Redefining Mentoring:
An Evaluation of a Second-Year Teacher Mentoring Program

A thesis presented by

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to
The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of

Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
June 2012
Abstract

Mentoring programs for beginning teachers have garnered much attention in the field of education in the past decade. There is an increasing call for the redefinition of the traditional mentoring program, which often caters only to the first-year teacher, providing primarily emotional and procedural support. The Plymouth Public Schools (PPS) has heard this call, and has recognized that it needs to extend its mentoring program beyond the first year of a beginning teacher’s career to ensure that novice teachers receive ongoing and sustained instructional support. In response, the researcher was asked to develop the second-year teacher mentoring program, and chose to engage in a program evaluation to investigate the outcomes of the program based on its initial year of implementation, utilizing a mixed methods approach.

Data collection involved the perceptions of both the mentees and the mentors involved with the program, and included:

(a) a survey to determine initial perspectives of the program’s outcomes
(b) a focus group to more fully investigate these perspectives
(c) a document analysis of the social networking outputs (i.e., mentor and mentee blogs, discussion forum archived posts) that are built-in program components, and
(d) researcher’s field notes.

This data was analyzed in order to determine not only what outcomes of the program were achieved as perceived by participants, but also which aspects of the program contributed most to these outcomes. The findings contributed to refinement of the new program for the Plymouth Public Schools.

Key Words: Mentoring, collaboration, instructional knowledge, reflective practice, social networking, action research, beginning teachers, second-year teachers
Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank all the mentors, past and present, who have served me well in my life and in my career. Their guidance and encouragement taught me how important mentoring is. Much gratitude also goes out to my most recent mentor, my advisor, Dr. Chris Unger. His guidance throughout this process has been invaluable. But even more importantly, he has opened my eyes to a new way of looking at and thinking about education. His presence in my life for the past two years has been a true gift.

I’d also like to thank two women who were my colleagues and friends throughout this process. Nicole Pedro and Diane Hartley have been more than just doctoral classmates; they have inspired me and kept me going through triumphs and through troubles.

No acknowledgement would be complete without recognizing my amazing family. It is my biggest wish that my three late grandparents could be witness to this achievement in my life: my maternal grandparents, who beamed with pride as they watched my twin brother and I walk up the hill to our first day of Kindergarten, walk across the stage at our high school graduation, and who paid for our textbooks as we entered college; my paternal grandfather who was always interested in my teaching career, consistently asking how my students were treating me. Endless thanks goes out to my parents. Jane and Greg Bettencourt were always heavily invested in my education, from taping my elementary spelling words to the refrigerator for a daily review to supporting my wish to double major as an undergraduate. Words cannot express how much their love and support has impacted my life.

And, finally, thanks to the man who held my hand throughout the last three years of my life as a doctoral student. Matt Whipple cheered with me when I soared, and picked me up when
I fell. His tireless support of me is just one of the countless reasons why he is my love and my
truest partner. Here’s to many more dreams fulfilled and adventures experienced together.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................................................... 3  
Chapter I: Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 7  
  Educational Problem of Practice .................................................................................................................... 7  
  Significance of the Problem ......................................................................................................................... 9  
  Intellectual Goals ......................................................................................................................................... 11  
  Practical Goals .......................................................................................................................................... 12  
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................................... 12  
  Paper Organization and Content ................................................................................................................ 13  
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................................... 14  
Chapter II: Literature Review ......................................................................................................................... 24  
  Redefining & Expanding Traditional Views of Mentoring ......................................................................... 24  
  Promoting Collaboration & Reducing Teacher Isolation ............................................................................ 29  
  Promoting the Instructional Growth of Beginning Teachers ...................................................................... 31  
  Mentors as Leaders and Learners ............................................................................................................. 33  
  Action Research ....................................................................................................................................... 35  
  Social Networking .................................................................................................................................... 37  
Chapter III: Methodology ............................................................................................................................... 39  
  Research Questions ................................................................................................................................... 39  
  Rationale for a Mixed Methods Design ...................................................................................................... 40  
  Practice-Based Research (PBR): Program Evaluation ............................................................................... 42  
  Site and Participants ................................................................................................................................... 45  
  Data Collection ......................................................................................................................................... 46  
  Validity and Credibility ............................................................................................................................... 52  
  Protection of Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations ........................................................................ 55  
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................. 57  
Chapter IV: Report of Research Findings ........................................................................................................ 58  
  Study Context ........................................................................................................................................... 59  
  Analysis .................................................................................................................................................... 60  
  Research Question #1 ............................................................................................................................... 62  
  Research Question #2 ................................................................................................................................ 99  
  Summary of Findings ............................................................................................................................... 130  
Chapter V: Discussion of the Research Findings ........................................................................................... 132  
  Summary of the Problem ............................................................................................................................ 132  
  Review of the Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 133  
  Summary of the Findings ............................................................................................................................ 134  
  Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework of this Study ......................... 141  
  Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature Review of this Study ..................................... 146  
  Validity and Limitations ............................................................................................................................. 157  
  Conclusion ................................................................................................................................................ 159  
  Significance of the Study to the Field ......................................................................................................... 160  
  Next Steps ............................................................................................................................................... 162  
  Final Words ............................................................................................................................................. 163  
References .................................................................................................................................................... 165  
Appendix A .................................................................................................................................................. 171
List of Tables

Table 1 ........................................................................................................................................... 61
Table 2 ........................................................................................................................................... 64
Table 3 ........................................................................................................................................... 64
Table 4 ........................................................................................................................................... 65
Table 5 ........................................................................................................................................... 66
Table 6 ........................................................................................................................................... 69
Table 7 ........................................................................................................................................... 70
Table 8 ........................................................................................................................................... 75
Table 9 ........................................................................................................................................... 76
Table 10 ......................................................................................................................................... 77
Table 11 ......................................................................................................................................... 77
Table 12 ......................................................................................................................................... 80
Table 13 ......................................................................................................................................... 80
Table 14 ......................................................................................................................................... 85
Table 15 ......................................................................................................................................... 85
Table 16 ......................................................................................................................................... 86
Table 17 ......................................................................................................................................... 87
Table 18 ......................................................................................................................................... 90
Table 19 ......................................................................................................................................... 90
Table 20 ......................................................................................................................................... 107
Table 21 ....................................................................................................................................... 111
Table 22 ....................................................................................................................................... 113
Table 23 ....................................................................................................................................... 115
Table 24 ....................................................................................................................................... 115
Table 25 ....................................................................................................................................... 116
Table 26 ....................................................................................................................................... 120
Table 27 ....................................................................................................................................... 125
Table 28 ....................................................................................................................................... 137
Table 29 ....................................................................................................................................... 137
Table 30 ....................................................................................................................................... 139
Table 31 ....................................................................................................................................... 139
Chapter I: Introduction

Educational Problem of Practice

Research indicates that the majority of U.S. schools offer induction programs for first-year teachers to help transition beginning teachers from their theory-based university work to the realities of day-to-day work as a classroom teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Moir, 2009). The Plymouth Public School district is no different and has mandated participation by all first-year teachers in a mentoring program for the past twelve years. However, while many studies show that there are clear benefits of providing mentoring for first-year teachers, more and more studies are beginning to call for expansions of mentoring programs to include beginning teachers beyond their first year. The need for a second-year teacher mentoring program, the goal of which is to focus fully on instructional support, has recently been recognized by the Plymouth Public School district.

The first-year mentoring program of the Plymouth Public Schools has served as a fairly traditional mentoring program consisting of a one-on-one relationship that primarily focuses on the provision of emotional and procedural support from mentor to mentee. The mentee, a first-year teacher, is coached to improve his or her classroom management, to gain familiarity with the school context in which he or she teaches, and to begin to grasp an introductory understanding of curricular issues. These are all important goals to accomplish within a mentoring program for first-year teachers, since research has proven that first-year teachers often rely on the personalized security of having a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a veteran teacher, seeking emotional and procedural support just as often (and, within the first few months of teaching, typically more often) as they seek instructional support (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Moir, 2009). However, just as the Plymouth Public School teacher acquires mastery of
these initial goals and begins to form new goals, typically rooted in instruction, the support of a
mentor is eliminated after the first year. Subsequently, Plymouth's second-year teachers have not
been formally supported beyond their first year.

Second-year teachers have great potential for continued instructional growth, and the
Plymouth Public School district believes this potential should be fostered through the continued
support of a mentoring program. In order to best address the goals of instructional growth and
reflection, this new mentoring program for second-year teachers is centered around action
research, defined as “a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking action.
The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the actor in improving or refining
his or her actions” (Sagor, 2011, p. 1). In approaching instructional goals as action research
topics, second-year teachers were guided by mentors to reflect deeply about their instructional
practices, conduct inquiries of their colleagues and of the literature, formulate specific action
plans, and analyze collected data. In short, the second-year teachers were to develop their skills
as reflective practitioners. How this action research was conducted was an equally important
attribute of the mentoring program for second-year teachers. Through the use of both social
networking and several face-to-face meetings, mentees and mentors collaboratively investigated
action research topics, mentees working in groups on chosen inquiries directly concerning their
classroom instructional practice as mentors guided and facilitated this work.

Furthermore, as the work within the mentoring program of the Plymouth Public Schools
shifts from primarily emotional and procedural support in a teacher's first year to primarily
instructional support in the second, the needs of the mentor are also met. No teacher ever
outgrows the need to continue to develop instructional practices, even though collaborative work
around such needs is typically lacking, as novice and veteran teachers alike find themselves
isolated after their very first year (Gratch, 1998; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Evertson & Smithey, 2009). If the mentoring dialogue includes a shift towards instruction during a teacher's second year, not only will the beginning teacher continue to grow, but the act of mentoring itself will also be a form of professional development for the veteran teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Moir, 2009).

The Plymouth Public School district has recently recognized the benefits of expanding its induction program to include scaffolded mentoring into a teacher's second year. This new program was designed around research indicating how best to promote instructional growth and reflection and to reduce teacher isolation for both mentees and mentors. The problem of practice explored in this study concerns whether or not the second-year teacher mentoring program that has been designed by the researcher as program coordinator for the Plymouth Public Schools achieved these outcomes in its initial year.

**Significance of the Problem**

The Plymouth Public School district implemented the new second-year teacher mentoring program due to the perceived need by district administrators and new and veteran teachers alike to focus more on instructional support and reducing teacher isolation and to also provide leadership opportunities for mentors. According to the educational literature, this is not only a need in Plymouth, but is a national need for the redefinition of mentoring programs (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Moir, 2009; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Cherubini, 2007; Drago-Severson, 2004).

The importance of mentoring programs for second-year teachers lies in the potential for capitalizing on the instructional goals prevalent among second-year teachers as they begin to leave behind the need for emotional and procedural support so necessary during their first year of
teaching. One significant way to redefine mentoring in order to reach this potential, thereby maximizing the instructional growth among beginning teachers, is to employ action research during a teacher's second year as an activity that promotes inquiry about and reflection on instruction. This is key to a beginning teacher's instructional growth, as “there is an intimate connection between transformational learning and self-examination” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 23). The timing of this transformational learning during a teacher's second year is especially key.

A redefinition of the traditional mentoring program ensures that it does not solely cater to “the personal comfort levels of novices, [since] feeling comfortable does not necessarily lead to effective teaching and student learning,” (Wang et al., 2008, p. 2) but instead emphasizes instructional growth. There is also growing evidence to support collaborative practices within mentoring programs. Jian Wang, Sandra Odell, and Sharon Schwille (2008) cite a British study that found that “beginning teachers in a collaborative school environment reported that their mentors made greater impacts on their professional development, which were further sustained by the collaborative culture” (p. 8). Indeed, the focus of mentoring programs should be towards collaborative practices that “[emphasize] problem posing, question asking, developing interpretations, and researching together; however, mentor training programs rarely tap these sources” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 5). Adding a second-year teacher component to existing induction programs can help districts “tap these sources,” since second-year teachers are ready to leave behind the introductory level of support needed during their first years and are ready to collaborate on inquiry and research concerning their developing instructional goals. Studies show that the benefits of instructional growth and reduced teacher isolation do not end with the mentees.
Mentors themselves can benefit professionally from their role in mentoring programs, especially if they are redefined to include second-year teachers with a heavy focus on instructional goals. These types of goals lend themselves naturally to educative mentoring, defined by Schwill (2008) as “challenging norms of noninterference in others' teaching by taking an active part in helping novices think through teaching” (p. 156). Ward (2005) found that such educative mentors, in addition to their mentees, also experienced “feeling more confident about their own ability to effectively teach” (p. 4). If a mentoring program is educative in nature, then mentors also stand to learn, and to become leaders in a school-wide learning organization culture. As Moir (2009) states, “as much as we should be concerned about retaining new teachers – and it's critical – we also want to ensure that we retain, challenge, and learn from our most experienced teachers” (p. 17). By establishing second-year teacher mentoring programs that focus on the instructional growth of both mentees (who are now ready to focus solely on such goals) and mentors— (who can also gain in instructional knowledge through educative mentoring), this can be ensured.

Thus, if the Plymouth Public Schools' new second-year teacher mentoring program attended to the stated problem of practice at large and functioned as expected, its outcomes could lead to new options and new ideas about mentoring, impacting the field of education as a whole.

**Intellectual Goals**

This study pursued significant intellectual goals, namely to determine to what degrees action research, collaboration, social networking, and face to face meeting time each contributed to the desired outcomes (increased instructional knowledge and reflective practice of both mentees and mentors, and reduced teacher isolation as experienced by both mentees and mentors) and to determine whether these outcomes were influenced by the combination of these
program elements, or whether certain program elements had more of an impact on these outcomes than other program elements. In addition to leading to a refinement of the Plymouth Public School's new mentoring program for second-year teachers by “identifying weaknesses as well as strengths,” this program evaluation “add[s] to the existing knowledge in the human services field about what does and does not work” in the mentoring of beginning teachers (OPRE, 2010).

Practical Goals

*The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation* (2010) from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) states that program evaluations help the researcher “find out what is and is not working” in the program (OPRE, 2010). Therefore, the practical goals of this study were to determine what outcomes (increased instructional knowledge and reflective practice of both mentees and mentors, and reduced teacher isolation as experienced by both mentees and mentors) were achieved and not achieved through the program as perceived by its participants and researcher observations (based on data collected throughout the initial year of the new program's implementation), leading to a refinement of the program.

Research Questions

The design of the new mentoring program for second-year teachers of the Plymouth Public Schools was informed by adult learning theory and by transformational learning theory; both theories argue for experiential and collaborative learning, the former in relation to how adults learn best, and the latter in relation to how best to build the capacities of the learners in order to transform their ways of thinking about and viewing their work, in the hope that this transformational learning will ultimately lead to organizational change and organizational
learning. In evaluating this program in its initial phase, therefore, two questions were explored concerning the desired outcomes of the program as determined by the above theories:

1. To what extent is the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program achieving its expected outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

2. Which components of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program have contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

**Paper Organization and Content**

The introduction presents the problem of practice, the significance of the study, and the research questions, as well as theoretical framework employed by the researcher to evaluate and assess the impact of the second-year teacher mentoring program, comprised of adult learning theory and transformational learning theory, as well as organizational change and organizational learning theories. Next, the literature review presents the literature regarding first year mentoring programs and the potential of second year mentoring programs with a focus on how such programs can, if redefined, promote collaboration, reduce teacher isolation, lead to the instructional growth of beginning teachers, and provide leadership and growth opportunities for the mentors as well. The literature review also examined the slow but steady increase in the use of both action research and social media and networking to enhance the practice of mentoring.

Third, an overview is provided of the study’s research design and research questions, as well as a justification of the program evaluation method, including the site and participants, data collection and analysis methods, and any issues concerning validity and credibility. Finally, an analysis of the findings are presented including a discussion of the findings through the lens of the
theoretical framework and literature review and recommendations for further research and implications for practice.

**Theoretical Framework**

The mentoring program for the second-year teachers of the Plymouth Public School district was designed based on both adult learning theory and transformational learning theory. Since aspects of both theories informed not only the program's attributes, activities, and resources, but also the desired outcomes of the program, they provided a clear direction and overall focus of this study. In particular, these two theories acted as lenses through which particular aspects of the program (designed with these theories in mind) were evaluated. In addition to these learning theories, this study was also informed by theories of organizational change and organizational learning, both of which supply a lens through which the second-year teacher mentoring program was viewed in terms of its overall impact on the entire organization of the Plymouth Public Schools.

**Adult learning theory & transformational learning theory.** Adult learning theory centers around the concept that adults learn best in particular ways suited to their developmental stage as adults (Kearsley, 1994). This theory can be explored in understanding the most effective ways to continue to “teach” beginning teachers into their second years.

The theoretical building blocks of the new mentoring program reflect the notion that adults learn best experientially, according to both Malcolm Knowles’s (1999) theory of andragogy and Rogers’s theory of experiential learning (Kearsley, 1994). Both these theories of adult learning purport that adult learners are best served by putting theory into practice. Aspects of Rogers’s theory, in particular, point to an action research model as perhaps the ideal fit for
beginning teachers, as “it is primarily based upon direct confrontation with practical . . . research problems” (Kearsley, 1994, p. 22).

Knowles’s theory capitalizes on the experiential learning preferences of adult learners, as he emphasizes a self-directed learning approach. Adult learners “are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their jobs” (Kearsley, 1994, p. 4), and beginning teachers are no exception to this rule. Therefore, Knowles’s concept of self-directed learning applies to how beginning teachers should be mentored, analyzing educational problems as they arise in the classroom, determining what works (and what does not) through a process in which they are still provided guidance and assisted “when mistakes are made” (Kearsley, 1994, p. 4). This guidance and assistance should be provided by mentors and also by peers through a collaborative process that complements the self-directed adult learner.

Although traditional, passive learning modes can present a challenge and adult learners may need to be reoriented with the help of their mentors towards this type of learning through problem solving (Hatcher, 1997, p. 37), the benefits for adult learners are clear and include greater motivation and retention of what has been learned (Smith, 2002, p. 7). As part of his theory, Knowles developed a five step model that involved “diagnosing learning needs, . . . identifying material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, [and] evaluating learning outcomes” (Smith, 2002, p. 8). These steps work easily in conjunction with Rogers's aforementioned experiential learning theory, and both can be applied to the learning needs of beginning teachers as self-directed adult learners working with mentors and peers via action research models in the field of education.

Viewing how best to meet the mentoring needs of beginning teachers through the lens of adult learning theory also mandates the exploration of critical reflection and practical theorizing,
two components of adult learning theory that relate well to the theories of Knowles and of Rogers. Critical reflection, according to Stephen Brookfield (1995), focuses on the ability of adult learners to question assumptions and develop “alternative perspective[s] on previously taken for granted ideas” (p. 3). This aspect of adult learning theory can be easily linked to the notion of educators as reflective practitioners. Brookfield purports that:

- evidence that adults are capable of this kind of learning can be found in developmental psychology, where a host of constructs such as embedded logic, dialectical thinking, working intelligence, reflective judgment, [and] post-formal reasoning . . . describe how adults come to think contextually and critically. (p. 3)

Practical theorizing, connected mostly with the work of Usher and Bryant (1997), capitalizes on the critical reflective capabilities of adult learners and has been studied specifically in terms of educational practitioners. Under the umbrella of practical theorizing, it follows that teachers are able to “come to a more informed understanding of their informal patterns of reasoning” by collaborating with colleagues who:

- serve as reflective mirrors in [reflection groups]; they reflect back to the practitioner readings of her or his behavior that come as an interesting surprise. . . . Colleagues can help the individual worker re-frame, broaden and refine her own theories of practice.

(Brookfield, 1995, pp. 7-8)

Adult learners’ capabilities of practical theorizing illustrate the need for beginning teachers to work collaboratively with mentors and peers in order to hone their educational practices. The lens of adult learning theory therefore allows mentoring programs to be viewed as opportunities for beginning teachers to continue to learn experientially as self-directed, reflective practitioners in collaboration with their colleagues and mentors.
The type of active and reflective learning called for in adult learning theory rings true with transformational learning theory as well, although the latter takes learning one step further by not only including what adult learning should look like, but what results should be expected. Typically, mentoring programs for first-year teachers provide mentees with primarily emotional and procedural support, aimed at the comfort of the first-year teacher. However, Berger (2004) declared that “support as comfort is not transformative[;] instead . . . helping [mentees] . . . recognize their own narrative while at the edge of their learning” is what leads to transformation (Berger, 2004, p. 339). Thus, in order to promote real learning and growth within second-year teachers and even within their mentors (who should certainly still be considered learners within a mentoring program), aspects of transformational learning theory must be applied.

Transformational learning (also referred to as transformative learning) is defined by Drago-Severson (2004) as learning that constitutes a qualitative shift in how a person organizes, understands, and actively makes sense of his or her experience. When transformational learning occurs, a person develops increased capacities . . . for better managing the complexities of daily . . . work. This increase in capacities enables people to take broader perspectives on themselves and others – and on their work. (p. 17)

Transformational learning theory outlines how best to foster this type of learning and capacity building, particularly among second-year teachers who have moved beyond the need for “support as comfort” (Berger, 2004). Encouraging reflective practice, working on inquiry-based learning tasks (e.g., action research), and collaborating with fellow professionals are all activities supported within this theory.

Drago-Severson (2004) maintains that “there is an intimate connection between transformational learning and self-examination” (p. 23). Taylor (2005) also highlights the need for “learning experiences that are direct, personally engaging and stimulate reflection upon experience” in fostering transformational learning (p. 183). Opportunities for teachers to work
as reflective practitioners are therefore crucial to professional growth. Mezirow (1996) “confirmed the essentiality of critical reflection” in his look at transformative dimensions of adult learning, and added the importance of “a disorienting dilemma as a catalyst for change” (p. 163). It is this concept of “a disorienting dilemma” that can translate to the practice of action research. While Mezirow (1996) does not name this practice specifically, he does call for transformational learning activities to include “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action” (p. 162).

As beginning teachers begin to set instructional goals for themselves through reflective practices, leading to the work of classroom-based action research, it is essential to guide them through this process in order to achieve transformational learning. Those guiding these teachers, the mentors, can also anticipate experiencing this type of learning provided that the work of the mentoring program for second-year teachers is collaborative, another aspect inherent in transformational learning theory.

Research has found that “establishing relationships with others” is an “essential [factor] in a transformative experience” (Taylor, 2005, p. 179). Transformational learning does not occur in isolation, and so steps must be taken to reduce the traditional isolation that beginning and veteran teachers experience alike. Indeed, in order for the mentoring program for second-year teachers to truly be transformative for its participants, and to move away from the “support as comfort” typically provided in mentoring programs for first-year teachers, collaboration is key. The mentor should not be a disseminator of support; rather, the relationship should consist of several peers working together, with a mentor as guide, within a climate of “trust, . . . non-hierarchical status, . . . shared goals and authenticity,” as outlined by Eisen (2001) in his
identification of the peer dynamic important to transformational learning (p. 38). Baumgartner (2002) supports this view as well, finding that “the engagement in dialogue with others . . . [is] essential to transformative learning” (p. 49). Maximizing the potential of a mentoring program for second-year teacher requires understanding both mentees and mentors as adult learners who, in engaging in the transformational learning tasks of reflection, of making inquiries and taking action based on these inquiries, and of collaboration, experience powerful growth in their pedagogical and instructional knowledge.

