desk; Finished-First box
- Collaboration
- Being honest with mentor
- SOL sheets in grade book
- Challenge book for each student and giving time for children to work in them

*Parent Perspective*

Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, a parent of a fourth grader and middle schooler in \_\_\_\_\_ County Schools, was a guest speaker at our November 20<sup>th</sup> seminar. As evident in your comments, teachers felt her thoughts and ideas on teacher-parent communication were important and relevant to beginning teacher. To summarize her thoughts: \*education now is really a partnership between teachers and parents and the community; \*communication is the key! - backpack flyers; newsletters, weekly work and behavior sheets, notes and phone calls important; \*provide scheduled opportunities for parents to help in the classroom; \*don't be afraid to show your human side; and \*join the PTA! Her final thoughts were to always remember that as uncertain as you may feel about some things in the classroom, parents also need assurance that they are "doing their job right" too, especially in the early grades. Thanks to Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ for taking time out of her busy work schedule at the Virginia Tech \_\_\_\_\_ to talk to us during our afternoon session. She was very insightful for us all.

### *Staff Development Days*

I hope you find the staff development days valuable on January 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Check with your mentor and principal on questions about these two important days. Enjoy and be sure to share with your colleagues what you learn.

### *Mark Your Calendar*

Our second Beginning Teacher Group Session is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 12, 1998 from 1 - 4 p.m. Once testing schedules have been determined, this date will be confirmed or a new date will be given. I realize this is a very busy time of the year. I will notify you of the seminar date as soon as possible.

### *Share Your Ideas*

It was recommended by several of you that at our next Beginning Teacher Session teachers come prepared to share a teaching idea. Please bring enough copies with the description of what you are sharing for around 30 teachers. I will remind you of this again before the next session. Continue to send me any ideas you have for our group sessions. As requested by some of you, if you have an e-mail address and would be willing to have me distribute it to our beginning teacher group, please e-mail me at [mstallin@bev.net](mailto:mstallin@bev.net). Thanks as always for your participation and support of this important project.

*Happy New Year!*

# Record Keeping

## ⇒ A System That Works For You

Good records make your life easier. You can approach conferences and report card time with confidence if you know your records are not only complete but also meaningful. It is important to set up a system for keeping records and even more important to choose a system that works for you. This may entail a period of trial and error, but it is worth taking the time to come up with the right approach.

## ⇒ The Grade Book

Keeping grades in a grade book is the traditional approach to record keeping. These grades give you the confidence you need when assessing the progress your students are making and validate your assessments in the eyes of parents.

In the elementary school, it is a time-saver to make your own grade book, simply because the usual commercially produced grade book has such tiny squares that you need a super-fine pen and extraordinary eyesight just to enter your grades. A teacher-made grade book can consist of pages with a class list down the left side and squares ruled off for grades. Run off an ample supply of these pages and label a set with the subjects you choose to keep grades for. SPELLING, MATH, and so on. (A sample form follows on page B-38 for your convenience.)

## ⇒ The Portfolio

Right now, teachers are being asked to take the “portfolio approach” to record keeping. This is a totally different style and requires a totally different system. There are many different ways to keep portfolio records, but all of them begin with a folder for each student. Once you have set up your folders, there is a variety of forms that can help you to systematize your record keeping. (A selection of these forms is included on pages B-39 to B-43 to help you get started.) *Just remember to date everything that goes in!*

## ⇒ The Grading Portfolio

This portfolio is especially useful for those who teach in districts where students are expected to be compared to other students. For any assignment that would go into a showcase portfolio, you select at least two examples of student work that are representative of the grades you would assign. Deleting student names, make a copy of each selected paper. Place these into a grading portfolio. Whenever you need to justify a grade on a particular paper, it can be compared to those in the grading portfolio. This is especially useful to parents who feel their child received a grade unfairly. You can have them read their child’s paper first and then show them the comparison paper. (If you have used their child’s paper as part of the grading portfolio, show them the other sample.)

