

TEACHER MENTORING PROGRAMS IN MANITOBA
PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISIONS:
A STATUS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research study examines the status of mentoring programs for beginning teachers in Manitoba's public school divisions. Based on reviewed literature, a distinction is made between formal and informal mentoring programs for beginning teachers. The study is a naturalistic inquiry using a semi-structured interview protocol. Twenty four of 38 school divisions in Manitoba participated in the study. Interviewees were asked if the school division had a formal mentoring program in place, the histories, goals and rationales of their formal mentoring programs, and the strengths and challenges of the mentoring programs. If the division did not have a formal mentoring program, they were asked to comment on the way they support beginning teachers and on rationales for not having a formal mentoring program.

Based on the school divisions interviewed, the study found that the province was almost evenly split between divisions with formal mentoring programs and those not having formal programs. However, formal programs were more prevalent in urban areas than in rural and northern areas. Mentoring was recognized as a strong support for beginning teachers providing benefits to the beginning teacher, the mentor and the school division. Programs varied greatly from division to division with little or no communication or collaboration between divisions to develop a common program as is done in some other Canadian provinces. The challenges for school divisions to offer formal mentoring programs included time, money, and geography. The study offers five recommendations to support beginning teachers.

Keywords: mentoring, beginning teachers, new teachers, mentors

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my journey in the field of education resulting in this thesis to my family:

- To my husband, Harry, who has supported my various roles and positions in schools and the community, some paid and many volunteer;
- To my children Ian, Blaine and Daniel and their spouses Michelle, Monica and Janelle for their inspiration and love;
- To my grandchildren Eden, Byron, Jake and his sibling because you light up my life and inspire me to look for ways to improve our education system;
- To my McInnes siblings who have provided me with a strong family unit who have always been supportive of each other;
- To my Lepp family who taught me much and me part of their family;
- And finally to my parents John and Dorothy McInnes who instilled in me a strong work ethic, perseverance, and probably some stubbornness.

As a new graduate with a teaching certificate, I once asked my Dad if he would hire me as he had once been the secretary-treasurer of the local school district before consolidation. His reply was “No!” He went on to tell me that beginning teachers were not the best ones to hire as they did not have the experience as yet that would serve them well as effective classroom teachers. He would much prefer to hire an experienced teacher rather than a beginning teacher. Perhaps this long ago conversation could be the seed that prompted my study of mentoring beginning teachers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“When we focus on teachers, everyone succeeds” is the motto of the Beginning Teacher Center website (Beginning Teacher Center, n.d.). How do we focus on our new teachers in Manitoba? How do we ensure everyone succeeds? Students graduate from a five-year program of studies that includes many weeks of preservice experience in classrooms. The graduates are excited to be hired for their first job, to have their own classroom and their own students and to embark on their journey as professional teachers. The first job for any teacher is a special time in their career, a time of excitement, trepidation, and fear. They have many questions to be answered about their new school and the expectations of their administration. As Wong and Wong (1998) state the new teacher is expected to “perform a full complement of duties immediately while learning them at the same time” (p. 17). New teachers seldom ever realize from the start what the full complement of duties entail. They are thinking about classroom management, curriculum, planning, assessment, and a myriad of other items. Feiman-Nemser (2003) suggests we misrepresent the process of learning if we consider new teachers as finished products and that we do a disservice to our new teachers if we expect the same of them as of our veteran teachers. Beginning teachers have learning needs that cannot be gained prior to actual experience in their own classrooms. The learning curve may actually be steep. Who is responsible to focus on new teachers? Who is responsible to assist beginning teachers become effective, successful professionals? How can we support beginning teachers to address their learning needs?

The intent of this thesis is to explore how we support new teachers in Manitoba through formal mentoring programs. In this chapter, I will provide (1) a background to the study including a definition of mentoring and explain how it differs from induction; (2) a personal professional concern about mentoring; and (3) a glimpse into two mentoring programs in Manitoba. In later chapters, I will present my research as to the status of formal mentoring programs in the province.

Background to the Study: Mentoring Beginning Teachers

School divisions in Manitoba provide induction programs to ease beginning teachers into the profession. Induction is a systematic, organized plan for supporting and developing beginning teachers in their initial years of teaching (Bartell, 2005; Wong, 2005). Induction programs often begin before the first day of school, designed to help beginning teachers learn about the culture of the school, the policies and procedures of the school division, and specialized areas such as reporting to parents and working with student services personnel. Induction programs may include teachers in their first year or teachers new to the division. Glazerman et al. (2010) found that a comprehensive induction program accelerated the professional growth of teachers, improved student learning and reduced teacher attrition. Supporting Glazerman and his colleagues' findings, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) also reported that support to beginning teachers can enhance the effectiveness of the beginning teachers, improve retention, and improve other outcomes such as student achievement. Some school systems invest in a formal mentoring program as part of their induction process to help initiate beginning teachers to their specific school division.

Earley and Ross (2006) note that mentoring is one of the two most important components of an effective induction program. Hobson, Ashby, Maderez and Tomlinson (2009) define mentoring as one-to-one support of the beginning teacher by an experienced teacher (mentor) to introduce the beginning teacher to the school culture and to provide support to the beginning teacher as she develops her abilities to become an effective teacher. Mertz (2004) refers to mentoring as an “intentional relationship” that guides what is expected of each of the parties (p.547). Generally, formal mentoring matches a beginning teacher with a seasoned veteran teacher for the purpose of supporting professional learning experiences to help the beginning teacher become a successful classroom professional. Mentoring experiences include opportunity for the mentor and beginning teacher to meet for planning and debriefing, classroom observations, and sharing resources. Formal mentoring differs from an informal process where a beginning teacher may be provided with a “buddy” within the school who can answer questions and help the beginning teacher “learn the ropes.” In a formal mentoring program, three important areas are addressed: (1) the mentors are respected, experienced teachers (and may receive training in mentorship); (2) attention is paid to matching mentors and beginning teachers, for instance matching by grade or subject area, and (3) time is provided for mentors and beginning teachers to meet throughout the school day and throughout the school year.

Several reasons exist to offer a mentoring program. Teacher retention is an issue for school systems and recruiting, hiring, and inducting beginning teachers is a costly endeavour; therefore, some systems initiate a mentoring program to help reduce teacher turnover. Schools and school divisions wish to have their staff transition to the division’s policy and procedures quickly. Mentors can help beginning teachers learn the necessary details and also help them to adapt to the culture of the school and the community. Mentoring may help the beginning teacher

to thrive, not only survive (Portner, 2003). The personal guidance provided through formal mentoring programs has become the dominant form of teacher induction (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Ingersoll, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Strong, 2009); however, mentoring is not part of all induction programs in Manitoba.

It is important to note that “mentoring and induction are not the same” (Wong, 2005, p. 42). Mentoring may be part of an induction program for beginning teachers, but induction programs may not include mentoring as a part.¹ Mentoring is most successful when it is part of an induction program (Wong, 2005). The first three years of teaching are considered to be the initial years, but one can find one-, two-, and three-year induction programs. Induction is a time of transition from preparation or preservice to professional practice; “[it] is the name given to a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process” (Wong, 2005, p. 43). Support is provided to beginning teachers to assist them in adapting to their professional career. The initial years are crucial to developing the skills necessary to be an effective teacher. Feiman-Nemser (2003) suggests that if we leave teachers in a “sink or swim” situation, they may become overwhelmed and leave, or “alternatively they may stay, clinging to practices and attitudes that help them survive but do not serve the education needs of students” (p. 26). The beginning teacher will become familiar with the responsibilities of a teacher, develop their own personal style as a teacher, continue to learn more about instructional strategies, and how to bridge their knowledge of learning theory to practical application in the classroom. Many school systems consider these initial years too important to leave to chance and will, therefore, implement a systematic, organized program for beginning teachers. Wong (2005) believes all effective

¹ The literature from the USA more frequently uses the terms ‘induction’ and ‘mentoring’ interchangeably; and in more recent literature, mentoring is considered a necessary component of an induction program. In the Canadian literature considered for this study, the words were not used interchangeably, and one cannot assume that induction will have a mentoring component. I will follow the Canadian terminology.

programs are comprehensive, coherent, and sustained. Induction programs are designed to help beginning teachers gain insight from their experienced colleagues to engage students in worthwhile learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Mentoring provides the trusted relationship to assist the beginning teacher to develop her skills and confidence in her professional practice.

Induction programs may encompass or provide a variety of topics to address the needs of the beginning teacher. These may include classroom management, effective instructional strategies, group-based learning methods, orientation to the school division's policies and practices, information on assessment tools and practices used within the division and province, and how assessments are reported to parents. Induction may be accomplished through a series of professional development presentations to beginning teachers throughout the school year.

Bartell (2005) notes that induction programs help to retain teachers and help them to become more effective practitioners. They are encouraged to refine their skills and to develop thoughtful practice. Induction of beginning teachers initiates them into a professional community that encourages and supports its members. From induction, mentoring developed and became a very important component of comprehensive induction programs. Mentoring is not a new idea, but Manitoba school divisions have been slow in adopting formal mentoring programs. Many informal mentoring relationships have developed between beginning teachers and more experienced teachers in their school buildings or as extensions from preservice relationships between co-operating teachers and student teachers. However, planned, organized mentoring programs are relatively new, growing from many of the American programs such as the California Beginning Teacher Project and the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers.

Lortie (1975) describes the socialization of beginning teachers and how it may have been a springboard to research on formal induction programs. Brock and Grady (1998) and Darling-

Hammond (2005) report that well-designed support and training by qualified mentors can benefit beginning teachers. Several studies have examined the purposes of mentoring programs. Both Bartell (2005) and Earley and Ross (2006) consider mentoring an investment in teacher retention. Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) note “mentoring programs have a positive impact on teachers and their retention” (p. 1). Sparks (2005) suggests that the goal of mentoring is to promote good teaching practices and to collaborate with other professionals to develop ongoing, continuous professional learning to improve student achievement. Feiman-Nemser (2003) views mentoring as encouraging systems to help beginning teachers become good teachers. The research indicates that mentoring as part of an induction program has benefits for school systems and beginning teachers who face many challenges in their first experience as a professional teacher.

Wilkinson (2009) specifies several difficult teaching conditions that beginning teachers may experience, including:

1. very challenging teaching assignments,
2. multiple preparations,
3. insufficient professional support and feedback,
4. insufficient materials and supplies,
5. few opportunities for collaboration,
6. underdeveloped teaching skills, and
7. insufficient planning time.

Although every beginning teacher may not face all of the listed challenges, any single one of them might be experienced by a beginning teacher as a great challenge. Mentoring can help reduce this or shift the stress created. Gilles, Davis, and McGlamery (2009) echo Wilkinson’s

(2009) findings as they suggest beginning teachers often are given the most difficult children, the least usable space, and very little support. The Beginning Teacher Induction Program from Ontario's Ministry of Education is used by the Toronto District School Board. Strachan (2009) identifies the three big issues for beginning teachers as: classroom management, assessment and evaluation, and diversity of learners (the how of teaching).

An induction period that includes mentoring addresses many of the challenges and provides support and development for a beginning teacher. Canadian researchers Glassford and Salinitri (2007) confirm this belief that "better teaching leads to more effective learning by students" (p. 2) and therefore, it is incumbent upon school divisions and schools to ensure that beginning teachers are supported and get off on the right path. All teachers want to show evidence of best practice, but beginning teachers may require help in learning what best practice looks like.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) refer to the need for ongoing professional learning to include "professional standards of practice that define what good teachers should know and be able to do and what qualities and dispositions they (beginning teachers) should possess to care for and connect with their students" (p. 51). Flynn and Nolan (2008) also report that many positive outcomes are realized when working towards best practices. The literature for best practices in mentoring includes areas such as pairing mentors and mentees who work in the same area (e.g. early years, middle years, or specific senior years subject areas) and in close proximity (same building or within a close distance), common planning times to allow for meeting and observations, specific professional development opportunities for mentors and mentees, and well-developed orientation to the mentoring program. More specific areas of best practices also

include classroom management, policy and procedures or school culture, differentiated instruction, assessment, and working with parents.

As can be seen from the research studies cited in this section, evidence suggests formal mentoring has an important role to play in an induction program. Some Canadian provinces have mandated formal mentoring programs for all beginning teachers. Ontario has had such a program since 2006. The North West Territories introduced a comprehensive induction program including mentoring in 2001. British Columbia and Alberta have followed with pilot programs in some districts. Other provinces are exploring formal mentoring programs. Manitoba has formal mentoring in some school divisions, but there is not a common protocol for mentoring programs in our province. Kutsyuruba, Godden, Matheson and Walker (2016) provide a complete analysis of induction and mentorship programs in Canada in their pan-Canadian study.

Mentoring: A Personal Professional Concern

My interest in mentoring beginning teachers stems from my work experiences as a beginning teacher, a young administrator, and a school leader in the public school system. I was fortunate to be informally mentored by other teachers as a beginning teacher and by my principal and vice-principal in my first administrative position as a vice-principal. I felt very secure as I developed my administrative skills. Many years after I started teaching, when I became the principal of a K-12 school in rural Manitoba, I recalled my own experience as a beginning teacher. I made a special effort to spend time with my beginning teachers and the student teachers who worked in our building asking about their experiences and listening to their successes and challenges. I also encouraged mentoring relationships between my beginning teachers and other experienced teachers in my school. Although not a formal program, I

recognized benefits of ongoing relationships between the teachers who did develop mentoring relationships. I especially noticed that many of these relationships continued years after the teachers were no longer in the same building.

Professional learning and professional learning communities were an important part of my experience as an educator and I was curious to learn more about how mentoring could be part of a beginning teacher's experience. I was curious to know more about formalized mentoring programs and whether school divisions in the province of Manitoba were involved in mentoring programs. I frequently questioned colleagues in other school divisions as to what their divisions were doing to support beginning teachers, but I was not able to find a source for province-wide information. As an educational leader for my school division, I was involved in induction programs for beginning teachers, but mentoring was not part of our program. As the year progressed, I saw beginning teachers pulled in various directions at the same time. They were compelled to attend the induction workshops, but it required extra time to provide plans for substitute teachers (sometimes referred to as supply teachers) and removed them from their classroom at a time when they were trying to establish themselves as a new professional. The workshop material was interesting to them, but it was somewhat like a university class where they were learning in isolation from their own experience. I recalled much of my life as an educator and my preparation to be a teacher. I was always hurrying through experiences – university, classroom experiences, and administrative jobs. I thought that perhaps there could be another or better way of assisting beginning teachers that can provide support to them as they make their way through their professional journey. It was time to learn more about mentoring to discover if this concept might be useful for beginning teachers.

Teaching has been a passion for me for more than 30 years of my life. Working with young learners and working with, and learning from, my teaching colleagues provided me with fulfilment and the desire to continue to learn more. My former students who pursued careers in teaching often returned to my school for their placements or sought my advice about issues they experienced. At times I found myself in informal mentoring roles. My experiences prompted an interest in learning more about mentoring and learning how I could be more useful to the beginning teachers who worked with me. Professional development experiences helped me learn new skills as a teacher and I looked forward to working together with students and other teachers to develop these skills.

From my own school division, I recognized that the largest turnover in staff was within the Hutterian colony schools within our school division. We had 15 colony schools, usually with two teachers in each school and additional high school teachers who taught classes on an ITV system. Hutterites are communal people living on colonies in the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia, Canada, and several American states including North Dakota, South Dakota, Washington, Montana, Minnesota and Oregon. The Hutterites came from Europe in the late 1800s to escape persecution for their Anabaptist beliefs. Families live and work together as they believe in the community of goods (Maendel, 2015). Colonies originally relied on agriculture; however, now many are involved in manufacturing to support their colony. Looking from the outside, colonies may be seen to have conservative beliefs, but most are very forward thinking using current technology in their businesses and their schools. Many colonies are part of local school divisions in Manitoba, but some prefer to have their own private school on their colony. If a colony is part of the local school division, teachers are hired on the same basis as community schools. Whereas a decade ago colony teachers were not colony members, there has been a trend

for more and more colony schools to have Hutterian teachers, but the majority of the teachers are not Hutterian. All colony school teachers that are employed by public school divisions have Manitoba teacher certification.

Although some staff members remained for the long-term, most teachers in the colony schools sought jobs within the community schools either within our division or in other divisions. Frequently the colony schools hired new graduates, and these beginning teachers would be responsible for a multi-grade class in a building with one other teacher. The largest group within our school division's induction program was made up of teachers working in the Hutterian colony schools. The administration of the Hutterian colony schools provided excellent support and training to their staff, but I could not help but think that a mentoring program might be useful in helping these beginning teachers feel confident in their teaching practice. Distance and isolation certainly were challenges to supporting beginning teachers in the Hutterian schools. Although retention does not appear to be a large problem in Manitoba, I have witnessed that rural and northern divisions can have difficulty retaining staff for longer terms in their schools.

From my own experience, I believe that professionals in the school system recognize that beginning teachers need support provided by colleagues and administrators. However, in my experience, the support was not readily available. As I worked within my school division's induction processes, it would have been very helpful for me to learn what other school divisions in the province of Manitoba were doing to support beginning teachers. I was unable to find this information.

Through my university studies I became aware of mentoring programs at larger city school divisions, but I was not aware of programs in many rural Manitoba divisions. Through meetings and professional development events, I had opportunities to discuss induction processes

and some informal mentoring experiences in other rural divisions. It became very obvious to me that information was not readily available concerning widespread mentoring processes in the province. I felt it would be very useful to have a better understanding of what mentoring throughout the province actually looks like. This is my rationale to conduct a study about the status of mentoring programs and practices in Manitoba. This study presented here has the purpose of providing a deeper and broader understanding of the status of formal mentoring (programs) in Manitoba school divisions, as discussed in the next section.