**Organizational change and organizational learning.** The expansion of the mentoring program of the Plymouth Public Schools was a significant change in the district, and should, therefore, be viewed through not only the lens of organizational change, but also through the lens of organizational learning, the ultimate desired impact of the program.

A key paradox of organizational change, according to Burke (2008) is “that the peak of success is the time to worry and to plan for and bring about significant change” (p. 11). Plymouth Public Schools is perhaps not at the peak of its success, but the district typically meets Adequate Yearly Progress according to the state of Massachusetts, especially regarding scores on state standardized tests. Although the scores could definitely be higher, the lack of being placed on warning status may actually be helping to keep instruction in the Plymouth Public Schools status quo. Instead of falling victim to this, the Plymouth Public School district must embrace the paradox of organizational change, viewing the mentoring program for second-year teachers as an opportunity to grow rather than to sustain the status quo of mediocre instruction.

Burke (2008) states that decisions about organizational change are “made as a result of a previous diagnosis and in collaboration with the relevant people within the organization” (p. 54). This is in keeping with the decision to implement a second-year teacher mentoring program in
Plymouth, which was a result of the district administrators' observations that there should be more induction concerning instructional practices and teacher collaboration. Adhering to organizational change theory, these administrators realized that the target for change is “not the individual,” but rather “the organization's culture, especially the group and organizational norms to which members conform” (Burke, 2008, p. 55). In the Plymouth Public Schools, these norms are not unlike many other districts: a lack of consistent reflective practice, a lack of an emphasis on instructional growth, and a lack of collaboration with colleagues. Of course, “one rarely tackles the entire system at once, [therefore] one works diligently to keep the total in mind as one goes about changing parts, because the change of one part will affect other parts, perhaps all parts eventually” (Burke, 2008, p. 50). It is this fundamental aspect of organizational change theory that the district administrators and the program coordinator of the second-year teacher mentoring program of the Plymouth Public Schools applied with the built-in aspects of collaboration and reflective instructional practice of the program. Rather than attempt to mandate system-wide collaboration all at once, the district decided to change one part of the system (how beginning teachers collaborate and reflect on instruction), theorizing that this one change will affect other parts and practices of the district.

In order to do so, another component of organizational change theory must be employed. Culture itself should not be targeted in changing an organization; rather, individual behavior should be the focus, because if “the framework [of change] begins with organizational interventions that are intended to affect certain variables, . . . individual behavior [is affected] and ultimately . . . organizational performance [improves] . . . and individual development [is enhanced]” (Burke, 2008, p. 126). Therefore, the individual collaborative and reflective behaviors of the second-year teachers and the mentors are what was targeted by the
implementation of the second-year teacher mentoring program, which should then, in turn, according to organizational change theory, spread to the improvement of the entire organization regarding these behaviors.

One particular theory of organizational change that pertains to the second-year teacher mentoring program is Harold Leavitt's 1965 model, which included four major components. The first task concerns “the organization's purpose” (Burke, 2008, p. 168). The task of the Plymouth Public Schools at large is to provide effective instruction to students; a component of this is the task of the second-year teacher mentoring program, the purpose of which is to promote collaborative and reflective practice among mentees and mentors. Leavitt's second component of change theory is the people involved; in Plymouth's case, this includes the program coordinator and the mentees and mentors of the second-year teacher mentoring program. Technology and structure are Leavitt's third and fourth components, both of which play key roles in the Plymouth Public School's second-year teacher mentoring program. Technology is a vital part of the program, as online social networking was the vehicle for the majority of the collaboration among and between mentees and mentors. The structure of the program was mainly dependent on the work flow – the process of action research (including inquiry and reflection) conducted by mentees and monitored by mentors and by the program coordinator.

Marvin Weisbord (1976) added a fifth component to this model, one that is essential to Plymouth's mentoring program. Weisbord placed leadership in the very center of his change model because he “believed that organizational leaders' jobs are to watch for blips in each of the other . . . [change] components . . . and to make sure that they are in alignment” (Burke, 2008, p. 171). One of the potential “blips” anticipated by leadership of this change in Plymouth concerned potential resistance to change, which can be combated by “clarity of change and [by]
motivation,” both of which “are necessary for acceptance and commitment on the part of organizational members” (Burke, 2008, p. 142). Another is the importance of “communicat[ing the] values [of the program] in order for change to get launched and to stick” (Burke, 2008, p. 7). Ultimately, though, what leaders of change (in this case, the program coordinator of the Plymouth Public Schools mentoring program) must realize is that “change happens in part because of a few people who initiate the spread of the 'virus’” (Burke, 2008, p. 6). In Plymouth's case, therefore, it is essential that the program coordinator distributed change leadership first to the mentors of the program, and ultimately also to the mentees in the hopes that both groups would be able to spread the change of collaborative and reflective practice district-wide, resulting in organizational learning.

Organizational learning is defined by Collinson and Cook (2007) as “the deliberate use of individual, group, and system learning to embed new thinking and practices that continuously renew and transform the organization in ways that support shared aims” (p. 8). With organizational learning, one goal is to not only change behaviors (as referenced above concerning organizational change), but to “[lead] members to change norms (thinking) as well as behaviors” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 9). This is the best result Plymouth Public Schools hoped for in implementing the second-year teacher mentoring program. This was certainly a realistic goal, since this mentoring program was built around collaborative action research, which parallels activities Collinson and Cook (2007) claim lead to organizational learning, such as “members actively addressing problems and issues rather than automatically accepting obvious or time-tested solutions; . . . discovering erroneous assumptions, questioning existing ways of operating, learning from mistakes, and ensuring that useful ideas and innovations spread beyond individual members” (p. 15).
In implementing a program that called for collaboration and reflective practice (both of which were not happening system-wide in Plymouth, nor in many systems), the Plymouth Public Schools recognized that not only does the “organization [affect] how individuals learn, . . . [but] individuals significantly affect how organizations learn” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 75). If individual teachers are provided with opportunities to learn collaboratively and through inquiry and reflection, then ultimately the entire organization could learn in this way. In fact, the collaborative action research practices (which include inquiry and reflection on instruction) of the second-year mentoring program aligned well with Collinson and Cook’s (2007) five core assumptions of organizational learning: learning is multilevel (learning occurs at the individual, group, and organization level); learning requires inquiry; learning relies on shared understandings – meaning that “organizational members must share ideas, insights, perceptions, experiences, and questions” (p. 33); – organizational learning involves both behavioral and cognitive change; and it embeds new knowledge and practices (p. 32).

In order to sustain these five assumptions of organizational learning, members “have to understand and be able to apply their learning continuously, flexibly, and creatively. In this kind of world, learners cannot afford to be inhibited by fear of failure; they have to be allowed to experiment and take risks” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 71). Indeed, these are just the types of encouragement that were built into the second-year teacher mentoring program of the Plymouth Public Schools, in the hopes that learning would occur not only at the individual level and with the reflective practitioner groups, but eventually at the organizational level as well. After all, schools not only have the responsibility of developing students, “but they also have the responsibility of developing the adult individuals who work in schools” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 67), including both mentees and mentors alike. With this goal in mind, the Plymouth
Public Schools recognized that “analysis, evaluation, and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve instructionally” (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 73). Therefore, in order to ensure organizational learning, leaders (in this case, the program coordinator of the second-year teacher mentoring program) “have responsibility for structuring opportunities for thoughtful interactions” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 201), something that was carefully built into the second-year teacher mentoring program via the collaborative action research (inquiry and reflection-based) components.

**Chapter II: Literature Review**

A review of the literature was necessary to more precisely determine how activities like collaboration and reflection can effectively function in a mentoring program. This focus entails redefining and expanding our view of the practice of mentoring: how collaboration can and should be fostered through mentoring, thereby reducing isolation; how mentoring can impact instructional growth and transformational learning; what kinds of benefits mentors themselves can experience through their participation in a mentoring program; how action research can enhance a mentoring program; and, finally, the potential of social networking as a resource to help facilitate all of the above.

**Redefining & Expanding Traditional Views of Mentoring**

**Guiding Question:** What does the research tell us about why mentoring programs should be redefined? How are mentoring programs being expanded beyond their traditional use?

Traditionally, mentoring programs for beginning teachers have focused on emotional support for the protege; matters of retention have been the primary goal. Wang, Odell, and Schwille (2008) point out this has led to mentoring programs concerned with “classroom management, curriculum resources, and beginning teachers’ relationships with students, instead
of the quality of their teaching and student learning” (p. 9). It is arguable that “mentoring’s early association with beginning teacher induction often [leads] to a narrow view of mentoring as a form of temporary support to help novices cope with the demands of their 1st (sic) year of teaching” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 16). This narrow view must be expanded if mentoring programs are to be reformed. Instead of a focus only on the emotional support a first year teacher needs merely to survive, the functions of a mentoring program must be expanded to include a focus on the learning of both the protege and the mentor, and should allow this learning to continue beyond one year.

The first step, therefore, in redefining mentoring is to shift the traditional mentoring program’s focus away from mere retention and emotional support, a shift that is overwhelmingly supported in recent educational literature (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Moir, 2009). Feiman-Nemser repeatedly state, “keeping new teachers in teaching is not the same as helping them become good teachers” (2003, p. 25). This is because “feeling comfortable does not necessarily lead to effective teaching and student learning” (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008, p. 2). New developments in the field of mentoring, led primarily by the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California, have proven that induction programs can “accelerate the effectiveness of new teachers, fast-tracking their progress to exemplary teachers” (Moir, 2009, p. 16). But this acceleration requires reform of traditional mentoring.

A primary obstacle in mentoring program reform is the misconception of the needs of beginning teachers. Feiman-Nemser (2001) found “discipline and management [are often identified] as the most pressing problems of beginning teachers. Yet problems so classified may have more to do with curriculum and instruction” (p. 7). Therefore, it is logical that if mentoring programs focused more on the curricular knowledge and instructional practices of beginning
teachers, these other needs would fade into the background. This belief is the reasoning behind the recent emphasis in the literature towards educative mentoring, which Feiman-Nemser defines as “rest[ing] on an explicit vision of good teaching and [on] an understanding of teacher learning” (p. 2). Educative mentoring places the mentor in the position of co-think[er] with beginning teachers about teaching, instead of being an expert who imposes ideas; focusing beginning teachers on basic instructional issues that they may not have recognized; . . . helping beginning teachers frame their self-identified teaching problems and articulate reasons for them; and modeling teaching that demonstrates principles of good teaching. (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008, p. 4)

In this sense, mentoring becomes less about mere retention and emotional support, and more about teacher learning and growth. Rather than viewing the mentor as a shoulder to lean on, or as an imposing expert, it is helpful to think of the mentor as “someone who . . . nudge[s] along the learning process” (McDade, 2005, p. 767).

This “nudging” is where educative mentoring comes into play. If a mentoring program is too focused on emotional support instead of on instruction, the beginning teacher may shy away from taking instructional risks in the classroom due to a fear of failure. Yet, as Roland S. Barth (2007) states, “if you take away a person's right to fail, you take away her right to succeed. . . . A failure experience [can be] an especially good teacher when accompanied by observation, reflection, conversation, and efforts to make sense of the failure” (p. 215). These four elements reflect the teacher learning and growth that can occur through educative mentoring.

Also supported by recent educational literature is the idea that this growth and learning need not end after a beginning teacher's first year (which is an unspoken message of traditional mentoring programs that only include support for a teacher's first year). Drago-Severson (2004)
maintains that these types of learning environments must “[stick] around' in order to provide continuity and a context of stability” (p. 34). Jones and Pauley (2003) concur, stating that the mentoring relationship should last up to three years (p. 4). In their extensive case study, Rock, Gregg, Gable, and Zigmond (2009) examine a groundbreaking example of virtual coaching for in-service teachers. While the technology used in this particular study is quite new and far from available for the majority of schools, of interest in the case study is the experience of a young teacher involved in the program. This teacher, who had already completed her first year, volunteered to be virtually coached, feeling she still had much to learn. What the coaching was able to do for her points to the fact that mentoring relationships are still very much needed beyond a new teacher's first year.

Thus, redefining mentoring, according to the educational literature, must take into account the continual process of learning for beginning teachers and how best to support this learning (Drago-Severson, 2004; Jones & Pauley, 2003; Barth, 2007).

An often overlooked concept in traditional mentoring programs is the fact that all participants in such programs are adults, and, thus, programs should be designed with theories of adult learning in mind. Collinson and Cook (2007) posit that “an organization of adult learners requires a different way of thinking; it functions as a community in the sense that each member's learning and performance is enhanced by others' learning” (p. 179). McDade (2005) stresses the inclusion of andragogy – which she defines as a theory “about helping adults learn by focusing on individual realization of potential” (p. 761) – in the design of a mentoring program, and both McDade (2005) and Drago-Severson (2004) emphasize the consideration of transformational learning theory, defined by Drago-Severson as a theory about the “qualitative shift in how a person organizes, understands, and actively makes sense of his or her experience” (p. 17).
When adult learning theories such as andragogy and transformational learning are applied to educators, it is clear that collaborative practices and inquiry-based practices such as action research are most effective in fulfilling the “individual realization of potential” and the “qualitative shift” in learning to which McDade and Drago-Severson, respectively, refer. This is because researchers agree that teachers learn best when they are involved in activities that . . . provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate with colleagues inside and outside the school; . . . reflect teachers' influence about what and how they learn; and . . . help teachers develop theoretical understanding of the skills and knowledge they need to learn. (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006, p. 9)

The recent educational literature on mentoring also supports the inclusion of adult learning practices (such as collaboration and action research) in mentoring programs. Feiman-Nemser (2001) calls for mentor programs that “[emphasize] problem posing, question asking, developing interpretations, and researching together” and laments that “mentor training programs rarely tap these sources” (p. 5). Jones and Pauley (2003) and Moir (2009) also emphasize collaborative action research, a process Moir describes as follows:

The group [consisting of mentors and mentees] identifies an inquiry subject, . . . and establishes norms. In learning teams, teachers collaborate to design powerful lessons, observe each other teach when possible, and analyze student data to ensure that students are learning. (p. 17)

The emphasis in the educational literature on these types of practices in mentoring programs “underscores the risks in teacher isolation and the adult learning benefits of reducing it” (Drago-Severson & Pinto, 2006, p. 131). If mentoring programs become opportunities for
Promoting Collaboration & Reducing Teacher Isolation

Guiding Question: How can mentoring programs help to facilitate teacher collaboration?

Teaching has long been an autonomous profession. Classroom doors are shut, and little collaboration occurs. However, Woods and Weasmer (2004) “[assert] that to thrive in a collegial setting it is important for a teacher to be an active influence on the school culture rather than a passive bystander” (p. 119). One way to encourage teachers to be active influences is to engage them in professional communities, where “teachers have opportunities to break down the isolation of classrooms in collaborative, problem-setting, and problem-solving activities with colleagues” (Halverson, 2007, p. 36).

Mentoring programs, if redefined as outlined above, can serve as these types of professional communities. Ellen Moir, director of the New Teacher Center, has “found that the reach of induction programs extends far beyond new teachers and the mentors who work with them” (2009, p. 15). Indeed, this extension can impact an entire school's culture if the mentoring program has been redefined as a place where collaboration and teacher learning are at the center. If this is accomplished, then, as Jones and Pauley (2003) predict, “teacher mentoring [could be] a medium of reform to current policy and practice in American education” (p. 1).

Several studies have been conducted that consider interactive (or collaborative) learning as a lens through which to consider the possibilities for teacher growth within a mentoring program. Blair's (2008) study, *Mentoring novice teachers: Developing a community of practice* is informed by both Rogoff’s (1990) peer interaction theory and by Lave and Wenger’s (1991) theory of social participation in learning, leading the researcher to investigate the positive
relationship between participating in a collaborative mentoring group and teacher efficacy. As Blair (2008) found, the beginning teachers as study participants were “interest[ed] not only in growing individually, but also, as they developed collegial relationships, in supporting one another's growth” (p. 113). Ginns et al. (2001) investigated the successful use of participatory action research (PAR) within such collaborative mentoring groups in developing the growth of beginning teacher instructional efficacy, framing their study with a look at Kemmis and Wilkinson's (1998) notions of the social and participatory aspects of PAR. Upon analyzing their data regarding beginning teachers as participatory and collaborative action researchers, Ginns et al. (2001) believe that

the traditional induction methods tend to reproduce the profession, rather than use critical reflection that can lead to change, progress and reflection on practice. [They] contend that beginning teachers working collaboratively with each other in small action research cells . . . has been a more empowering and enriching experience for them and more effective in addressing the concerns of the teachers themselves. (p. 14)

Strong and Baron (2004) took a slightly different approach to interaction opportunities of mentoring programs, using the framework of Schiffrin's (1988, 1994) theories of interactional sociolinguistics and conversational analysis to analyze mentoring conversations with beginning teachers. These researchers found that mentors took “extreme efforts to avoid giving direct advice” (p. 55), which may be a result of misinterpreting the importance of collaboration between mentees and mentors. Surely, the traditional mentor was placed, perhaps ineffectively, in the position of sage, but this does not mean that the redefined, collaborative mentor is not still a guide or, to borrow Vygotsky's well-known term, a more knowledgeable other, able to assist in the instructional growth of the beginning teacher as mentee.
Promoting the Instructional Growth of Beginning Teachers

Guiding Question: *How can mentoring programs foster the instructional growth of mentees?*

In moving away from the former goals of traditional mentoring programs and towards the goals of educative mentoring, which include collaboration and teacher learning, recent educational literature highlights the growth of instructional knowledge as a function of mentoring (Schwille, 2008; Collinson & Cook, 2007; Drago-Severson, 2004). The transformational learning capabilities an educative mentoring program can provide suggest that instructional knowledge can indeed be strengthened in mentees.

In educative mentoring, the emphasis is on teacher learning. “Moving beyond traditional supervisory roles, . . . [educative] mentors [can challenge] norms of noninterference in other's teaching by taking an active part in helping novices think through teaching” (Schwille, 2008, p. 156). Collinson and Cook (2007) also highlight collaboration in the classroom, stating that “successful schools assumed that improvement in teaching is a collective rather than an individual enterprise, and that analysis, evaluation, and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve instructionally” (p. 114). If Collinson and Cook’s ideas are applied to educative mentoring, then the link between this type of practice and improved instructional knowledge is clear.

Also linked to gains in instructional knowledge is reflective practitionering. If teachers, in this case beginning teachers, are to feel increasingly more effective in their instructional practices, self-reflection must be fostered. Drago-Severson (2004) maintains “there is an intimate connection between transformational learning and self-examination” (p. 23). And Schwille (2008) sees educative mentoring as a practice that “includes opportunities for deep and
rich reflection on practice with the participation of a mentor who helps to shape and instill this intellectual habit” (p. 141).

Theories concerning the development of knowledge were also effectively used to frame some of the studies reviewed. Blair (2008) used Bruner's (1996) concept of scaffolding in analyzing data collected over the course of a full year of induction for beginning teachers, and she was joined by Chalies et al. (2007) in considering Vygotsky's (1978) zones of proximal development as they applied to learning “on the job.” Both studies found encouraging results, maintaining, as Chalies et al. (2007) stated, that “collaborative mentoring can contribute to breaking down the barriers between the traditional training situations . . . and the work of teaching itself” (p. 561). Furthermore, Hellsten et al.’s (2009) study was informed by constructivist models of knowledge. Upon conducting their case study on the experience of several beginning teachers involved in a collaborative mentoring program, Hellsten et al. (2009) suggest that “the mentorship of teachers could be developed through an adaptation of the professional learning community model [where] . . . mentorship, then, occurs as a teacher learns in community with others how to achieve higher student learning outcomes” (p. 725).

Several of the researchers reviewed used theories of professional training to organize their investigations of mentoring and induction programs. Chalies et al. (2007) considered Suchman's (1987) situated perspective of professional training in studying how beginning teachers used the rules of the profession to help contribute to their development. Cherubini’s (2007) study, *Speaking up and speaking freely: Beginning teachers' critical perspectives of their professional induction*, was heavily rooted in several theories of teacher induction: that it is responsive (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Tickle, 2000; Williams, 2003), that it is reflective (Mitchell & Laidlaw, 1999; Portner, 2002), and it is a process (Moir & Gless, 2001).
The benefits of educative mentoring practices such as collaboration and reflection are seen in Robin Ward's 2005 study, *Impact of Mentoring on Teacher Efficacy*. Ward found that “not only is participation in a mentoring program essential for new teachers to succeed and learn, but . . . it [also] positively affects teacher efficacy” (p. 2). In fact, Ward found that even the mentors themselves experienced “feeling more confident about their own ability to effectively teach” (p. 4). These findings indicate that mentees are not the only teachers who stand to benefit from educative mentoring. Mentors also learn and grow through the experience, and can emerge as new teacher leaders in their schools.

**Mentors as Leaders and Learners**

**Guiding Question:** *How can mentoring programs promote the instructional growth of mentors as well as mentees?*

It is important to note the full potential of a mentoring program in its impact not only on beginning teachers, but on the mentors as well. As Moir (2009) states, “as much as we should be concerned about retaining new teachers – and it's critical – we also want to ensure that we retain, challenge, and learn from our most experienced teachers” (p. 17). Only through this view of mentoring can such programs help to build a school-wide learning organization culture. As Moir insists, “when we value exemplary teachers, they thrive, and most important, they become more effective teachers” (2009, p. 16). If a mentoring program is educative in nature, then mentors also stand to learn, and to become leaders in a learning organization. This is why Drago-Severson (2004) refers to mentoring as “a reciprocal learning opportunity, meaning that mentees and mentors reap benefits from mentoring, because both learn as a result of the relationship” (p. 123).
The business world has countless examples of developing leaders within the organization. In Ed Betof's (2010) study of workplace learning, he emphasizes the success of businesses that include “teaching and coaching . . . [to] dramatically increase the application of personal and organizational learning” (p. 1). These businesses build up the leadership of their “coaches” in order to increase organizational learning. Peter M. Senge (2007) insists that education must now follow suit and “discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization” (p. 4).

The learning opportunities for mentors are extensive. In Gilles and Wilson's 2004 study, Receiving as Well as Giving: Mentors' Perceptions of their Professional Development in One Teacher Induction Program, the authors found that the mentor participants believed that their professional development included: new aspects of learning/retooling; expansion of their role beyond . . . mentoring; changes in their teaching worldview . . . ; and an understanding of the impact of the program on themselves. (pp. 92-93)

If mentoring is redefined, then it truly has the potential to function as professional development for the mentors themselves.