## ⇒ The Combination Approach

Since systems of evaluation are changing so rapidly right now, you may want to combine the grade-book and portfolio approaches to record keeping. Even though you may really be committed to implementing portfolio evaluation, you can strengthen your position with both administrators and parents who are used to the traditional approach by keeping some grades in a grade book. Simply record the grades from a set of papers before putting them into the portfolios.

**APPENDIX U**  
**K-5 Beginning and New Teachers**  
**Orientation Questionnaire**

**Question: What fears do you have as you begin teaching this fall?**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Specific quotes</b>
<b>Parents</b>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am afraid of meeting parents the first morning of school.”</li> <li>• “I fear some parents will find out I am a new teacher and will move their child out of my class.”</li> <li>• “I fear conflict with parents.”</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting needs of students</b>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am worried that I won’t be able to spend enough one-on-one time with my students.”</li> <li>• “Will I be able to motivate my students?”</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations</b>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “My fear is that I will be unable to juggle all of the expectation on me as a new teacher.”</li> <li>• “I’m afraid I won’t be able to recall any of the information I learned during my six years of college and will fail the students.”</li> </ul>
<b>Not ready for the first day of school</b>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I fear I will not have everything done by the first day.”</li> <li>• “With only a week and a half before school starts I am afraid I won’t have everything done.”</li> <li>• “My fear is that I will forget everything I learned about teaching.”</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusion of special education students</b>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am concerned that I won’t be able to meet the needs of all of my students due to total inclusion.”</li> <li>• “I fear I may not be fully prepared for the inclusive classroom.”</li> </ul>
<b>Learning names</b>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I am afraid of learning kids’ and other teachers’ names quickly.”</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX V

### Grades 6-8 Beginning and New Teachers Questionnaire Results for Orientation Week

Questions	Summary by themes	Frequency
<b>What fears do you have as you begin teaching this fall?</b>	• Time Issues	4
	• Meeting Needs of Students	2
	• Student Behavior	2
	• Resources	2
	• Administration Support	
	• Preparation	
	• Inclusion	
	• Communication	
	• Covering Required Material	
	• Balancing school and personal life	
<b>What questions do you have about our school district?</b>	• Professional Development	4
	• Personnel Issues	2
	• District Requirements	2
	• Vision of School District	
	• Student-to-teacher Ratio	
	• Conference Opportunities	
	• Specific School Questions	

## APPENDIX W

### Grades 9-12 Beginning and New Teacher Questionnaire Results for Orientation Week

Questions	Summary by theme	Frequency
<b>What fears do you have as you begin teaching this fall?</b>	• Being accepted by and working with other teachers	4
	• Challenging behaviors	3
	• Adjusting to new school and starting all over	2
	• Being prepared	2
	• Relationships with students	2
	• Resources	2
	• Establishing learning environment	2
	• Lack of knowledge	
	• Special ed. paperwork	
	• In-class topic discussions parents may object to	
<b>What questions do you have about our school district?</b>	• Orientation week compensation	3
	• Pay scale	2
	• After school and summer enrichment programs	2
	• Technology	
	• Inclusion	
	• Magnet schools	
	• Standardized testing	
	• Military leave	
	• Athletic programs	
	• How schools work together with curriculum issues	

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APPLEGATE / THE ROANOKE TIMES

Martha Ann Stallings, a fifth-grade teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School, gives some last-minute guidance to new \_\_\_\_\_ schoolteachers. Stallings has developed a new mentoring program that will connect experienced teachers with the "green" ones for their first year in front of a class.

## Help for fledgling teachers in \_\_\_\_\_ County

*Program pairs someone  
old, someone new*

Rookie teachers get a mentor to help prepare for their first year in program targeted at elementary educators.

By **LISA APPLEGATE**  
THE ROANOKE TIMES

BLACKSBURG - \_\_\_\_\_ remembers her first year, the end of it in particular.