Mentoring in Manitoba

At the time of developing this research study, I was aware of only two formal mentoring programs. One is within the largest school division in the province, Winnipeg School Division (Collis, Falkenberg, & Morin, 2012-13). An induction program with a mentoring component was part of the mandate of the Professional Learning Centre (PLC) for the Inner City District for early service teachers for a three-year period. Collis et al. (2012-13) stated about the induction program, “in some ways, the proposal was our organizational response to prevailing notions within the professional literature that ‘improving student learning, especially in high-need, low-income schools, requires increasing the professional capacity of schools’ (Moore Johnson, 2009)” (p. 16). The program seeks to promote effective teaching practices while addressing the needs of students in core area schools, typically in low socio-economic areas. An essential component to accomplish this goal is to help early service teachers understand the socio-cultural context of the families they serve.

The Winnipeg School Division (WSD) program relies heavily on reflective practice as an essential component and training for the mentors as a critical piece. Learning-focused

conversations, as described by Lipton, Wellman and Humbard (2003), form the basis for reflective practice and this is combined with action research (Stringer, 2008) to derive theory from practice. In addition, the participants form teacher cohort groups to provide a networked learning community. The WSD program is grounded in both Canadian and international research including some of the more well-known mentoring programs such as the Beginning Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California, programs in the United Kingdom, and the programs of the Toronto District School Board. Evaluations of the WSD program report positive responses from both the mentees and the mentors involved in the program and the program continues to be a component of the Inner City District of the WSD.

Mountain View School Division conducted a three year mentoring project beginning in 2003-2004. The first year of the program was evaluated using qualitative in-depth interviews with mentors, mentees, and the program co-ordinator (Martin & Radi, 2004). In their report on year one of the mentoring project, the authors report that the Mountain View Division had four outcomes for their program:

1. to provide emotional and professional support;
2. to assist beginning teachers with their transitions into their new positions with regards to policy and procedures of the school division, the school and the classroom;
3. to assist in understanding culture (norms, values and beliefs) within the division and the school; and
4. to provide opportunities for professional development and learning. (Martin & Radi 2004, pp. 4-5)

Like the WSD mentoring program, Mountain View also focused on a coaching-based program with a professional growth and learning focus. Mountain View's program was designed based on Portner (2003) and Daresh's (2003) key concepts:

1. Creating a supportive professional culture not only allows beginning teachers to survive but to thrive (Portner, 2003; Daresh, 2003);
2. A mentoring program will attract and retain quality teachers while also assisting beginning teachers (Portner, 2003; Daresh, 2003); and
3. Mentors working with novices and sharing ideas with other veteran master teachers validates the importance of the work teachers do and energizes experienced teachers. (as quoted in Martin & Radi, 2004, p. 3)

As a rural division, location and distance were mentioned as challenges. Mentors and mentees were not always in the same schools, and distances between schools could hamper the opportunity for collaboration and visitation. Martin and Radi (2004) found many of the same concerns expressed in the literature evaluating mentoring programs (see for example Flynn & Nolan, 2008; Hansford, Tennent & Ehrich, 2003). Common planning time, close proximity for mentors and mentees and training for mentors were articulated in the Mountain View study as being important considerations for a successful program. The Mountain View program lasted only two years until there was a change in divisional administration.

My informal experience with a lack of general information on mentoring programs in Manitoba school divisions and my understanding of the challenges of developing a good mentoring program has led me to this research study. I will address the research problem of determining the existence, goals and rationales, and designs of formal mentoring programs in Manitoba school divisions, and the experiences of participants with them.

The purpose of this study is to provide a profile of formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers in Manitoba public school divisions. Chapter 2 discusses literature relevant for the study, and Chapter 3 describes the specific research questions for the study and the method used in the study to respond to these questions. Chapter 4 presents the core features of formal mentoring programs in the Manitoba school divisions that participated in the study. Chapter 5 describes the strengths and challenges of formal mentoring programs including advantages for the school divisions, the beginning teachers and the mentor teachers. This chapter also includes the supports provided to beginning teachers by school divisions that do not have formal mentoring programs. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the research study findings and provides recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON MENTORING BEGINNING TEACHERS

This literature review first examines several definitions of mentoring in educational contexts provided by researchers who have examined various mentoring programs. The review looks at reasons for a mentoring program and then examines three distinct models of mentoring. The models are compared to determine common features as well as differences. The next section of the review summarizes research findings on the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Finally the challenges to establishing and maintaining effective mentoring problems are highlighted.

The Concept of Mentoring

A wide variety of definitions for mentoring exists. For the purposes of this study, mentoring will be defined as a process based on an intentional, personal, reciprocal helping relationship between an experienced teacher and a beginning teacher to provide support and professional development in order to develop the competencies, skills, and knowledge of both the beginning teacher and the mentor for improved performance and professional growth (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Glassford & Salinitri, 2007; Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2003). Mentoring matches a beginning teacher with an experienced teacher and both are willing to commit time, energy, and resources to their professional growth. Although mentoring is normally encouraged for the benefit of the beginning teacher, it is important to recognize that the mentor also generally benefits from the experience of mentoring. An ideal mentoring relationship assumes that both the beginning teacher and mentor are committed to the goals of mentoring and the belief that both parties benefit from the relationship (Hansford, Tennent &

Ehrich, 2003; Mertz, 2004). It cannot be assumed that both parties approach mentoring with the same intent and expectations; therefore, it is essential that the mentor and the beginning teacher have an opportunity to develop a trusting relationship with each other. Some commonality in philosophy and pedagogy is generally beneficial to the success of the mentoring relationship. Mentoring focuses on student learning and developing good teaching practice, with a recognition that good teaching develops over time (Bartell, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

It is important to note that “beginning teacher” may refer to a recent graduate from a teacher education program or it may refer to a teacher beginning to teach in a specific school district or division. Beginning teachers are also referred to as “protégés”, “mentees”, “new teachers” or “early career teachers” in the literature. For the purposes of my study, I will use the term “beginning teacher” to refer to the person being mentored.

Beginning teachers may be mandated by their employer to become part of a mentoring relationship, but willingness to participate is certainly necessary for a beneficial relationship. Teachers may volunteer to become mentors or they may be recruited by someone in their school division. A process of matching mentors and beginning teachers should be in place. In larger schools, appropriate matching frequently is based on finding teachers teaching the same grade (elementary level) or the same subject (secondary level) or both. In smaller schools, which can be generally found throughout rural school divisions, this approach to matching may not be an option as staff numbers may constrain the availability of teachers with matching grades and/or subjects.

It can be safely assumed that mentoring beginning teachers is not something that any experienced teacher is equipped to do without training. Successful mentoring programs require training for the mentors to be able to carry out the role of mentor. As Portner (2003) states, “A

dedicated, experienced teacher becomes an effective and accomplished mentor by design and training, not by chance” (p. 5). The first need for a mentor is to recognize that the beginning teacher is an adult learner not a student learner and consequently, a different knowledge base and relationship is necessary. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) suggest that “good mentoring involves helping teachers work effectively with adults” (p. 53) which means mentors need to be familiar with adult learning theory. Mentors and beginning teachers frequently change roles from learner to teacher as they share information and strategies with one another. Another very important aspect of mentoring is to understand the role of the mentor in relation to others in the system, for example, administrator, supervisor, or curriculum co-ordinator. In almost all cases, the mentor is not an evaluator and this distinction makes for a very different relationship between the mentor and the beginning teacher. Training to become a mentor includes learning to work in collaboration with a beginning teacher and involves coaching, consulting, and relating (Gilles, Davis, & McGlamery, 2009; Lipton, Wellman, & Humbar, 2003; Portner, 2003). Successful mentoring relationships result in better trained teachers who are more content in their role.

Lipton, Wellman and Humbar (2003) are well-known writers in the field of mentoring. They provide a practical “how-to” guide to establishing a formal mentoring program primarily for beginning teachers within their first three years of teaching. With the central goal for mentoring being improved student learning, the authors promote mentoring as a way to create collaborative relationships to meet the goal of on-going learning for all teachers. Lipton, Wellman and Humbar (2003) base their suggestions on research-based teaching-learning theory. They outline suggestions for learning-focused conversations based on the stances of consulting, collaborating, and coaching. They draw on Costa and Garmston’s (2002) “cognitive coaching” model and emphasize the goal of empowering the beginning teacher to make

decisions and solve problems based on theory and practice. The mentor's role is to help facilitate professional vision. As Lipton, Wellman and Humbard (2003) state, "We don't learn to teach. We learn from our teaching" (p. 4). The authors use the "Phases of First Year Teaching" outlined by Ellen Moir, Director of the Beginning Teacher Centre at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The phases are: anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection, and anticipation. Lipton and her colleagues then provide a yearly calendar of options that a mentoring program could use to satisfy the needs of beginning teachers, particularly in their first year.

Rationale for Mentoring Programs

Three specific rationales for mentoring programs are frequently suggested: recruitment, retention, and attrition (see, for instance, Darling-Hammond, Berry, Haselkorn & Fideler, 1999; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008).

Recruitment. Recruitment is an important issue for school systems. The United States has had difficulty recruiting enough qualified teachers to staff their schools (Darling-Hammond, Berry, Hasselkorn & Fideler, 1999) and have resorted to alternative methods of certification. In the United States, schools in lower socio-economic areas have more difficulty attracting beginning teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2005; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2004), as do schools in rural and northern locations in Canada. One has only to check newspaper advertisements to see that more openings exist in rural divisions than in city divisions.

Recruitment is more than finding a person for the job; it is finding the right person for the right job and then having a process in place that provides for professional learning for the new hire. It is here where mentoring programs can provide recruitment support by letting job applicants

know that they will be helped to become the right person for the right job. Once recruited, the next step is to retain teachers in the school as it takes a minimum two to three years to develop the practice and the skill to be a successful, effective teacher (Strong, 2009).

Retention. Recruitment is the first step in finding well-qualified teachers. Supporting the newly hired teachers is the second, since well-supported teachers are much more likely to be retained in the school division. Those who are not satisfied are more likely to transfer to other schools or school divisions or leave the teaching field entirely. The number of teachers leaving their jobs either for transfers, retirements, or career change impacts on the administrator's time and responsibilities as well as providing some upheaval to student learning and achievement (Feiman-Nemser, 2003); therefore retention is important to school divisions.

Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) examined data over a number of years from the *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)* and *Teacher Follow Up Survey (TFS)* in the United States to look at teacher supply and demand. Ingersoll's studies challenge the view that not enough teachers are being trained in the United States. His studies suggest that the teacher shortage in the United States is not due to an insufficient supply of beginning teachers, or increased student enrolments or teacher retirements (see also Cochran-Smith, 2004). Although enrolments and retirements have increased, Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) state that there are "more than enough prospective teachers produced each year in the U.S." (p. 8); the problem is retaining teachers. Researchers suggest that the crux of the retention problem in the United States is the number of teachers who choose to move from one teaching job to another or leave teaching altogether, resulting in what is known as the "revolving door" problem (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Keeping beginning teachers in schools, or retention, becomes an obvious goal for school divisions.

The statistics concerning the number of beginning teachers who leave the teaching profession in the USA are staggering, considering teachers must often complete a minimum of five years of higher education in order to become a classroom teacher. Le Maistre and Pare (2010) report that as many as 50% of beginning teachers leave within their first five years of teaching (p. 560), while Darling-Hammond (2003) suggests that one-third leave in the first five years at a cost of approximately \$8,000 per recruit. However, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) supports a figure closer to that of Le Maistre and Pare: 14% after the first year, 24% after two years, 33% after three years, 40% after four years and 46% after five years (as quoted in Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2009, p. 6). The Canadian Teachers Federation (CTF, 2004) suggests that 30% of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years in Canada (as quoted in Falkenberg, 2010, p. 566).

Although there are many reasons for beginning teachers to leave the profession, the challenge of the first year is certainly the predominant one (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). Beginning teachers feel the need to perform well from the start for their evaluations as they are working to achieve permanent status with their school division. The level and quality of support provided to beginning teachers influences their decision to remain in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Beginning teachers who benefit from induction and mentoring programs stay in the profession at higher rates and become more competent teachers faster than those who do not have the benefit of induction programs which include mentoring (Darling-Hammond, 2003). In their 2004 study, Ingersoll and Kralik note that current research may not provide definitive evidence of the value of mentoring programs in keeping beginning teachers, but research does provide significant evidence to suggest "mentoring programs have a positive impact on teachers and their retention" (p. 1).

Retention of effective school staff raises the bar in terms of student achievement and establishes school culture. In an ideal situation colleagues collaborate, integrate, and work together to raise student achievement in their school. Retention involves helping beginning teachers learn to fit into the school system that hires them as well as adapting to the community. Feiman-Nemser (2003) points out that induction programs should not stop at providing emotional support to beginning teachers, but that systems must help beginning teachers become good teachers. It is necessary to “surround beginning teachers with a professional culture that supports teacher learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 25). Brock and Grady (1998) and Darling-Hammond (2003) report that well-designed support and training by qualified mentors can benefit beginning teachers and make a great difference in the teachers’ decisions to continue their employment with a specific school. Also, well-prepared and capable teachers have the greatest impact on student learning so meeting the needs of beginning teachers through a mentoring process can help to retain beginning teachers and are important to improve student learning as well (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2012). It is unreasonable to expect that a teacher will make the transition from pre-service to in-service without support to develop their skills and abilities. A mentoring program may go a long way to helping the beginning teacher develop their skills. Bartell (2005) also notes that a mentoring process may help beginning teachers who might not be suited for a career in education to understand their limitations.

Attrition. Attrition is the antonym of retention. Attrition refers to the turnover of staff due to retirement, career change, changing roles within a system (for instance, moving from the classroom to school leadership) or moving to another school division or district. Strong (2009) cites Ingersoll’s (2003) conclusions that teacher turnover is much higher in the early years in the profession and that retirement is not the primary reason for attrition (p. 26). Strong (2009) also

notes that other researchers have found that a relatively high pension-to-salary ratio makes early retirement attractive to teachers. However, based on Ingersoll's USA data this conclusion is not supported. Mentoring may be useful to keep beginning teachers in the profession or it may also have a positive result by helping ineffective beginning teachers choose another career and leave the teaching field.

A Canadian Perspective. In Canada there does not seem to be any indication of a teacher shortage overall; where there is, it seems to be localized, particularly in rural rather than urban areas (Falkenberg, 2015). In general, then, teacher shortage does not provide a rationale for mentoring programs in Canada. Kutsyuruba, Godden, Matheson and Walker (2016) compiled a pan-Canadian study of induction and mentoring and found inconsistent and incomplete statistics. The authors noted that because education is a provincial or territorial responsibility in Canada with a variety of school systems, information tends not to be shared from one jurisdiction to another. The authors also note that there is a lack of Canadian research on the topic of early career teacher attrition. The pan-Canadian study relied on data that was available in the public realm on school district websites, from teacher unions, associations or federations and from provincial education authorities. In their conclusion, Kutsyuruba et al. (2016) comment, "the role of mentoring within teacher induction across Canada may be more widespread than this study has revealed, and should be further explored" (p. 65). However, the authors also state that the "study has revealed a sporadic and inconsistent approach to the support of new and beginning teachers in a pan-Canadian context" (p. 67), which is in line with the findings of the study reported upon in this thesis on mentoring in Manitoba.

An earlier pan-Canadian study by Kamanzie, Riopel and Lessard in collaboration with the Canadian Teachers' Federation done in 2007 and quoted in Campbell, Osmond-Johnson,

Faubert, Zeichnew, and Hobbs-Johnson (2016) found that 26.7% of respondents reported participating in a mentoring process, but 71.3% reported that no mentoring was offered. Only Ontario and the North West Territories require all teachers to participate in a formal induction program including mentoring. Campbell et al. (2016) conclude that “induction and mentoring supports of various forms is not yet the standard practice” (p. 87).

Models of Mentoring

Three mentoring models. Three approaches (models) to mentoring are found in the literature: the site-based or school-based model; the prescriptive model; and the integrated model. The site-based model is most prevalent as a mentoring model and most of the literature on mentoring discusses various authors’ understanding of this model.

The school-based mentoring model has been proposed by a number of researchers (e.g., Boreen et al., 2009; Feeney-Jonson, 2008; Lipton, Wellman & Humbard, 2003; Portner, 2003). The core common feature of the different approaches to this model is that they all focus on mentoring within one particular school or, sometimes, within one school division. The school-based models exist because of the belief in supporting beginning teachers and in the power of collaborative relationships between beginning and experienced teachers, generally working in the same school or close by.

An example of a *prescriptive model* is the Adaptive Model designed by Ralph and Walker (2010), which is much more prescriptive than the school-based model. The Adaptive Model is derived from the situational leadership approaches, and is also used in other fields besides education. Ralph and Walker’s (2010) approach shares some similarities with the school-based model, but outlines very specific ways of carrying out the mentoring process.

The core idea of the adaptive mentorship approach is that “the mentor matches his/her adaptive response to coincide with the skill-specific developmental level of his/her protégé” (Ralph & Walker, 2010, p. 206). The model proposes three phases of mentorship (Ralph & Walker, 2010, pp. 207-208): determine developmental level of mentee; synchronizing mentor response (adaptive response); and continually observing and adapting mentor response. The “matching” of the response of the mentor with the developmental level consist in matching the level of the mentee’s confidence (low-high) with a corresponding level of support (low-high), while at the same time matching the level of the mentee’s competence (low-high) with a corresponding level of task difficulty (low-high).