In her study of mentors from the New Teacher Center, Hanson (2010) also points to mentors “gain[ing] a 'global' view that affected their vision of good schools and good teaching” (p. 77). Hanson cites one particular mentor's reflections:

As a teacher, I was quite happy to just close my door and be in my room because I was good at it and my kids were good at it and so it was easy to just think, 'All you other people [need to] figure out how to get it good in your room.' That's different for me now. (p. 78)
What's different for this mentor now is that, in being able to learn and grow as a teacher involved in educative mentoring, this mentor teacher can now serve as a leader among her peers, no longer closing her classroom door. This is how a redefined vision of mentoring can reduce teacher isolation, by building mentors as leaders.

Mentoring practices at the New Teacher Center, however, are unique in their emphasis on mentors as leaders. In many schools, even if mentors are learning through the process of mentoring, they may not be empowered to share this learning as teacher leaders. Collinson and Cook (2007) posit that often, “although people in organizations learn, their individual knowledge may not spread to larger groups within the organization” (p. 45). In their study, Beyond Mentoring, Hanson and Moir (2008) investigate to what extent mentors “apply the skills and knowledge they gained as mentors” (p. 1) in their schools at large. The authors insist that schools must begin to capitalize on the fact that “mentors carry with them new knowledge, skills, and values that can positively influence students, other teachers, school organizations, and the teaching profession” (p. 8). When schools do build their mentors as leaders, Hanson and Moir found that “mentors have played leading roles in cultural shifts in their schools that encourage distributed leadership and the development of adult learning communities focused on reflective conversations about teaching and learning” (p. 8).

Clearly, if mentors (well practiced in educative mentoring and collaboration) are enabled as teacher leaders in schools, teacher isolation will be dramatically reduced and learning organization cultures will develop (Moir, 2009; Drago-Severson, 2004; Collinson & Cook, 2007).

**Action Research**

**Guiding Question:** How can the practices of action research ensure that opportunities for
inquiry, reflection, and collaboration exist in newly redefined mentoring programs?

As defined by Sagor (2011), action research is “a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the actor in improving or refining his or her actions” (p. 1). Not only can this improvement and refinement benefit the individual, it can also benefit the learning of an entire organization if action research is employed as a way to redefine mentoring programs. This includes ensuring that the action research is focused on instructional goals, involves collaboration, and promotes organizational change.

All too often, as Ginns et al. (2001) point out, “very few [support or mentoring] programs have a focus on empowering beginning teachers to take control of their own professional growth” (p. 3). The authors cite “the need for beginning teachers to seek knowledge and make decisions for their own settings . . . and the suggestion . . . that assisting beginning teachers to reflect on their practice would influence the direction of their teaching” (Ginns et al., 2001, p. 3), all of which can be accomplished through the work of action research.

Gilles et al. (2010) add to this idea of using action research as part of inducting beginning teachers into the field of education which, they claim, can not only impact these teachers instructionally but can also be a venue for collaborative practices and reflective practitioners. As the authors state in their study, “one of the important potential benefits from action research is the creating or strengthening of a Professional Learning Community (PLC), [which] can be characterized by: collaboration, . . . dialogue and reflection on practice, and increased awareness of others' practices” (Gilles et al., 2010, p. 93). The benefits of this type of collaboration can lead to organizational learning, as it “opens communication among teachers and school faculty; it increases awareness and reflection of issues that affect learning and professionalism” (Gilles et
Ginns et al. (2001) agree, including in their study's findings that “beginning teachers working collaboratively with each other in small action research cells, and in a larger network . . . has been a more empowering and enriching experience for them and more effective in addressing the concerns of the teachers themselves” (p. 14).

Much of the educational literature, however, maintains that this type of organizational learning through collaborative action research can only occur if mentoring programs are redefined, since “traditional induction methods tend to reproduce the profession, rather than use critical reflection that can lead to change, progress, and reflection on practice” (Ginns et al., 2001, p. 14). If, in fact, such programs are redefined to include collaborative action research based on instructional inquiry and reflection, then such programs can lead to organizational change, as supported by Gilles et al. (2010) who state that “some researchers have found action research to be a professional development tool that uses inquiry and reflection to promote change in a school” (p. 93). In their study of a mentoring program that was centered around such action research, Gilles et al. (2010) did find evidence of organizational change and learning. “Over time classroom research [i.e., action research] at [the school studied] became the norm, not the exception” (p. 99). In fact, in interviewing the teachers at the school studied, Gilles et al. (2010) found that “many felt that action research was now institutionalized at the school” (p. 102).

Social Networking

**Guiding Question:** *How can social networking help to facilitate the emphases on collaboration, reflection, and instructional growth in newly redefined mentoring programs?*

Despite the clear benefits of educative mentoring, “competing work, school, and family commitments often make it difficult for participants to engage in and sustain mentoring programs” (Kasprisin et al, 2008, p. 163). These difficulties could be aided by online social
networking which can transcend time and space, making it easier for mentors and proteges to “meet.”

Smith and Israel (2010), who coined the term “e-mentoring,” define the practice “as the use of computer-mediated communications such as e-mail, discussion boards, chat rooms, blogs, Web conferencing, and growing Internet-based solutions” (p. 30). So, Hung and Yip (2008) add to the literature on this use of social networking by recommending the use of video databases as a way for teachers to observe one another teach without necessarily being in one another's classrooms. The authors claim that “an online video database can create a vibrant learning community in which peers share insights, ask questions and make suggestions” (p. 88).

Many proteges and mentors have difficulty in being released to observe one another teach, or even in finding time to meet face-to-face as often as they'd like. Video databases and social media can help ensure that a mentoring program doesn't fail due to these issues. As Kasprisin et al (2008) point out, social networking “allows [mentors and proteges] to stay in contact and at their convenience” (p. 164). Moir (2009) agrees, adding that “online learning communities offer access to resources – experienced teachers, content facilitators, and content experts – that are not always available within the district” (p. 18).

Social networking may even help facilitate discussions more effectively than face-to-face mentoring, since “e-mail and chat rooms seem to ease discussion of 'undiscussable' topics that remain off limits in face-to-face conversations but are crucial to organizational learning” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 112). Keeping in mind that most beginning teachers are likely to be digital natives, this may be more true now than ever.

The educational literature on using social networking as a way to facilitate mentoring is relatively new and still fairly minimal, and although there are still many positives derived from
face-to-face educative mentoring, it is noteworthy that, so far, social networking has been found to have a positive impact on mentoring (Moir, 2009; Collinson & Cook, 2007; So, Hung, & Yip, 2008). In Kasprisin et al.’s 2008 study, the authors successfully “linked the positive relationship between involvement and satisfaction with mentoring and e-mentoring [or social networking] programs” (p. 171).

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the data collected and how it was analyzed in this investigation.

1. To what extent is the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program achieving its expected outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

2. Which components of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program have contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

The design of the second-year teacher mentoring program was centered around collaboration and experiential learning, activities informed by both adult learning and transformational learning theories, in the hopes that these activities would lead to organizational change and organizational learning. The investigation of the first research question helped the researcher determine whether or not the program had achieved the outcomes of increased instructional knowledge and reflective practice and the reduction of teacher isolation as experienced and perceived by both mentees and mentors. These were the desired outcomes of the second-year teacher mentoring program as presented in the PPS second-year teacher
mentoring logic model in keeping with both adult learning and transformational learning theories.

The investigation of the second research question allowed the researcher to analyze the degree to which the different components of the second-year teacher mentoring program (action research, collaboration, social networking, and face to face meeting time) contributed to the program's initial outcomes as perceived by the participants and documented by the researcher, determining whether these outcomes were influenced by the combination of these program elements, or whether certain program elements had more of an impact on these outcomes than other program elements.

Rationale for a Mixed Methods Design

In order to investigate mentees' and mentors' perceptions of the second-year teacher mentoring program's outcomes (especially since these outcomes directly relate to the instructional growth, reflective practice, and experience of teacher isolation of the mentees and the mentors themselves), qualitative methods predominated this mixed methods study. As Creswell (2007) states, qualitative research stems from the need for “a complex, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to their . . . places of work, and allowing them to tell their stories” (p. 40). While there was one collection of survey data, which served to quantify the initial perceptions of the mentees and the mentors and triangulated the data, for the most part, quantitative measures and statistical analyses would not suffice. This is largely due to the nature of the second-year teacher mentoring program itself, built around the ideas of collaboration.

Creswell (2007) states, “Interactions among people . . . are difficult to capture with existing measures, and these measures may not be sensitive [to statistics]. To level all
individuals to a statistical mean overlooks the uniqueness of the study participants and of their experiences within the program (p. 40). Data was collected in the field, at the schools where the participants teach and through the online social networking sites where the primary collaboration of the program took place. Qualitative research supports the researcher’s need to “actually [talk] directly to people and [see] them behave and act within their context” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Furthermore, the researcher as program director was, as Creswell (2007) calls it, a “key instrument,” meaning the researcher collected data herself “through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants” (p. 38). Keeping in mind the ethical considerations necessary for the researcher as program director, the focus of qualitative research on participants' meanings ensured “a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the [researcher] bring[s] to the research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). This meaning, that the participants themselves hold about the second-year teacher mentoring program and its initial outcomes, was in direct reference to this study's research questions and was obtained through qualitative measures.

The element of interpretive inquiry in qualitative research also suited this study well. Because “the researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings,” it was necessary for the researcher to combine her interpretations with those of the study participants and even of the readers so that “multiple views of the problem [could] emerge” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). This is why multiple perspectives were reported and the many factors of the program were involved, so that “the complex interactions” allowed the researcher to qualitatively sketch “the larger picture that emerges” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39).
Practice-Based Research (PBR): Program Evaluation

A program evaluation best met the goals of this study, since this type of PBR allowed the researcher to “find out what is and is not working in [the] program, . . . by identifying weaknesses as well as strengths” (OPRE, 2010). Because the research questions not only guided the research to investigate overall outcomes of the program, but also which factors of the program most heavily contributed to these outcomes, strengths and weaknesses of the program emerged. Clearly, the identification of strengths was a great benefit to this study, but equally important was “the discovery of problems, [which] should not be viewed as evidence of program failure, but rather as an opportunity to learn and improve the program” (OPRE, 2010). Certainly, this particular program evaluation assisted the researcher as program director to continue to improve the fledgling second-year teacher mentoring program, but the identification of strengths and weaknesses will also contribute to the field of educational literature concerning mentoring and how best to approach the provision of this vital experience for both mentees and mentors alike. Prior to conducting this study, the researcher as program coordinator was made aware of the utility of a logic model. According to the Kellogg Foundation's Logic Model Development Guide, in conducting a program evaluation, it is necessary to employ a logic model (See Figure 1) that can function as “a road map describing the sequence of related events connecting the need for the planned program with the program’s desired results” (Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 3). Such a model allowed the researcher to investigate what in particular “contribute[d] to achieving [the] intended program goals and can lead to program improvements” (Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p.3)
To clearly articulate how the Plymouth Public School staff expected the activities of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program to result in the outcomes also as expected by the program, the researcher, along with PPS leadership and staff, developed a logic model for the program. The logic model displayed above depicts the resources, activities, and expected short and long-term outcomes of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program, which enabled the researcher as program coordinator to “relat[e] activities to projected outcomes” (Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 5).

The resources and inputs of the program first and foremost included the new position of...
program coordinator for the new second-year teacher mentoring program (who not only designed the program, but facilitated its implementation and oversaw all activities inherent within), as well as the district expectation that all second-year teachers participate in the program in order to advance their certification. A budget was also designated for the purchasing of supplies for the program, which included copies of Richard Sagor's (2011) *The Action Research Guidebook: A Four-Stage Process for Educators and School Teams* for all participants and also Ning accounts (social networking sites) for each action research mentoring group. These resources allowed for the implementation of the designed activities of the program, which included both online and face-to-face collaboration. Mentees used the blog features of Ning to write about and reflect upon their experiences with their respective action research projects on a weekly to biweekly basis; participants then commented on such blog posts, furthering the mentees' thoughts and future actions. The discussion forum feature of Ning allowed both mentees and mentors to participate in an online dialogue about their work during various stages of the action research process. The reflective practitioner groups also met for three two-hour face to face meetings, which served to complement their ongoing collaborative work conducted through online social networking.

The outcomes of the logic model, which reflect the “specific changes in . . . behaviors, knowledge, . . . [and] skills expected to result from program activities and which are most often expressed at an individual level” (Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 8), included an increase in reflective practice and in instructional knowledge for both mentees and mentors, and a reduced sense of teacher isolation for both mentees and mentors. This program evaluation study enabled the researcher, as program coordinator, to investigate whether these outcomes were reached, and which activities of the program most contributed to any outcomes reached, thus helping to
further refine and improve the program. As displayed in the logic model, it was anticipated that the ultimate impact of the program on the Plymouth Public Schools, after several years of implementation, would be a district-wide culture of teacher collaboration, as well as a culture of reflective practice that is rooted in a dedication to strong instructional practices. Thinking about the second-year teacher mentoring program in terms of a logic model allowed the researcher as program coordinator to produce “(1) an inventory of what . . . [was needed] to operate [the] program; (2) a strong case for how and why [the] program [would] produce [the] desired results; and (3) a method for program . . . assessment” (Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 8). The logic model, therefore, informed the methodology of this study.

Site and Participants

This study evaluated the new second-year teacher mentoring program of the Plymouth Public School (PPS) district, implemented in the fall of 2011. The Plymouth Public School district of Plymouth, Massachusetts, houses two high schools, two middle schools, and eight elementary schools. For the school year of 2011-2012 (the first year the new program was implemented), over half the schools in the district had second-year teachers on their respective staffs. Since the program was a new addition to the existing induction of the beginning teachers of PPS, the district was interested in evaluating the initial outcomes of the program; the researcher requested permission from the superintendent of the Plymouth Public School district to conduct this study (See Appendix A).

The voluntary participants of this study included twenty-three (of the thirty) mentees and eight (of the nine) mentors who guided these beginning teachers through the second-year teacher mentoring program. Because the researcher was the program director of the second-year teacher mentoring program, she had open access to all study participants. Mentees and mentors were
Participants were surveyed regarding their perceptions of the program at mid- and end-of-program points and mentors were also invited to participate in an end-of-program focus group conducted by the researcher, during which they were asked about more specific elements of the program and how these elements had contributed to any particular outcomes as they perceived them. Since document analysis was also part of the data collection, participants were asked to voluntarily allow information from the social networking practices of the program (blogs and discussion forum posts) to be used as data. The researcher’s relationship with the participants was an additional source of information in this study. Because the researcher was the program director, she had regular interaction and conversation with mentees and mentors and had access to both their social networking and their face to face meetings.

**Data Collection**

Data for the evaluation of the second-year teacher mentoring program was based upon four different sources: (1) survey, (2) focus groups, (3) document analysis, and (4) researcher field notes.

**Survey.** Surveys were administered to all participants (employing a census sampling strategy) at mid- and end-of-program points in order to assess the perceptions of the mentees and mentors of the second-year teacher mentoring program regarding the value of certain aspects of the program (action research, collaboration, social networking, and face to face meetings) in terms of the desired outcomes of the program (increased growth in instructional knowledge of both mentees and mentors; increased reflective practice of both mentees and mentors; reduced teacher isolation). Because surveys are an effective way to “describe some aspects . . . (such as .
. . opinions, attitudes, beliefs and/or knowledge) of the population” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 396), they proved to be a useful data collection method at this stage of the study. The surveys enabled the researcher “to study the same phenomena through multiple methods. The aim [was] to check information acquired by one method against information acquired by other methods in order to corroborate findings” (Weiss, 1998, p. 269). Weiss lists surveys as one such method to be employed as a quantitative tool within a mixed methods study and cites a multi-method approach as “the ultimate in triangulation” (Weiss, 1998, p. 269).

Surveys consisted of items that focused on particular aspects of the second-year mentoring program. Likert scale survey items were used in asking participants to rate the extent of the value of, for example, the action research aspects of the program, the social networking aspects of the program, and the collaborative nature of the program (See Appendices D, E, and F). These Likert scale items were followed by requests for further explanation, as well as open-ended questions (such as “What has been most valuable about the second-year mentoring program? Why?; What has been least valuable? Why?; How would you redesign any or all aspects of the program?”), since it is “useful to combine both formats in a single question” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 402). Since the surveys were designed to elicit information specific to this particular program, they were developed by the researcher. This was necessary because the “[program] objectives and the interventions . . . developed to attain those objectives may not match what is being assessed by a standardized instrument. . . . If [the] evaluation [researcher] is unable to find an appropriate existing instrument to assess participant outcome objectives, [he or she] will need to develop one” (OPRE, 2010).

**Focus group.** A focus group with mentors was conducted at the end of the program in order to further clarify the survey results. The intent of this data collection method “[was] to get
high-quality data in a social context where people [could] consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (Patton, 2002, p. 386). After all mentors were invited to participate in the focus groups, all five who agreed participated. Patton (2002) recommends small focus group sizes, ranging from 5 to 10 people, and sessions that last 1 to 2 hours; these recommendations were heeded in this study.

The focus group was conducted by the researcher and an assistant. The researcher followed Patton's (2002) recommendation that the researcher focus on facilitating the group following Patton's (2002) protocol of asking neutral questions, using illustrative examples, prefatory statements and announcements, probes and follow-up questions, process feedback during the focus group interview, and support and recognition responses. Meanwhile, the assistant took detailed notes and operated the recording device. This assistant was trained prior to the conducting of focus groups, as “everyone involved in collecting evaluation information must be trained in data collection procedures” (OPRE, 2010). Since focus groups are effective only when “the facilitation is focused, keeping responses on target [and when] interactions among participants are focused, staying on topic” (Patton, 2002, p. 388), the researcher developed specific, open-ended questions and follow-up questions in advance (See Appendix G). Since the purpose of the focus groups was to further clarify the survey results, focus group questions also examined the value of certain aspects of the program (action research, collaboration, social networking, and face to face meetings) in terms of the desired outcomes of the program (increased growth in instructional knowledge of both mentees and mentors; increased reflective practice of both mentees and mentors; reduced teacher isolation). Once again, due to the specific focus on a particular program, focus group questions were developed by the researcher.
Document analysis. Document analysis was conducted throughout the first year of the implementation of the second-year mentoring program. Weiss (1998) recommends collecting this type of data since they can provide a useful check on information gathered in interviews . . . , can provide a convincing answer . . . [and since] they were written contemporaneously with the events they chronicle, . . . are not subject to memory decay or memory distortion. (p. 260)

The documents collected in this study were accessed through the social networking aspects of the program and primarily consisted of participants' blogs and a record of the online discussions that took place among participants. These blogs and discussion forums were used by mentees and mentors to facilitate and reflect upon their collaborative action research, and thus served as important indicators of the program's achievement of its desired outcomes regarding adult and transformational learning. Because Ning (the social networking tool being used) allows for archival storage of blogs and discussion forums, the researcher as program designer had continuous access to this data.

Field notes. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, field notes were taken by the researcher as program director throughout the first year of the implementation of the second-year program. Lofland (1971) stated that field notes are “the most important determinant of later bringing off a qualitative analysis. [They] provide the observer's raison d'être. If . . . not doing them, [the researcher] might as well not be in the setting” (p. 102). These field notes were based on the program director's observations of face to face meetings of mentees with their respective mentors, and on the program director's interaction with mentees and mentors during the time frame of this study. Following Patton's (2002) recommendations, the researcher took specific steps to ensure the effectiveness of her field notes: the notes were descriptive, recorded basic
information about the setting (such as the date, time, who was present, what the physical setting was like, what activities took place), and contained detailed observations as well as direct quotes. Since “the observer's own experiences are part of [qualitative] data” (Patton, 2002, p. 303), the researcher's own feelings and reactions to the experience were recorded.

Data Analysis

Throughout this process, the logic model of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program was employed in assessing collected data.

Based on the survey data, means and standard deviations were calculated and reported as associated within the Normal Curve. This allowed the researcher to accurately interpret any one particular score and to examine how a particular score compared with all the other scores in a normal distribution (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 209). This initial data analysis proved useful in determining the range of initial perspectives regarding the second-year teacher mentoring program’s outcomes.

In addition to the analysis of the survey data, the open-ended questions of the survey were qualitatively analyzed using a coding scheme, which was also used in analyzing the data collected from the focus groups.

Both of these sets of data were analyzed via a pattern, theme, and content analysis (Patton, 2002). This inductive analysis allowed “findings [to] emerge out of the data, through the analyst's interactions with the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 453).

The first step of the inductive analysis of the data was to read through all open-ended survey responses and focus group transcripts, respectively, making marginal notes which “[constituted] the first cut at organizing the data into topics” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). Once this data was labeled (referred to as coding), and shorthand codes or labels were written directly on the relevant data passages, a new reading of the data was undertaken (Patton, 2002).
This second reading of the data was done in order to systematically identify specific themes, which were categorized through a color-coded system (Patton, 2002). These classifications eventually produced a framework for organizing and describing the data that was collected. Furthermore, the description of this data “[built] a foundation for the interpretative phase when meanings [were] extracted from the data . . . [and] conclusions [were] drawn” (Patton, 2002, p. 465). In identifying themes as they emerged within the data, the challenge of convergence (Guba, 1978) was dealt with. The researcher was sure to judge themes according to internal homogeneity – the extent to which the “data that belong together . . . hold together or 'dovetail' in a meaningful way” (Patton, 2002, p. 465). The researcher was also sure to consider matters of external heterogeneity, or the extent to which “differences among [themes] are bold and clear” (Patton, 2002, p. 465).

Divergence was also addressed throughout this stage of data analysis. The researcher conducted a careful examination of “data that [didn't] seem to fit including deviant cases that [didn't] fit the dominant identified patterns” (Patton, 2002, p. 466).

While the analysis of survey data and of focus group data occurred after these data were collected, document analysis and the analysis of the researcher's field notes was ongoing. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) state that one “should never collect [such] data without substantial analysis going on simultaneously” (as cited in Maxwell, 2005, p. 95). Therefore, in investigating the blogs and discussion forum posts (document analysis) that mentees and mentors used to write about and reflect upon their collaborative action research as part of the mentoring program, the researcher wrote memos that allowed her to “not only capture [her] analytic thinking about [her] data, but also facilitate such thinking, stimulating analytic insights” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). Such memos consisted of “short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the [researcher]”
(Creswell, 2007, p. 151), and were also written in the margins of the researcher's field notes. Writing memos in such a way “help[ed] in [the] initial process of exploring [the] database” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 150-151). This process of memoing, to borrow Creswell's (2007) term, spiraled into the “describing, classifying, and interpreting loop” of what he calls the data analysis spiral (p. 151). Here, information from these memos joined the qualitative data analysis of the focus groups and added to the establishment of themes (or categories or codes).