More than 20 years ago, \_\_\_\_\_ began teaching the third grade at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School. She came in during the middle of the year, and they stuck her out in a mobile classroom.

So when it came to details such as end-of-the-year report cards, she was pretty much on her own. "There was this little thing on the report card but I never did see it -that's where you put what year a child will move up to the next grade," she remembered. Her principal got a call from every parent in \_\_\_\_\_ class, wondering if his or her child had passed the third grade. At the time, \_\_\_\_\_ was mortified. But now she laughs as she tells it to first-year teacher \_\_\_\_\_ will join \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ as this year's other first-grade teacher. The report card incident, \_\_\_\_\_ said, is "that kind of thing we just forget to tell teachers. We've known it for 10 years and just assume they know it too," \_\_\_\_\_ said. "That's why this program is so important." This program is a mentoring one, where experienced teachers like \_\_\_\_\_ are assigned to "green" teachers like \_\_\_\_\_. This is a first for \_\_\_\_\_ County schools, and it was designed by a fellow teacher.

Martha Ann Stallings, a fifth-grade teacher at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School, is working on her doctorate from Virginia Tech. After trying to informally help new teachers in recent years, she knew her research needed to focus on making the first year one of the best. National statistics show that about one-third of beginning teachers do not return for a second year. Sometimes, Stallings said, university training doesn't sufficiently cover basics such as disciplining classes which can frustrate new teachers to the point of quitting. Often, it comes down to simply not having the support to get through that first year. "The main thing I want to emphasize is that there's support and help from other teachers out there," she said.

New teachers - along with experienced teachers who are new to \_\_\_\_\_ County— spent all of this week discussing curriculum and discipline, comparing teaching ideas and sharing their fears. One of the biggest worries expressed this week, \_\_\_\_\_ said, was whether fellow teachers and parents would respect novice educators enough to trust them with children.

Stallings will send out a calendar to all mentors with important dates to get together with their new co-workers. Events like the first parent-teacher conference, standardized testing and the February doldrums are all good opportunities to give some advice, or simply some empathy.

"It's just nice knowing someone will be there, once I think of all the questions," said first-year teacher \_\_\_\_\_, who will be the speech pathologist at \_\_\_\_\_ Elementary School.

Her biggest fear was handling all the paperwork related to special education. Her mentor, \_\_\_\_\_ special education teacher \_\_\_\_\_, anticipated this even before she met \_\_\_\_\_. At a reception Thursday, \_\_\_\_\_ sat \_\_\_\_\_ down with a folder full of papers, including a chart that would organize the paperwork easily.

For now, the mentoring program is limited to the roughly 20 novice elementary school teachers in the county. Stallings is expecting a grant from the state designed to help programs like this, but Assistant Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_ said the county would cover the costs no matter what.

"By the end of this year, Stallings said, "I'm hoping to have a plan to give to the school system and say, 'OK, here's how - we can continue this.'"

**Lisa Applegate can be reached at 381-1679 or [lisa@roanoke.com](mailto:lisa@roanoke.com)**

**APPENDIX**  
**K-5 Beginning Teachers First Meeting**  
**Teacher Session Questionnaire Summary**

Questions	Summary in themes	Frequency
<b>What is the one thing you are the most proud of in your teaching experience to-date?</b>	• curriculum issues	5
	• following students' interest	2
	• reputation in community	
	• relationships	
	• using differentiation	
	• inspiring students	
	• using cooperative learning	
	• enthusiasm	
	• inspiring students to try new things	
	• weekly parent communication about child's progress	
<b>What are some changes you would like to make in your teaching now?</b>	• parent communication	5
	• planning	3
	• curriculum changes	3
	• classroom management	2
	• differentiation	2
	• use more teaching ideas	2
	• assessment techniques	2
	• organization	
	• not being afraid to try new things and possibly fail	
	• finding a better way to communicate with other teachers	