This particular mentorship model is concerned with a core issue of the practice of mentoring: how to adequately support the development of a beginning teacher. The response that the adaptive mentoring approach provides is simply this: the support should be adequate relative to where the mentee is developmentally. Thereby the mentoring model focuses on two dimensions of mentee development: competency and confidence, and on two dimensions of mentor support: the level of support and the level of difficulty of the task assigned.

The *integrated model* is more prevalent in the USA than in Canada, but has been used to some degree in Canada. Feiman-Nemser (2003), Darling-Hammond (2005) and Falkenberg (2010) suggest that an integrated program of teacher education and beginning teaching would meet the needs of our education system. Falkenberg bases his model of integration known as Collaborative Professional Development Centres on Darling-Hammond’s (2005) Professional Development Schools. Both recognize the benefits of an integrated approach as professional collaboration, collegial problem-solving, and an interdisciplinary focus to support improvement in schools and schools of education.

Common aspects to the models. The three models have many common aspects. A fundamental principle common to all three models is working collaboratively to improve professional learning. Feiman-Nemser (2008) suggests four broad themes in learning to teach:

- Learning to think like a teacher;
- Learning to know like a teacher;
- Learning to feel like a teacher; and
- Learning to act like a teacher.

The mentor guides, coaches, collaborates and informally assesses the beginning teacher to assist in developing the beginning teacher's own style, but always with the goal of improved student achievement. Ralph and Walker (2010) use assessment in a non-evaluative manner, but as a feedback method. Feiman-Nemser (2008) emphasizes that the beginning teacher learns to integrate ways of thinking, knowing, feeling and acting to become her own personal teaching style.

The Adaptive Model relies on the mentor adjusting her behaviour according to the developmental level or needs of the beginning teacher. The school-based models as described by Boreen et al. (2009), Feeney-Jonson (2008), Lipton, Wellman, and Humbart (2003), and Portner (2003) also emphasize having the mentor work with the beginning teacher using strategies that the beginning teacher identified and would like to practice. The mentoring relationship is an adult relationship which relies on the skills of the two adults to know what areas are of most concern and interest at any particular time period (Feeney-Jonson, 2008). Ralph and Walker (2010) use two key terms when describing the Adaptive Model: competence and confidence. These key terms apply to all three models of mentoring used. Ralph and Walker (2010) talk about a beginning teacher who may have low competence as she does not know *how* to perform

a particular task, but she has high confidence because she is very willing and eager to step forward and try it. The onus is on the mentor to be able to assess the developmental needs of the beginning teacher and to adapt the mentoring behaviour as a result. The integrated model would make use of the same types of processes in mentoring beginning teachers, but would prefer to see the mentorship be part of a program integrating teacher education studies and the first years of teaching.

Another common area among the three models is the support that a mentor teacher provides to the beginning teacher. Ralph and Walter (2010) divides support into two areas: human relations and task dimension. Human relations support is mentioned by authors in all three models. Positive reinforcement, accepting body language, and affirmations from the mentor provide support to the beginning teacher. Knowing that other beginning teachers have experienced similar issues and that all teachers follow a learning process to become effective helps the beginning teacher to feel more confident on their journey. Ralph and Walter (2010) describes the task dimension as refining techniques, but also as part of the professional learning process and the professional identity that the beginning teacher is developing. The school-based model puts great emphasis on the collaboration between mentor and beginning teacher. The school-based model of mentoring is often based on the “cognitive coaching” model of Costa and Garmston (2002), which involves learning conversations where the mentor takes on roles of consulting, collaborating, and coaching. Learning conversations help beginning teachers to see the vision or “big picture” of their professional practice. Beginning teachers are learning from their personal teaching experiences and their opportunities to discuss their practice with their mentors. Reflective practice plays an important role in learning conversations. It is important for the beginning teacher to process the experience and to learn from her experience. Boreen et al.

(2009) express a similar idea when they write, “Beginning teachers understand how to ‘act’ like a teacher, but they don’t always understand the internal processes necessary to ‘be’ a teacher, to think in an ongoing way about student learning” (p. 52). It is essential for beginning teachers to learn metacognition, to constantly think about their thinking. While Lipton, Wellman and Humbard (2003) make use of reflection as part of the learner-focused conversations, Boreen et al. (2009) focus more directly on Donald Schön’s (1983) reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. By helping beginning teachers to learn to analyze their professional performance after a lesson or task (reflection-on-action), mentors are developing their mentees’ skill to be able to make decisions “on the fly” to act and react to the needs of their students in the classroom immediately (reflection-in-action).

Collaboration as a feature of mentoring is also evident in all three models, but the integrated model would perhaps be the most progressive method of introducing collaboration as a means of ongoing, persistent professional learning. The beginning teacher is able to combine theory and practice while the mentor teacher takes advantage of renewing her own professional learning opportunities. The collaboration of university professionals working with teachers in their classrooms provides opportunities for professional growth for all participants while combining research and practice. The school and the university are developing a shared conception of good teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Collegiality becomes common practice in collaborative relationships.

Another commonality among the three models is the need for reflective practice. Falkenberg (2010) notes that teachers involved in programs based on an integrated approach have a chance to go beyond imitation to a deeper understanding of teaching and learning. This deeper understanding is developed through reflective thinking. Other proponents of the

integrated approach (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001) agree that merely “practicing” teaching is not sufficient to develop professional learning. Darling-Hammond (2005) notes that reflective capacities are not innate nor acquired quickly. An effective mentor can ask the right questions or make the right comments to help the beginning teacher examine her thoughts about her practice and to make plans for growth based on her experience. The school-based model and the adaptive model are making use of a much more committed relationship and working partnership between the beginning teacher and the experienced teacher (mentor) to think and act like a teacher than the traditional co-operating teacher and student teacher. The learning conversations (Boreen et al., 2009; Lipton, Wellman and Hubbard (2003) and the practice of relating, coaching and guiding (Portner, 2003) promote reflective practice throughout.

A common belief among the school-based model is that mentors should volunteer, not be mandated to do the work. Falkenberg (2010) notes that not every exemplary school teacher of children will make a good educator of teachers. It is important to create a good match between beginning teachers and their experienced mentor. Various methods of matching beginning and experienced teachers are used. Ralph and Walker (2010) use the most advanced method in matching the protégé’s developmental level and the mentor’s adaptive response. The mentor is required to adapt her mentorship behaviour in response to the developmental level of the protégé. Ralph and Walker (2010) suggest that if the Adaptive Model functions perfectly, there would be a 100% agreement between the mentor and the protégé; however, in practice, that has not proven to be the case. Moore Johnson and Kardos (2004) believe that mentoring pairs are too often haphazard even though the literature suggests matching teachers who teach in the same building, teach in the same subject area or grade, and have some common interests. Too often the

matching is driven by a school schedule. The integrated model does not describe precisely how matching would be done, but does suggest that there needs to be some subject specific pairing. However, because the mentoring done in the integrated model uses an advisory group, the one-to-one match may not be quite as important as there will be a number of mentor relationships.

In addition, proponents of the school-based model and the Adaptive Model believe the mentors must be trained to do the job of mentoring. Although not addressed specifically by Darling-Hammond (2005) and Falkenberg (2010), the integrated model demands collaboration among a number of people from different systems. It would be imperative to provide some training so that the roles would be defined to establish a more collegial, collaborative approach. Lambert (2003) believes teacher leaders serving as mentors definitely require training in four areas: adult development, dialogue or communication, collaboration, and organizational change. It is important to have a cohesive plan that provides tools for mentor teachers and more importantly, a common understanding of the role of the mentor and how it can be performed effectively. Training would also provide opportunities for reflection on the mentor's part that may be very useful when comparing experiences with other mentors. The importance of recognizing adult learning principles and the need for collaborative working relationships has been discussed earlier. Communication is an essential skill for the mentor to develop in order to build a trusting relationship with the beginning teacher and focus the dialogue on learning and teaching. Communication needs to be flexible, open-minded, and inviting to the beginning teacher. Although organizational change may not be what prompts a mentor to become involved in mentoring, it certainly may be an outcome of an on-going mentoring process. Mentoring programs can engage participants in visionary thinking and planning. What starts out as a one-to-

one partnership can spread to others involved in the mentoring process and to others in the system.

Differences between the models. The first noticeable difference between the three models is the starting point in the system. Both the Adaptive Model and the school-based model are working with recently graduated beginning teachers. The integrated model works with what we would normally refer to as student teachers and beginning teachers. The model integrates the teacher education program with full-year classroom assignments rather than blocks of student teaching. Interns work in classrooms and take teacher preparation courses at the same time.

The school-based model and Adaptive Model use a one-to-one relationship between beginning teacher and mentor most frequently; however, some models have been known to work with cohorts or groups (e.g., one mentor and more than one beginning teacher). The integrated model is more group-oriented as the beginning teacher will be part of an advisory group or cohort for classroom purposes, for instance in the case of team teaching, and for mentoring as well. The integrated model supports the need for a more co-operative learning situation for all teachers involved in the program. The school becomes the laboratory and the lines of authority become less defined. Instead of an expert-novice relationship or teacher-learner relationship, the adults become professional collaborators (Darling-Hammond, 2005). The school-based model also purports to have the mentor and beginning teacher be co-learners, but there is much variation in practice among the systems using this model. Many are specifically school based, but some are division or district based. The farther apart geographically the mentor and beginning teacher are, the less often they can work together and this may impact on the relationship between the partners. The more prescriptive structure of the Adaptive Model uses a

teaching approach to aid in having the mentor and beginning teacher (or “protégé”, the term Ralph and Walker use) understand developmental levels and suitable adaptive responses.

A noticeable difference between the integrated model and the other two models is the connectedness and coherence of the integrated model. Rather than being specific to mentoring, the integrated approach addresses academic learning, professional learning, and professional practice as a whole. Integration is a professional development approach across the board, not only a mentoring approach.

All three models have the potential to be a constructivist learning experience using true inquiry processes. Whether each school or system that uses any of these approaches actually carries out the respective process in this way is debatable. For some it is very important to build on the original ideas expressed by John Dewey (1938) relating to experiential education. If we want teachers to provide authentic learning experiences for students, do we not need to provide authentic learning experiences for beginning teachers? What better place to do so than in actual classrooms? If the group including university personnel, experienced teacher(s), beginning teacher, and teacher candidate can create experiences that puts theory into practice, all parties should benefit and potentially the students should be the ones who benefit the most.

Effectiveness of Mentoring

In their review of articles related to educational mentoring, Hansford, Tennent and Ehrich (2003) “revealed that there were benefits to be gained from mentoring, not only by the mentee or protégée, but also by the mentor” (p. 42). One of most common benefits for the mentor was collegiality, collaborating, and sharing ideas with colleagues. The development of the mentor’s capacity to reflect is also noted as a positive outcome of mentoring as is the fact that teachers are

encouraged to reflect on their own practice as well as on the beginning teacher's practice. However, Hansford et al. (2003) also noted that it was difficult to make valid inferences about mentoring due to the variability of findings from studies. They cited Ragins, Cotton and Miller's (2000) summary as "mentoring relationships fall along a continuum, and although many mentoring relationships are highly satisfying, some may be marginally dissatisfying, or even at the very extreme end of the continuum, dysfunctional, or harmful" (p. 1178).

Strong (2009) reports that mentoring is a bridge to *teacher effectiveness* which he "describes as the quality of teachers in terms of the outcomes of their teaching, namely student learning and achievement, student engagement in the learning process, and the context of their teaching" (p. 3). His research has focused on a search for empirical evidence to determine if mentoring does impact teacher effectiveness. He found research to support the notion that teachers experience satisfaction from mentoring, both formal and informal mentoring. In his research, Strong found both positive and negative responses to mentoring programs, but very few (less than four) were found to be exclusively negative. Strong's research is supported by Handford et al. (2003), who observe that "in many cases where mentoring programs were reported to have negative outcomes, program success appeared to have been jeopardised by lack of funding, lack of time, or poor matching of mentors and mentees" (p. 2).

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) report that research shows induction programs in the United States (most of which include mentoring as a significant component of the induction process) increase beginning teacher satisfaction, efficacy, and retention. Their study used the National Centre for *Schools and Staff Survey* (SASS) data from 1999-2000 and the *Teacher Follow-up Survey* (TFS) from 2000-2001 with a sample size of 3,235 beginning teachers. Based on extensive data, 69.5% of beginning teachers in the USA were reported to have participated in

mentoring programs. Data indicate 91.6% of those surveyed found the mentoring to be helpful. However, Smith and Ingersoll (2004) note that the evidence is reported from evaluations completed on the participants in induction programs and that research does not exist for a control group of teachers who have not participated in similar training. Also, the existing studies do not control for other significant issues that may impact the outcomes of the beginning teacher programs. Strong (2009) goes so far as to suggest that “self-report data are notoriously unreliable” (p. 102) and therefore, there is not reliable data to measure the effects of induction on teacher practice.

Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) report that empirical evidence does suggest a positive impact of teacher mentoring programs on teachers and their retention. They also note, however, that other elements of support for beginning teachers also impact teacher satisfaction and retention. One-to-one support from a veteran teacher, which may be informal mentoring, was also noted to be highly regarded and very useful to beginning teachers.

In a more recent examination of 15 studies, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) concluded that there is empirical support to claim that teacher mentoring programs have a positive impact. Almost all of the studies they examined showed that beginning teachers had higher satisfaction, commitment, or retention if they participated in a mentoring program. The beginning teachers who participated in these programs performed better on many of the teacher tasks such as planning lessons, questioning techniques, classroom management, and creating a positive classroom atmosphere. Perhaps even more importantly, student achievement gains were noted for teachers who participated in the beginning teacher mentoring programs.

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) noted one large randomized trial conducted by Glazerman and colleagues in 2010 that had mixed results. Glazerman’s study found that after two years of

induction there were significant differences in student achievement between teachers in the control group and teachers in the treatment group. Students in the treatment group performed better by up to four percentile points in reading and by up to eight percentile points in mathematics than students in the control group. The difference in achievement was not noted until teachers were in their third year of mentoring. As well, no significant differences were noted in teacher retention between the treatment group and the control group throughout the three years of the study. Classroom practice was only assessed during the first year of the study, but not in the second or third years, with no significant differences between the two groups noted in the first year. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) suggest that the study is flawed in this aspect as observations were not done in the second and third years, when changes in classroom practice would have been more evident. Due to the timing of the surveys as part of Glazerman's study, data for two complete years were not available.

Ingersoll (2012) indicates that beginning teachers are now the largest group within the entire group of teachers in the USA. His research shows that the number of induction programs has steadily increased over the past few decades since his earlier studies using the SASS data of the 1990s and up to 2001. As of 2010-2011, 27 states in the USA required an induction program for beginning teachers (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin & Burn, 2007, as quoted in Ingersoll, 2012, p. 50), and it is important to note that the majority of induction programs in the USA include mentoring as a key component. Data from the 2007-2008 school year indicated 80% of beginning teachers had feedback and guidance from a mentor teacher. Although mixed results are found in the research on induction, Ingersoll (2012) notes that induction has a positive effect and he notes, "Induction is an education reform whose time has come" (p. 51).

Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2008) delineate many of the benefits of a mentoring program for the beginning teacher, for the mentor, and for the school system. Providing emotional and psychological support to the beginning teacher has been most beneficial in boosting confidence which may have implications for teacher retention. Hobson et al. (2008) contend that the American data suggest that teachers who have been mentored are less likely to leave teaching and less likely to move to a different school (see also Hansford, Tennent & Ehrlich, 2003; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; and Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) evaluated 15 studies concerning the effects of teacher induction (noting that the terms induction and mentoring at this time are used almost interchangeably in the United States) using one or more outcomes. Their research determined that induction had positive effects – beginning teachers “had higher job satisfaction, commitment, or retention” (p. 211). From this study, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) also noted that the strongest factors in a mentoring program were the following: a mentor in the same subject (area or field of study); common planning time for the mentor and mentee; and regularly scheduled planning time built in to a schedule to collaborate. (p. 214).

Another interesting point Ingersoll and Strong (2011) bring to attention is the finding from Smith and Ingersoll’s (2004) study “that induction had strong effects in low-poverty schools but not in high poverty schools” (p. 216). This data points to the need to pay special attention to the mentoring provided to beginning teachers in schools where poverty is a particular concern. Locally in Manitoba, one urban school division initiated a formal mentoring program specifically to address teaching practice in low-income inner-city schools. The success of the program prompted expansion to the entire division.

In addition, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) discuss results of an evaluation of California's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program. This evaluation of the impact of mentoring on teaching practices and student achievement resulted in positive results. The California study indicated that the mentoring program had a positive effect on nine measures of teaching practice. Looking at the California study and another two studies of East Coast school districts, results showed that "greater participation by beginning teachers in mentoring programs had a positive effect on their students' achievement" (p. 219).

Evidence regarding the various models, and within the models themselves, is difficult to compare as there is much variation. Mentoring in school-based models can be quite different from site to site. Criteria are not the same, length of mentoring interaction varies, and methods of matching mentors vary widely. The Professional Development School (PDS) models in the United States vary greatly from one state to another and the number of PDS-type programs in Canada is very small. Noting that it may be difficult to compare American results to Canadian programs, Buzza, Kotsopoulos, Mueller and Johnston (2010) conducted a Canadian research study of Wilfred Laurier University's PDS model and found, in terms of a teacher education model, the PDS was rated higher on aspects of instruction, management, and assessment, and the teacher candidates rated their in-school component very positively and "as the most important source of their learning to become a teacher" (p. 54). Participants were able to make connections to the theory they were learning in their university classes to the practice in the classroom. Buzza et al. (2010) note that connectedness between theory and practice is key to helping beginning teachers learn to teach. Although the PDS model at Wilfred Laurier intended to tackle the challenge, the researchers felt it had still fallen short of their goal. The connections between

theory and practice still needed to be made more explicit to the teacher education candidates by both the school staff and the university staff.