**Summary analysis: program evaluation.** Upon completing analysis of all data collected, the researcher holistically examined all the data together, looking for evidence of perceived outcomes across the survey and focus groups against the document analysis, researcher observations, and field notes. This summative analysis was conducted in order to either confirm or present discrepant evidence against the logic model of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program as developed by PPS leadership and staff. Because a logic model “presents program information and progress towards goals in ways that inform [and] advocate for a particular program approach” (Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p. 5), this deliberate review of all data identified evidence both in support of and in contradiction to the logic model, identifying components of the model that were in keeping or discrepant with the expected use of resources, strategies, activities, and outcomes as perceived by the participants and the researcher.

**Validity and Credibility**

Creswell (2007) outlines eight specific validation strategies, of which he “recommend[s] that . . . researchers engage in at least two . . . in any given study” (p. 209). These strategies fall under several different validation perspectives and terms of several different writers and researchers. This study employed validation strategies within three significant areas of validity and credibility: trustworthiness, consensual validation, and objectivity and positionality.
**Trustworthiness.** In order to establish the trustworthiness of the study, Lincoln and Guba (1985), as well as Merriam (1988) and Ely et al. (1991), recommend “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field includ[ing] building trust with participants, learning the culture, and checking for misinformation” (Creswell, 2007, p. 207). Since the researcher was also the program coordinator of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program, she had ample opportunity to establish this type of relationship with participants and also brought to the study her eleven years of engagement within the district, enhancing her capacity to continue to learn about the district's culture in studying the implementation of this new program.

Providing corroborating evidence is also a factor of trustworthiness, and was done through the triangulation of data. This triangulation enabled the researcher to “make use of multiple and different sources [and] methods . . . to shed light on a theme of perspective” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208), allowing for “a cross-check through different modes of inquiry” (Weiss, 1998, p. 263).

Also, all survey questions and focus group questions (especially since these were developed by the researcher) were pilot tested using a selection of third-year teachers and past mentors. The use of third-year teachers was helpful, as they were still beginning teachers and therefore not far removed at all from the experiences of second-year teachers, but were not participants in the new mentoring program for second-year teachers and were therefore unbiased as pilot testers. Teachers who have served as mentors in the past but who are not mentors assigned to this new program were also unbiased as pilot testers, but brought to the pilot their understanding of the general mentoring experience. The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE, 2010) recommends such piloting in order to “ensure the effectiveness of instruments and procedures,” which adds to the trustworthiness of the study.
Consensual validation. In order to demonstrate credibility, Eisner (1991) recommended consensual validation strategies that “[seek] the opinion of others . . . and an agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, and evaluation and thematics . . . are right” (Creswell, 2007, p. 204). This type of validation can be obtained through peer review or debriefing, and through member checking.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) “define the role of the peer debriefer as a 'devil's advocate,' an individual who keeps the researcher honest” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Such external checks of this study were sought from district administrators, peers, and the researcher’s advisor, all of whom were asked to cross-check all observations and themes of the study.

Consensual validation was also ensured by the process of member checking, which involved “the researcher solicit[ing] participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208), the researcher member-checked all “data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions [with] participants so that they [could] judge the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208) both during the focus group and during the data analysis stage.

Objectivity and positionality. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) were concerned with the objectivity of mostly qualitative studies, a concern of credibility that Merriam (1988) stated could be ensured by a “clarification of researcher bias from the outset of the study” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 208). For the purposes of this study, therefore, it was essential that the researcher acknowledged her role as program coordinator of the second-year teacher mentoring program, commenting thoroughly on any “past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). In
doing so, the researcher “[spent] some time reflecting upon [her] own positionality in relation to being a researcher” (British Educational Research Association, 2011). Due to her dual role as researcher and program coordinator of the second-year teacher mentoring program, the researcher “ask[ed her]self: ‘What is relevant and important about me which might impact on me when carrying out research?’” (BERA, 2011). In reflecting on such questions, the researcher acknowledged that her “professional lived experiences . . . [were] of importance and relevance” (BERA, 2011), including especially the researcher's potential biases towards the program due to her role as coordinator, the power she held as program coordinator, and the personal and professional stakes the outcomes of the program held for her as such. Upon this reflection and acknowledgment, the researcher recognized the need for objectivity especially due to her positionality within the study, a need that was largely met through data triangulation, the pilot testing of survey and focus group questions, peer debriefing, and member checking.

**Protection of Human Subjects and Ethical Considerations**

Ethical concerns and the protection of participants as human subjects were of tantamount importance to this study. The researcher participated in and passed the National Institute of Health's online course, “Protecting Human Research Subjects,” offered through Northeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Participants of this study were strictly volunteers, having chosen to fill out the survey, participate in a focus group, and/or allow the researcher to collect document analysis data from the online component of the program (i.e., blogs and archived discussion forum posts) and from the researcher's field notes. Since, according to Weiss (1998), a program evaluator, especially one who is embedded within the program in some way, must realize that “candor is essential” (p. 266), the researcher was entirely clear with her participants about her role in this research, to
protect both them and also the study, from potential bias. These volunteer participants were provided with adequate information concerning the purpose of the research, the research design and methodology, and any risks and benefits of participating in the study and were given the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns about the study via a signed informed consent form (See Appendix C).

Creswell (2007) insists that “maintaining confidentiality and protecting the anonymity of individuals with whom we speak” are of the utmost importance to a study (p. 44). The researcher provided such protection for participants in this study, therefore, “by assigning . . . aliases to individuals” (Creswell, 2007, p. 141). Furthermore, all data and information collected by the researcher for this study was stored on the personal home computer of the researcher, and no one, from teachers to administrators, of the Plymouth Public Schools had or will have access to any identifying information regarding any of the participants. Although “confidentiality cannot be assured in focus groups” (Patton, 2002, p. 387), the researcher addressed issues of privacy at the start of the focus group session in order to minimize any potential problems.

A final ethical consideration of this study was the existing relationship between the researcher as program coordinator and the mentees and mentors of the second-year teacher mentoring program. The researcher did not intentionally abuse any power in this study, and all participants were given the opportunity to decline participation in the study. Potential participants were informed that acceptance of or decline of such participation would have no impact on the mentees' or mentors' work within the second-year teacher mentoring program.

This research project was in full compliance with Northeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies.
Conclusion

Nationwide, many districts employ first-year teacher mentoring programs. However, these programs typically focus on emotional and procedural support (rather than instructional), and beginning teachers lose even this support after their first year. The Plymouth Public Schools recognized that their beginning teachers could use additional support beyond their first year of teaching and that this support should focus on instruction, and becoming a reflective practitioner.

Adult learning and transformational learning theories, as well as organizational change and organizational learning theories, have been recognized for some time now, and yet the understandings inherent in each are not consistently applied to adult learning situations. A mentoring program for beginning teachers is one such situation, and perhaps holds the most potential for opportunities for teachers (both new and veteran) to grow as instructionally-sound, reflective practitioners in collaborating with others. If mentoring programs are redefined from the traditional one-on-one emotional and procedural support provided for first-year teachers only to the consideration of the adult learning needs of collaborative and experiential learning and mentoring beyond one's first year, then transformation in terms of instructional and reflective growth, and the movement away from teacher isolation, can occur.

The Plymouth Public School district, and others like it, decided to expand its induction program to include mentoring for second-year teachers that was collaborative in nature, that was experiential and rooted in action research, and that utilized a combination of social networking and face-to-face meetings to facilitate interaction. Evaluating this new program was necessary in order to determine which of these elements most effectively contributed to the desired outcomes of the program. In qualitatively analyzing the themes that emerged from the collected data, data that came directly from the mouths of the mentees and the mentors, reflecting a true and honest
account of the initial perceptions of the program's outcomes, the researcher was able to
determine the strengths and weaknesses of the second-year teacher mentoring program. This
benefits not only the Plymouth Public Schools, by enabling the district to refine and improve the
program beyond its first year of implementation, but also the educational field at large, by
providing data and analysis that will add to the call for a new type of mentoring program.

Chapter IV: Report of Research Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of this program evaluation study. The first section
provides a review of the context of this study, including an overview of the logic model that
informed the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program and the overall study, as well as a
presentation of study participants. The second section presents the data collected and the
analysis employed for the survey data, the open-ended questions used in the survey, and, finally,
the focus group with mentors. Then each of the two research questions is analyzed in turn.
Research question one (To what extent is the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher
mentoring program achieving its expected outcomes as perceived by participants and the
researcher?) is analyzed in terms of each of the three expected outcomes of the program as
referenced by the logic model. For each of the three expected outcomes, first the mentee data
(mentee Likert scale responses, open-ended survey responses, and document analysis) is
analyzed, followed by the mentor data (mentor Likert scale responses, open-ended survey
responses, and focus group responses).

Next, research question two (Which components of the Plymouth Public School's second-
year teacher mentoring program have contributed the most to the program's desired outcomes as
perceived by participants and the researcher?) is analyzed by theme. First, mentees' open-ended
responses on both the mid-program and the end-of-program surveys, respectively, are coded for
which program components were found to be most useful and least useful. Then, mentors' open-ended responses on the mid-program survey and focus group responses from the end-of-program focus group, respectively, are coded for which program components were found to be most useful and least useful.

The final section of this chapter presents a summary of the key findings of this study.

**Study Context**

This program evaluation study was informed primarily by the logic model developed by the researcher as program coordinator. This logic model identifies the anticipated relationship between the resources, inputs, activities, and outputs of the program and the program's outcomes. The resources and inputs of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program included the establishment of a budget in order to purchase texts for each program participant that would help to guide them through the action research process, as well as to purchase Ning accounts for each group of participants to facilitate their online social networking. Resources and inputs also included the establishment of the position of the program coordinator, who, along with PPS administration, designed the program and who subsequently oversaw all inherent activities of the program throughout its initial year (which spanned from September 2011 to March 2012). These activities were as follows: second-year teacher mentee participants of the program worked in collaborative groups they had been assigned to on action research topics under the guidance of a mentor assigned to each group; via Ning, mentees reflectively blogged about their experiences throughout the action research process (such as the formulation of the research question, their work in their classrooms concerning the interventions decided upon due to their action research plan, and the collection and analysis of their data) and also participated in online discussion forums with fellow mentees and their mentor concerning their progress; mentees met with their
collaborative groups and with their mentor for a minimum of three two-hour face-to-face meetings over the course of the program to discuss their progress through the action research process, including successes with interventions and stumbling blocks.

The three anticipated outcomes of the program, as identified by the logic model, were (1) an increase in instructional knowledge for both mentees and mentors, (2) an increase in reflective practice for both mentees and mentors, and (3) a reduced experience of teacher isolation for both mentees and mentors.

Study participants included those mentees and mentors of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program who voluntarily responded to a mid-program online survey (administered in December of 2011), mentees who voluntarily also responded to an end-of-program online survey (administered in March of 2012), and mentors who voluntarily participated in an end-of-program focus group in March of 2012. Through both surveys and the focus group, participants were asked about their experiences regarding the three expected outcomes of the program as stated above: had they experienced growth in instructional knowledge and in reflective practice, and had they experienced a reduced sense of teacher isolation. Participants were also asked about which program activities and components were most and least valuable in regards to the achievement of these outcomes. Document analysis data (which included the use of mentees’ online blogs and participation in online discussion forums) was also collected by the researcher from mentees who gave informed consent, and served to illustrate the types of activities mentees participated in that may or may not have contributed to the program’s expected outcomes.

Analysis

Table 1 identifies the data sources used for both the mentee and mentor participants in the study.
Table 1

*Use of Data Sources According to Participant*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
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| Mentees     | Mid-program surveys (Likert scale & open-ended responses)  
End-of-program surveys (Likert scale & open-ended responses)  
Document analysis (online blogs and discussion forums) |
| Mentors     | Mid-program surveys (Likert scale & open-ended responses)  
End-of-program focus group |

**Survey analysis.** In order to analyze data collected from the Likert scale responses of the surveys, ratings were examined (as outlined in Chapter 3) in comparison with all the other ratings in a normal distribution (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). This initial data analysis determined the range of initial perspectives regarding the second-year teacher mentoring program's outcomes.

**Coding for themes.** In order to determine to what extent the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program achieved its expected outcomes as identified by the logic model, data collected from the open-ended survey questions, the focus group, and the online documents were all read through initially, while the researcher made marginal notes on the appearance of words or phrases that helped to identify to what extent participants felt the program had resulted in an increase in instructional knowledge, an increase in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. A second reading was then conducted in order to further systematically identify responses that related to these three outcomes, which served as the existing codes as informed by the logic model. Similarities and differences among these codes as they appeared in both the responses from mentees and the responses from mentors were identified in order to determine any commonalities emerging from the data.
In order to inductively analyze data collected from the surveys, the focus group, and the online documents, stages of coding were conducted as outlined in Chapter 3. The open-ended responses from the surveys, the focus group transcript, and the archived online documents were all read through initially, while the researcher made marginal notes based on the appearance of words or phrases that helped to identify which components of the program participants found helped it to meet its expected outcomes; these notes then served as the initial shorthand codes (Patton, 2002). A second reading was then conducted in order to systematically identify specific themes as they emerged from the data. Similarities and differences among these themes as they appeared in both the responses from mentees and the responses from mentors were identified in order to determine any commonalities emerging from the data.

**Research Question #1: To what extent is the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program achieving its expected outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?**

The first research question was: To what extent is the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program achieving its expected outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher? In investigating this question, data concerning each of the three expected outcomes was analyzed in terms of both mentees' responses and mentors' responses, respectively.

**Expected outcome #1: An increase in instructional knowledge.** The following section reports on the mentee and mentor results of the study regarding the degree which they feel the program components and overall program contributioned to the mentee’s instructional knowledge.

**Mentee mid- and end-of-program Likert scale results.** Table 2 identifies the mentees' responses concerning how and to what extent particular activities of the PPS second-year teacher
mentoring program (i.e., participating in action research, collaborating with their fellow mentees and mentor, social networking with their fellow mentees and mentor, and meeting face-to-face with their fellow mentees and their mentor) impacted their instructional knowledge. Table 3 then collapses this raw data, highlighting those who reported the program activity as having some to strong impact on instructional knowledge and those who reported the program activity as having no to little impact on instructional knowledge. This data is from the Likert scale responses administered as part of the mid-program survey, to which twenty-three mentees responded.
Table 2

*Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Instructional Knowledge, Mid-Program Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>52% (12)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>41% (9)</td>
<td>32% (7)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>30% (7)</td>
<td>61% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>44% (10)</td>
<td>17% (4)</td>
<td>17% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

*Collapsed Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Instructional Knowledge, Mid-Program Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>26% (6)</td>
<td>74% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>43% (10)</td>
<td>52% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>91% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>65% (15)</td>
<td>34% (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, by the halfway mark of completion of the second-year teacher mentoring program, participants did feel that certain aspects of the program did lead to an increase in instructional knowledge for at least 65 percent of the participants. The program activity that teachers felt had the greatest impact on instructional knowledge for mentees was by
far the face-to-face meetings with the mentoring group consisting of other fellow mentees and the assigned mentor (65 percent). Collaborating with fellow mentees and one's mentor also had somewhat of an impact (43 percent) on an increase in instructional knowledge, yet was slightly outweighed by those who felt this practice had no to little impact (52 percent). The practices of action research and social networking were only found by 26 percent and 8 percent of the mentees, respectively, to have had much impact on any increase in instructional growth.

Tables 4 and 5 report the same data as reported in the March 2012 end-of-program survey, to which nineteen mentees responded.

Table 4

*Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Instructional Knowledge, End-of-Program Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
<td>63% (12)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
<td>37% (7)</td>
<td>32% (6)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
<td>32% (6)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
<td>63% (12)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Collapsed Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Instructional Knowledge, End-of-program Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong or Powerful Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>26% (5)</td>
<td>74% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
<td>53% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
<td>79% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>84% (16)</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is evident in Tables 4 and 5, while most of the program activities did not lead to an increase in instructional knowledge for the majority of participants, there was indeed an increase in instructional knowledge as a result, again, of certain aspects of the program. The activities of meeting face-to-face and of collaboration continued to rank the highest of the four activities in regards to their impact on an increase in instructional knowledge, with the percent of those reporting face-to-face meetings as having some to strong or powerful impact on instructional knowledge rising from 65 percent of respondents at mid-program to 84 percent of respondents at end-of-program. The practices of action research and of social networking remained ranked as mostly having no to little impact on instructional knowledge, however social networking did experience some percentage increase (from 8 percent to 21 percent) in those who reported the practice as having some to strong impact on instructional knowledge.

Mentee mid-and end-of-program open-ended results. On the mid- and end-of-program surveys, open-ended questions were asked concerning to what extent the components of action research, collaboration, social networking, and face-to-face meetings had an impact on the
expected program outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. A number of responses were made concerning each of these program outcomes. Highlighted below are those responses that were made concerning either components that made a positive impact on instructional knowledge gains or those that were not seen as impacting instructional knowledge gains.

On the open-ended responses from the mid-program survey, there were fourteen comments from mentees reporting that the program had resulted in an increase in instructional growth for them. One mentee's comments summed up best what most of those mentees who reported an increase in instructional knowledge (due mostly to face-to-face meetings or collaboration) had to say:

The face to face meetings have been the most valuable to me. I enjoy meeting and talking with other teachers. No matter what the topic, just having time to talk helps inform my own instruction based on hearing what others are doing in their own classrooms.

Another mentee agreed, referring to his mentoring group as “a wealth of knowledge” especially when “discuss[ing] their specific classroom needs.” However, he “believe[d] he could have learned more from [his] colleagues if [they] were given time to discuss [their] own teaching concerns instead of [being limited] to a single research project.” This reasoning was echoed by twelve other mentees, expressed by one of them as follows: “the time spent together [with the mentoring group] would have been more productive if we could have discussed a range of challenges in our classroom instead of limiting our discussions to action research.” Clearly, the mentees felt that, although the face-to-face meetings were most beneficial in terms of an increase in instructional knowledge, these meetings were still too stultified by the necessity of discussing
the group's action research project and benefited more in regards to instructional knowledge when mentees and mentor simply discussed “what others are doing in their own classrooms.”

Aside from these twelve mentees who felt that the action research process impeded gains in instructional knowledge by preventing mentoring groups from freely discussing day-to-day classroom practices, the remaining ten mentees who mentioned non-growth in instructional knowledge attributed this lack of growth to a perceived lack of time. These mentees felt, as one put it, that “time in a teacher's day could be better spent working on planning and other things.” This indicates that second-year teachers do wish to spend time making gains in planning and other areas of instructional knowledge, but do not see the action research process as beneficial in this regard.

The open-ended responses from the end-of-program survey (March 2012) showcased very similar ideas as those shared in the mid-program survey. Now having completed the program, eleven of the mentees' comments still indicated an increase in instructional knowledge. As one mentee put it, “collaborat[ing] to understand what others in the program were doing in their classrooms and tak[ing] that knowledge for future use” was one of the more valuable aspects of the program. The limits of only primarily discussing the action research project within the mentoring groups was also once again cited (this time by eight mentees) as impeding an increase in instructional knowledge. As another mentee put it, echoing the other seven respondents who felt similarly, “The biggest problem was that we were isolated into one subject. This limited our ability to discuss our teaching more openly and gather insight into our more pressing challenges.” The remaining four responses concerning the action research process as limiting the potential for instructional knowledge growth referred more to the inherent nature of
action research itself, and the fact that these mentees felt, as one put it, going through a formal action research process was “more of a chore rather than a learning experience.”

*Mentor Likert scale results.* Table 6 identifies how the mentors responded to the mid-program Likert scale survey items (to which eight mentors responded), specifically highlighting how particular activities of the program impacted an increase in instructional knowledge. Table 7 then collapses this data to demonstrate the difference between those mentors who reported some to strong impact of the program component on instructional knowledge gains and those mentors who reported no to little impact.

Table 6

*Mentor Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Instructional Knowledge, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>63% (5)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Collapsed Mentor Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Instructional Knowledge, Mid-program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Instructional Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>63% (5)</td>
<td>37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>63% (5)</td>
<td>37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>75% (6)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Tables 6 and 7, a majority of the mentors found there was an increase in instructional knowledge as a result of the overall program. Similar to the mentees, at mid-program the mentors posited the face-to-face meetings (75 percent) to be the strongest contributor to this. However, whereas the mentees' responses then placed collaboration in second (with this activity still being mostly reported as having no to little impact on instructional knowledge gains) and action research and social networking a quite distant third and fourth, the mentors' responses differed. At mid-program, 63 percent of mentors cited both action research and social networking as having some to strong impact on instructional knowledge, while 50 percent of mentors found collaboration to have the same.

**Mentor mid-program open-ended results.** On the mid-program survey, open-ended questions were asked concerning to what extent the components of action research, collaboration, social networking, and face-to-face meetings had an impact on the expected program outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. A number of responses were made concerning each of these program outcomes. Highlighted below are those responses that were made concerning
either components that made a positive impact on instructional knowledge gains or those that were not seen as impacting instructional knowledge gains.

In their open-ended responses on the mid-program survey items, twelve comments were made about mentors’ perceptions of an increase in instructional knowledge. All twelve comments referred to similar reasons, best put by one mentor as “[being] able to give my mentees ideas that have worked well for me, as well as hear ideas they tried and took them back to my own classroom.” Once again, similar to the mentees’ responses, the mentors also attribute the times when they were able to share ideas about classroom practices in general as being the most beneficial to gains in instructional knowledge.

The three comments made concerning non-growth in instructional knowledge were also based on the same reason the mentees had given, that the action research process itself was “cumbersome [and] . . . overwhelming” for the mentees, thereby impeding their gains in instructional knowledge, which, again, were seen as benefited more by discussions about classroom practices in general.

**Mentor end-of-program focus groups.** There were six direct comments made about instructional knowledge increases during the end-of-program focus group with the mentors. These remained similar to the mid-program comments in terms of mentors still feeling, at the completion of the program, that allowing their mentoring group to digress in their discussions away from the action research project and towards sharing ideas about classroom practices did result in growth in instructional knowledge. One mentor zeroed directly in on what her mentees most wanted in terms of instructional growth:

I think they felt what they wanted to do was to collaborate and kind of fill their tool bag with things: ‘What do you do in your classroom that would be successful for this? What
can you share with me that I could bring back and implement in my classroom?’ That's what they were thinking about.

Another mentor took the dialogue to the next level, expressing his own feelings of being torn between what he sees as the benefits of action research and what he saw his mentees needing regarding being able to discuss classroom practices in general, a sentiment all five of the mentors participating in the focus group agreed with:

I'm torn because, on the one hand, action research means you're committing to something and I really believe that maybe it's going to be a lot of work but it's going to make you a better teacher; you're going to learn something valuable in the end of that. But on the other hand, I can see how getting together and just talking about all the things that are going on that second year is also very valuable. I mean, when we got together as a group a lot of conversations would go to that as well.