(table continues)

Questions	Summary in themes	Frequency
What are two to three successful classroom management strategies you have used this year?	• incentive charts	4
	• students taking responsibility	3
	• for their behavior	3
	• parent communication	2
	• engaging activities	2
	• using positive reinforcements	
	• clear rules and expectations	
	• movement breaks	
	• appropriate voice tone	
	• using songs for transitions	
What are some classroom management areas you still need assistance with?	• being consistent	4
	• students finishing work in the right amount of time	3
	• time management	2
	• conflict management	
	• organization	
	• keeping things moving smoothly	
	• giving student choices	
• maintaining focus		

## APPENDIX Z

### K-5 Beginning Teachers Policies and Problem Solving Teacher Session Questionnaire Summary

Questions	Summary in themes	Frequency
<b>What assistance have you been given about SOL testing at your school?</b>	• Training from school district testing coordinator	6
	• Blueprints from state department	4
	• Assistance from other teachers	4
	• Information from principals	2
<b>Remembering the focuses from our last session, any successes you can share?</b>	• changes made	5
	• parent communication	4
	• writer's workshop	2
	• worked with other teachers	2
	• observed another teacher	2
	• working relationship with principal	2
	• classroom management skills	2
	• new teaching strategies	2
	• end-of-the-day procedure	2
	• feel more confident in all areas	2
	• more solid expectations	2
<b>List some sources and/or suggestions that have been provided to you from your mentor since last session.</b>	• planning	6
	• sharing of resources	4
	• support	4
	• assistance with discipline issues	2
	• assistance with parent	2
	• advice	2
	• gifted unit information	2
	• importance of documentation	2
	• make copies of everything	2
	•	2
<b>What needs/questions do you have as you prepare for the end of the year?</b>	• end-of-the year responsibilities	4
	• retention issues	3
	• will everything needed be covered	3
	• how students will behave	3
	• inventory	3
	• how to ease stress	3
	• next year's assignment	3

## APPENDIX AA

### Planning the Future and Celebrating the Past K-5 Beginning Teachers Questionnaire Summary

Questions	Summary in themes	Frequency
<b>What are some things you have done well as a classroom teacher this year?</b>	• Met individual needs	8
	• Collaboration with teachers	5
	• Behavior management	5
	• Time management	3
	• Organization	2
	• Asked mentor questions	2
	• Got to know students as people	2
	• Make learning meaningful	2
	• Remained positive	
	• Enjoyed myself	
	• Experimented with projects	
	• Was flexible and adapted well	
	• Showed patience	
	• Progress with students	
	• Was creative	
	• Overcame difficult situation	
	• Made learning fun	
• Incorporated student ideas		
<b>What will you do differently in your teaching next year?</b>	• Better parent communication	7
	• Organization	5
	• Long term planning	5
	• Teaching of reading	4
	• Better documentation	4
	• Communication with other teachers	4

(table continues)

Questions	Summary in themes	Frequency
<b>(continued) What will you do differently in your teaching next year?</b>	• Differentiation	4
	• Use more activities and ideas	4
	• Classroom management	3
	• Find and use resources better	2
	• Use more classroom volunteers	2
	• More involved in out of school activities	2
	• Improve writing process	
	• Use peer mediation	
	• Challenge students more	
	• Establish student learning goals	
	• Encourage independent and creative thinking	
	<b>Pretend that you have been assigned to mentor a beginning teacher next year. What advice do you have for the teacher?</b>	• Ask questions
• Get to know your parents and communicate well		5
• Document everything		
• Stay organized		4
• Try to relax and enjoy yourself		4
• Find resources and use them		3
• Be patient with yourself		
• Plan ahead		2
• Keep good records		2
• Get to know the other teachers in your school		2
• Get involved		
• Review SOLs		
• Develop an instruction timeline		
• Establish expectations right away		

(table continues)