Research Concerns

As my review suggests, much supportive evidence for teacher mentoring exists in the literature. However, most of it is based on case studies of mentoring programs. Interviews are conducted with participants and qualitative data are collected and interpreted. The case studies are limited in sample size and the results may not generalize to wider contexts (Strong, 2009). Very few comprehensive, large-scale randomized or quasi-randomized studies have been carried out (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Hobson et al. (2008) note that most research studies are based predominantly on mentees' and mentors' perceptions and accounts. Hansford et al. (2003) noted that only a small percentage of mentoring studies provided statistical results. They also noted that much of the data is reported by those being mentored and less data is available from the mentors and the organizations sponsoring the mentorship relationship.

The lack of research data on the Canadian context is a concern. Although the American studies have applicability to our Canadian system, the systems are not the same and specific Canadian data would be useful. While conducting my study it became very apparent that information is not being shared widely within the provinces or from province to province or territory.

Another problem of gaining evidence for mentoring programs is the difficulty in obtaining control data (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). An educational system that invests the funds to develop a mentoring program is going to want to have all of their beginning teachers participate in the program, not leave some aside as part of a control group. If a control group is assigned

from a separate system, too many factors are outside the control of the experiment for the research data to be comparable. Differences in the schools may have an effect on outcomes such as teacher commitment and retention and these are difficult features to control.

The supportive qualitative data has been criticized because often the researchers providing the data are also involved in developing or carrying out the program questioning the objectivity of the findings. Ralph and Walker (2010) cite a number of studies from 1992 to 2009 on the Adaptive Model, but all of the studies have been conducted by Ralph himself. Darling-Hammond (2005) has written extensively about the PDS model, but she has also been the impetus behind PDS in the United States and one of its strongest allies.

Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) have stated that “While current research does not yet provide definitive evidence of the value of mentoring programs in keeping beginning teachers from leaving the profession, it does reveal that there is enough promise to warrant significant further investigation” (p. 6). Although Ingersoll made this call for further studies in 2004, few additional studies appear to have been published. In his most recent review of data, Ingersoll (2012) notes that induction (which usually includes mentoring according to Ingersoll’s studies) has become more widespread. American statistics report growth from 50% of beginning teachers participating in an induction program in 1990 to 91% of beginning teachers participating in 2008 (Ingersoll, 2012). Ingersoll adds that at least 80% of the beginning teachers in 2008 were receiving feedback from a mentor teacher (p. 50).²

² Data for Canadian mentoring programs has only recently become available. Data on mentoring in Canada can be found at the early career teachers website (<https://earlycareerteachers.com/our-research/policy-analysis/>). However, the information does not provide assessment of mentoring programs.

Challenges to Mentoring Programs

The ultimate goal of the mentoring process is to improve student learning through improved teaching. Easing the transition from student teacher to teacher of students increases the opportunity for beginning teachers to work effectively to improve student learning. However, if mentors are willing to take on the task, they need to be given time to do an effective job. This means providing time for the mentor and beginning teacher to meet on a regular basis, providing adequate or matching schedules so each may observe the other in their respective classroom, and appropriate time for reflective conversations to take place. Time is a precious commodity within the school system and may be the biggest obstacle to effective mentoring processes.

Another significant challenge to mentoring programs is the cost. School divisions incur a significant cost to provide mentoring programs for beginning teachers. Professional learning time for both mentor and beginning teacher must be supported. Extra staffing may be needed to provide common meeting time for the participants for observing in each other's classrooms and for conversations. Training for the mentors and any seminars or workshops provided to the beginning teachers requires more professional development dollars. A school system must commit to a change in how professional development funds are designated to develop an effective mentoring process. A team of professional staff is also necessary to organize and support the mentoring process. Darling-Hammond (2005) reports that less than one-half of 1% of school districts' budgets in the United States is directed to professional development compared to 10% spent by corporations to further train their employees (as quoted in Falkenberg, 2010, p. 559). Canadian researchers Le Maistre and Pare (2010) report that as many as 50% of beginning teachers leave within their first five years of teaching. Paying close attention to the reasons for this statistic is imperative for school systems. The largest cost to any school division is teacher

salaries. Investing in support and guidance through a mentoring program may be a wise investment for divisions to develop and retain well-educated and effective staff, the most important key to student achievement.

The duration of a mentoring program also has a bearing on the effectiveness of the program. School divisions are challenged to establish programs for beginning teachers that last for at least two years and perhaps even three years. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) state, “programs that are more comprehensive, or longer, or include more depth of support appear to be better” (p. 228). As mentioned previously, the Glazerman et al. (2010) studies as quoted in Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that at least two years of mentoring were needed to see improvements in teacher practice and student achievement. The research would indicate that one year is not sufficient to effect long term improvement in teaching practice or student achievement.

Further questions need to be researched regarding the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Does the quality of pre-service education affect the outcome of mentoring programs? All beginning teachers do not enter the work force with the same competencies. Does mentoring benefit some more than others? Is there a cost-benefit ratio for mentoring? In these days of “cutting back” how can resources be shuffled to support a mentoring program? These are issues that challenge school divisions with respect to the development and the maintaining of an effective mentoring program.

The study presented in this thesis is grounded in my belief in the need and the potential effectiveness of mentoring programs for beginning teachers for achieving improvement of student learning. With the literature review in this chapter in mind, my study inquired into the variety of formal mentoring programs in school divisions in Manitoba and the impact and

challenges of those programs as perceived by those in charge of them. The next chapter outlines the research questions and the study design used to address those questions.

CHAPTER 3

STUDYING MENTORING PROGRAMS IN MANITOBA

My research study was designed to examine the formal mentoring programs in place in the 38 public school divisions in Manitoba. This chapter identifies the specific research questions for the study and the methodical approach taken to address these research questions. More specifically, this chapter is divided into five sections: (i) an outline of the research problem for the study and the specific research questions the study is addressing; (ii) a description of the methodical approach to addressing the study's research questions, including an overview of the study participants; (iii) a characterization of my positioning as a researcher undertaking this study; (iv) a description of how I addressed research ethics issues for undertaking the study; and (v) a description of the limitations of the study.

The Research Problem and the Research Questions

My review of the literature on formal mentoring programs in chapter 2 indicates that beginning teachers, mentors, schools, and students benefit from school divisions having formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers. This research suggests that having formal mentoring programs in Manitoba would be of benefit to student learning. Based on my own experience that I discussed in chapter 1, there is a lack of understanding of the designs of formal mentoring programs in school divisions in Manitoba, their underlying goals and rationales, and whether and where they exist in the first place. In other words, the mentoring landscape of Manitoba is largely unknown. Considering the literature supporting the effectiveness of mentoring programs for the improvement of student learning through teacher learning, the problem of the status of formal

mentoring programs in Manitoba should be of some importance for all those concerned for the effectiveness of school education in Manitoba. This research study is designed to determine the status of mentoring in our province. More specifically, my study addresses this problem through researching responses to the following four research questions:

1. What types of formal mentoring programs exist in school divisions in Manitoba?
2. What are the histories, goals and rationales of these formal mentoring programs?
3. What strengths and challenges can be identified for these mentoring programs in terms of their development, implementation, and sustainment?
4. Why do some public school divisions in Manitoba not have formal mentoring programs?

As the next section on the methodical approach of the study outlines, my response to these research questions will be based on the perceptions of school divisional leaders who are or would be responsible for formal mentoring programs in their school division.

Method

Data collection. To address the research questions from the perspective of school divisional leaders, I collected qualitative interview data on the existence and quality of (formal) mentoring programs in school divisions in Manitoba. Qualitative research is well-suited to situations where exploration is needed (Creswell, 2012), as is the case in this study. To address the research questions of the study, I used two semi-structured interview protocols (Creswell, 2012), which are reproduced in Appendices A and B. Some of the probing follow-up questions were: Is the program for beginning teachers and/or also teachers new to the division? (Some mentoring programs include teachers into a mentoring program who may have one or more years

of experience in a different school division.) Would the program be considered induction or does it also include mentoring? The answer to whether or not the division has a formal mentoring program determined if the semi-structured interview followed a short questionnaire or a longer interview questionnaire (see Appendices A and B). In addition to the interview, the participants were asked to share any documentation they provided to beginning teachers or mentors such as brochures that may help to describe their mentoring process. As Creswell (2012) has said, “documents can provide a researcher with a rich source of information” (p. 223). Many of the interviewees did have artifacts to share and were very helpful in describing their processes. The artifacts included brochures or print material provided to participants in the mentoring program, binders that outlined the process and the timelines of a division’s program, and calendars, newsletters and reports to the community describing division programming.

The advantage of using a semi-structured interview protocol is that they “allow participants to create responses within their cultural and social experiences instead of the researcher’s experiences” (Neuman, 2000, as quoted in Creswell, 2012, p. 387). The semi-structured interview questions are grounded in my exploration of the relevant literature on mentoring programs. Using a semi-structured interview protocol allows one to obtain comparable data across subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Stringer (2008) describes “interpretive studies resulting in detailed and descriptive accounts of people’s subjective experience as naturalistic or qualitative research” (p. 23). This particular study permitted a “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) using the perceptions of school division leaders regarding their mentorship programs for beginning teachers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) view naturalistic inquiry as a paradigm, “a basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically

fundamental ways” (p.105). The worldview defines the nature of the world. The qualitative data obtained through the interviews with the school division leaders provided insight into their behaviours, beliefs, and philosophies concerning the support provided to beginning teachers and the nature of formal mentoring programs.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest three phases of a qualitative or naturalistic inquiry: orientation and overview, focused exploration, member check. For the first phase, school divisions in Manitoba were contacted and asked to participate in the study. In each section of the interview protocol, the first question is especially open-ended to start the conversation. Open-ended questions provide the study participant with the opportunity to decide what is important to address in light of the question, while the response allows the researcher to determine follow-up questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 235). The second phase, focused exploration, involved probes into the responses from the participants by the researcher to explore the points identified in the initial response further. For the third phase and following the recorded interviews, the researcher prepared a transcript of each interview and sent those to the respective participants for member checking to ensure a high level of accuracy and clarity.

The primary source of data collection for this study was in-person or telephone interviews, augmented by print material or online data concerning each division’s beginning teacher mentoring programs as secondary sources. The interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed by me. For the in-person interviews, I traveled to the school division office or school site to conduct the interview. This naturalistic environment is designed to make the person being interviewed as comfortable as possible. The interviewee was able to refer to information sources at hand in her familiar environment. As travel was a challenge for northern locations and some rural areas, telephone interviews were conducted in these cases at a time convenient to the

interviewee. In all cases, a quiet, comfortable location was sought at a convenient time. The participants were provided with the questionnaire in advance of the interview to allow for some prior “think time” and for gathering of information. The interviews were designed to last 45-60 minutes for school divisions which have formal mentoring programs and approximately 15-20 minutes for school divisions which do not have formal programs. After conducting a number of interviews, the researcher was able to conduct the interviews within these time frames or with less time needed.

A pilot process was used to help to determine any changes to the questionnaire draft and to make a prediction of the time required to complete the questionnaire. I undertook one pilot interview and had one conversation about the interview protocol with a colleague. The conversation regarding the interview protocols occurred with an individual who was formerly a co-ordinator in a Manitoba school division who had experience with mentoring programs. One interview was conducted with a doctoral student who had experience with interview protocols. The pilot phase helped focus the interview protocol prior to meeting with division personnel. The two participants in the piloting process served as critical friends to assist me in increasing the credibility of the study.

Participants. Since the study approaches the research questions from the perspective of school divisional leaders, one-on-one interviews were arranged with representatives of participating Manitoba school divisions who had some understanding of the mentoring or induction process(es) used in their respective school division. Creswell (2012) states that “one-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, who are articulate, and who can share ideas comfortably” (p. 218).

All 38 of the public school divisions listed by Manitoba Education at http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/sb_contacts.html (Appendix C) were contacted regarding their willingness to participate in the study. I excluded all non-public federally funded and independent schools (e.g. Band operated schools and private schools). The participants may be described as a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2012) as I have intentionally attempted to sample the provincial public school divisions in Manitoba. The purpose of this study is to provide a profile of formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers in Manitoba public school divisions.

For each of the 38 school divisions, their school superintendents were contacted for permission to conduct the study and the name and contact information of the person most knowledgeable about the mentoring program in their school division was requested for the interview. In some cases, the superintendent was interviewed. In other cases, an assistant superintendent was interviewed. Some school divisions had a co-ordinator in charge of the mentoring program and who was made available for the interview. Table 1 outlines school division participation in the study. Two of the divisions opted out of the study as they did not consider themselves to be “divisions” in the same way as the others would be. One division agreed to participate, but no interviewee was made available.

The reporting of the findings aggregates the data by regions of the province: northern, urban and rural. Referring to the divisions as being rural, urban or northern maintains greater confidentiality and provides some interesting insight as to the challenges and strengths to mentoring programs as some seem to be more reflective of the regional characteristics (see chapter 5).

Table 1

Participation Rates

	Number	Percentage
School Divisions Contacted	38	100
Replies	29	76
School Divisions Who Did Not Respond	9	24
School Divisions Interviewed	24	63
School Divisions Opted Out	2	5
School Divisions Who Declined to Participate	2	5
School Division – unable to interview	1	3
Total	38	100

Data analysis. Once the interview data were transcribed and checked by the person interviewed (member checking), it and any corroborating material such as print information (e.g. brochures) or website information provided was coded for responses to the research questions (Creswell, 2012, pp. 243-252). Multiple sources of information assisted the researcher in interpreting the data (Creswell, 2012, p. 259).

Trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to criteria for trustworthiness (validity) for naturalistic inquiries. Member checking and supplementary materials provided by the interviewees such as additional printed information or website information (where available) contribute to the credibility of the interpretation of the collected data. To meet the criteria of transferability, thick description has been used to permit comparison of mentoring programs from division to division. Detailed data was recorded. Dependability was established through the use of multiple methods of gathering data. Data was recorded on audio tape as well as transcribed and printed to hard copy to establish an audit trail for the research data. The next characteristic Lincoln and Guba (1985) require is confirmability. Supplementary materials collected contributed to the trustworthiness of the data collected. Also, I kept personal notes of each interview and my reflections following each interview in order to record information about

self and method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to the “human instrument,” the researcher and the extent to which her biases may influence the outcome of the study. The reflexive journaling allows for decision-making to be recorded and thoughts of one’s own values and concerns as they relate to the study.

Researcher Positioning

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize the point that naturalistic inquiry demands a human “instrument”, the researcher, and that “the human instrument builds upon his or her *tacit* knowledge as much and if not more than upon propositional knowledge” (p. 187). The values and beliefs of the researcher can impact the data. As extensively described in in chapter 1, my interest in researching mentoring programs stems from my experience as a teacher leader working with many beginning teachers and being responsible for orientation and induction processes for beginning teachers. As a former teacher leader, I am able to position myself as a colleague with an interest in the current status of beginning teacher mentoring. I am not associated with any school divisions who were asked to participate in the study. Although one of the school divisions is my former employer, the current senior leadership has changed since my employment with them, which allows for a relatively impartial relationship.

Confidentiality and Ethics

Consent from the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) of the University of Manitoba was sought prior to conducting the research study. All 38 school divisions were provided with a request to participate in a telephone or in-person interview (their choice according to distance and availability of the interviewee and/or researcher). I contacted

the superintendent as listed on the ministry's website first by email and then by telephone where necessary, to determine the division employee most able to answer the interview questions. Some school divisions in Manitoba delegated responsibility for professional development to an assistant superintendent or another employee, but in smaller divisions most often the responsibility rested with the superintendent. The choice of the interviewee was left with the school division superintendent. The participants were provided with a cover letter detailing information about the study, procedures, expectations and their rights, in accordance with the requirements set by ENREB. Informed consent in writing from the superintendent and the interviewee (where different) was obtained prior to undertaking the survey interview. The interview was followed up with a telephone call or email, if necessary, to obtain further information or clarification. The researcher digitally recorded the interviews and prepared a transcription following the interviews. The transcription document was provided to the interviewees for the purpose of member checking. Participants were asked on the consent form if they wished to have a summary of the results of the study upon completion. In the reporting of the findings, interviewees are not identified by name or school division, only by region (rural school division, northern school division or urban school division). Every effort was made to protect the identity of the school divisions and the respondents to the questionnaires.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study.

This research study focuses only on public school divisions in the province of Manitoba and as such, it is a naturalistic inquiry of a specific region in Canada and is not generalizable to other regions. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, naturalistic sampling's purpose is to "maximize information, not facilitate generalization" (p. 202). No inter-judge reliability was possible with

the study as only one researcher analyzed the data. As some of the interviews were conducted in person and some by telephone, it is also possible that the presence of the researcher may have impacted responses.

A strength of the study is the size and distribution of the sample. All 38 public school divisions in the province were contacted, and 67% of those participated in the study.

Furthermore, 71% of all urban school divisions in Manitoba participated in the study, 58% of all rural school divisions, and 100% of the northern school divisions.

CHAPTER 4

CORE FEATURES OF FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAMS IN MANITOBA

In this chapter I describe and discuss the findings of the study as far as the first two research questions are concerned:

1. What types of formal mentoring programs exist in school divisions in Manitoba?
2. What are the histories, goals and rationales of these formal mentoring programs?

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I respond to the first research questions, and in the second section I respond to the second research question. The findings relevant to research questions three and four are described and discussed in chapter 5. A summary of the findings relevant to all of the four research questions is found in chapter 6.