There were, as stated above, only six comments made directly about instructional knowledge gains during the focus group. This is because the mentors' dialogue turned more toward discussing why teacher isolation may or may not have been reduced (six direct comments were made concerning this and will be analyzed in conjunction with that particular program outcome below); the pros and cons of online collaboration versus face-to-face collaboration (eleven direct comments); issues of group dynamics (nineteen direct comments); and the perceived need of the mentors to adjust the action research process. Twenty-one direct comments were made concerning the latter issue, most of which regarding action research's impact as impeding the possibility of instructional knowledge gains, a sentiment expressed by both mentees and mentors in the mid- and (for the mentees) end-of-program surveys. As one mentor explained, the action research project requirement made the program feel “like a class” to
mentees instead of being mentored, and, because of this, “they didn't want to work, to do the work.”

**Mentee document analysis.** Although the data supporting overall instructional knowledge gains from both mentees and mentors is sporadic (some program components found to aid in these gains; others found to impede them), the blogs and online discussion forums that mentees participated in between September 2011 and March 2012 do demonstrate some of the gains in instructional knowledge mentees were able to make as a result of the program. Many of these examples seem to be a result of collaborative practices (most likely due to the nature of discussion forums). For example, one participant sought out help from her mentoring group, stating on a discussion forum, “I was wondering what you decided to do now that you’ve benchmarked the kids and discovered that everyone is making progress . . . I'm torn between what is right and what is manageable.” Another participant also sought out help via the discussion forum:

I was planning on grouping my word study groups to be the same as my reading groups . . . I was going to have the Words Their Way [a reading program] sorts as a center activity as well. Was anyone else thinking of designing their groups a different way?

While both of these mentees were asking questions that did concern their groups' action research topic, it is clear that there is also a desire present to share classroom practices, as indicated in the mentees' and mentors' open-ended responses on the surveys, as well as in the mentors' focus group.

Some mentees took this need to share classroom practices one step further, actually collaborating on instructional ideas via the discussion forum:

As [a fellow mentee] mentioned, we felt it would be better time spent focusing on
improving our reading workshop since we both have been working on making it more of a true workshop model, changing our instruction to make lessons more meaningful and applicable to our students as readers. . . . I love this new approach so far because it seems like the students have the language to talk about books and are VERY aware of their thinking. I was finding that so many children were fluent with their decoding, but couldn't remember much from the story. Since I have started this new reading workshop, I am seeing that students are much more articulate about the happenings in a story. In particular, I have seen students doing this in their benchmark reading … a teacher's dream!

This example of two mentees' online collaboration seems to have led to instructional growth on their parts, stemming from discussing their classroom practices in relation to their group's action research topic.

Summary. An increase in instructional knowledge was perceived by some participants as an outcome of this program. Despite ample evidence of instructional growth through online collaboration according to the document analysis, mentees reported they mostly experienced this increase when meeting face-to-face with their mentoring groups, 65 percent of them reporting this at mid-program, leading to an increase of 84 percent of mentees reporting this at the end of the program. While the percentage of mentors who found the program to result in instructional growth was overall higher than that of the mentees, both groups consistently mentioned instructional growth in conjunction with opportunities to discuss classroom practices within their mentoring groups, acknowledging that they felt the action research component of the program detracted from these opportunities.
Expected outcome #2: An increase in reflective practice. The following section reports on the mentee and mentor results of the study regarding the degree which they feel the program components and over all program contributed to the mentee’s reflective practice.

Mentee mid- and end-of-program Likert scale results. Table 8 identifies the mentees’ responses concerning how particular activities of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program (i.e., participating in action research, collaborating with their fellow mentees and mentor, social networking with their fellow mentees and mentor, and meeting face-to-face with their fellow mentees and their mentor) impacted their reflective practice. Table 9 then collapses this raw data, highlighting those who reported the program activity as having some to strong impact on instructional knowledge and those who reported the program activity as having no to little impact on instructional knowledge. This data is from the Likert scale responses administered as part of the mid-program survey, to which twenty-three mentees responded.

Table 8

Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reflective Practice, Mid-program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>57% (13)</td>
<td>26% (6)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>35% (8)</td>
<td>44% (10)</td>
<td>13% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>48% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>26% (6)</td>
<td>52% (12)</td>
<td>17% (4)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

_Collapsed Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reflective Practice, Mid-program_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>65% (15)</td>
<td>35% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>43% (10)</td>
<td>57% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>30% (7)</td>
<td>70% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>78% (18)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this data, at mid-program, certain aspects of the program did result in an increase in reflective practice. Meeting face-to-face with their mentoring groups is what most mentees (78 percent) cited as contributing to an increase in their reflective practice. Interestingly, 65 percent of those mentees surveyed attributed the practice of action research as another contributor to an increase in reflective practice (contrasting the mere 26 percent of respondents who cited action research as a contributor to an increase in instructional knowledge in the same survey). Collaboration and social networking were not seen by the majority as having even somewhat assisted any increase in reflective practice (only 43 percent and 30 percent, respectively, saw these components as increasing reflective practice).

Tables 10 and 11 report the same types of data, as reported in the end-of-program survey, to which nineteen mentees responded.
Table 10

*Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reflective Practice, End-of-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
<td>37% (7)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
<td>37% (7)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>26% (5)</td>
<td>26% (5)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>42% (8)</td>
<td>32% (6)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

*Collapsed Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reflective Practice, End-of-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong or Powerful Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>53% (10)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>53% (10)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>26% (5)</td>
<td>74% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>79% (15)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the culmination of the program, a number of mentees still found that the program did result in an increase in reflective practice. Between mid- and end-of-program, mentees' responses about the impact of face-to-face meetings remained almost identical, with 78 percent and 79 percent of respondents on each survey citing this activity as having some to strong or
powerful impact on an increase in reflective practice. Mentees' views towards the impact of action research on gains in reflective practice dropped by 12 percent from mid-program to end-of-program, but still remained above 50 percent, while there was a 10 percent increase in those who cited collaboration as a contributor to an increase in reflective practice (from 43 percent at mid-program to 53 percent at end-of-program). Social networking remained the lowest ranked activity in terms of its contribution to gains in reflective practice (ending at 26 percent), which is no different than how it was ranked in both surveys regrading its impact on instructional knowledge gains.

*Mentee mid- and end-of-program open-ended results.* On the mid- and end-of-program surveys, open-ended questions were asked concerning to what extent the components of action research, collaboration, social networking, and face-to-face meetings had an impact on the expected program outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. A number of responses were made concerning each of these program outcomes. Highlighted below are those responses that were made concerning either components that made a positive impact on reflective practice gains or those that were not seen as impacting reflective practice gains.

Three comments were made by mentees in their open-ended responses on the mid-program survey indicating an increase in reflective practice as a result of the program, while seven were made on the end-of-program survey. In all but one of these comments, mentees attributed these gains to the reflective journaling components of the action research process (the one outlier attributed the gains – in the end-of-program survey – to “hear[ing] . . . feedback about my own classroom” during the face-to-face meetings). One mentee, in her response to the mid-program survey, stated that the majority of the influence this action research project has had
is in “[her] reflective approach to every lesson. It is one thing [to] constantly be assessing the pros and cons of everything we do as teachers, but it is another thing to document it to be revisited later.”

Another, in his response to the end-of-program survey, echoed her sentiments: “The nature of the program . . . caused me to reflect more continuously on each aspect of my day to evaluate for the future, which I felt was a beneficial aspect that will be continued throughout [my career].”

While action research fell second to meeting face-to-face regarding impacting gains in reflective practice, it is clear based on the mentees' open-ended responses that the reflective nature of action research definitely resulted in an increase in reflective practice.

Four total comments between both surveys combined concerned a lack of growth in reflective practice, and can be considered outliers as a result of the overall positive response to reflective practice gains in the Likert scale and open-ended responses. These were each in regards to the respondents feeling that a forced reflection (as part of the program) was not helpful. As one mentee commented at mid-program, he felt “the program [did] not allow for the natural development of [reflection].” In the end-of-program survey, only one similar comment was made, by a mentee about her peers in her mentoring group: “I felt like people were just responding [online] to respond, rather than putting thought and consideration into their postings.”

Mentor Likert scale results. Table 12 identifies how the mentors responded to the mid-program Likert scale survey items of the mid-program survey (to which eight mentors responded), specifically highlighting how particular activities of the program impacted an increase in reflective practice. Table 13 then collapses this data to demonstrate the difference
between those mentors who reported some to strong or powerful impact of the program component on reflective practice gains and those mentors who reported no to little impact.

Table 12

*Mentor Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reflective Practice, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

*Collapsed Mentor Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reflective Practice, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong or Powerful Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Reflective Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>63% (5)</td>
<td>37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>75% (6)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>63% (5)</td>
<td>37% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>75% (6)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated by Tables 12 and 13, at mid-program, most mentors felt there was an increase in reflective practice as a result of the program. 63 percent to 75 percent of mentors surveyed felt that each of the listed program activities had some to strong or powerful impact on
an increase in reflective practice, even ranking social networking positively, the biggest
difference between mentees and mentors on this point.

**Mentor mid-program open-ended results.** On the mid-program survey, open-ended
questions were asked concerning to what extent the components of action research,
collaboration, social networking, and face-to-face meetings had an impact on the expected
program outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a
reduced experience of teacher isolation. A number of responses were made concerning each of
these program outcomes. Highlighted below are those responses that were made concerning
either components that made a positive impact on reflective practice gains or those that were not
seen as impacting reflective practice gains.

While most of the surveyed mentors certainly felt (according to the Likert scale results
analyzed above) that the overall program had at least some impact, if not a strong impact, on
gains in reflective practice, only four comments were made by mentors in the open-ended
responses concerning a growth in reflective practice. These comments were all similar, having to
do with, as one mentor stated, “reflecting as a group [helping with overall] reflective practice.”
According to this mentor, along with the other mentors who commented about this aspect of the
program, group collaboration was definitely a key factor in reflective practice gains, contrasting
the mentees' responses which placed little emphasis on collaboration in terms of its relationship
to reflective practice, highlighting instead the face-to-face meetings and the reflective nature of
action research, both of which were also noted by surveyed mentors if not in their open-ended
responses, then certainly in their Likert ratings as displayed in Tables 12 and 13.

**Mentor end-of-program focus group.** The mentors who participated in the March focus
group, marking the culmination of the program, had a bit more to say about any impact the
program had on gains in reflective practice, all five commenting in one way or another that the program should focus less on the more formalized structure of action research and more on reflective practitionering in general in the future, since it was perceived as the most successfully achieved outcome. Seven direct comments were made about this. One mentor, to the nods of her fellow mentors, summed it up best:

Maybe the term [or the key concept of the program should be] 'reflecting on your practices' . . . When I thought it turned that way with [my] group [turned from an adamant focus on the process of action research to a more reflective dialogue,] . . . the group couldn't stop! And even four out of five [mentees], they would write lengthy [reflections online] . . . They would just get on and it would go on and on, and I thought that was what was wonderful about it. That was the best part.

The mentors were clearly picking up on how most of the mentees felt about the practice of reflection, as demonstrated by both the mentees' mid- and end-of-program survey results, although the above mentor's comments certainly attribute some of this impact to social networking, whereas the mentees did not point to social networking as much of an influence on their reflective practice throughout this program.

Mentee document analysis. Based on both the mentee and mentor data analyzed above, it is no surprise that evidence of growth in reflective practice abounded in the mentees' online document. Due to the nature of how the online blogs and discussion forums functioned within this program (both were established as forums for teacher reflection on their progress with their action research investigation), there were numerous examples of teachers engaging in reflective practice. One mentee was able to reflect on her teaching after reading back through several of her most recent blog posts (an experience found with numerous mentee blogs and forum posts):
“After reading through my journals and those of the group I have noticed a very prevalent pattern; many students struggle with spelling and word attack strategies whether they be on an IEP or not.”

Another mentee took his reflective practice to the next level, feeling compelled to blog reflectively upon certain classroom experiences related directly to his action research focus:

After today's lesson in my American Lit CP 1 class, I feel the need to journal. For both sections I had held Socratic Seminars on The Catcher in the Rye, with a focus on the element of ‘falling’ within in the novel. Students were divided into inner circle groups of up to seven students and had very limited results. I'm hoping that your feedback may help me to understand why this is happening during term 3.

The examples of reflective practice found throughout the document analysis as a whole correspond with the more positive rankings of experienced gains in reflective practice from the mentees on the surveys and from the mentors on the survey and focus group, but potentially contrast with how lowly most mentees ranked social networking as being a program component to increase reflective practice, since of course all the document analysis was conducted via the social networking aspect of the program.

**Summary.** According to most participants in both groups, the program did result in an increase in reflective practice. The mentees mainly saw this increase as a result of both the face-to-face meetings and the built-in reflective nature of the action research process, and demonstrated such reflective practice consistently online, while high numbers of mentors (63 to 75% surveyed) found that each aspect of the program resulted in gains in reflective practice.
Expected outcome #3: A reduced experience of teacher isolation. The following section reports on the mentee and mentor results of the study regarding the degree which they feel the program components and over all program contributioned to the mentee’s reduced experience of teacher isolation.

Mentee mid- and end-of-program Likert scale results. Table 14 identifies the mentees' responses concerning how particular activities of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program (i.e., participating in action research, collaborating with their fellow mentees and mentor, social networking with their fellow mentees and mentor, and meeting face-to-face with their fellow mentees and their mentor) impacted their reduced experience of teacher isolation. Table 15 then collapses this raw data, highlighting those who reported the program activity as having no to little impact on reducing teacher isolation and those who reported the program activity as having some to strong impact on reducing teacher isolation. This data is from the Likert scale responses administered as part of the mid-program survey, to which twenty-three mentees responded.
Table 14

*Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on a Reduced Experience of Teacher Isolation, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>48% (11)</td>
<td>30% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>39% (9)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>30% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>61% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>26% (6)</td>
<td>39% (9)</td>
<td>17% (4)</td>
<td>17% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

*Collapsed Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on a Reduced Experience of Teacher Isolation, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong Impact on Reducing Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Reducing Teacher Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>22% (5)</td>
<td>78% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>48% (11)</td>
<td>52% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>13% (3)</td>
<td>87% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>65% (15)</td>
<td>35% (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At mid-program, most surveyed mentees reported that most aspects of the program did not lead to a reduced experience of teacher isolation. 65 percent found that meeting face-to-face was the predominant program activity that *did* help to reduce their experience of teacher isolation. Almost 50 percent of surveyed mentees saw collaboration as having a similar impact,
while most mentees saw both action research and social networking as not having much impact on reducing teacher isolation at all (22 percent and 13 percent, respectively, saw these components as having some to strong impact on reducing teacher isolation).

Tables 16 and 17 report the same data, from the end-of-program survey, to which nineteen mentees responded.

Table 16

*Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on a Reduced Experience of Teacher Isolation, End-of-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Teacher Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
<td>53% (10)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
<td>42% (8)</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
<td>37% (7)</td>
<td>47% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
<td>42% (8)</td>
<td>32% (6)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

Collapsed Mentee Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on a Reduced Experience of Teacher Isolation, End-of-program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong or Powerful Impact on Reducing Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Reducing Teacher Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>26% (5)</td>
<td>74% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>42% (8)</td>
<td>58% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
<td>84% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>84% (16)</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This data demonstrates that the surveyed mentees' ideas concerning the impact of program activities on reducing teacher isolation did not change significantly between mid-program and end-of-program. The one program component to experience a significant increase in its impact on reducing teacher isolation was meeting face-to-face, which rose from 65 percent to 84 percent of respondents finding it to have had some to strong or powerful impact.

**Mentee mid- and end-of-program open-ended results.** On the mid-program and end-of-program surveys, open-ended questions were asked concerning to what extent the components of action research, collaboration, social networking, and face-to-face meetings had an impact on the expected program outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. A number of responses were made concerning each of these program outcomes. Highlighted below are those responses that were made concerning either components that made a positive impact on reducing teacher isolation or those that were not seen as impacting a reduced experience of teacher isolation.

On the open-ended responses of the mid-program survey, eight mentees commented on an experience of reduced teacher isolation, focusing mostly on the simplicity of “getting to know
other colleagues,” as one mentee put it. Others agreed, stating “It was nice to be able to work with a new group of people to get to know them a little bit better” and “The face to face meetings have been the most valuable to me. I enjoy meeting and talking with other teachers.” This latter comment reflects what most mentees who found a reduced sense of teacher isolation through the program felt – that it was not only becoming acquainted with other teachers, but it was specifically doing so in a face-to-face venue, a sentiment that also shines through in both the mid- and end-of-program Likert scale ratings.

Thirteen comments were made by surveyed mentees as part of the mid-program survey's open-ended responses that demonstrated a non-reduced experience of teacher isolation. Nine of these respondents blamed their continued feelings of teacher isolation on the social networking aspect of the program. One respondent stated that “the blogging has not made me feel more connected to my peers,” while others stated that “the communication was [mostly] online, so this did nothing to reduce isolation,” and “the online component . . . makes you feel disconnected.” The remaining four respondents who felt a continued sense of teacher isolation attributed this to their own group's dynamics. Either, as one mentee stated, group members were “all doing different topics for [their action research] projects [resulting in] the collaboration [not being] productive,” or group members were not teaching the exact same grade level (though all were placed with very similar grade level teachers). One mentee posited, “I feel that collaboration within . . . grade level teams would have been far more useful and productive.”

By the end-of-program, having met a few more times in a face-to-face forum, mentees swung once again towards recognizing the connections made and relationships built through the program, eighteen making comments about a reduced experience of teacher isolation. While seventeen mentees made comments about having not experienced reduced teacher isolation,
eleven still citing the social networking aspect of the program as being isolating (one mentee commented that “if anything, [he] found [himself] in [his] classroom blogging, reading, and collecting data for the program causing increased isolation”) and the remaining six still citing group dynamics as a factor, fourteen other respondents commented on, as one mentee put it, “the experience build[ing] relationships just by virtue of meeting others.” Another mentee agreed, stating that “it was great to get together with others from the field and from different buildings to gain other perspectives.” Once again, the impact of face-to-face meetings is seen here.

**Mentor mid-program Likert scale results.** Table 18 identifies how the mentors responded to the mid-program Likert scale survey items of the mid-program survey (to which eight mentors responded), specifically highlighting how particular activities of the program impacted a reduced sense of teacher isolation. Table 19 then collapses this data to demonstrate the difference between those mentors who reported some to strong impact of the program component on reduced teacher isolation and those mentors who reported no to little impact.
Table 18

*Mentor Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Powerful Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Strong Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Some Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting Little Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting No Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19

*Collapsed Mentor Likert Scale Responses Regarding Program Impact on Reduced Teacher Isolation, Mid-program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Activity</th>
<th># Reporting Some to Strong Impact on Reducing Teacher Isolation</th>
<th># Reporting No to Little Impact on Reducing Teacher Isolation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
<td>50% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>38% (3)</td>
<td>63% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>75% (6)</td>
<td>25% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only program activity demonstrating a majority opinion (75 percent) on reduced experience of teacher isolation according to surveyed mentors at mid-program was meeting face-to-face. Concerning both action research and collaboration, surveyed mentors were split (50
percent). And this particular survey item generated the only response that placed the highest percentage of mentors' ratings in the no to little impact range; roughly 63 percent of mentors surveyed reported social networking as having no to little impact on reducing teacher isolation, a finding very similar to that of the mentees'.

**Mentor mid-program open-ended results.** On the mid-program survey, open-ended questions were asked concerning to what extent the components of action research, collaboration, social networking, and face-to-face meetings had an impact on the expected program outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. A number of responses were made concerning each of these program outcomes. Highlighted below are those responses that were made concerning either components that made a positive impact on reducing teacher isolation or those that were not seen as impacting a reduced experience of teacher isolation.

In their open-ended responses from the mid-program, five comments were made claiming there was a reduced experience in teacher isolation, citing group reflection and collaboration as factors influencing this: “Reflecting as a group has . . . reduced the feelings of isolation;” “[The most valuable aspect of the program has been] meeting other teachers and collaborating.” Both of these comments corroborate what the mentees said through their open-ended responses concerning building relationships and making acquaintances. One mentor pointed out an issue that very few other open-ended responses, whether from a mentee or a mentor, dealt with in terms of reducing teacher isolation, that of mentees being placed in groups with teachers who worked in different schools: “[My mentees] feel isolated in this group because of being at all different schools.” The remaining four comments made by mentors concerning a non-reduced experience of teacher isolation attributed this to social networking and a lack of consistent online
participation from mentees. As one mentor stated, “Social networking has been least valuable to me because many/most members of my group were very inconsistent about it.”

**Mentor end-of-program focus group.** Comments made by mentors at the culmination of the program during the March focus group, however, also related to the notion of mentoring group members being from different schools having scant impact on reducing teacher isolation. Out of the six comments directly referencing teacher isolation made during the focus group, half of them dealt with this issue. One mentor's comments illustrate this best:

They still felt isolated because they're still in their own school so they were unable to . . . on a daily basis to pop in and say, ‘What do you think about this; what do you think about that?’ That's what they were looking for . . . Even though they could go online and do it, but . . . we were struggling . . . We found that most people waited until the very last minute, you know, to post their responses [to one another's questions or concerns]. So that was frustrating, I think, for them. So, I think that would be why it was still isolated.

Another mentor backed this up, stating that her mentees “felt they were in isolation even from each other. They weren't all on the same team . . .” While no mentees commented directly on this in their open-ended responses from either survey as an aspect of the program that impacted their sense of teacher isolation, it is clear according to the mentors' comments made during the focus group that this sentiment was expressed to the mentors by the mentees at various points throughout the program.

Two of the five mentors who participated in the focus groups reported that their mentoring groups, although made up of teachers from different schools, still functioned well in terms of reducing teacher isolation, mostly due to the cohesiveness of the group which resulted
from how collaborative their respective groups were regarding their chosen action research topics. One mentor explained,

Some of [the mentees in this program] did their own research . . . their own topic. And then there were those that chose the other option of working collaboratively [on one group topic] and I would say that would definitely make a difference.” Another mentor corroborated:

I think [my mentees] got more out of it, I would say. Because they felt like they weren't doing it alone. Maybe they felt like they could benefit from each other. And I know that [they] felt that connection because they were doing something very, very similar. That helped them to feel that way.

Once again, although this is not an issue mentees pointed directly at in their open-ended responses as a factor in helping to reduce their isolation as teachers, for these two mentors, the cohesiveness of their respective groups' action research topics was a definite key in reducing teacher isolation.