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Questions	Summary in themes	Frequency
<b>(continued) Pretend that you have been assigned to mentor a beginning teacher next year. What advice do you have for the teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep an up-to-date calendar with you</li><li>• Be prepared</li><li>• Remember you learn from everything whether it is good or bad</li><li>• Be confident in your abilities but ask for help</li><li>• Go ahead and try the “crazy” ideas you have after you think them through</li><li>• Stay positive</li><li>• Pace yourself</li><li>• Don’t be afraid to question what you have always done</li><li>• Be true to your beliefs and be confident in your abilities</li></ul>	

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## APPENDIX BB

### K-5 Mentoring Teachers Pre-Opening and Completion of First Week Questionnaire Results

Questions	Summary by theme	Frequency
<b>What amount of time did you spend with your beginning teacher prior to the opening of school?</b>		4.8 hours
<b>How much time was spent mentoring the beginning teacher during the first week of school?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 - 2 ½ hours</li> <li>• 10 hours</li> <li>• several hours</li> <li>• great amount of time</li> <li>• 2 ½ school days</li> </ul>	10 2 2 2
<b>What resources did you provide prior to the opening of school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• books</li> <li>• educational resource materials</li> <li>• lesson plans</li> <li>• curriculum guides</li> <li>• files</li> <li>• parent communication</li> <li>• SOL information</li> <li>• supplies</li> <li>• inventories</li> <li>• journal articles</li> <li>• ideas for the first day</li> <li>• information on how to prepare for emergency substitute plans</li> </ul>	7 5 4 4 3 3 2 2  2
<b>What additional resources did you share during the first week of school?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letters</li> <li>• thematic units</li> <li>• assessment materials</li> <li>• Title 1 materials</li> <li>• student of the week</li> </ul>	2

(table continues)

Questions	Summary by theme	Frequency
<b>List any tasks and/or activities you had with your beginning teacher prior to the opening of school.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• planning</li> <li>• attended meetings</li> <li>• going over school handbook</li> <li>• set up classroom</li> <li>• scheduling</li> <li>• testing materials</li> <li>• organized class supplies</li> <li>• worked on bulletin boards</li> <li>• made class lists</li> <li>• attended luncheon together</li> <li>• opening paperwork</li> <li>• lesson plan expectations</li> </ul>	<p>4 4 2 2</p>
<b>What questions were you asked prior to the opening of the school year?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scheduling</li> <li>• daily routines</li> <li>• cumulative folders</li> <li>• money availability</li> <li>• lunch procedures</li> <li>• administrative-type</li> <li>• curriculum procedures</li> <li>• about visual aides</li> <li>• open house</li> <li>• testing</li> <li>• about other teachers</li> <li>• how to group children</li> <li>• book availability</li> <li>• how to work with parents</li> <li>• how to do writing workshop</li> </ul>	<p>4 2 2 2 2 2</p>
<b>What concerns and/or questions did the beginning teacher have after the opening school?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scheduling</li> <li>• dealing with parents</li> <li>• discipline issues</li> <li>• general procedures</li> <li>• SOLs</li> <li>• social studies</li> <li>• files</li> <li>• lesson plans</li> <li>• paperwork</li> <li>• inclusion</li> </ul>	

## APPENDIX CC

### K-5 Mentoring Teachers End-of-the-Year Questionnaire Summary

Questions	Average rating	
<p><b>Being a mentor was a professionally rewarding experience. Rate this statement by circling the appropriate number.</b> (Strongly Disagree 1...2...3...4...5 Strongly Agree)</p>	<p><b>4.8</b></p>	
<hr/>		
	<b>Summary by theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<p><b>Why did you make the statement in the way above?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A great experience</li> <li>• Rewarding</li> <li>• Rethought about practices of our profession</li> <li>• Learned from the experience</li> <li>• Flexibility of the program</li> <li>• Recognition and support as a mentor</li> <li>• Reappreciation of things taken for granted</li> <li>• Received technology assistance</li> <li>• Gave back to the profession</li> <li>• Felt not always doing enough</li> <li>• Saw my job from a different point of view</li> </ul>	<p>5 4 2 2</p>