Types of Formal Mentoring Programs in Manitoba Public School Divisions

Based on the responses by the interviewees, I identified formal mentoring programs in 11 of 24 (46%) interviewed school divisions in Manitoba. I considered formal mentoring programs those that meet the criteria described in Chapter 1: Formal programs use experienced teachers as mentors (preferably with mentor training), mentors and beginning teachers were matched in appropriate grade or subject areas, and release time was provided for the partners to meet. In this section I discuss only findings for the formal mentoring programs in Manitoba school divisions. For reasons of ease, I will generally leave out “formal” and just speak of “mentoring programs”.

Models used. All of the mentoring processes described would be considered versions of the school-based mentoring model as described by Boreen, et al. (2009), Feeney-Jonson (2008), Lipton, Wellman, and Humbard (2003), and Portner (2003), which has as its core feature that the

mentoring happens within the school in which both the mentor and the mentee are both working. Divisions frequently tried to have mentors and beginning teachers in the same school building to allow access to one another's classrooms as an important aspect of a successful mentoring process. None of the models would be considered prescriptive in the sense of Ralph and Walker's (2010) Adaptive Model; however, some division programs were more structured than others and shared some similarities with the prescriptive model. The prescriptive model outlines specific ways of carrying out the mentoring process. Ralph and Walker (2010) have outlined a prescriptive model in their Adaptive Model. Competence and confidence are key words to consider when working within the Adaptive Model, and a mentor would be trained to assess both the competence and confidence of each particular skill the beginning teacher needs to develop. A common feature shared among divisional interviewees and the Adaptive Model was to provide human relations support to the beginning teacher. Knowing that others have had similar experiences on their journey can build confidence in beginning teachers.

None of the Manitoba school divisions have an integrated model working with teacher education faculties and beginning teachers, although it is not unusual for student teachers to participate in the induction aspects of mentoring programs while in their practicum. However, one rural school division mentioned that they work closely with their student teachers to involve them with curriculum support staff and site-based mentors. This division believes that making the student teachers aware of the supports in place within the division for beginning teachers, including on-site mentors, is a positive aspect in terms of hiring. Rural Interviewee #9 commented that he connects with university staff to provide mock interviews for student teachers. He responds to potential questions about mentoring beginning teachers in an effort to make important connections between the public system and the university faculty. This same

rural school division is also proactive in hiring their student placement teachers who are in their final year of their university training. The student teachers are invited to a luncheon near the end of their placement and the superintendents talk about the next steps for them. Frequently, recent graduates begin with term contracts (due to leaves for permanent staff). Rural Interviewee #9 described his school division's process as follows:

We introduce them to our hiring process and show this is how we support you with curriculum support people, summer institutes and site-based mentor. It is very positive that way. The beginning teacher knows exactly what they're signing up for.

Although not an integrated system, per se, the school division is working with both the university faculty and the student teachers to make them more knowledgeable about the connections between their studies and their work as classroom teachers.

Degree of structure. I found many variations in the degree to which mentoring programs in Manitoba are structured, which means the degree to which there are fixed components of the program that are in place across implementation. In some cases, I found very structured programs based on job-embedded learning and professional inquiry connected to leadership development. The most structure for mentoring programs was found in urban school divisions where the number of beginning teachers and mentors was much greater than in rural or northern divisions. In two urban divisions, release days were provided for teachers to collaborate to plan, to observe in each other's classrooms, or to attend professional learning events together. Specific meeting times as a group of beginning teachers were also designated from the start of the year. Training for mentors is provided and both mentors and beginning teachers are encouraged to attempt action research and job-embedded learning. All participants engage in an annual review that is used to inform planning for the following years.

Across the province, mentoring program leaders provided more structured programming during the early weeks of the school year than the remaining months as beginning teachers met their mentors and spent more time learning about their specific school workplaces. Workshops or in-service activities were frequently scheduled for the beginning teachers just prior to the beginning of the new school year or within the first month. Some school divisions shared binders, brochures, or website materials with me to indicate the formal structure of their programs.

Other school divisions with formal programs were more loosely structured. In all cases the beginning of the year had the most meeting times. Beginning teachers would meet their mentors, and many induction events would be available to the beginning teacher. Common examples included workshops and sessions focusing upon: numeracy and literacy, inclusion, differentiation, assessment, reporting to parents, and student services requirements such as writing Individualized Education Plans. Due to the number and concentration of induction workshops, teachers were given more leeway to determine when they would meet with mentors. Choice is considered an important aspect of the mentoring process. In many divisions, the onus was on the mentor to check in with the beginning teacher to offer talk time or meeting time. A rural division with a co-ordinator would check in by email with the participants to determine if they needed any resources or forms signed for release time. The forms would be directed to the coordinator, which was an additional way of knowing if mentors and beginning teachers were meeting.

Duration. As Table 2 shows, all mentoring programs in the province are for one year only, with the exception of one urban school division that has a two-year program.

Table 2
Duration of mentoring programs in Manitoba

	Rural	Northern	Urban	Total
One year or less	6	1	3	10
Greater than one year	0	0	1	1

Although programs were described as one year in duration, I noted above that the first term tended to have a higher participation rate than the later months of the year. In some situations, mentoring began with summer institutes – workshops prior to the start of the school year on topics specifically relevant to beginning teachers or teachers new to the division. In many cases, school divisions provide a specific number of release days, either as full or half-days, to be used by the mentor and the beginning teacher for their own purposes. The time could be used to observe in each other’s classes or as planning time or as time to reflect on their practice. Although choice and discretion were described as positive aspects of mentoring, it also meant that times of actual mentoring ebbed and flowed throughout the year.

Voluntary or mandatory participation. Most school divisions told me that their program is voluntary. However, I discovered that what I thought was a straight-forward question, “Is your mentoring program voluntary or compulsory?” did not provide straight-forward answers. The administrators I interviewed usually stated that their program was voluntary, but that all beginning teachers participated. I found, in many cases, the beginning teachers were not actually polled about whether they wished to attend or not. They were invited. Workshops and programming were in place; therefore, they participated. Most often, beginning teachers were invited to a gathering prior to the start of school. It was offered as an opportunity to meet division office staff and perhaps some of the specialists who would work with them throughout the year. It occurred to me that beginning teachers probably had a sense of curiosity about their new employment and employers and would be interested in learning more. The beginning

teacher would also not want to be noticeably absent from a workshop that others were attending. Technically, even if the mentoring program was not deemed to be mandated, a beginning teacher in a new situation may very well feel compelled to participate. In a few interviews, I was informed that it was an expectation for the beginning teachers to participate in the process. Urban Interviewee #19, stated, “All beginning teachers to the division, regardless of their experience, are expected to attend all sessions.” On the other hand, a number of administrators informed me that teacher candidates during their practicum frequently asked if their school division had a mentoring program.

Selection of mentees. Of school divisions that provide formal mentoring programs all but two provide mentoring to their *beginning teachers*. One urban school division offers their mentoring program to second year teachers. Another urban school division offers their two-year mentoring program to teachers in the first year of their permanent contract. In Manitoba, teachers are often hired on a term contract to replace a teacher on a permanent contract who may be on leave for study purposes, maternity leave, a leave for reasons of health, or a personal leave. Beginning teachers are often the ones hired on these term contracts, but school divisions are only permitted to hire a teacher under a specific number of term contracts before they have to offer a permanent contract. The difference between a permanent contract and a term contract determined whether beginning teachers could participate in one school division’s mentoring program.

What is a beginning teacher? “Beginning teacher” refers to a first year teacher who recently graduated or one who may have worked partial term contracts. As discussed in chapter 2, the literature suggests teachers in their first, second, or third year of teaching benefit from a mentoring process. However, I found that divisions concentrated on those in their first full year of employment. One urban division only included teachers who were in the first year of a

permanent contract so a beginning teacher in their school division may have one or two years' experience, but they are not eligible for the program until they are on a permanent contract. This urban division was the *only* one that required permanent contract status for eligibility to take part in the mentoring program.

Teachers new to a school division. Most of the school divisions with a formal mentoring program preferred to include into their mentoring programs teachers new to the school division, although they may have one or more years of teaching experience in other school divisions. They wished those teachers to become familiar with the workings of their school division. For instance Northern Interviewee #5 said they wanted teachers new to their division to take part so they would learn the same principles and formats as used by other teachers in the division. A few division-leaders give more experienced teachers who are new to their division the option of being part of the mentoring process or not. Some divisions, particularly those with more structured programs, have a calendar of workshops and meeting times throughout the year. An interviewee from one of these divisions explained to me that an experienced teacher would not need to attend early literacy workshops if they were already comfortable and experienced in this area. Therefore, they provided the option to the teacher to opt in to some parts of the process and to opt out of others. Table 3 shows the distribution of the type of participants in the formal mentoring programs across school divisions by region.

Table 3

Type of participants in formal mentoring programs across school divisions by region

	Rural	Northern	Urban	Total
Beginning teachers (recent graduates)	6	1	4	11
Teachers new to the division	5	1	4	10
Permanent contract only	0	0	1	1
Teachers in second year	0	0	1	1

Selection of mentors. Interview data revealed a common approach by school divisions with mentoring programs to the selection of mentors. Divisions provide teachers with the opportunity to volunteer, but many are directly invited (“tapped on the shoulder”). Rural Interviewee #14 mentioned that he had never had a refusal from a teacher to be a mentor and in fact “most people are honoured to be a mentor.” Teachers may not volunteer because of modesty or not wanting to add more work to an already busy schedule, but all interviewees agreed they could find enough mentors for their divisions.

Principals bear the responsibility of selecting teachers to be mentors and of ensuring that there are mentors for specialist positions. They look for teachers who have several years of experience and are seen as competent and capable teachers. Principals are in a key role to be able to “tap teachers on the shoulder” as they are in and out of classrooms more than most others in a school. The principal has been responsible for teacher evaluation and is, therefore, in a position to know if a particular teacher may be a good candidate to be a mentor. Principals are also in a position of knowing the teaching areas needed for mentoring, particularly for specialist positions such as band, French, or practical arts teachers.

However, two interviewees said that they were “not convinced that a good teacher is necessarily a good mentor” (Rural Interviewee #11; Rural Interviewee #16), which questions

somewhat the common approach of selecting mentors just described. According to educators associated with the Beginning Teacher Center (2006), qualities of an effective mentor include the following:

- Evidence of outstanding teaching practice;
- Strong intrapersonal skills;
- Experience with adult learners;
- Respect of peers; and
- Current knowledge of professional development.

Here, evidence of outstanding teaching practice is only one out of five qualities listed. Another is to have experience with adult learners and, I might add, to be knowledgeable of adult learning principles. However, individuals may be master teachers with students, but they might not be very apt at working with adults. One urban school division provides training to their mentors in adult learning principles to assist them in working with their adult learners (e.g., the beginning teachers). Accordingly, Rural Interviewee #7 suggested that a teacher did not necessarily have to be a master teacher to be considered for a mentoring position; “sometimes having someone farther along the road is helpful, too, maybe not a master”.

As noted by the majority of the interviewees, the mentoring relationship is a learning experience for both the beginning teacher and the experienced teacher. Successful matches grew from mentoring relationships to collaborative, collegial relationships that continued long after the mentoring program. Interviewees expressed the view that mentors learn alongside their mentees and benefit from professional learning that is provided and that being a mentor provides additional opportunities for professional development.

Although the norm in mentoring programs is to match a beginning teacher with an experienced classroom teacher, I found examples in some school divisions where curriculum consultants or literacy/numeracy coaches acted as mentors as well. Interviewee #19 (Rural) mentioned a full-time instructional support teacher who also mentors teachers new to the school division. She models lessons, observes the beginning teacher and spends time with the beginning teacher to reflect on their practice. However, this instructional support teacher would not be the only mentor to a beginning teacher. In addition, the beginning teacher is paired with a mentor in her school building where possible. This particular interviewee feels a responsibility to mentor beginning teachers as well. Similarly, Urban Interviewee #22 also uses curriculum consultants as mentors for classroom teachers, while the official mentor is someone within their school. Another Rural Interviewee #9 school division reported using curriculum support teachers as mentors. The support teacher organizes a cohort of beginning teachers and works with them as a group but also on a one-to-one basis.

Matching mentors and beginning teachers. In Manitoba school divisions, principals are tasked with matching beginning teachers and mentors, unless the division has a co-ordinator of the mentoring program. Either way, the principal always has some input into the matching process. Typically, administrators would look to match according to criteria such as:

- Teachers in the same building (proximity);
- Teachers with similar assignments (e.g. same grade);
- Teachers with similar areas of interest (subject specific); and
- Teachers who were well-matched in personality.

Some school divisions provide the mentee with the choice of selecting a fitting mentor. Rural Interviewee #15 stated, as an administrator “matching someone with a mentor is not

always a good choice.” He suggested that he prefers to have principals make suggestions for potential mentors, but then allows the beginning teacher to make the final choice. His thinking was based on the premise that the principal could not always know whether the mentor and the beginning teacher would be a good fit. Giving the beginning teacher some choice in the selection may ensure a better fit in matching. Along similar lines, one principal, Urban Interviewee #23, shared her experience in matching mentors and beginning teachers:

It would be a stress to find someone such as a formal mentor. So you would have your admin decide that this is the person you are going to be with. You really don't know. What we have really learned is the relationship between the two is the key in the success of it. In the beginning we would have a bank of mentors. We learned through practice that that wasn't working as well as we hoped.

This school division changed their program from mentoring in the first year of the contract to the second year of employment and found the beginning teacher was then able to choose their own mentor based on relationships already established in the school building or division.

Another Rural Interviewee #16, said that in her school division a mentorship co-ordinator, who is not a principal, would contact beginning teachers in October if they had not connected with a mentor on their own. The co-ordinator would then ask the beginning teacher if they needed help in selecting a mentor. In the interviewee's experience, the beginning teachers approached this way are appreciative of this kind of support, because in some cases, the interviewee said, the principal had been too busy to make a suggestion for a possible mentor or the beginning teacher needed a mentor from another building and did not know teachers in other locations.

The matching by subject area is a particular challenge for rural school division leaders in Manitoba. Specialty teachers may not be in the same building. Most rural interviewees made reference to the need for teachers in specialty areas such as industrial arts, practical arts, band, and resource positions to connect with teachers who may not work in their same schools or even within the division. Sometimes, interviewees said, attempts would be made to find teachers in other school divisions who could connect with the beginning teachers. Time was made available and in a few instances, mileage payments were made for the two teachers to spend time in each other's classroom. One rural school division hired a mentor, a former specialist in their school who was on leave, to act as a mentor. Specialty area teachers in urban areas did not have similar issues as larger divisions had more staff in the specialty areas. However, in the rural and northern divisions finding mentors for the specialty areas is more difficult. A few rural divisions expressed the view that it was more important for the beginning teacher to have a mentor on site than trying – unsuccessfully – to find a mentor in the same specialist area.

I noticed from my research that the North West Territories recognize the challenges to have formal mentorships in their small schools, and they provide for “a support network through e-mail and video or telephone conference calls with an experienced teacher or consultant” (North West Territories Education, Culture and Employment, 2016, p. 11). None of the school divisions interviewed discussed the use of technology to address the concern of matching a mentor and beginning teacher.

The literature discusses opportunities for re-matching when a mentor and beginning teacher do not develop a suitable relationship. However, in my interviews very few interviewees expressed any experience with having to rematch. Occasionally due to circumstances a mentor could not continue or the mentoring relationship would come to a standstill, but very seldom did

one of the parties come forward with a request to be re-matched. The interviewees always were prepared to re-match, but had not found it to be necessary.

Training/preparing mentors. The level and form of preparing mentors for their work with their mentees varied considerably from division to division. I found that most of the school divisions in Manitoba do not have specific training for the mentors.

One school division, Rural Interviewee #15, reported bringing the mentors together early in the year to facilitate discussion among the mentors as to how they see their role. Another division, Rural Interviewee #19, has a support teacher who works with beginning teachers as a coach/mentor and other mentor teachers learn from observing the support teacher modeling her work with beginning teachers.

As noted earlier, the more formalized mentoring programs in Manitoba plan for specific days of training with mentors before they met their mentees. Training includes sessions on adult learning principles, how to conduct learning-focused conversations, and/or how to facilitate teacher action research.

One fundamental challenge that all mentor training faces was expressed by Rural Interviewee #11: “I think that training as a mentor has to be more than a workshop. How do you train a mentor when you can’t follow them into their coaching sessions and coach the coach? I am just a bit skeptical of the nature of mentorship training.” The interviewee makes a good point, but good training involves more than workshops. There should be follow-up after the workshops and after the mentor has been working with the beginning teacher to address issues they identify.

Histories, Goals and Rationales of Mentoring Programs in Manitoba

Interviewees were asked about the histories, goals and rationales of their formal mentoring programs.

Histories of mentoring programs. In most cases, interviewees were unable to answer the question about the history of their respective formal mentoring program, because the program had been in existence prior to the employment term of the interviewee. In the case of amalgamated school divisions, interviewees were often also not sure about the history of the current mentoring program, since the program may have been different in the divisions prior to amalgamation. In some cases the interviewee could answer questions about the existing program, but was not knowledgeable about the history of the program.

In three rural divisions their mentoring programs have been in place for five years or less. In each of these three cases the divisions reviewed existing induction/mentoring programs and made changes specifically to the mentoring component of their programs to fit their context. The third rural division is an amalgamated division, and the induction program (with a mentoring component) was created after the amalgamation. Two principals developed the program for the division and a co-ordinator is now responsible for administering the mentoring component.