**Mentee document analysis.** Nowhere on the online blogs or on the discussion forums did mentees post thoughts or ideas about an experience of teacher isolation, reduced or otherwise. However, there were at least ten instances when mentees directly mentioned looking forward to upcoming face-to-face meetings in their posts, possibly supporting the above findings from both mentee and mentor data that mentees felt the least isolated when they had the opportunity to meet face-to-face instead of online. Two mentees both posted the following type of anticipation online: “I am glad we are able to discuss face-to-face today;” “It will be fun to meet in March and compare notes!”

**Summary.** According to both groups, a reduced experience of teacher isolation was somewhat achieved by the program, mainly in regards to the opportunities to meet face-to-face.
Mentees (84 percent) found that the social networking aspects actually made them feel more isolated, while the mentors agreed (63 percent), but also attributed group dynamics to whether or not the group as a whole had experienced reduced teacher isolation.

**Overall impact of the program on the growth of instructional knowledge, reflective practice, and reduced sense of teacher isolation.** On the mid- and end-of-program surveys, three final open-ended questions were asked concerning what participants found to be most valuable about the program, least valuable about the program, and how they would redesign any or all aspects of the second-year teacher mentoring program. The following findings were identified through an analysis of mentee and mentor responses to the following three open-ended survey questions: (1) What has been most valuable about the program?; (2) What has been least valuable about the program?; and, (3) How would you redesign any or all aspects of the program?

**What has been most valuable about the program?** On the mid-program survey, when asked what was most valuable about the program, mentees were split between facets of the program that they perceived as impacting instructional knowledge gains and program components that they perceived as impacting a reduced sense of teacher isolation. Nine mentees commented on instructional knowledge gains, six of whom attributed these gains to being able to share classroom practices with one another during the face-to-face meetings. As one mentee stated, “Discussing [classroom ideas] with other teachers has been most valuable. Discussing successes, failures, breakthroughs, and frustrations truly helps with professional growth. When meeting together we have the unique opportunity to use one another’s ideas to grow professionally.” The remaining three comments pointed to the practice of action research as most valuable in its impact on instructional knowledge. As one mentee best summed up, what
was most valuable was “the practice of instituting a research project that will ultimately benefit the students and school as a whole,” while another mentee appreciated the opportunity to “[look] at long term goals and [have] a theme, a specific goal to accomplish.”

By end-of-program, mentees still pointed to components they perceived as leading to gains in instructional knowledge as being the most valuable. However, this time, all five who commented as such attributed this to sharing classroom practices during face-to-face meetings. As one mentee phrased it, “The face-to-face meetings with my fellow mentees was the most valuable experience. Here we were able to share information openly and honestly. We picked up tips from one another to help us in the classroom.” Four other mentees commented on opportunities for reflective practice as most valuable, one mentee stating that “spending time reflecting on our practices is helpful.” Nine mentees commented on reduced experiences of teacher isolation as being most valuable, and all nine attributed this to their face-to-face meetings. As one mentee stated, “meeting with teachers to discuss our occupation was the most valuable piece to this program.”

On the mid-program survey, mentors were also asked what they saw as most valuable about the program. Six commented on components they perceived as impacting gains in instructional knowledge, all six attributing this to their own experience guiding and helping their mentees and to connecting with those just starting out in the field. As one mentor stated, “The most valuable part of this program has been the positive impact I have had on my mentee’s learning experience because, just like teaching, helping others succeed always makes you feel proud of your accomplishments.” One mentor commented on reducing teacher isolation as being the most valuable aspect of the program, stating that “meeting other teachers and collaborating” with each other was most valuable.
What has been least valuable about the program? On the mid-program survey, when asked what was least valuable about the program, mentees overwhelmingly pointed to program components they saw as not impacting instructional knowledge gains. Ten mentees commented on this, all attributing this to the practice of action research and how they did not see it as suitable for second-year teachers. As one mentee best summed it up, “I don’t feel that as a second year teacher I know well enough yet what DOESN’T work . . . so to complete this . . . research project seems strange.” The other three comments pointed to a lack of reduced teacher isolation as the least valuable program aspect, attributing this to what they perceived as the unsocial nature of social networking. As one mentee stated, “the online component . . . makes you feel disconnected.”

On the end-of-the-program survey, ten mentees still reported that the practice of action research (which they did not see as leading to gains in instructional knowledge) was least valuable. As one mentee stated, “The action research project . . . did not help me. . . . What I really needed was a group of people to help me solve my problems.” The remaining two comments were from mentees who reported that they found the online collaboration to be least valuable. As one stated, “I felt like people were just responding to respond, rather than putting thought and consideration into their postings.”

On the mid-program survey, mentors were also asked what they saw as least valuable about the program. Three mentors pointed to the practice of action research as being too “overwhelming,” as one mentor put it, for the mentees for it to have had any impact on instructional knowledge gains. The remaining two comments from mentees pointed to the lack of impact on reducing teacher isolation as least valuable. Both attributed this to the practice of
social networking, particularly the lack of consistent participation online. As one mentor stated, “Most members of my group were very inconsistent about it.”

**How would you redesign any or all aspects of the program?** On the mid-program survey, mentees were asked how they might redesign any or all aspects of the program. Eleven of their responses all reflected the desire of second-year teachers to make gains in instructional knowledge, but offered a different way of meeting this goal, namely, meeting with other teachers to share ideas about classroom practices. In these eleven comments, mentees called for “collaborative workshops;” time for “teachers [to] talk with other teachers about the 'issues' they are facing and [to] discuss possible solutions;” and “monthly meetings where teachers and a mentor come together to bring ideas and share concerns.” Two other mentees commented on reflective practices, both recommending that this remain part of the program. Three mentees made suggestions about reducing teacher isolation by including more face-to-face meetings and minimizing time spent social networking.

On the end-of-program survey, mentees once again mostly mentioned program aspects they felt could lead to an increase in instructional knowledge. All ten respondents who mentioned this called for time to “address all the [classroom] issues we may be having;” “time to share ideas;” and support of “our daily practices in the classroom.” One mentee also suggested continuing to include opportunities for reflective practice.

On the mid-program survey, mentors also pointed to program aspects they felt could lead to instructional knowledge gains when asked which aspects of the program they would redesign. The four mentors who commented as such recommended expanding opportunities to share classroom practices and scaling back the action research process. As one mentor suggested, the
program coordinator should “reduce the work load of [action research],” and another mentor stated, “people in their second year of teaching still require guidance about teaching.”

Summary. The expected outcome of growth in instructional knowledge was perceived to have been met by some participants. According to the Likert scale survey results, most mentees attributed any increase in instructional knowledge to face-to-face meetings, with 65 percent of mentees reporting this at mid-program and 84 percent reporting this at the end of the program. Mentors’ Likert scale survey results are similarly high in terms of face-to-face meetings, and both groups’ open-ended questions also support this finding. These open-ended responses consistently point to the gains in instructional knowledge as being most achieved when mentees were able to share classroom practices with one another. Indeed, a total of fourteen comments were made on the surveys combined that pointed to the sharing of classroom practices as being the most valuable aspect of the program. Such responses also pointed to the practice of action research as being detrimental to instructional knowledge growth, with a total of ten mentees each on both the mid- and end-of-program surveys and three mentors on the mid-program survey citing action research as the least valuable program component, especially in terms of increasing instructional knowledge.

According to most program participants, the expected outcome of growth in reflective practice was achieved. Mentees mainly attributed this to the face-to-face meetings as well as the opportunities for reflective practice within action research, and mentors rated each program component as having some to strong impact on reflective practice, according to the Likert scale survey results. The open-ended responses reflect this finding as well. Four mentees perceived opportunities for reflective practice as being the most valuable aspect of the program, and two suggested that, in redesigning the program, reflective practice opportunities remain.
According to both groups, the expected outcome of reduced teacher isolation was somewhat achieved, mostly due to the face-to-face meetings. The Likert scale survey results support this finding, demonstrating that participants saw social networking as far inferior to face-to-face meetings. Eighty-four percent of mentees reported that social networking had no impact on reducing teacher isolation, and sixty-three percent of mentors agreed. The open-ended responses also support this finding. Five mentees reported that face-to-face meetings were the most valuable aspect of the program, and three reported that social networking was the least valuable. In offering suggestions on how to redesign the program, eleven mentees called for more face-to-face meetings in order to better reduce teacher isolation.

Research Question #2: Which components of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program have contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

The second research question was: Which components of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program have contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher? In investigating this question, themes were identified in analyzing data sources from both mentees and mentors, respectively.

**Mid- and end-of-program themes of mentees.** Twenty-three mentees responded to an online mid-program survey containing open-ended questions, and nineteen mentees responded to an online end-of-program survey containing open-ended questions. For each survey, three themes were identified regarding the useful components of the second-year teacher mentoring program, and three themes were identified regarding those components which were seen as not useful. Data from the document analysis sources (mentees' online blogs and discussion forums) serves to shed further light on these themes.
Mid-program themes of mentees. Table 20 identifies the themes of the mentees at mid-program regarding both useful program components and program components that were not useful.

Table 20

**Mid-program Themes of Mentees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Reflective Practice</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Sharing Classroom Practices</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
<th># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Formal Structure of Action Research</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lack of Support</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lack of Sufficient Time</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mid-program themes of mentees—useful program components. Three themes were identified regarding the useful components of the program based on open-ended survey data upon mentees reaching the midway point of the program in December 2011 (at this point, mentees had been in the program for three and a half months, and had another three months to go before the culmination of the program): (1) the value of reflective practice, (2) the value of meeting face-to-face, and (3) the value of sharing classroom practices.

The value of reflective practice. Seven comments were made by mentees concerning their enjoyment of the reflective nature of the action research component of the program, illustrating its usefulness to them. Although as evidenced during the investigation of the first research question that the action research aspect of the program was not found overly useful by mentees, this one factor of action research— that of reflecting on one's practices, continually
thinking about what works and what doesn't work and why in terms of a specific instructional goal – was considered helpful. As one mentee phrased it, “I like that it encourages teachers to explore their teaching practices and find ways to improve them. Having us think about our goals and how we want to achieve them has been valuable.” Several mentees expressed their thoughts about the practice of reflective journaling via blogging. Although at times they seemed to resent being compelled to write reflective journal entries as part of the program, they did see the benefits of such a practice. One mentee's comments encapsulated these thoughts: “When I sat down to [post a blog/reflective journal entry] it felt forced. However, being forced to reflect on my own work and respond to others was beneficial.”

Such examples of the usefulness of reflective practice to the mentees can be seen in reading their blog entries. Often, upon writing a series of reflective posts, mentees would begin to note trends in their classroom practice, trends which informed their goals and plans for future action. One mentee wrote one such post after writing several reflective journals about her reading block time in her elementary classroom:

One thing I saw as a common theme was my reading block definitely not being run the way I want it to yet. I am hoping to start my work stations (centers) sometime soon and I am missing the word work/grammar piece of that puzzle.

A middle school librarian also found clarity upon completing a series of reflective posts about her work as an instructor in the media center:

It became clear that students will need to have a strong foundation of information literacy prior to writing source citations. It became clear that library instruction must be focused and sequential in order to get the maximum number of students to mastery by the end of the year. . . . I have found many times that doing 'too much, too fast' creates confusion and
hinders learning in the library.

Despite being “forced” to do so, these examples of mentees’ blogs and comments demonstrate the value of reflective practice to second-year teachers, making this particular aspect of the program one that contributed to its outcomes.

*The value of meeting face-to-face.* Six comments were made on the open-ended responses of the mid-program survey that specifically focused on the benefits mentees received from being able to meet face-to-face with their mentoring groups. Although these face-to-face meetings had only occurred once or twice for each group at the time of the mid-program survey (with most collaboration having occurred online through social networking), their impact was clear. Mentees’ comments were mainly directed at what they felt was the more authentic and real-time nature of meeting face-to-face. One mentee explained that she felt “the conversations we had at our face-to-face meetings were more authentic and valuable.” Several mentees attributed this value to, as stated above, the real-time nature of meeting in person. As one mentee stated, “This was a positive experience where follow up questions could be asked and feedback could be given right away.”

Most mentees commenting on the value of meeting face-to-face explained it in comparison to social networking, which they saw as potentially too restrictive. As one mentee expressed,

I enjoyed the face to face meetings even more than the blogging. I felt that these meetings were more accessible to me as a learner. I also liked that we could trail off from action research and discuss other meaningful aspects of teaching.

The “accessibility” of the face-to-face meetings seems to be related to this ability to “trail off” from the more narrow conversations held online about the mentees’ action research topics and
progress, allowing mentees to simply discuss classroom practices at large.

In looking at the online discussion forums, it's clear that mentees were grateful for the time spent in person with their mentoring group. Typically, mentees left these meetings feeling that issues had been resolved for them. As one mentee wrote,

Yesterday was so helpful I believe for [all of] us. Sometimes I think I make this harder than it is. This is a learning experience for all of us. I can see the full picture now.

Thanks for your help, advice, and input.

Since comments like this were not directly made about dialoguing online, it is clear that discussing issues face-to-face was valuable for the learning and growth of the second-year teachers.

*The value of sharing classroom practices.* As mentioned above, one part of meeting face-to-face mentees valued was the ability to digress in their discussions away from their action research work and towards more day-to-day issues they were experiencing in their classrooms. The ability to sit with other second-year teachers and a mentor and share ideas and concerns about classroom practice was truly valued by the mentees. Ten comments were made about this experience on the open-ended responses of the December survey. Two comments in particular represent what mentees were feeling:

Meeting and discussing things with other teachers has been most valuable. Discussing successes, failures, breakthroughs, and frustrations truly helps with professional growth. When meeting together we have the unique opportunity to use one another's ideas to grow professionally.

The most valuable aspect of the program is being able to meet with other professionals to discuss concerns, issues, progress, and ideas. I think it helps to reduce the isolation,
which is important.

In investigating the online documents, there is no mention of the value of sharing classroom practices. This is most likely a result of mentees feeling restricted in their online posts to only discuss their action research topics, not feeling able to branch off from this to discuss simply any issue of classroom practice that had surfaced for them. As previously mentioned, this “branching off” was more possible for mentees during the face-to-face meetings.

Mid-program themes of mentees – program components that were not useful. Three themes were identified regarding program components that were not useful based on open-ended survey data upon mentees reaching the midway point of the program in December 2011: (1) the formal structure of action research, (2) a lack of support, and (3) a lack of sufficient time.

The formal structure of action research. Fifteen comments were made by mentees on the open-ended responses of the December survey illustrating mentees' frustrations with the formality of conducting action research. These mentees felt torn between investigating their action research topic in their classrooms and their more pressing, day-to-day struggles as beginning teachers. One mentee stated, “It has been too much to . . . implement such . . . formal research when my worries are still if I'm going to make it through report cards and conferences.” Another mentee echoed this sentiment, expressing how she still feels challenged by the basics of teaching: “The structure of this [action research] was extremely demanding and limiting. As a second year teacher, I am still challenged by all different aspects of my teaching from classroom management to curriculum development.”

Although, as illustrated by the logic model, the action research was implemented as a program activity that would result in the outcome of growth in instructional knowledge, it seems
that the type of knowledge most sought by these second-year teachers still relates to their comfort level in the classroom and with school procedures.

**A lack of support.** Related to the mentees' desires to simply deal with the day-to-day challenges of beginning teaching as explained above is the lack of support mentees felt throughout their participation in the second-year teacher mentoring program. They did not feel a lack of support concerning their action research projects; rather, they yearned for a different type of support, with twelve mentees commenting on the need for support that would help them with, as one mentee put it, “the more pressing day-to-day aspects of teaching that I am currently working to improve.”

This perceived lack of support quite possibly stems from a comparison made by some mentees between their first year of mentoring (which typically consisted of a one-on-one mentor who met weekly with his or her mentee to discuss classroom management issues, procedural issues, and some instructional needs) and this second-year program, which, as can be seen by the logic model, consisted of very different inputs and activities. Those mentees who experienced frustration at not having as much opportunity to receive support concerning the “day-to-day aspects of teaching” wanted a second-year mentoring program that “resembled first year mentoring where mentors and mentees met regularly to discuss their specific classroom needs. . . ..,” as one mentee put it. She continued to explain, “I believe I could have learned more from my colleagues if we were given time to discuss our own teaching concerns.” Many mentees did not feel ready to move beyond this type of support, more often associated with first-year mentoring programs, and thus felt that their perceived lack of support through this program was not useful for them.
A lack of sufficient time. Eleven mentees commented specifically about not feeling they had enough time to complete all aspects of the program. Most of these comments attributed this to their being too busy as teachers, especially concerning the time they reported needing to devote to the day-to-day practices of teaching. As one mentee stated, her time spent on the program’s activities was “time that [she] could have otherwise spent more productively on [her] own classroom.” Another mentee explained that she also felt “time in a teacher's day could be better spent working on planning and other things.” Instead of seeing the action research process and collaborating with others as a way to help inform their classroom practices and their planning, many mentees saw it as a separate, independent activity that was not related to their day-to-day lives as teachers. Instead, it was seen by one mentee as “a large inconvenience” due to the “time constraints of the everyday job” of teaching.

Since mentees were working on action research topics that directly related to their work in their classrooms (for example, two groups of elementary teacher mentees were working on incorporating a new reading program called Words Their Way in order to increase student achievement in various aspects of reading development), it is interesting that they saw the time spent on their action research work as being separate from their work in their classroom or on planning. Yet, the issue of time constraints also surfaced in the online discussion forums, where mentees stated comments like the following to their fellow mentoring group members:

I feel like we're ALWAYS running out of time!

We're definitely all in the same boat with the ever growing to do list. I honestly feel lately that I'm not getting anywhere . . . unfortunately we're pulled in EVERY direction and I guess there just isn't always enough time.

I feel it was very difficult to really wrap my head around and give it [action research] the
thought it deserved with report cards, progress reports, and all the testing/evals/IEPs I have going on at the moment.

Their frustration due to a perceived lack of time is evident. Although the logic model highlights two of the program's expected outcomes as growth in instructional knowledge and growth in reflective practice, the perceived lack of sufficient time by mentees may be enough to hinder these outcomes. As one mentee lamentingly questioned in an online discussion forum, “How do we try our best at improving, without spreading ourselves too thin?”

**End-of-program themes of mentees.** Table 21 identifies the themes of the mentees at end-of-program regarding both useful program components and program components that were not useful.

Table 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End-of-program Themes of Mentees</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</strong></th>
<th><strong># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Reflective Practice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Sharing Classroom Practices</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Inappropriateness of Action Research for Second-year Teachers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lack of a Mentor in One's Own School</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impersonal Nature of Social Networking</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**End-of-program themes of mentees – useful program components.** The same three themes were identified regarding the useful components of the program based on open-ended survey data upon mentees reaching the culmination of the program in March 2012 as the themes identified regarding the useful program components on the mid-program survey: (1) the value of
reflective practice, (2) the value of meeting face-to-face, and (3) the value of sharing classroom practices.

**The value of reflective practice.** Six mentees commented on the value of reflective practice upon their culmination of the mentoring program. Half of these respondents focused on the reflective nature of the action research project itself, while the other half commented on the specific practice of reflective online blogging.

Those who experienced the action research “project [as] informative into reflective teaching,” as one mentee put it, felt that, as another stated, “the project did give . . . different insight into . . . teaching and how to look at . . . plans differently.” As seen at mid-program, the reflective aspects of action research continued to be the one piece of action research that was seen by the mentees as valuable, leading (as found in investigating the first research question) to growth in reflective practice as the expected outcome most perceived by mentees to have been achieved.

This is further emphasized by those mentees who found the online reflective blogging to also have had value. As stated by one mentee, “I also found [the social networking] to be a valuable resource when we were posting the journal reflections because I got to see areas where other teachers found difficulties and when they responded I received valuable feedback and support.” This link between collaborating and reflecting on one's practice was at least partially achieved via social networking.

**The value of meeting face-to-face.** Almost identical to the responses on the mid-program survey were the eight responses made by mentees at end-of-program regarding the ability to use face-to-face time to digress away from action research and towards a simpler sharing of classroom issues. One mentee stated,
The face to face meetings were most valuable. I was able to express issues in my
classroom with other second-year teachers and our mentor. I was able to obtain advice
and assurance that I am not the only one who may have certain difficulties.

This comment, representative of most comments made concerning this idea, relates to the
lack of support mentees felt the program provided as evidenced by the mid-program survey
responses. Clearly, by the end of the program in March (upon which time mentees had met face-
to-face with their groups at least twice more since December), mentees felt some of that missed
support, but only through the face-to-face meetings.

The face-to-face meetings also seemed most valuable in terms of collaborating, as
evidenced by one mentee's comment that “the few face to face meetings we had were the most
valuable. It was nice to brainstorm ideas for success in the classroom.” The face-to-face
meetings were seen as valuable in that they provided the emotional support mentees missed from
their first year, and in that they provided the opportunity to share and discuss ideas about
classroom practices.

**The value of sharing classroom practices.** As at mid-program, by the end of the
program the mentees still felt that taking opportunities throughout the program (mostly during
face-to-face meetings upon digressing from discussion of action research topics) to share
classroom practices was one of the most valuable aspects of the program, and that which
contributed to the expected outcomes, particularly that of growth in instructional knowledge.
The following comments are representative of the seven made by mentees concerning the value
they placed on sharing classroom practices:

It was nice to discuss different strategies and different scenarios that we face in our
classes.
I gained the most out of just talking about our classrooms.

Having a chance just simply to discuss instructional practices in the classroom with other teachers [was most valuable].

Between what mentees felt was not useful at mid-program – the lack of support – and the above comments (which, interestingly, do not reflect a planned activity of the program according to the logic model, which focused solely on collaboration around action research topics and not around classroom practices in general), it is clear that the mentees most felt the support they wanted when they took opportunities to share classroom practices, opportunities that were only afforded to them, as they perceived it, during the face-to-face meetings.

**End-of-program themes of mentees – program components that were not useful.**

Three themes were identified regarding program components that were not useful based on open-ended survey data upon mentees reaching the culmination of the program in March 2012: (1) the inappropriateness of action research for second-year teachers, (2) the lack of a mentor in one's own school, and (3) the impersonal nature of social networking.

**The inappropriateness of action research for second-year teachers.** As compared to mid-program survey results, when mentees felt that the formal structure of action research was not useful for them, by the culmination of the program, eight mentees expressed their concern with the action research process more specifically in regards to not feeling that, as second-year teachers, they were equipped to handle the process. Table 22 illustrates five quotes representative of their points.
Table 22

*Mentee Comments Concerning the Inappropriateness of Action Research for Second-Year Teachers*

| "I think that it would better serve a more experienced teacher. There are still too many day-to-day questions and problems to solve as a second year teacher." |
| "That might be a valuable tool for any teacher but I don't believe it helped me as a second-year teacher." |
| "The action research project was initially too demanding for a second year teacher." |
| "The step by step process was troubling. As a second-year teacher, I felt I did not have a clear idea of the end-product/goal." |
| "Ultimately the program is overly demanding of a second year teacher." |

Clearly, there are concerns of efficacy for the second-year teachers in terms of whether they feel capable to conduct action research in their classrooms as beginning teachers. Interestingly, none of the comments displayed in Table 31 find direct fault with conducting action research itself, and two make direct reference to it being a process that would be valuable for “any teacher,” specifically “a more experienced teacher.” This makes sense when analyzed side-by-side with the previously stated needs of the mentees for more support and for more opportunities to share classroom practices. They seem to view more experienced teachers as eventually not needing these types of support any longer, at which point they are ready to delve into action research.