(table continues)

Questions	Summary by theme	Frequency
<b>Think back and tell about the most successful thing you did as a mentoring teacher.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided support</li> <li>• Was available for questions</li> <li>• Helped with lesson plans</li> <li>• Shared information</li> <li>• Provided resources</li> <li>• Assisted with record keeping</li> <li>• Assisted with management skills</li> <li>* Provided positive feedback</li> <li>• Developed a professional relationship</li> <li>• Assistance with parent conferences</li> <li>• Helped with scheduling</li> <li>• Helped with grouping of students</li> <li>• Assistance with organization</li> <li>• Assistance with SOLs</li> <li>• Learned how to communicate with other teachers better</li> <li>• Recognized my strengths and weaknesses as a mentor and teacher</li> </ul>	<p>4</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>
<b>What will you do differently next time you are a mentoring teacher?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet at a regularly scheduled time</li> <li>• Stay in contact more</li> <li>• Nothing</li> <li>• Be more organized</li> <li>• Try to be teamed with the teacher</li> <li>• Get more involved</li> <li>• Compliment teacher more</li> <li>• Present my material in a notebook</li> <li>• Provide more support with students with special needs</li> </ul>	<p>4</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>

(table continues)

Questions	Summary by theme	Frequency
<b>What advice do you have for future mentoring teachers?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be available for questions</li> <li>• Be open</li> <li>• Don't wait to be asked</li> <li>• Don't assume anything</li> <li>• Set a scheduled time to meet</li> <li>• Do not give too much information at one time</li> <li>• Look for good opportunities to give information</li> <li>• Do not make decisions for the teacher</li> <li>• Be sure you want to be a mentor</li> <li>• Take daily just to "touch base"</li> <li>• Be prepared to spend extra time mentoring</li> <li>• Have a back-up mentor when you are not available</li> <li>• Keep an on-going file of things you'd like to share or discuss</li> <li>• Remember what it felt like to be the new kid on the block</li> <li>• Be willing and open to learn from the beginning teacher</li> </ul>	<p>6</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p>

## APPENDIX DD

### Secondary Building Mentoring Questionnaire Summary

- 1. About how many beginning teachers are in your building this year?**  
6 from 1 school; 4 from 1 school; 3 from 2 schools; 1 from 1 school
- 2. How does your principal go about matching mentoring teachers with beginning teachers?**  
by department; subject area and/or teams in middle schools; usually by department; subject area; subject area, personalities, and time availability
- 3. Are teachers in your building who are not beginners but new to our district matching with mentoring teachers?**  
yes - 3; no- 2
- 4. What specific concerns and/or questions did you beginning teachers have?**  
Orientation for teachers hired late; written instructions for integrate; basic questions about school operations on a daily basis; policies on discipline; deadlines on grades; conference procedures; general questions on school policies and duties; questions on what material to cover; questions about school organizations such as clubs, schedules, money, supplies; sick leave procedures; duty assignments; facility use regulations; substitutes; parking; custodial responsibilities
- 5. What are some specific resources you shared with beginning teachers?**  
English materials; items with conferences on cooperative learning; curriculum materials (books, activities); SOL/book connections; exams; manipulatives; a great deal having to do with Integrate; journal articles; lesson plans; learning activity packets; machine availability; fund raising activities and procedures; program-of-work schedules
- 6. What recommendations do you have for a secondary mentoring program next year?**  
regularly scheduled meetings between new staff and mentors with open agendas; discussions about learning styles; discussions about discipline; get together during work week to go over handbook, policies, duties, etc.; some resources to share with beginning teachers; start earlier; formal meetings with beginning teachers at the beginning, middle and end of the school year
- 7. What needs do you have as a mentoring coordinator that might help us plan a program for next year?**  
3 said none; one said information on how to be a good mentor