Where interviewees were able to report on the history of their mentoring program, those programs frequently grew out of discussions or initiatives at the administrative level. Following are a number of examples for mentoring programs with such a history. Rural Interviewee #9 said that their program was developed by their superintendents' team. Another division, Northern Interviewee #5, developed its program as part of an administration leadership project, and a teacher leader developed the handbook to be used for a formal mentoring program. Rural Interviewee #19 indicated that their mentoring program grew out of their Supervision for

Growth model. Urban Interviewee #23's school division first developed its induction program from a health and welfare survey completed ten years earlier, and following a process of focus group data gathering completed more recently. Using information from those two sources, the formal mentoring program that is now being used was developed. Another urban school division started a mentoring program for beginning teachers in their inner city schools. It began in 2008 as a three year program. Prior to the formal program, a "buddy" program had existed in that school division since 2004. However, in 2013 the program became a two-year program and expanded to include all schools in the division. While a few interviewees mentioned that principals often suggest a buddy to beginning teachers (outside of the formal mentoring program), this school division was the only one where a formal mentoring program historically grew from an informal or buddy system of mentoring.

Goals and rationales of mentoring programs. The goals and rationales provided by interviewees for their formal mentoring programs can best be summarized as: providing support for beginning teachers to improve student learning. The school divisions with formal mentoring programs felt there was a need for formal programs that go beyond a buddy system. A buddy is a colleague who welcomes the beginning teacher and helps them to become acquainted with their school and the processes in their particular school. It may be a relationship for the beginning weeks or months or it may extend longer throughout the year. However, a buddy does not act as a mentor providing modeling for, and observations of, the beginning teacher in a more formal structure. School divisions who wanted more out of their support programs developed formal mentoring programs. Following is a list of goals provided by interviewees across their mentoring programs:

- Improving student learning;
- Supporting beginning teachers;
- Wanting good teachers in the division ;
- Providing professional learning opportunities;
- Retaining teachers;
- Supporting adult learning and student learning;
- Creating professional learning networks; and
- Providing a nurturing, supportive environment for beginning teachers.

Only one school division specifically mentioned retention as being one of the reasons their school division invested in a mentoring program. One school division felt it was a hiring benefit to have a mentoring program. Both divisions believed the program helped them retain their beginning teachers because the beginning teachers felt supported by the division.

In two cases the high level of structure of the mentoring program and the depth of the rationalization for those programs was closely linked. One school division, Urban Interviewee #23 starts its mentoring program in the second year of the teacher's employment with their school division. The division provides beginning teacher workshops in the first year, but the mentoring program begins in the second year. The first year is seen as an opportunity for the beginning teacher to establish routines and find what style works for them. During this time, beginning teachers are supported by their administrators and "buddies" in the building. In the second year, then, the beginning teachers are, according to the goals and rationales of the mentoring program, much more able to be reflective and to explore best practices. This particular division found, from assessing their mentoring program through the use of surveys and focus groups, that the participants felt it as more beneficial to give beginning teachers a year of

induction workshops first before they begin the mentoring process in the second year. This feedback led the school division to this current sequence of induction workshops in the first year and mentoring program in the second year. The goals and rationales of the well-structured mentoring program in Urban Interviewee #24's division suggests that its program provides support in effective teaching and career development for both mentees and mentors over a two-year time period. This program provides in-depth training in adult learning over the course of the mentoring period. The division bases its mentoring program on current research incorporating job-embedded learning and professional inquiry connected to leadership development.

Divisions were also asked if their mentoring program was based on a specific model. None were based on a particular model, but a few divisions mentioned specific training they focus on with both the mentors and the beginning teachers. Learning-focused conversations as described by Lipton, Wellman and Humbard (2003) were mentioned by two school divisions. A few school divisions also supported their administrators in Cognitive Coaching training, but have not provided training in Cognitive Coaching to mentors.

CHAPTER 5

STRENGTHS OF AND CHALLENGES MENTORING PROGRAMS IN MANITOBA

In this chapter I describe and discuss the findings of the study as far as the third and fourth research questions are concerned:

3. What strengths and challenges can be identified for these mentoring programs in terms of their development, implementation, and sustainment?
4. Why do some public school divisions in Manitoba not have formal mentoring programs?

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first two sections, I describe and discuss the findings as they are relevant to the third research question. First, I describe and discuss findings on the strengths of the formal mentoring programs in Manitoba, and secondly, I discuss the challenges interviewees encounter in establishing and maintaining their mentoring programs. The third section responds to the fourth research question by offering reasons expressed by interviewees as to why their school divisions do not offer mentoring programs for beginning teachers.

Strengths of Formal Mentoring Programs in Manitoba

For the purpose of this study, the strengths of a formal mentoring program are those features that benefit those involved in the mentoring program. Accordingly, what the interviewees reporting regarding the strengths of their mentoring programs can be divided into three parts, depending on *whom* the specific program features benefitted: the school division

leaders, the beginning teacher, or the mentor teacher. If the same feature benefitted more than one of these three groups, it will be discussed in each section respectively.

Advantages for school division leaders. Interviewees identified a number of benefits that their formal mentoring program offered to leaders of their school divisions, each of which I discuss subsequently:

- Improving student learning in the division;
- Providing all teachers in the division the same orientation toward, and support in, important divisional programming aspects;
- Learning about different support systems;
- Working collaboratively;
- Developing good professional, reflective practice (including action research projects);
- Developing ongoing professional relationships; and
- Developing competencies and skills of both beginning teachers and mentors.

Interviewees across divisions identified a positive impact on student learning through mentoring beginning teachers as one of the benefits for their school divisions. For instance, Urban Interviewee #24 commented that increased confidence by beginning teachers is one of the benefits of their mentoring programs, which results in better student engagement. Rural Interviewee #10 supported this statement noting improved student learning is the goal of their formal mentoring program.

Interviewees identified as an important strength of the mentoring program for their school division that all teachers new to the division receive the same orientation to the division and needed support in the same areas important to divisional programming. They cited as the most common areas of support: literacy, numeracy, classroom management, assessment, report card

writing, and working with parents. All of the school divisions interviewed, even those without formal mentoring programs, provide an orientation or induction for beginning teachers that included the areas listed above. Interviewees from school divisions with a formal mentoring program noted that the mentoring program was beneficial for the division because the beginning teachers are being supported by experienced teachers familiar with the culture of the school and the school division. A number of superintendents said that it was important for new professional staff, both beginning teachers and teachers new to the division, to understand “how we do things in THIS division” (Rural Interviewee #23).

Linked to this first point of the goals and rationales of their mentoring programs, interviewees said that their formal mentoring program also supported a team approach to learning about the student support systems in place in the division. What does the student support services team do? How does a classroom teacher access these supports for students having difficulty? Interviewees suggested that beginning teachers might know about student services from their preservice education, but knowing how student services work in a specific division is an important lesson to learn for beginning teachers.

Helping beginning teachers to work collaboratively with other professionals was seen by interviewees as an important goal for their mentoring program. Providing a formal structure for such collaboration through mentoring enabled beginning teachers to start out their career experiencing the value and practice of collaborative relationships. Interviewees commented school divisions are interested in having their teachers work collaboratively because such professional collaboration helps all teachers develop knowledge and skills. Working collaboratively with their teaching peers would help them hone their skills and develop their competencies.

Rural Interviewee #9 commented that their division tries to create a really supportive atmosphere for their novice teachers beginning with the very first summer institute workshops designed to develop good professional practice. The interviewee suggested that the intention of their approach to mentoring is to help beginning teachers develop habits of reflective practice and to be open to observing experienced teachers, being observed themselves, and to sharing ideas and suggestions with others in order to move their teaching practice forward as they develop their skills in the classroom. According to Northern Interviewee #5, they take time in their formal mentoring process to ensure beginning teachers are familiar with Schön's (1983) concepts of "reflection-*in*-action" and "reflection-*on*-action"; all teachers are required to think "on their feet" as events occur in the classroom, hopefully making good judgment calls. Simultaneously, beginning teachers have a chance to deepen their understanding of their practice if they take time for introspection after an event, building up a repertoire of possible responses for future use. Urban Interviewee #24 said that their mentoring program encourages their mentors and beginning teachers to conduct action research projects as part of the mentoring process. The needs of the beginning teachers determine the type of action research that may be undertaken. This approach to a research-based practice is based on adult learning principles as described by Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012). While an action research project is not mandatory in the mentoring program in this school division, the mentoring process often leads to such an inquiry.

Interviewees also emphasized that successful mentoring relationships result in ongoing professional relationships over an extended period of time. Urban Interviewee #17, for instance, commented that positive mentorship relationships are sustainable, that they do not end when the mentoring program ends, but that the professional relationship between the two teachers

continues for the length of employment. Strong relationships develop into professional partnerships, where there is no longer one who is the mentor and one who is the mentee. Instead, a professional learning relationship is established and each party appreciates the skills of the other. They become co-learners as both continue to develop their professional competencies and skills. These relationships and skills greatly benefit the school division.

Advantages for beginning teachers. All interviewees agreed that beginning teachers need support in their first year of teaching. Those who did not have formal mentoring programs provided support through induction workshops or through a “buddy” system of pairing a beginning teacher with an experienced teacher (see below). However, the school divisions with a formal mentoring program were able to indicate the specific benefits to their beginning teachers of participating in the formal mentoring program. The following list includes the benefits identified by interviewees from school divisions with formal mentoring programs:

- Receiving professional support;
- Receiving support by someone not in an evaluation role;
- Developing a sense of belonging; and
- Building broader collegial relationships.

Expectedly, the biggest advantage of a formal mentoring program that interviewees identified for beginning teachers is the professional support that they receive through the program. This advantage includes, as Urban Interviewee #17 suggested, the benefit that collegial connections are being made for the beginning teacher, “where they are not needing to go out and seek it themselves . . . when you don’t know anybody; that can be pretty daunting.” The professional support also includes support in managing the demands of the job, as Rural Interviewee #3 notes:

When you are a beginning teacher your mind is going so fast and your to-do list just keeps growing and growing and you don't know who to ask. I think often the secretary gets those questions. When you talk to an experienced teacher I think they can put things into perspective for a beginning teacher. Not everything has to get done in the first two weeks.

A second advantage for mentees that interviewees identified is that through the mentor-mentee relationship, beginning teachers receive structured support by someone not in an evaluative role toward them. As one interviewee expressed it, knowing from the start that the mentor is in the beginning teacher's corner and is not in an evaluative or judgmental capacity goes a long way to providing the encouragement and belief in the beginning teacher's capacity to become a successful, professional teacher.

Another very important advantage for beginning teachers is that being part of a formal mentoring program provides them with a sense of belonging. At the Teacher Induction and Mentoring Forum (Kingston, Ontario, 2016), a participant in the "Bliss and Blisters of First Years of Teaching" panel stated, "I felt perfectly alone." As Rural Interviewee #11 said:

We want them to feel welcome into our new community and we want them to understand who we are as a community and become a part of our own learning culture. We really believe that to have teachers become successful happy employees, they need to feel as though they belong.

Northern Interviewee #5 stated that their formal mentoring process assists beginning teachers in making a new teaching job in rural or northern Manitoba less isolating for them. Immediately the beginning teacher has a confidante who can help them develop their social network. The interviewee stated, "I think it gives them more confidence because they know they have a safety

net there.” As interviewees suggested, working collaboratively with another teacher in a mentor-mentee relationship removes the feeling of being alone and responsible for the same tasks as every experienced teacher. As Wong and Wong (1998) suggest, the beginning teacher is expected to perform all the duties of an experienced teacher while still learning how to do the tasks linked to these duties. Being supported while learning to do these tasks helps beginning teachers develop their “mental strength” and encourages them in their professional practice. The school divisions with formal mentoring programs do not want to leave their sense of belonging to chance; they purposely connect beginning teachers to experienced teachers who would make time to connect with them and become part of their learning community. The school division interviewees also commented that by having a mentor, division leaders had a sense that the beginning teacher’s mental health was being positively supported. Rural Interviewee #2 wanted beginning teachers to realize that their challenges are not just experienced by them, but are probably shared by a number of their colleagues and that they do not have to handle these challenges all by themselves.

Some interviewees pointed to the building of broader, division-wide collegial relationships, especially to other beginning teachers, as another advantage for beginning teachers of being in a formal mentoring program. For instance, Rural Interviewee #4 mentioned that as part of their formal mentoring program they have the beginning teachers and mentors come together as a group, which allowed beginning teachers to form a cohort. Not only were they connected to their mentor, but they also had opportunities throughout the year to connect with other beginning teachers. In addition, the interviewee said, beginning teachers would find it helpful to hear about other beginning teachers’ experiences.

Advantages for the mentor teachers. School division interviewees also recognized that being involved in a formal mentoring program has a number of benefits for mentor teachers. The benefits can be listed as follows:

- Being exposed to new ideas, sharing ideas, and being able to put their own professional growth and practice into perspective;
- Experiencing collegiality over isolation;
- Building ongoing professional relationships; and
- Being professionally complemented by being asked to be a mentor.

Rural Interviewee #7 says that mentors benefit from their role in the mentoring process by being exposed to fresh ideas and practices that beginning teachers come with from their often just completed teacher education programs. At the same time, the interviewee suggested, mentors were happy to work with beginning teachers as it helped the mentors to see their own professional growth. Northern Interviewee #5 recognized the advantage of the mentoring program for mentor teachers of being engaged in the professional practice of sharing ideas between teachers, whereby beginning teachers come from a variety of university faculties and bring new methods and new ideas to their classrooms and to school staff more generally. As the interviewee suggested, in particular in Northern Manitoba, teachers may often work in isolation, and so having beginning teachers bring fresh ideas is a definite advantage to already practicing teachers, as well as the school and school division. Urban Interviewee #17 noted, while the mentoring experience may open the mentor up to other perspectives and other voices, it may also confirm – and thus strengthen – the mentor’s own convictions and educational philosophy. Rural Interviewee #11 pointed out the mentoring process helps the mentor clarify their own professional practice, when the mentor teacher is asked by the beginning teacher about their own

practice. This interviewee suggested that mentors saw this as an advantage for their own professional practice.

Some interviewees saw an advantage for mentoring teachers in the opportunities that their mentoring provides to them for working collegially with another teacher instead of in isolation. Rural Interviewee #10 commented: “One thing that people forget all the time is that teaching is such an isolated practice.” Location may be isolating, but the actual act of teaching may also be isolating as teachers are able to determine their own practice to a large degree. The interviewee went on to say, “The only ones seeing a lot of it [teaching practice] are the administrators and resource teachers. The colleague next door doesn’t often see you teach, so they don’t know.” The benefit of having a formal mentoring program for this school division is that the veteran teachers serving as mentors are getting opportunities to observe and work with other (beginning) teachers in their classrooms. Similarly, Rural Interviewee #2 thinks, “the networking for educators is so important. A teacher who is passionate about what they do is always looking for new ideas and how they can improve. When they get that from the mentorship partnership, they are like ‘Wow, it’s great!’” According to the interviewee, their mentors appreciate the release time provided to the beginning teacher and mentor to be in each other’s classrooms to observe, or have time to meet for planning sessions or to attend in-service opportunities together. The majority of school divisions with formal mentoring programs provide some release time throughout the year for the beginning teacher and mentor teacher to meet.

Linked to this benefit for teachers who are mentors, a benefit one interviewee pointed to was the potential for building an ongoing professional relationship out of the mentor-mentee relationship, which is not just beneficial to beginning teachers but also to the mentor teachers. Urban Interviewee #17 said:

The relationships that happen within the school continue. There is a lot of collaboration and opportunity for working together. This keeps them connected. Anytime you put two or more individuals together in collaboration, conversation, teamwork, the benefits that come out of it are usually mutual.

The interviewees frequently mentioned that mentor teachers generally perceive being asked to be a mentor to be a professional complement. Principals are frequently tasked with the job of matching mentors with beginning teachers. A teacher being asked to mentor recognizes that her principal considers her to be a teacher with certain qualities. Being asked to mentor is like a reward and recognition from other professionals.

Challenges to Developing, Implementing, and Sustaining Mentoring Programs

Considering the relatively low number of formal mentoring programs in Manitoba, there are obviously challenges to developing and implementing such programs. The school divisions that offer formal mentoring programs *also* identified challenges to maintaining their programs. The main challenges identified through the interviews are: time, funding to support a sustainable the program, and geography. In addition, there were also challenges identified that were more specific to a school division. I will discuss each in turn.

Time. Time was the primary challenge for developing and maintaining formal mentoring programs. Interviewees identified different ways in which time was a challenge. First, time was required to design and establish a program. Many of the established programs have been in existence for a number of years. In fact, some of the current division personnel were not aware of how or when the program was established because it had been in existence for longer than the current administrative staff had been employed by the school division. In particular in Manitoba

when school divisions were amalgamated, some programs became conglomerates of programs from two divisions. Current staff was not certain of the origins of various aspects of their programs. Two of the other formal programs stemmed from projects of staff members. New staff members were challenged to revise and redevelop existing programs to meet current needs. Superintendents or co-ordinators who were interviewed expressed appreciation for those who had established the programs initially as they recognized it was a huge time commitment to add to an already busy schedule. In some cases, divisions had co-ordinators but in the majority of cases the responsibility was added on to someone's work list. It may be assigned to an assistant superintendent or a human resources person (always a certified teacher). In either case, it was seen to be an important responsibility.

Release time was considered by interviewees as a challenge to the maintenance and effectiveness of a mentoring program. Release time for mentors and mentees means that they are out of their respective classrooms and away from their students. Additional time is required for the beginning teacher and the mentor teacher in order to prepare for a substitute teacher. Some interviewees reported that they were aware that the release time provided for the beginning teacher and mentor was not always being used. Although they did not have hard data, they said they believe from conversations and exit slips at the end of the process, that the reason for not making use of available release time was a concern for the required extra time for being out of the classroom. In addition, beginning teachers are frequently required to be part of other training initiatives such as literacy and numeracy for elementary teachers as well as induction workshops, which would also be scheduled at the beginning of a school year. This adds to the time beginning teachers are away from their own students.