*The lack of a mentor in one's own school.* Whereas at mid-program mentees were concerned with a perceived lack of support, especially in comparison to the type of support they felt during the first-year mentoring program, by the end of the program mentees had narrowed this concern to missing the assignment to them of a mentor from the same building at which they taught (a component of the first-year mentoring program, where mentees meet with one-on-one
mentors from their own school, versus the second-year program, where mentees collaborated in
groups consisting of fellow mentees and a mentor, all of whom may be spread out district-wide
in order to accommodate the group nature of the program as identified by the logic model).

Ten comments were made on the end-of-program survey reflecting this concern, illustrating the mentees’ desire for a different type of support provided to them by a mentor within their building. One mentee stated, “I would rather have had a mentor that I could contact in my building for concerns that I was having in my classroom,” while another mentee explained a similar want: “Mentors should be teachers in our own buildings that we can grab for a quick question or discuss a particularly difficult day to brainstorm other ideas.” The latter comment especially reflects the need for real-time feedback as found from the mid-program survey results concerning the availability of this during face-to-face meetings.

The impersonal nature of social networking. While on the mid-program surveys mentees mainly focused on their preference for face-to-face meetings versus social networking, by the end of the program mentees were further elaborating on this issue, delving into what it was about social networking that made it inferior to meeting face-to-face. Twelve total comments were made concerning this issue; table 23 highlights five such comments:
Table 23

_Mentees’ Comments Concerning the Impersonal Nature of Social Networking_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The in-person meetings were much more impactful than the online discussions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It [social networking] was too impersonal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A great deal of brainstorming occurs in a face to face meeting and ours were productive. I also feel as though most discussions are much more open and honest at a face to face meeting vs. through social networking media.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You are better able to delve into topics and ask/answer questions in a face to face format.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel we share more in person than on Ning [the venue used for social networking].”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These comments identify that mentees found face-to-face meetings to be much more personal than social networking, explaining that face-to-face meetings were “more open and honest” and encouraged more sharing, resulting in these meetings being perceived as more “productive” than the online discussions.

An interesting issue with social networking surfaced in two mentees' comments on the end-of-program survey. Both mentees expressed concerns about using social networking to share their teaching practices: “I felt uncomfortable sharing online;” “I felt uncomfortable discussing my teaching practices over the internet.” This concern may have had a decent impact on why the mentees found the social networking aspects of the program to be of little use.

_Summary_. The components of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program that contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by mentees are (1) meeting face-to-face, (2) engaging in reflective practice, and (3) sharing classroom practices. The themes as coded based on both the mid-program survey and the end-of-program survey demonstrate this; since these themes did not alter at all between December and March, it is clear that the three program components listed above are what contributed most to the program’s desired outcomes.
Engaging in reflective practice, according to mentees, was the only stand-out aspect of the action research process in terms of having a valuable impact. While it was seen through the document analysis that this reflective practice was definitely happening in the blogs and through the discussion forums, mentees did not find social networking to have been a valuable program component. They attributed this mainly to what they saw as the impersonal nature of social networking, much preferring to meet face-to-face (a program component that was seen as contributing to the program's outcomes). Although the face-to-face meetings were, according to the logic model, established in order to provide a venue for collaborative action research, often these meetings turned away from discussing mentees’ action research projects (which they found too formal and cumbersome as second-year teachers) and towards discussing everyday classroom practices. This practice was not an activity or input of the program (as can be seen on the logic model) but nevertheless occurred and was seen as a contributing factor to the program's desired outcomes. Perhaps this type of sharing face-to-face reminded mentees of their experience in the first-year mentoring program, leading them to wish the second-year program offered them the same types of support, especially, according to a faction of mentees, support from a mentor who taught in the same building as they did.

Mid- and end-of-program themes of mentors. Eight of the second-year teacher mentoring program's nine mentors responded to a mid-program online survey containing open-ended questions, and five mentors participated in an end-of-program focus group. For both the mid-program survey and the end-of-program focus group, three themes were identified regarding the useful components of the second-year teacher mentoring program, and three themes were identified regarding those components which were seen as not useful.


**Mid-program themes of mentors.** Table 24 identifies the themes of the mentors at mid-program regarding both useful program components and program components that were not useful.

Table 24

*Mid-program Themes of Mentors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Guiding and Helping Beginning Teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Collaborating</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
<th># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Lack of Mentee Buy-In and Motivation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Practice of Social Networking</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lack of Mentees in One’s Own School</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mid-program themes of mentors – useful program components.** Three themes were identified regarding the useful components of the program based on mentor mid-program open-ended survey data: (1) the value of guiding and helping beginning teachers, (2) the value of meeting face-to-face, and (3) the value of collaborating.

**The value of guiding and helping beginning teachers.** At mid-program, seven of the eight mentors who participated in the survey commented on the feeling that they had been able to help and guide a beginning teacher as one of the most, if not the most, valuable aspects of the program. As two of the mentors put it, they felt it was valuable for them to have been of some assistance to their mentees: “I do believe I made a difference by guiding and supporting their work;” “I feel helping the group to focus their projects and learning this process together [was the most valuable aspect of the program].”
One mentor also commented that simply watching as a beginning teacher embarked on investigating his or her instruction was most valuable: “I . . . think the greatest value was the ability to kind of see someone . . . really set out on a mission to figure out something critically important to his/her professional classroom . . .” It should be no surprise, considering the nature of those who volunteer to mentor, that the act of guiding and helping beginning teachers and watching them grow was seen by mentors as one of the more valuable components of the program.

**The value of meeting face-to-face.** Four of the eight surveyed mentors commented on the value of meeting face-to-face. Table 25 displays their comments.

Table 25

*Mentors’ Comments Concerning the Value of Meeting Face-to-Face*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I enjoyed the face to face meetings very much. It was easier chatting and collaborating face to face.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This was my favorite part of the program – meeting face-to-face. I wish the program were building based so that mentees/mentors could meet more often and easier.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I . . . prefer the face-to-face contact. I think it's because I feel like I can steer conversation better in person. . . . It's harder for me to tell them what to do online, but in a “live” situation I can better approach this and say 'but what about trying this...’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My mentees and I all agreed that the face-to-face meetings was [sic] a very positive aspect of the mentoring process. . . . the face-to-face interaction is always a plus when collaborating with peers.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similar to comments made by mentees about face-to-face meetings, mentors found that it was “easier . . . collaborating face to face,” and that these meetings afforded the preferred, more real-time feedback, allowing mentors to “steer [the] conversation better.” Some mentors also felt, like some mentees, that a “building based” mentor/mentee relationship may have been more effective.
The value of collaborating. Five of the eight surveyed mentors mentioned collaboration as being a valuable and useful component of the program. One mentor mentioned liking being “involved in 'new communities' of learning and thinking about the profession, [and] this is one of those new communities,” while another simply posited that “collaborating with mentees and interacting with other mentors has been a very positive experience.”

A couple mentors expanded more specifically about the value of collaborating through this program, pointing out that collaborating via sharing classroom practices was useful (not an uncommon finding!). As one mentor explained, “I was able to give my mentees ideas that have worked well for me, as well as hear ideas they tried and took them back to my own classroom.” A second mentor agreed that mentors received ideas about classroom practice from their mentees, stating,

The most valuable part of this experience has been getting to know people who are new in the field as they have a great new outlook on things that we have been doing for years.

It can be nice to see new perspectives and try new approaches to the same old jobs.

Mid-program themes of mentors – program components that were not useful. Three themes were identified regarding program components that were not useful based on mid-program open-ended survey data: (1) the lack of mentee buy-in and motivation, (2) the practice of social networking, and (3) the lack of mentees in one's own school.

The lack of mentee buy-in and motivation. Six of the eight mentors surveyed stated that the lack of buy-in or motivation from their mentees negatively impacted the program's desired outcomes. As found in analyzing the mentee data, mentees reported a perceived lack of time to devote to the program. Mentors felt that, regardless, the dedication needed to be there. As one mentor stated,
The program . . . suffer[s] due to [a] person's inability to commit to the program. Most of
the reasons my mentees gave for not being able to meet, or to network, was they were so
involved in other school programs, like coaching . . . There needs to be dedication on the
mentees' part to see the program through.

Another mentor stated his frustration, stating he was “not sure how to make some second-
year mentees realize this is for them – a professional way to improve their own skills.” Mentors
saw the value of investing time in the program, but could not convey this value to their mentees,
who seemed to not share the same buy-in.

The practice of social networking. At mid-program, half of the eight mentors surveyed
commented on the practice of social networking as not being a useful program component.
However, they saw the lack of mentee buy-in and motivation as being a direct contributor to the,
as one mentor put it, “failure” of social networking as part of this program. This mentor went on
to state that “it's hard to network with others who aren't networking!,” referring to the lack of
consistent participation on the online discussion forums by some mentees. This was echoed by
another mentor, who explained, “Social networking has been least valuable to me because
many/most members of my group were very inconsistent about it. I prefer immediate feedback,
which means more face-to-face meetings.”

This mentor brings up the real-time feedback issue that has been brought up earlier by
both mentors and mentees. But, this mentor is also focusing on the inconsistent participation of
mentees online. Certainly this inconsistency could be related to the perceived lack of time as
experienced by mentees, and it definitely hurt the program's desired outcomes of growth in
instructional knowledge and a reduced experience of teacher isolation, as a lack of consistent
participation online meant that not every mentee was able to consistently collaborate with others,
or gain knowledge from others. Note that it did not hurt the program outcome of growth in reflective practices in the same way. This may be due to the nature of reflective practice in that it can easily be an individual endeavor. Reflective practice gains were the most easily identifiable program outcome, and the practice was seen as valuable by mentees.

**The lack of mentees in one's own school.** Similar to feelings expressed by some mentees, three of the eight mentors surveyed at mid-program felt that not having mentees who taught in the same building as they did was not useful. Most of these comments consisted of the mentor expressing how his or her mentee felt: “Our group has really wanted a mentor like last year, someone they can go to and chat with daily if necessary. They feel isolated in this group because of being at all different schools.” However, one mentor elaborated, at first expressing the mentees' feelings, then her own:

> In listening to the mentees, they truly missed their 1-1 mentor in their home school. As much as I tried to help, there is no substitution for, as in one mentee's words, 'that person who is being paid to listen and give support at least once a week.' When I suggested that there are always people to help, she said she would feel guilty asking for too much time, as people are busy . . . It was frustrating at times not to be able to actually see or talk to the mentees in their classrooms, especially when they sounded frustrated and just needed some time. I think even from the mentor's view, it is far more helpful to be in the building of the mentees you're working with.

Knowing from the analysis of what mentors found useful that the mentors overwhelmingly appreciated being able to guide and help mentees, this mentor's comments make perfect sense. Not always being readily accessible to her mentees or being able to see her
mentees in action in the classroom impeded her ability, as she perceived it, to guide and help them.

*End-of-program themes of mentors.* Table 26 identifies the themes of the mentors at end-of-program regarding both useful program components and program components that were not useful.

Table 26

*End-of-program Themes of Mentors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Sharing Classroom Practices</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cohesiveness of the Group</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
<th># of Responses Made Concerning this Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Practice of Action Research</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impersonal Nature of Social Networking</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Small Size of Online Groups</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*End-of-program themes of mentors – useful program components.* Three themes were identified regarding the useful components of the program based on end-of-program focus group data: (1) the value of meeting face-to-face, (2) the value of sharing classroom practices, and (3) the cohesiveness of the group.

*The value of meeting face-to-face.* During the end-of-program focus group the five participating mentors made a total of twelve comments about the usefulness of the face-to-face meetings of the program. Mentors attributed this largely to what they perceived as the social nature of teaching. One mentor explained, “They just enjoyed the humanistic side of being face to face and having the conversation be a little more interactive and spontaneous and just where it
goes.” The latter part of this comment, especially, speaks to the analysis of the mentees' comments, which found that what they found really valuable was when they could digress away from discussing their action research work and towards their issues in the classroom as they naturally came up in the conversation.

Another mentor commented on another facet of meeting face-to-face, relating the value of these meetings to the mentees' need for support (this need was also identified in analyzing mentee response data):

The personal conversations [versus only discussing action research] might have also drifted more on, more on not year one mentoring type stuff, but more on emotional support, more on the things we associate with year one mentoring than with some of the academics because it did let them vent a little about successes and failures of their classroom . . . [when we met in person] it was more 'what's going on in your classroom?'

So I think that reminded them maybe of that human sort of emotional support side so maybe as they're filling out the [survey] they're remembering those moments that did seem to be more about . . .

This mentor's comment is reminiscent of the mentees' comments about missing the relationship they had with their first-year mentor.

Perhaps yet another mentor said it best, though. She expressed quite enthusiastically how much she felt meeting face-to-face with her group helped them, making it a valuable aspect of the program:

We LOVED getting together – our group loved it. . . . I was always worried about having our meeting and then after an hour saying, 'Oh, you know what? I hate to run out on you but I have to go and . . . ' [Shakes head no.] We stayed beyond, we were just chatting,
chatting, chatting. And it was those kind of conversations that when I left there I was just like, 'We are HELPING these people! This is so awesome!' It's funny because at the last meeting . . . I was like, 'How did you guys feel when we'd leave these meetings? Were you just like, 'Oh thank God that's over,' you know, blah blah blah,' and they were like, 'NO! Every time we left we were just like, 'That was such a great meeting . . . ' and so that made me feel really good . . . that they didn't feel like we were just wasting their time and just check that off the list of I-got-that-done.

This mentor was not the only mentor to feel this way. As she was sharing, all four of her fellow mentors participating in the focus group nodded in agreement. It's clear by her comment, and by her peers' agreement, that mentors were cognizant of not wanting to “waste” their mentees' time (they were most likely aware of the mentees feeling a lack of sufficient time, a theme identified in analyzing the mentees' responses) and that mentors saw the face-to-face meetings as being the most worthy way to spend one's time within the program.

The value of sharing classroom practices. Whereas at mid-program, surveyed mentors highlighted the sharing of classroom practices as being one part of the larger picture of collaboration they saw as useful, at the end of the program, the focus group participants zeroed in specifically on the value of sharing classroom practices. Five total comments were made during the focus group concerning this. One mentor first brought it up as a way for mentees to “fill their tool bag[s]” with a variety of best practices:

I think they felt what they wanted to do was to collaborate and kind of fill their tool bag with things: 'What do you do in your classroom that would be successful for this? What can you share with me that I could bring back and implement in my classroom?' That's what they were thinking about.
Another mentor then continued the “tool bag” or “tool kit” reference, mentioning that this would be a better issue for the social networking to be centered around versus collaborating on action research topics: “Even if you post it [online], put something in the toolkit, have a part of a blog on there that might be ‘give me something that works for you.’”

It's interesting that mentors focused so much more on the idea of sharing classroom practices at end-of-program than at mid-program, though not surprising. Due to the guiding and helping nature of mentors, it is natural they would want to meet their mentees' primary needs, which, as seen in the analysis of the mentees' responses, involved being able to share classroom practices (which they saw as being one of the most valuable, albeit unplanned, aspects of the program).

**The cohesiveness of the group.** Four comments were made during the focus groups about the success of those groups that were most cohesive. One mentor shared the experience of her mentoring group, which consisted of three Kindergarten teachers, one first grade teacher, and one third grade teacher:

Did anybody mention grade level yet? Because I think that that was huge. You know, I had three grade K and I think those three bonded and it was always this day to day collaboration that you would really expect teachers to have and I think that's when you become isolated, when you're the only one on your level, or you're the only one in the building. . . . I think the thing is to have groups that are same grade level is a huge piece for elementary [teachers].

Because of the number of second-year teachers in the district reflecting various teachers at various grade levels, not all mentoring groups were as close to the match this mentor described. Despite this logistical consideration, the remaining four mentors who participated in
the focus group agreed with her, that, “in an ideal world,” as one mentor put it, this type of grade-level matching would always occur, contributing to the program's desired outcomes.

Another mentor also experienced a cohesive group, but for a different reason. This mentor's mentees were all high school teachers who taught different subject areas, but she attributed their cohesiveness to the action research topic they chose to collaborate on:

I think because there was such a similar topic and their topic wasn't subject-related, that it was okay. So I think because it [their topic] was technology, but let's say [my mentees] were focusing on curriculum stuff, it would not have been as cohesive.

Although mentors had varying experiences concerning the cohesiveness (or lack thereof) of their mentoring groups, all focus group participants agreed that if there was in fact cohesiveness within the group, due to either factor posited above by these two mentors, that this would be a useful aspect of the program.

End-of-program themes of mentors – program components that were not useful.

Three themes were identified regarding program components that were not useful based on end-of-program focus group data: (1) the practice of action research, (2) the impersonal nature of social networking, and (3) the small size of online groups.

The practice of action research. During the end-of-program focus group, a total of twenty-four comments were made about the practice of action research as a program component that was not useful. One mentor began the discussion around this topic, stating about the practice of action research,

I think it became overwhelming and instead of using it as a teaching tool and it was just another thing added to their plate. . . . It makes sense that you need to do it, you need to see what works, you need to try things, and it makes sense. But it became – it was just
an assignment, get it done, and we'll just call it that. Whereas opposed to being a learning tool and something you could use to better your classroom.

This mentor's comment reflects some of the findings upon analyzing the mentees' responses, particularly their concerns about not having enough time to devote to action research and to their lack of understanding how action research could help them as a second-year teacher.

As this mentor said, the practice of action research “became overwhelming” for the mentees, a feeling that most of the mentors participating in the focus group attributed mostly to the semantics of action research itself, as illustrated by the comments displayed in Table 27.

Table 27

Mentor's Comments Concerning the Practice and Semantics of Action Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor's Comment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“So make it less like a class.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Exactly. They didn't want to work, to do the work.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“So, the actual project thing – you can't call it that.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe if the action research was scaled down a little bit. . . . I think if we want the second year teachers to buy in, we should make it less focused on – I don't know – even the vocabulary of action research kind of turns them off . . . if we could just say, 'Let’s just say (and I hate to say that we have to dumb it down for our own profession, but, just saying), oh let's focus on just a few areas of concern for you and we'll just keep coming back to that to see how it develops' and then maybe after a month of doing that, going, 'Wow, you know what? This is really like action research. Oh, look, you're doing action research!'”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“But maybe the term is 'reflecting on your practices.' And just take out the word [action research]. . . . But if I say to you and you're a teacher who's feeling really overwhelmed with the first few years and the second year, you're just starting to say, 'Ok, whew! I went through one,' that the word 'academic project' says something different than 'We're going to get together and reflect on your practices and try to improve those areas that you want to – you can choose whatever it is that you need to improve,' it says something totally different than, 'we're going to have you choose an academic project.' It's like that project is over here whereas reflecting on practices is right over here with what you're doing – that's what you do every day.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first three comments displayed in Table 27 refer to the mentees' perception of the second-year teacher mentoring program as “a class,” because they were being asked to work on a
“project.” Mentors felt that just the wording and phrasing of this aspect of the program caused mentees to not “want to . . . do the work,” due, perhaps, to the feeling of being overwhelmed as the previously quoted mentor stated, overwhelmed even by the semantics of the program.

The mentors, however, did not recommend the removal of action research from the program, but simply suggested a “scaling down” of the process, and re-phrasing the process to simply encompass “reflecting on your practices,” believing that this would enable the basic aspects of action research to be achieved by mentees without overwhelming them.

_The impersonal nature of social networking._ When the researcher shared with the focus group participants that the mentees had not found the social networking useful, the mentors were, for the most part, surprised. But, upon reflecting about why this might be, mentors offered a total of nine comments about the issue, deducing two important reasons (which were the same reasons mentees had referenced).

Two mentors both related the issue of social networking not being perceived as useful to its impersonal nature; they felt, respectively, that teaching was a social profession, and that mentees may have wanted a more personal connection. The first explained that

the nature of our jobs isn't to be sitting in front of a computer. I could see if I was in the business world, part of my job always sitting behind a computer, that would be a very easy segue to make, but for us – it was almost like putting a teacher in time out, saying 'Get behind your computer and do this extra bit.' And I think teaching by nature is a social job . . . we prefer to not sit behind computers unless we're chained to them.

The second mentor then expanded on her thought, pointing out that he felt at least one of his mentees wanted a more personal connection, causing her to transfer to another mentoring group:
They're younger than I am and they like technology more than I do – so they should have been fine with technology, but one of my mentees left and went to the other high school group because she felt it easier . . . and I don't know because she was the most frequent poster, which again means to me she wanted a more personal connection to her building when she was doing great postings so I don't think it had anything to do with that. . . . She did want the personal contact. . . . It's something that's almost unexpected from the data that despite what we think they still feel they want more connection to a person. Because these are teachers that in general should feel comfortable with technology and it's second nature and it gives them more flexibility with time because they're always complaining about time. I think it's interesting data. I'm surprised by it.

He makes some interesting points, especially his deduction that one of his mentees left because she wanted a more personal connection (and sought this from another mentor in the program who was located in her building, versus her original mentor, who was not) despite the fact that she was the stronger poster of the group. This may mean that even though many beginning teachers are comfortable with technology, they still prefer face-to-face contact.

Two other mentors brought up a different reason for mentees to have not felt the social networking to be useful: the uncomfortability of some mentees in posting online. This was mentioned by two mentees on the end-of-program survey, but the fuller explanations offered by these two mentors, respectively, shed more light on the issue:

When you're not at professional status and that if they're not following the rules or let's just say it's action research – so it's something that didn't go well in your classroom last year . . . now they're saying, 'Oh my Gosh, I'm a bad teacher. Is the administration going to say that? And look at that and look down upon me because I don't have classroom
management or I wasn't able to get my spelling program off the ground' or something like that. That was a concern. . . they felt that it was Big Brother looking on.

I'm thinking that their comfort level in putting things in print . . . maybe that added a whole new dimension.

The fear of Big Brother looking on should have been eased by the private setting features of Ning (the venue for the program's social networking), but clearly was not. These two mentors point out that the process of action research was jeopardized by this fear, since action research requires the educator to admit to what is not working in his or her classroom, something second-year teachers may have felt uncomfortable to put in print online.