## APPENDIX EE

### Elementary Principals Completion of First Week Questionnaire Summary

Questions	Average rating
<p><b>How important do you see your role in assisting the beginning teacher?</b> (Unimportant 1...2...3...4...5 Extremely Important)</p>	<p><b>5.0</b></p>
	<p><b>Summary by themes</b></p>
	<p><b>Frequency</b></p>
<p><b>What are some things you have done to assist the beginning teacher?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Met with teacher individually 5</li> <li>• Discussed school policies 4</li> <li>• Staff introductions 3</li> <li>• Positive Feedback 3</li> <li>• Daily check-ins 2</li> <li>• Reviewed handbook &amp; forms 2</li> <li>• Building tour</li> <li>• Discussed curriculum guides</li> <li>• Discussed observations and evaluations</li> <li>• Personnel benefits</li> <li>• Assigned mentoring teacher</li> <li>• Wrote personal notes to teacher</li> </ul>
<p><b>Any particular questions you remember from the beginning teacher?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Anything special I need to know?”</li> <li>• Materials</li> <li>• Insurance questions</li> <li>• Discipline procedures to follow</li> <li>• Time at school expectations</li> <li>• “Who do I go to for questions about payroll and curriculum?”</li> </ul>

(table continues)

Questions	Summary by Themes	Frequency
<b>What areas of concern do you have about the beginning teacher(s) in your building?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being overwhelmed</li> <li>• Being provided enough support</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge in curriculum</li> <li>• Conference techniques</li> <li>• Time management</li> <li>• Grade reporting</li> <li>• Feeling a part of the school and district</li> <li>• Dealing with a team of strong personalities</li> <li>• Personal lives suffering</li> <li>• Frustration keeping up with veteran teachers</li> </ul>	2
<b>What strengths do you already see with the beginning teacher(s) in your building?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard workers</li> <li>• Positive attitude</li> <li>• Well prepared</li> <li>• Good lesson plans</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Personality</li> <li>• Previous knowledge of building and school routine</li> </ul>	2 2
<b>Anything you would do differently with your beginning teacher now that they have experienced the first week of school?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given them a welcome bag</li> <li>• Encourage them to meet regularly with their mentoring teacher</li> </ul>	
<b>What do you hope to see from the building of the Beginning Teacher/Mentoring Teacher Program?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Handbook</li> <li>• Timelines</li> <li>• Consistency</li> </ul>	5

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**College Education**

Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI  
Master of Arts, Reading Instruction, College of Education, 1979

Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY  
Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education, 1974

**Professional Experiences**

Elementary Classroom Teacher - Montgomery County Schools, VA; 1988 - present  
Middle School Reading Specialist - Montgomery County Schools, VA; 1984 - 1988  
Middle School Math Teacher - Montgomery County Schools, VA; 1982-84  
Substitute Teacher; 1979 - 1982

**Honors, Awards, Recognitions**

Co-authored Kappan Article "*How to Build an Inclusive School Community*";  
February, 1995  
Teacher in *Educating Peter*, an Academy Award-winning Home Box Office  
documentary on inclusion; 1992  
New River Valley Reading Council Reading Teacher of the Year; 1987

**Professional Organizations**

Delta Kappa Gamma International Society  
International Reading Association  
National Education Association  
Phi Delta Kappa

**Other Professional Activities**

Vice President, Alpha Lambda Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma; 1998  
Virginia State Reading Association Reading Teacher of the Year Committee; 1996-98  
New River Valley Reading Council Fall Conference Planning Committee; 1987-  
present  
President, Virginia Tech Chapter, Phi Delta Kappa; 1996-67  
Vice President, Virginia Tech Chapter, Phi Delta Kappa; 1994-96  
President, New River Valley Reading Council; 1987