Another issue linked to shortage of available time is particularly relevant to rural and northern divisions. Northern Interviewee #5 related difficulties for mentor-mentee meetings to snow days, which could “mess up schedules”. The beginning teacher and mentor may have made plans, but snow days canceled the plans and it was difficult to reschedule because of teachers other commitments. In some cases it was easier to forego the planned meeting and wait for the next planned occasion.

Urban Interviewee #24 suggested a way in which their school division tries to address the time challenge. The interviewee expressed the view that the mentoring program should be an “add-in not an add-on” for beginning teachers and mentors to honour teachers’ time. This division tries to integrate necessary training for teachers with the mentoring program. Providing training as communities of practice is one way to have an integrated system. However, trying to address the time challenge can also run into other types of challenges. Rural Interviewee #9, for instance, pointed to not wanting to make the mentoring program “one more thing for teachers to do.” The division would like to provide training for the mentors prior to matching and, ideally, prior to school start up. However, mentor teachers are not required to be available prior to school start up, so time becomes an issue at the very busy beginning of the school year.

Time, however, is not in all cases experienced as an obstacle by teachers. Rural Interviewee #7, for instance, said that some of his staff exceeded the allotted release days, and they were able to do so by using other school professional development funds to provide for collaboration time as part of the mentoring process.

Funding. Funding was mentioned as a challenge associated with their mentoring program by only three school division participants. It was referred to as “sustainable funding”,

that is funding not only for the start-up of the program, but also for long-term planning, implementing, and maintaining the program.

In one school division, funding for a pilot project was secured from outside sources as well as from the local school division. However, the program has continued to expand with the funding always tenuous and only secure on an annual basis. As well, the number of participants has increased significantly without an increase in the funding for staffing the program.

Two interviewees from rural school divisions mentioned stress on school budgets that prevents them from doing some things they believe would make their mentoring program stronger. One division discussed the desire to bring the larger group of mentors and beginning teachers together more frequently. They meet as a large group at the beginning of the year, but do not have opportunity to come back together during the year. The interviewee believes it would be beneficial to both the beginning teachers and the mentors to have additional large-group meetings. Beginning teachers had more opportunities to meet as they had induction workshops throughout the year they would attend, providing opportunities to network with other beginning teachers. The mentor teachers, on the other hand, tended not to have any of the same type of meetings, but were left to using their own skills and abilities without a cohort group to discuss their experiences or gain perspectives and ideas from other mentors, the interviewee said. The interviewee also wished to have funds available for a year-end group meeting as it would help to facilitate data gathering and assessing the program. However, such a meeting was not part of the mentoring program due both to funding and time.

Funding related to substitute teachers was also mentioned as release time added up to significant costs. However, the divisions were prepared to cover the substitute costs. A rural school division mentioned that availability of substitute teachers was more of an issue than the

costs associated with paying them. It is not unusual for plans to be made between the mentor and the beginning teacher, but then substitute teachers would not be available to release one or the other teacher. In this rural division, availability of substitute teachers was an obstacle for the program implementation.

Geography. The challenge of geography for their mentoring programs was identified by a number of rural and northern school divisions. Urban school divisions have an advantage over rural and northern school divisions as it is much easier for them to match mentors and beginning teachers in the same building. Although it is preferred to match mentors and mentees by teaching assignment and close proximity, rural and northern school divisions may be hampered to do so in the implementation of their mentoring programs because of geographical distance and population density. Ideally, schools would like to match teachers at similar grade levels or in a similar position. Many small schools in rural Manitoba have only one classroom per grade, which means the match must either be made with a different grade-level teacher or with another teacher from a different school; and schools are geographically further apart from each other in less densely populated areas, which is the case for rural and northern school divisions. Not being in the same building is an obstacle, because it requires travel time for the partners to meet each other and generally requires additional funding for travel. It also means it may take longer for the relationship to develop because the teachers do not see each other as regularly as teachers teaching in the same building. Proximity provides opportunities to be more in touch with how a beginning teacher is coping with her responsibilities and to be more available to offer a listening ear or a word of encouragement.

Specialty positions are especially vulnerable to geographical distance. Rural and northern school divisions are smaller than urban divisions and therefore, specialty positions such as music

and band, industrial arts, art, and home economics positions may exist only in one school in the division. Beginning teachers in these specialty positions would then only find a mentor with the same position in another school division. School clinicians also fall into this category. In rural and northern divisions, even if there is more than one speech clinician or school psychologist, they often work in separate geographical areas of the division.

As noted by my interviewees, these are not unsurmountable problems; they simply make the mentoring process more challenging in these circumstances, which are more often the case in rural and northern school divisions than in urban ones. Interviewees shared various innovative ideas they used to provide mentors for teachers in specialty positions. One rural division connects with an urban division, so that the new band teacher could be mentored by a band teacher in the urban division. Another rural division hires recently retired teachers to mentor beginning teachers in positions similar to what the retiree was teaching. The interviewee suggested that this has been their only option to provide a mentor to a teacher in a specialty position. Another rural school division has connected beginning teachers with mentors at university faculties to provide French immersion mentoring, which was also described as a challenge to the school division's mentoring program for the reasons mentioned with other specialty positions. Partnerships outside the building or matching at different levels were sometimes necessary.

Specific challenges. In addition to the three challenges quite common across school divisions, individual school division participants cited other challenges. These challenges mentioned only once might actually be division-specific or simply noticed only by one division participant.

One school division interviewee suggested that their challenge was the mentor's qualification to mentor. The interviewee recognized that the division did not have an extensive formal training program for the mentors. The onus of making a good match lies with the principal, who must rely on the ability of the mentor to provide a successful experience for the beginning teacher. Another school division noted that their challenge was assessing the program continuously and making changes based on those data. When a program has been in existence for a number of years and appears to be operating successfully, it may not be as responsive to change, the interviewee suggested. As each group of beginning teachers may have varying needs, the program should be responsive to their needs. The interviewee provided as an example that their "beginning teachers" tended to be teachers with experience in term positions and that they had fewer graduates directly out of university in their mentoring program. The needs of teachers with some experience would be quite different from those who have just graduated from a teacher education program. A mentoring program would need to take into consideration the specific needs of those mentees actually enrolled in the mentoring program.

School Divisions without a Formal Mentoring Program

In this section I present and discuss the findings for those school divisions participating in the study which do not have a formal mentoring program. This section is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on ways in which these school divisions nevertheless support their beginning teachers; the second part focuses on why some interviewees think that their school divisions actually do not need a formal mentoring program; and the third part focuses on the challenges that some school divisions said they face in developing, implementing, and sustaining a formal mentoring program for their beginning teachers.

Supporting beginning teachers in other forms. School divisions in Manitoba who do not have formal mentoring programs have many other supports for beginning teachers. These supports include orientation and induction programs, informal mentoring, and professional learning communities.

Orientations and induction. Every school division I interviewed has some type of orientation for their beginning teachers, often beginning in August prior to the start of the school term. The orientation sessions of divisions with and without formal mentoring programs were very similar. Some divisions work in partnership with the local teachers' association to provide what Rural Interviewee #7 called "the nuts and bolts" of working for the division. Orientations varied from a half-day to two-day summer institutes, which were designed not only for teachers new to the division, but current staff as well. Induction programs would continue throughout the year. As mentioned by the divisions with formal mentoring programs, school start-up is exceptionally busy and puts pressure on beginning teachers. Distributing induction workshops throughout the year alleviates some of the start-up pressure on beginning teachers. Rural Interviewee #2's induction program extends for more than one year partly because of time pressure, but also because the division believes that some topics are more applicable once a beginning teacher has experienced the full school year. This rationale is similar to the rationale provided by Urban Interviewee #23 for beginning their formal mentoring in the second year of the teaching contract. Furthermore, a number of interviewees said that they encourage their beginning teachers to attend the Fab5, a professional learning experience for beginning teachers offered by the Manitoba Teachers Society each year in two locations, one in Brandon and one in Winnipeg. Fab5 was considered by many interviewees to be part of the induction program for beginning teachers. The most recent agenda included a session encouraging beginning teachers

to form relationships with experienced teachers, but did not refer to it as a “mentoring relationship.”

Informal mentoring. Although formal mentoring programs were not offered in 13 of the 24 (54%) participating school divisions, other forms of mentoring were evidenced. Interviewees suggested that informal mentoring was common in their school divisions. Principals would suggest to beginning teachers that they choose a mentor or would sometimes suggest a suitable mentor. In some school divisions, release time was available to the partners to observe in each other’s classrooms. Rural school division #13 has an expectation of beginning teachers to make classroom visitations. Some of the mentoring pairings could be described as a “buddy system”, which is a system where the veteran teacher would answer questions from the beginning teacher and would ensure that the beginning teacher is aware of procedures and policies in the division, but they would not necessarily collaborate in other ways or spend time in each other’s classrooms. Rural Interviewee #14 suggested that their orientation program was designed to help establish professional relationships for their beginning teachers. The division recognized the need for beginning teachers to have seasoned staff as “go to” people. Rural Interviewee #12’s school division offers a mentoring package to beginning teachers at their first orientation session; it is then up to the beginning teacher to choose a mentor if they wish.

Another common form of informal mentoring mentioned by most of the divisions who did not have formal programs was the use of curriculum support teachers or specialists as mentors. School divisions have literacy and numeracy specialists who work one-on-one with beginning teachers to provide training, to model, to co-teach, and to offer support. Time spent with the beginning teacher is determined by the needs of each individual teacher. One school division has behaviour support teachers who will also work with beginning teachers in a

mentoring capacity. Cognitive Coaching was an initiative in rural school division #13 to train teacher leaders and administrators, who would then be able to use their skills to mentor beginning teachers.

From my study, I learned that administrators are often expected to (informally) mentor beginning teachers. The mentoring that principals do may, though, differs from what other teachers do. Much of the mentoring described by interviewees involved conversations in person or by email, but may have involved visits to classrooms or face-to-face chats. Two superintendents, both from rural divisions, said they mentor beginning teachers. One superintendent interviewed recognized that beginning teachers were probably reluctant to share challenges they might be facing, but he did feel he was able to establish strong connections with the beginning teachers, which paid off in the long term.

Professional learning communities. Professional development for teachers is changing. Rural Interviewee #6 expressed the wish for professional learning to take place within the division rather than through sources external to the division. Professional learning communities (PLCs) fulfill this wish, replacing the one or two-day “one-shot” workshop. Instead, teachers work together to explore new ways of teaching and to develop their professional practice. PLCs may conduct book studies, undertake inquiry projects or action research, or share their own learning with each other. A PLC is made up of both new and experienced teachers and provides another method of supporting beginning teachers while also exposing experienced teachers to new ideas brought forward by the beginning teachers. Three rural school divisions work together to offer a leadership development program over a two-year period. The divisions are preparing teacher leaders, not only for administrative roles, but to be leaders in their classrooms, in their schools, in the division, or in the community. They begin by exploring leadership principles, not

educational leadership. The second year of the program focuses on educational pedagogies and philosophies. A superintendent from one of these three divisions expressed a desire to create pools of talent and feels they have been successful. The interviewee said that the leaders are great role models for beginning teachers and all teachers in their school divisions more broadly, and that they contribute to a collegial, collaborative environment in the school division.

Ten out of 13 school divisions who did not have formal mentoring programs mentioned other professionals or support systems within their division available to support beginning teachers. In many cases these were PLCs, but were also described as cohorts, learning teams, consultants, or curriculum support personnel. Their responsibilities were not only to beginning teachers, but beginning teachers were on their radar and beginning teachers were encouraged to work with them.

No need for a formal mentoring program. Interviewees from a number of school divisions without a formal mentoring program provided reasons why they did not see a compelling need for their respective school division to have a formal mentoring program. Their reasons can be clustered into the following three groups.

Informal mentoring in place. One school division (Rural Interviewee #2) felt their current practice of induction provided the support necessary to their beginning teachers. The beginning teacher could partner with other staff and was encouraged to do so. The informal aspect of the mentoring process allowed for choice in selecting mentors and relieved pressure of adding on more expectations for the beginning teacher. The interviewee commented, “I have a hard time wrapping my head around taking someone out of the classroom.” Taking the teacher out of the classroom for observations and meeting times was viewed as a disadvantage to a formal mentoring program as beginning teachers were already absent for other induction activities. This

interviewee also worried about the stress load on his veteran staff. The interviewee believed the school and division administrators were able to take some of the responsibility that a mentor would share. He also commented that “a wonderful staff” willingly supported the beginning teachers in their school division. Another reason provided by other interviewees was the move to team teaching and more collaboration helped to form mentoring situations without the need for formal mentoring programs.

Northern Interviewee #15, whose formal program had been lost due to financial cut-backs, suggested that their school division relies on their orientation process, a professional development program for beginning teachers by the Manitoba Teacher Society (Fab5), and the literacy and numeracy support teachers to fill the gap formal mentoring used to provide. Another, Rural Interviewee #13, confirmed that their curriculum support teachers are also key in providing informal mentoring to new staff. In small rural schools with few staff members, teachers work as critical friends. I noticed that interviewees were very knowledgeable about mentoring, but may not have believed in compelling reasons to adopt a formal program in their school division.

Low teacher turnover. Seven of the 13 school divisions commented that they did not have high teacher turnover, which was seen as a positive indicator that beginning teachers were feeling supported. Teachers were satisfied with their jobs and were staying in the employ of the school division. Turnover of only four staff members allows for concentration on new staff members. Rural Interviewee #14 commented that small, rural divisions were desirable locations to work, and people were staying. He believed that supporting beginning teachers was the responsibility of all staff. Mentoring did not have to be formalized. Having an informal program provided fluidity, so that beginning teachers could participate as much or as little as they desired. Rural Interviewee #18 stated that the division did not hire many first year teachers. New hires

were frequently teachers with experience. It was not a purposeful action of the school division, but applicants tended to have some teaching experience.

Hiring practices. School divisions who did not have formal mentoring programs spoke to their hiring practices as one of the reasons they did not necessarily see the need to have a formal program. Rural divisions participate in career fairs at the universities and feel quite connected to the education faculties. They provide practicum opportunities for pre-service teachers and frequently hire these students if vacancies become available. One division with a formal program mentioned this same practice, while several of the divisions without formal programs mentioned this approach to integrating beginning teachers. One rural division specifically stated that recruitment is the key and that his division prefers candidates from a specific university, as that university's program was consistent with the division's philosophy. Another rural division stated that hiring the practicum students made a big difference because when they are hired as beginning teachers, they would already be familiar with the school and the division's policies and procedures.

Size of a division was also mentioned as a reason why a formal mentoring program was not necessary, because teachers tended to be more connected to their colleagues in smaller schools. For instance, Rural Interviewee #6 suggested that teachers were more visible to each other, they were more aware of what was happening in each other's classrooms, and they knew the children well. Experienced teachers were available as sounding boards and as "critical friends." The interviewee described his teaching staff as "small cohorts". Another rural school division interviewee stated that their PLCs fulfilled many of the same roles that a mentor might, but in a more informal manner.

Challenges. Interviewees from school divisions without a formal mentoring program mentioned the same challenges around establishing, implementing, and sustaining a formal mentoring program as those who had formal programs, but they did so in a different degree of relevance.

Size and distance. One could expect size (area) of the school division and distance to be a detriment for a northern school division with schools in a variety of sites throughout the province. However, as interviewees from rural school divisions made clear, distance is also a challenge in their divisions. Schools within a rural division can be more than 100 kilometres apart, which requires a lot of travel time for teachers from different schools when they want to meet. Interviewees said that distance may mean that half-day sessions are automatically excluded, and that driving time also reduces the amount of time teachers can actually spend together. Size is also a factor for student density, which means for many rural schools that they have only one class per grade. In the case of colony schools (also rural schools), there might even be only two teachers in the whole building. A common structure for colony schools is to have a primary teacher, grades K-3, and a middle years teacher, grades 4-8. One of them would also supervise the high school students, who take their classes over a televised system. A small staff size may hamper the opportunity to match beginning teachers and mentors in the same building or teaching at a comparable level.

Size as a reason for not having (yet) a formal mentoring program was mentioned by an urban school division, where the larger size of the division caused a number of changes in leadership, impacting the question of a formal mentoring program. This urban school division had a huge leadership change within two years and most members of the senior leadership team were new to their positions. The interviewee suggested that the division was still in the process

of developing plans for the structure of their programming. In the interim, their professional growth model was in place to support beginning teachers and their professional learning teams and consultants were actively working with new staff. School-based mentoring was taking place, but a formal mentoring program was not yet in place.

Funding. One rural school division mentioned that they had a formal program in the past, but the funding to hire a co-ordinator had been cut. The onus was now on the principals in the schools to provide support to beginning teachers, and the principals could determine if mentoring was part of that support. Funding was now directed to support personnel in the areas of literacy, numeracy, and social work. One other interviewee also said that at this time school divisions were required to be “lean”, and that hiring another person to co-ordinate mentoring or to be the mentor for beginning teachers was not seen as a possibility due to financial concerns.

Time. Only a few school divisions without a formal mentoring program mentioned time as being a challenge to having a formal mentoring program, whereas it was a more noticeable constraint for the divisions with formal programs. One interviewee from a school division without a mentoring program expressed the concern that a formal program would require more time out of the classroom for both the beginning teacher and the mentor, which the interviewee considered not always to be an ideal solution. Time was mentioned as a challenge not in terms of teachers’ time but in terms of administrators’ time. One interviewee mentioned that having a formal program would require adding the responsibility of co-ordinating the program to an existing member of the admin team. My data collected clearly indicates that time was not considered a barrier or a primary reason for divisions that had no formal mentoring program. Distance and size were considered to be much more important factors in this regard.

Manitoba school divisions recognize the strengths in having formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers, mentors and for school divisions. The school divisions face many challenges in developing, implementing, and sustaining their mentoring programs. However, the main challenges of time, funding, and geography are outweighed by the benefits of the mentoring experience.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the status of mentoring programs for beginning teachers in school divisions in Manitoba. In this final chapter I will summarize the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 and offer my conclusions and recommendations based on the evidence obtained from the study.

Summary

Four research questions formed the basis of the study and I will summarize the findings as they pertain to each of the questions.

What types of formal mentoring programs exist in school divisions in Manitoba?

Participants representing 24 of the 38 public school divisions in Manitoba were interviewed as part of the study. Induction programs for beginning teachers were in evidence throughout the school divisions interviewed; some induction programs included formal mentoring. The results showed an almost even split in terms of formal mentoring programs in the province, 46% compared to 54% without formal mentoring programs. However, a marked difference was found when looking at regions of the province. Based on the responses from 24 school divisions (63% of all school divisions in Manitoba) 80% of urban school divisions have formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers, while only 40% of rural school divisions and 25% of northern school divisions have them.

The mentoring programs were division-based throughout the province (referred to as the school-based model in the literature). The programs are designed for new or beginning teachers,

but the definition of “new” teacher varied between school divisions. In most cases, mentoring was provided to teachers in their first year of practice. However, one urban school division provides mentoring for teachers in their second year and another urban division provides mentoring to teachers in their first year of a permanent contract. It is fair to say that previous experience for the new teacher could be quite varied as new teachers may have substitute teaching experience, short-term experience or experience from several term contracts.

What are the histories, goals and rationales of these formal mentoring programs?

The larger urban school divisions had programs that had been in existence longer than those in the smaller urban and rural divisions. The history of the programs was not always known to the present administrators in charge of the programs due to staff turnover and amalgamation of school divisions. A few of the programs had been developed by staff members as part of a leadership project within the school division or as part of a project for university credit.

The goals and rationales of all of the programs are to provide support to beginning teachers to develop strong practice and thereby improving student learning and achievement. School division leaders with formal mentoring programs believe that mentoring provides a supportive, nurturing environment for their new teachers, which enhances professional learning opportunities and relationships for all staff. Creating job-embedded learning practice from the beginning of a teacher’s career develops the collegiality and collaboration desired for professional staff throughout their career.

What strengths and challenges can be identified for these mentoring programs in terms of their development, implementation, and sustainment? School divisions with formal mentoring programs recognize many strengths within their teaching community when they have a formal mentoring program. Strengths can be seen as advantages for the school division,

beginning teacher, and mentor teacher. A mentoring program provides a team approach that ensures all beginning teachers receive the same supports. For example, the division has an opportunity to lay out their literacy and numeracy strategies to all beginning teachers and the experienced mentors then assist the new teachers to use the strategies in their classrooms. Formal mentoring allows for an integrated approach to school, divisional, and provincial goals. Working collaboratively with a teacher partner develops the type of strong, professional practice divisions want their teachers to develop.

School divisions expressed the view that formal mentorship programs benefit beginning teachers as they felt supported in their growth as a teacher. Mentors are role models who support and encourage beginning teachers without judgment. Some school divisions commented that they felt their formal mentorship program assisted them with teacher recruitment and retention. The beginning teachers found strength in the formal mentoring programs as they were listened to and empowered when mentors learned from them. Mentors and new teachers benefit from formal mentoring as they become partners in teaching, and learning from each other. The school divisions recognized that their teacher mentors became school leaders.

The challenges to formal mentoring programs can be described as time, money, and geography. Time is required to develop a program, co-ordinate it, provide training for mentors, and provide release time to the mentors and beginning teachers. In addition, the expectations for teachers in a formal mentoring program to take time away from other aspects of the teachers' responsibilities was identified, although divisions with formal mentoring programs said that the return on this time investment is beneficial to all participants in the end.

Providing the personnel time required by a mentoring program also costs money to fund the program: training costs, substitute costs, program delivery, and resource materials. Funding

was mentioned as a challenge, but not as a barrier to a formal mentoring program. School divisions saw funding for their mentoring programs as good use of professional learning funds.

Why do some public school divisions in Manitoba not have formal mentoring programs? School divisions without a formal mentoring program offered other forms of support to beginning teachers, like orientation sessions and other elements of teacher induction, informal mentoring, and professional learning communities. A number of school division participants also provided reasons why they did not see a compelling need to have a formal mentoring program, like low teacher turnover, the practice of hiring experienced teachers, or the practice of hiring teacher candidates who had already completed a practicum in the school division. Some participants representing school divisions without a mentoring program, however, did identify challenges to having a formal mentoring program. The small size of some schools and distances between schools in rural and northern school divisions, funding constraints in rural and northern divisions, and time were identified by those school divisions as challenges to having a formal mentoring program.

It was interesting for me to hear throughout the interviews that all of the interviewees were very knowledgeable about mentoring and interested in the topic and the results of my study. Even those who did not have formal mentoring programs were aware of the potential benefits of mentoring beginning teachers and very interested in providing support to them. However, as the response to the last research question indicates, not all interviewees believed that a formal mentoring program was necessarily the answer to the question of how to best support beginning teachers for their particular division.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and my review of the literature, I would like to make some recommendations on supporting beginning teachers in school divisions in Manitoba. I first list those recommendations and then elaborate on each.

1. Promote formal mentoring as a quality professional learning model for beginning teachers in Manitoba school divisions as part of a complete induction program.
2. Provide training to mentor teachers prior to beginning the mentoring process and ensure ongoing opportunities for mentors to meet as a group for follow-up coaching and collaborating.
3. Provide training to school leaders and administrators developing, organizing or co-ordinating programs, particularly school administrators who match mentors and beginning teachers.
4. Provide the resources needed for release time and funding to support the formal mentoring program.
5. Systematically assess the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs on an ongoing basis, going beyond self-reported data.
6. Explore the possibility of a province-wide mentoring program similar to what is available in the province of Ontario and some other Canadian provinces.

Formal mentoring as a professional learning model. The literature provides strong evidence that formal mentoring programs result in improved teacher practice (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Strong, 2009). Mentoring meets the criteria for effective professional learning as it begins with the teacher's experience and knowledge, emphasizes active study over a prolonged time, models effective learning related to

the teacher's practice, focuses on practice to improve student learning, and gives the new teacher opportunities to try new ideas and discuss and reflect with another (Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, n.d.). In addition, professional learning should align with school, division, and provincial goals and develop strong, professional working relationships among teachers (Rolheiser, 2009). A formal mentoring program facilitates job-embedded learning and communities of practice, work that is connected to teachers' work with students.

Training for mentors and follow-up. My study revealed that school divisions spend much time and effort designing their induction programs for beginning teachers, but few spend much time and effort training their mentors and providing follow-up time for the mentors to debrief and learn. Another researcher has pointed to the importance of training mentors, recognizing that not every "good teacher" is a good mentor (Falkenberg, 2010). I heard the same refrain from some of my interviewees. It is very important for mentors to recognize the principles of adult learning to be a good mentor and for the mentor to benefit from the relationship. The school divisions in the province who do allocate time to their mentors see this as an absolute necessity for a successful program. The divisions benefit as the mentor teachers become teacher leaders (Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Training for administrators. School administrators are usually tasked with matching beginning teachers with their mentors. The practice makes sense, as the administrators know the experienced teachers well and most likely have also been part of the interview and hiring process for the beginning teachers. Interviewees commented that the administrators are very successful with this task most of the time. However, it is incumbent on administrators to be very knowledgeable about the goals of the mentoring program and to ensure that the program is being carried out as planned. One cannot expect that every administrator will have this knowledge and

that all will be present a consistent program. It was interesting to note that superintendents often suggested that it was very important to their division for incoming staff to learn about their particular policies, procedures and culture. It should also be very important that the school administrators have conversations about mentoring so that it would also be understood in the same way. Separating an evaluative role from a coaching role would be an important topic of conversation for administrators. Administrators can be very supportive of beginning teachers, but at the end of the day, the administrator is completing the beginning teacher's evaluation.

Kutsyruba (2016) in his study of *The Role of the School Administrator in Effective Teacher Induction and Mentoring Programs* concludes that mentoring and induction processes are “insufficient without the support and commitment of school administrators” (p. 46). From my discussions with school leaders, I believe administrators would be very interested in further training to assist them with their role in comprehensive mentoring and induction.

Release time and funding. Time is the most valuable asset of all teachers: time to plan, time to deliver lessons, time to assess, time to reflect. Schools value the time beginning teachers devote to their careers and try to honour beginning teachers' time. For mentoring to be successful, beginning teachers need time with their mentors to talk about the lessons, routines, students, and to reflect on their practice. As Lipton, Wellman and Humbard (2003) have said, we learn from our teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2012) emphasized that a new teacher must learn to think, to know, to feel, and to act like a teacher. These processes take place in the classroom, but they are augmented by time spent with an experienced mentor. Release time is fundamental to allow the teachers to have time to meet to discuss and reflect and to work in each other's classrooms to model or observe. “The practice of teaching involves both doing and thinking (Feiman-Nemser, 2012, p. 238). If the doing and thinking can be done with a teacher partner,

two people can benefit. To be successful, release time needs to be built into the mentoring program. Further, it is essential that the partners realize the expectation of mentor and beginning teachers spending time together. Once again, time is the barrier, but it is essential that meeting times be provided and utilized for the mentoring process to achieve desired results.

Funding was not considered a barrier to having a formal mentoring program from the comments of my interviewees. School divisions are interested in best practice. If money for professional learning is devoted to a mentoring process, beginning teachers and mentors are benefitting. Students are benefitting and schools are benefitting. A mentoring program should be money well spent.

A province-wide mentoring program. Several Canadian provinces have formal mentoring programs for beginning teachers. The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) in Ontario has been in place since 2006. The induction plan, compulsory for all publicly funded school districts, includes a mentoring component for new teachers. The Ministry of Education supports the program throughout the province. The aim of NTIP is described in the Ontario Ministry of Education's (2010) *A Resource Handbook for Principals* as follows:

The NTIP has been designed to support the growth and professional development of new teachers so that they can develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to achieve success as experienced teachers in Ontario. By helping new teachers achieve their full potential, the NTIP supports Ontario's vision of achieving high levels of student performance. In accordance with the Education Act, all school boards must offer the NTIP to new teachers and all new teachers must participate. (p. 2)

Ontario is the largest province in Canada with over two million students in over 5,000 schools. The province covers a very wide area geographically and will therefore experience some of the same challenges as those mentioned by the interviewees in my study. A more in-depth study of the Ontario program may provide lessons for a “made in Manitoba” province-wide mentoring program.

The North West Territories Teacher Induction Program was piloted in 2000-2001 to help teachers become competent and effective practitioners. It is designed to help teachers develop an understanding of the local schools, communities and culture. The mentorship program was developed with the support of the North West Territories Teachers’ Association and the Alberta Teachers’ Association. *NWT Teacher Induction, A Program for Beginning Teachers* (2016) lists the goals of their program as follows:

1. Improve teacher performance
2. Retain competent teachers in the profession
3. Promote the personal and professional well-being of the new and beginning teachers
4. Build a foundation for continued professional growth through structured contact with mentors, administrators and other veteran teachers.
5. Transmit the culture of the school and teaching profession.

The groundwork already completed by NWT could be very beneficial to developing a provincial program for Manitoba. Both our province and the NWT experience some of the same challenges for small schools and geographic distance. Solutions could be shared to benefit both areas.

The New Teacher Mentoring Project (NTMP) in British Columbia is an initiative of the BC Teachers’ Federation, the University of British Columbia, and the BC School Superintendents’ Association. The complexity of teachers’ roles has been acknowledged and

mentoring has been identified as a necessary component for supporting ongoing professional learning. The BC program began in 2012 as a pilot project and has expanded since its inception.

Alberta is exploring comprehensive support systems for beginning teachers. As noted in the pan-Canadian study by Kutsyruba et al. (2016), the Alberta ministry recognizes that “mentorship was a critical component of induction” (p. 11). A 2013 task force called for a province-wide mentorship framework to be developed to provide consistency across the province. Manitoba can look to other provinces to examine possible processes in addition to assessing the success of current mentoring programs in Manitoba. Other provinces are also exploring province-wide mentoring programs for their beginning teachers.

A Final Word

The other critical piece to an ongoing successful mentoring process is to provide for teacher voice. Beginning teachers need to be heard and contribute to an ongoing assessment of mentoring programs. Their voices are essential to adapting and maintaining programs that serve the needs of beginning teachers, the people they are intended to serve. We want our “new teachers to not just survive, but to succeed and thrive” (Bartell, 2005, p. 6).

In this study, I found that all school divisions in Manitoba who participated in the study have induction programs, but not all had mentoring programs in a formal sense. Urban school divisions were much more likely to have formal mentoring programs than rural or northern school divisions. I discussed the challenges and strengths divisions face in implementing their programs and the reasons suggested by school divisions who do not have programs. The study concluded with six recommendations to provide a province-wide formal mentoring program to support beginning teachers with adequate funding to support release time and resources which

would include training for mentors, school leaders, and administrators. Formal mentoring is a professional learning model that supports job-embedded learning and professional learning communities. Mentoring is an investment in the future of our teaching profession, but, more importantly, it is an investment in student learning.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol 1

Part 1: Does your school division have a process in place to support beginning teachers?

- a. Follow-up:
- Is it only for beginning teachers or for teachers new to your division?
 - Would it be considered induction or does it also include mentoring?
 - Do you have a formal mentoring program for beginning teachers in your school division? If YES, please answer the following questions. (If NO, please go to Interview Protocol 2.)

Part 2:

1. Type of Program

- a. Describe the structure of your mentoring program.
- Follow-up - Is the mentor program voluntary or compulsory? What is the length of the mentoring program? (One year, two years, other?)

2. History/Philosophy

- a. Tell me about the history of your mentoring program.
- Follow-up - When did it begin? Was an informal program in practice first?
- b. Tell me about the philosophy of your school division's mentoring program.
- Follow-up – Brochure available? What are the goals of your program? Are you following a particular model or using specific processes as part of your program? (Prompts: Cognitive coaching, other?) What are the underlying assumptions of your mentoring program?

3. Mentees

- a. Describe the selection process for participants in your mentoring program for beginning teachers.
- Follow-up - voluntary or mandated? Is a beginning teacher a new graduate or perhaps with less than three years' experience? If a teacher were new to your division would they be part of the mentor program? (Are there differences in structure for teachers new to the division? Explain.)
- b. What are the benefits to the beginning teachers in your mentoring program?

4. Mentors

- a. Describe the selection process for selecting mentors for your program.
- Follow-up - voluntary or requested? How are mentors and mentees matched? Is there a process for "rematching" if necessary? What is the ratio of mentors to beginning teachers? (1:1 or other?)
- b. What are the benefits to the mentors in your mentoring program?
- Follow-up – Supports for mentors? extra prep time, PD opportunities, release time?

5. Mentoring Process

- a. What are the expectations for the mentoring process?
 - o Follow-up - Does your program focus on particular instructional processes? Are there formal meetings between the mentors and mentees? For the group of mentors? Other?
- b. Does the division have a co-ordinator for the mentor program? (Fulltime? Part-time?)
- c. Is there anything further you wish to share about your mentoring process?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol 2

Part 1: Does your school division have a process in place to support beginning teachers?

b. Follow-up:

- Would it be considered induction or does it also include mentoring?
- Is it only for beginning teachers or for teachers new to your division?

Part 2: For school divisions who do NOT have a formal mentoring program.

1. Has your school division considered implementing a **formal** mentoring program for beginning teachers? Please explain.
2. What are the challenges to your school division to have a mentoring program?
 - Possible Follow-up – Why do mentoring programs not exist in some Manitoba public school divisions?

Appendix C: Manitoba Public School Divisions

- Beautiful Plains School Division - Neepawa, Manitoba
- Border Land School Division - Altona, Manitoba
- Brandon School Division - Brandon, Manitoba
- Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine - Lorette, Manitoba
- Evergreen School Division - Gimli, Manitoba
- Flin Flon School Division - Flin Flon, Manitoba
- Fort La Bosse School Division - Virden, Manitoba
- Frontier School Division - Manitoba
- Garden Valley School Division - Winkler, Manitoba
- Hanover School Division - Steinbach, Manitoba
- Interlake School Division - Stonewall, Manitoba
- Kelsey School Division - The Pas, Manitoba
- Lakeshore School Division - Eriksdale, Manitoba
- Lord Selkirk School Division - Selkirk, Manitoba
- Louis Riel School Division - Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Mountain View School Division - Dauphin, Manitoba
- School District of Mystery Lake - Thompson, Manitoba
- Park West School Division - Birtle, Manitoba
- Pembina Trails School Division - Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Pine Creek School Division - Gladstone, Manitoba
- Portage la Prairie School Division - Portage la Prairie, Manitoba
- Prairie Rose School Division - Carman, Manitoba
- Prairie Spirit School Division - Pilot Mound, Manitoba
- Red River Valley School Division - Morris, Manitoba
- River East Transcona School Division - Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Rolling River School Division - Minnedosa, Manitoba
- School District of Whiteshell - Pinawa, Manitoba
- Seine River School Division - Lorette, Manitoba
- Seven Oaks School Division - Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Southwest Horizon School Division - Melita, Manitoba
- St. James-Assiniboia School Division - Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Sunrise School Division - Beausejour, Manitoba
- Swan Valley School Division - Swan River, Manitoba
- Turtle Mountain School Division - Killarney, Manitoba
- Turtle River School Division - McCreary, Manitoba
- Western School Division - Morden, Manitoba
- Winnipeg School Division - Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Winnipeg Technical College - Winnipeg, Manitoba

Source: http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/sb_contacts.html