The small size of online groups. Focus group participants easily transitioned from the above discussion to investigating further program components that may have contributed to the uncomfortability of sharing online. What one mentor eventually suggested, a suggestion that was met by eight subsequent comments from the group about the same issue, was that he thought “the size of the online group [his group began with four members, but dropped to three within the first month] impeded their desire to go online maybe.” Another mentor quickly chimed in, adding that a larger group could afford better modeling of effective posts:

Yeah, because I think that would have helped discussion or just help so they could see . . .

I had people that weren't doing that well. If they had seen good modeling from other people, they would have done better, but they didn't have good modeling so they . . .

A third mentor added to this idea of better modeling within a larger group, and connected it to the fear of Big Brother, stating,

If you have that large of a pool, you're going to have your braver, more confident second year teachers who are willing to say, 'Oh, this is what went wrong,' and maybe that makes
those other teachers feel like, 'Oh God, the Earth didn't shatter . . .'

Being part of a larger online group is not something the mentees called for in their responses, but the mentors clearly thought this was an important factor that contributed to the lack of effectiveness of social networking and online collaborating of the program.

**Summary.** The components of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program that contributed the most to the program's desired outcomes as perceived by mentors were (1) meeting face-to-face, and (2) sharing classroom practices. At different points (mid-program and end-of-program) mentors also referred to being able to guide and help their mentees and the cohesiveness of their groups, respectively, as other program components that were useful. The former was potentially impacted by both groups' shared desire to have mentor/mentee relationships within the same school building, as well as the mentees' desire to be given more support in general throughout the program.

As stated earlier, the program components that contributed the most to the program's desired outcomes as perceived by mentees were (1) meeting face-to-face, (2) engaging in reflective practice, and (3) sharing classroom practices. Therefore, *both* mentors and mentees saw the practices of meeting face-to-face and sharing classroom practices as the components that most impacted the program's desired outcomes. Mentees also named engaging in reflective practice as one of these components, which was most likely not mentioned by mentors since it was primarily the mentees who engaged in this practice.

Also mentioned by both mentors and mentees was the lack of usefulness of the practice of social networking as a program component. Both groups found that the impersonal nature of social networking versus the more social nature of teaching in general was a factor, as well as the
fear of “Big Brother.” Mentors also mentioned the size of the online groups being a factor (most thought they were too small), which was not an apparent concern for the mentees.

The final program component agreed upon by both groups that was not seen as a useful component was the practice of action research. Mentees simply saw their struggles with action research as a result of their not being equipped as second-year teachers to conduct such research, while mentors added the reason that the verbiage and semantics of the process alone overwhelmed mentees from the start.

**Summary of Findings**

The desired outcomes of the Plymouth Public Schools second-year teacher mentoring program were as follows: growth in instructional knowledge, growth in reflective practice, and a reduced experience of teacher isolation. Various inputs and activities were put into place in order to achieve these outcomes. In studying program outputs such as the online blogs and discussion forums, as well as in analyzing data from surveys and a focus group, it is clear that, to some extent, all three outcomes were met. However, not all three were met to the same extent, and each was impacted either positively or negatively by particular program components.

Growth in instructional knowledge was found to have occurred by at least 65 percent of all study participants, mentees and mentors. The practice of meeting face-to-face was seen as the most useful component in terms of this outcome by far, with over 80 percent of study participants acknowledging the usefulness of this program component at the end of the program. Most instructional knowledge gains, as perceived by both mentees and mentors, occurred as a result of the looser structure of face-to-face discussions, where participants felt they could leave the discussion of action research behind in order to discuss what was happening in their classrooms on a daily basis. Although this was not a planned program component, both groups
cited that sharing ideas about classroom practice is what benefited their instructional growth the most, while they felt the process of action research actually impeded this growth, since it got in the way of discussing what mentees considered their more pressing classroom concerns.

Growth in reflective practice was found by both groups to have been achieved. The mentees’ engagement in this practice was clearly seen on their online blogs and through their online discussion forums. In addition to potentially being the only consistently noted positive to come out of social networking, reflective practice was the only consistently noted positive to come out of the action research component of the program. Mentees liked being able to reflect on their practice, and mentors liked watching them grow as a result of this reflection, adding also that reflective practice in general is what the second-year teacher mentoring program should be centered around rather than the more formal practice of action research.

Finally, the program’s desired outcome of a reduced experience of teacher isolation was only somewhat achieved (it was consistently ranked the lowest of the three potential outcomes by both mentees and mentors on the Likert scale items of the surveys). While both groups did attest that meeting face-to-face had an impact on reducing isolation, this was the only program component that seemed to have an impact on this outcome. Furthermore, the practice of social networking, a program component put in place due to the research that suggested it would benefit teacher collaboration and alleviate concerns with time constraints and availability thereby helping to reduce isolation, was not found by either group to help reduce teacher isolation, and, if anything, may have helped to contribute to feelings of isolation since most participants stated that social networking did not align with their more social desire to meet face-to-face.
Chapter V: Discussion of the Research Findings

This chapter presents a summary of the problem of practice and a review of the study's methodology, as well as a summary of the study's major findings. These findings are then discussed in relation to the study's theoretical framework and literature review. The chapter concludes by presenting the significance of the study to the field of education as well as proposing next steps.

Summary of the Problem

The Plymouth Public School system, like many others, has provided a mentoring program for its first year teachers for a little over a decade now. While such a program, according to research, has definite benefits for beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Schwille, 2008; Ward, 2005), more and more studies are calling for expanded teacher induction programs to include a second year (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Moir, 2009; Wang et al., 2008).

Because first-year mentoring programs often focus on emotional and procedural support for the mentee, while potentially only touching upon instructional support (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Moir, 2009; Wang et al., 2008; Ward, 2005), offering mentoring programs for second-year teachers (who typically receive no formal support or guidance and still have great potential for instructional growth) could increase the amount of instructional support beginning teachers receive.

The Plymouth Public Schools recognized the need for a second-year teacher mentoring program and developed a logic model presenting the various activities, resources, and inputs that would hopefully lead to the program's desired outcomes, which included a growth in instructional knowledge and reflective practice, and a reduced sense of teacher isolation, all needs of beginning teachers and veteran teachers alike. With these outcomes in mind for both
mentees and mentors in the program, resources were allocated and used in support of second-year teachers working collaboratively (face-to-face and via social networking) on action research projects guided by a mentor.

In order to determine whether program components did, in fact, lead to the program’s expected outcomes as presented in the logic model, a program evaluation study was conducted. The purpose of this study was to investigate the following two research questions:

1. To what extent is the Plymouth Public Schools’ second-year teacher mentoring program achieving its expected outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

2. Which components of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program have contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by participants and the researcher?

**Review of the Methodology**

A mixed methods methodology was used to conduct this program evaluation. Online surveys were conducted at both mid-program and end-of-program points with both the mentees and mentors of the second-year teacher mentoring program. Guided by the logic model's identification of inputs and activities, as well as expected program outcomes, survey questions focused on the extent to which the program components of action research, collaboration, face-to-face meetings, and social networking had an impact on the program's desired outcomes of gains in both instructional knowledge and reflective practice and a reduced sense of teacher isolation. These Likert scale ratings were then examined in comparison with all other ratings in a normal distribution (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003) in order to determine the range of perspectives regarding the second-year teacher mentoring program's expected outcomes.
In addition to the Likert scale survey items, open-ended responses from both the mid-program and end-of-program surveys were analyzed. A focus group was also conducted with mentor participants and data was transcribed and analyzed. Coding strategies were employed to identify themes from both the open-ended survey responses and focus group transcripts in relationship to each research question as well as the program's three expected outcomes, including emerging themes concerning participants' perceptions of the usefulness of each program component. Program documents consisting of mentees' online blogs and mentoring groups' online discussion forums were then analyzed to further inform the emerging themes.

The analysis of all collected data was conducted in relation to the logic model in order to determine not only to what extent program outcomes of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program were achieved as perceived by participants, but also to determine which program components contributed the most to these desired outcomes.

**Summary of the Findings**

The findings of this study illustrate to what extent each of the three expected program outcomes were met, as well as the efficacy of each program component in meeting these outcomes.

**Expected program outcomes.** According to this study, all three of the expected outcomes of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program were met, although the extent to which they were met as perceived by participants varied.

**Growth in instructional knowledge.** Twenty-six percent of mentees found action research to have had an impact on gains in instructional knowledge, and forty-seven percent found collaboration to have had the same. Interestingly, even though only 21 percent of mentees found social networking to have had an impact on instructional knowledge gains, the document
analysis provided significant evidence of instructional growth via the online interactions between mentees. For example, one mentee posted the following question to her mentoring group about her classroom instruction:

I was planning on grouping my word study groups to be the same as my reading groups. . . I was going to have the Words Their Way sorts as a center activity as well. Was anyone else thinking of designing their groups a different way?

This request was met by three of her peers, all offering various suggestions on this instructional problem. However, in spite of this, by the end of the program, 84 percent of mentees reported that their experience making gains in instructional knowledge mostly occurred during the face-to-face meetings with their mentoring groups. Seventy-five percent of mentors also perceived that the face-to-face interactions were the primary cause of this, due to the spontaneous nature of the face-to-face dialogue that allowed groups to more freely discuss classroom practices and ideas rather than limit themselves to discussing the mentees' action research work only (which both groups perceived as stultifying instructional growth since it was perceived as too limiting in structure). During the face-to-face meetings, time was taken to simply share classroom practices and ideas to help meet these participant-specific concerns, and this, although not a planned activity according to the logic model, was seen as the most valuable activity by both groups in terms of making gains in instructional knowledge.

**Growth in reflective practice.** The second expected program outcome was growth in teachers’ reflective practice. Out of the three expected outcomes, this outcome was reported by mentees as having the greatest impact (79 percent attributing reflective practice gains to the face-to-face meetings, and 53 percent also attributing these gains to action research and to collaboration), while most mentors (75 percent) saw gains in instructional knowledge and gains
in reflective practice as having the greatest impact, ranking both fairly highly. The analysis of online documents showed consistent reflection on the part of the mentees, who blogged regularly about lessons learned concerning their action research work from their daily classroom practices. For example, after reading over her reflective blog posts, one mentee posted the following:

One thing that I saw as a common theme was my reading block definitely not being run the way I want it to yet. I am hoping to start my work stations (centers) sometime soon and I am missing the word work/grammar piece of that puzzle.

In fact, the reflective nature of the action research process was strongly reported as the only facet of action research that most mentees found of value (53 percent of mentees reported that action research had an impact on their reflective practice gains, versus the 26 percent who felt it had an impact on instructional knowledge gains and on reducing teacher isolation). Furthermore, 79 percent of mentees once again attributed the face-to-face meetings with their mentoring groups as contributing to their gains in reflective practice. Sixty-three to seventy-five percent of mentors found that each aspect of the second-year teacher mentoring program resulted in a growth in reflective practice.

*Reduced sense of teacher isolation.* A reduced sense of teacher isolation, the third expected program outcome, was perceived by mentees and mentors to have been somewhat achieved, mainly as a result of the face-to-face meetings. While 84 percent of mentees reported the face-to-face meetings as impacting a reduced experience of isolation, 26 percent and 42 percent reported action research and collaboration, respectively, to have done the same. Interestingly, social networking (which, according to the logic model and based on current research, was implemented in order to help reduce teacher isolation by connecting teachers across the district to one another) was reported by 84 percent of mentees to have actually made
them feel more isolated. Sixty-three percent of mentors also felt that social networking did not help to reduce teacher isolation, while most mentors also agreed that the dynamics of the mentoring group itself (including the size of the group and whether or not they had chosen to conduct collaborative action research on the same or similar topics) also impacted whether or not mentees experienced reduced isolation.

**Efficacy of program components.** Themes were also identified according to what program components both mentees and mentors found to be useful and non-useful, at both mid- and end-of-program points. Tables 28 and 29 show the themes regarding both useful and non-useful program components as perceived by mentees at the mid- and end-of-program points, respectively.

Table 28

*Mid-program Themes of Mentees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Reflective Practice</td>
<td>The Formal Structure of Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>A Lack of Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Sharing Classroom Practices</td>
<td>A Lack of Sufficient Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29

*End-of-program Themes of Mentees*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Reflective Practice</td>
<td>The Inappropriateness of Action Research for Second-year Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>The Lack of a Mentor in One's Own School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Sharing Classroom Practices</td>
<td>The Impersonal Nature of Social Networking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As indicated in Tables 28 and 29, the components of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program that contributed the most to the program’s desired outcomes as perceived by mentees are (1) meeting face-to-face, (2) engaging in reflective practice, and (3) sharing classroom practices. Engaging in reflective practice was seen by most mentees as the only aspect of action research that had a valuable impact. Despite document analysis evidence that this practice was consistently occurring via the online blogs and discussion forums, mentees did not find social networking to have been useful, attributing this to the more preferred social nature of meeting face-to-face. Interestingly, these face-to-face meetings were established, according to the logic model, to provide collaborative time for mentoring groups to discuss their action research work. However, mentees found the process of action research work to be too formally structured and too challenging for second-year teachers, instead preferring face-to-face meetings (whose social nature allowed spontaneity) to digress away from discussions concerning the process and towards sharing of classroom practices. While not a planned program component, this activity certainly contributed to the achievement of the program’s expected outcomes. These face-to-face meetings may also have reminded mentees of the type of personalized support they received from the first-year mentoring program, causing them to miss this type of support, and, for some, to regret not having had a mentor from their own building assigned to them.

Tables 30 and 31 summarize the themes of the mentors concerning what they saw as both useful and non-useful program components at both mid- and end-of-program, respectively.
Table 30

Mid-program Themes of Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Guiding and Helping Beginning Teachers</td>
<td>The Lack of Mentee Buy-in and Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>The Practice of Social Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Collaborating</td>
<td>The Lack of Mentees in One's Own School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31

End-of-program Themes of Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Regarding Useful Program Components</th>
<th>Themes Regarding Program Components that were Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Meeting Face-to-face</td>
<td>The Practice of Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Sharing Classroom Practices</td>
<td>The Impersonal Nature of Social Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cohesiveness of the Group</td>
<td>The Small Size of Online Groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated by Tables 30 and 31, the components of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program that contributed the most overall to the program's desired outcomes as perceived by mentors were (1) meeting face-to-face, and (2) sharing classroom practices. Both of these components were also identified by the mentees. Mentors also highlighted being able to guide and support their mentees as a useful aspect of the program, an aspect that may have been negatively impacted by some members of both groups' desire to have had mentee/mentor pairings from the same school building.

Interestingly, neither mentees or mentors felt that social networking was a useful program component. Mentors shed some light on this issue, sharing their concerns that some mentees were afraid to be completely honest and forthcoming about struggles in the classroom in online
posts. Mentors also offered the possibility that the small size of online groups may have impeded the potential effectiveness of social networking. A larger group may have fostered mentees' confidence to post about their struggles in the classroom. As one mentor put it,

If you have that large of a pool, you're going to have your braver, more confident second year teachers who are willing to say, 'Oh, this is what went wrong,' and maybe that makes those other teachers feel like, 'Oh God, the Earth didn't shatter . . .'

Finally, the practice of action research itself, which was a key factor of the logic model, was not seen as a useful program component by either group. Mentees felt they were not experienced enough as second-year teachers to handle the challenges of action research. As one mentee put it, “I think action research is too formal of a process for second year mentees to go through.” Mentors felt that the actual semantics and verbiage associated with action research (versus the actual practice itself) is what intimidated mentees. As one mentor explained,

But maybe the term is 'reflecting on your practices.' And just take out the word [action research]. . . But if I say to you and you're a teacher who's feeling really overwhelmed with the first few years and the second year, you're just starting to say, 'Ok, whew! I went through one,' that the word 'academic project' says something different than 'We're going to get together and reflect on your practices and try to improve those areas that you want to – you can choose whatever it is that you need to improve,' it says something totally different that, 'we're going to have you choose an academic project.' It's like that project is over here whereas reflecting on practices is right over here with what you're doing – that's what you do every day.
Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework of this Study

Adult learning theory and transformational learning theory. The findings of this study directly relate to the theories of adult learning and transformational learning. Adult learning theory addresses the concept that adults learn best in certain ways. This theory was, in fact, used to help determine which activities and inputs should be included in the logic model of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program.

Both Knowles and Rogers, in their adult learning-related theories of andragogy and experiential learning, respectively, attest that adult learners are best served by putting theory into practice. Certainly, putting theory into practice is, in essence, what action research is all about. However, mentee participants of this study did not feel that they were equipped to do so due to what they perceived as their more pressing needs. As one mentee stated, “The structure of this program was extremely demanding . . . As a second year teacher, I am still challenged by all different aspects of my teaching from classroom management to curriculum development.” This mentee’s concerns, which were common among participants’ concerns, perhaps reflect that mentees did not see action research as “hav[ing] immediate relevance to their jobs,” something adult learners require according to Knowles (Kearsley, 1994, p. 4). What mentees did see as relevant to their day-to-days jobs as teachers was the chance (primarily during face-to-face meetings) to discuss and share classroom practices. As one mentee put it, rather than discussing their action research progress, “meeting and discussing things with other teachers has been most valuable. Discussing [the] successes, failures, breakthroughs, and frustrations [of daily classroom practice] truly helps with professional growth.”

Hatcher (1997) warns that adult learners will need to be re-oriented towards learning through problem solving versus more traditional, passive types of learning. This re-orientation
did not occur in the PPS second-year mentoring program, since, even by the end of the program, mentees still preferred more direct guidance regarding their classroom practice in the form of (passively) receiving ideas from other teachers. As one mentee stated, “This program did not provide the types of mentor/mentee support I expected,” while another claimed that “it . . . has not provided help with the more pressing day to day aspects of teaching that I am currently working to improve.” The mentors certainly should have been part of the above-mentioned re-orientation towards learning through problem solving (which is more related to the process of action research), but they, too, preferred the sharing of specific classroom practices. One mentor stated that the most valuable part of the program was “reach[ing] out to colleagues for new ways to tackle old problems! I was able to give my mentees ideas that have worked well for me, as well as hear ideas they tried and took them back to my own classroom.”

One aspect of adult learning theory, however, that both mentees and mentors responded positively towards was the notion of reflective practice. Critical reflection, according to Stephen Brookfield (1995), focuses on the ability of adult learners to question assumptions and develop “alternative perspective(s)” (p. 3). This type of critical reflection was evidenced throughout the mentees' online blogs and discussion forums. For example, as one mentee blogged,

It became clear that students will need to have a strong foundation of information literacy prior to writing source citations. It became clear that library instruction must be focused and sequential in order to get the maximum number of students to mastery by the end of the year. . . I have found . . . that doing 'too much, too fast' creates confusion and hinders learning in the library.

As indicated in Chapter 4, growth in reflective practice was an achieved outcome of the second-year teacher mentoring program. This is likely due to the aspects of adult learning theory
that informed the logic model. The face-to-face opportunities to reflect together further supported the achievement of this outcome, not surprisingly, since, according to Brookfield (1995), collaborating with colleagues who “serve as reflective mirrors . . . help[s] the individual worker re-frame, broaden and refine” (pp. 7-8) his or her practices. While there was evidence of such collaborative reflection occurring via the online discussion forums, according to the survey results, mentees felt that the face-to-face meetings helped them to reflect much more. Perhaps this is because it was easier to experience colleagues as “reflective mirrors” when meeting in person.

Transformational learning theory was also employed in developing the logic model, since it involves a qualitative shift in how a person organizes, understands, and actively makes sense of his or her experience, [resulting in] a person develop[ing] increased capacities . . . for better managing the complexities of daily . . . work, [which] enables people to take broader perspectives on themselves . . . and on their work. (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 17)

In some sense, mentees were enabled “to take broader perspectives on their work” by hearing about and learning from the classroom practices of others. However, it is debatable that this was a result of “increased capacities” on the part of the mentees. The above-mentioned “qualitative shift” concerning said capacities was not achieved by mentees, since they consistently insisted that they, as second-year teachers, were not capable of conducting action research. As one mentee posited, “It has been too much to . . . implement such formal research when my worries are still if I'm going to make it through report cards and conferences.” Since “making it through report cards and conferences” is a concern for first-year teachers (a concern that is addressed by the supportive role of the first-year one-on-one mentoring relationship), this
example suggests that perhaps second-year teachers are not ready for transformative learning, not ready to leave behind the “support as comfort” as Berger (2004) phrases it (p. 339).

Seemingly, the only aspect of the program which may have contributed to any transformational learning on the part of the mentees is “the engagement in dialogue with others” which, as Baumgartner (2002) states, is “essential to transformative learning” (p. 49). Mentees did enjoy the face-to-face opportunities for dialogue within the program, but it is unclear whether this dialogue led to transformative learning versus simply leading to a larger knowledge bank of classroom practices.

Organizational change and organizational learning. The findings of this study also directly relate to the theories of organizational change and organizational learning.

According to organizational change theory, culture itself should not be targeted in changing an organization; rather, the focus should be on individual behavior. In instituting the second-year teacher mentoring program, the Plymouth Public Schools was hoping to target collaboration among teachers regarding instructional practices and reflective practice. Reflective practice and even collaboration, to an extent (as it was mostly based on sharing classroom practices instead of building problem-solving capacity), were program components that were seen as valuable. The expectation was that the individual behaviors of mentee teachers could potentially branch out to other teachers in the district should the program continue to foster them, potentially resulting in some degree of organizational change.

As Burke (2008) warns, “organizational leaders [must] watch for blips in . . . change components” (p. 171). One such “blip” regarding the implementation of the second-year teacher mentoring program in Plymouth is a potential resistance to change, which could be reinforced by motivation (Burke, p. 142). Even though participating in the program was not a change for
mentees (since they are new to the district by default), they were aware that they were the first participants of this new program, which may have potentially impacted their motivation. The lack of motivation on the part of some mentees was referenced by mentors, one of whom stated that “having participants that did not keep up with their end” was the least valuable aspect of the program. Not “keeping up with their end” may have stemmed from a distaste for the action research process and/or a distaste for social networking, neither of which were found to be useful elements of the program. Burke (2008, p.7) states that “communicat[ing the] values” of the program is essential for organizational change. However, mentors (who would arguably be the primary “communicator” of values to mentees) did not help to communicate the value of action research or social networking to their mentees, since mentors almost equally disliked these program components.

While organizational change focuses on changing behaviors, organizational learning theory focuses on “[leading] members to change norms (thinking) as well as behaviors” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 9). Collinson and Cook cite several activities that can lead to organizational learning, including “members actively addressing problems and issues rather than automatically accepting obvious or time-tested solutions” (2007, p. 15). Unfortunately, as stated above, both mentees and mentors preferred sharing “time-tested solutions” more than engaging in most other program activities, such as action research, which is more related to “actively addressing problems and issues” since, as Collinson and Cook (2007) state, “learning requires inquiry” (p. 33) and action research requires inquiry. Sharing classroom practices does not. Organizational learning is dependent upon “ideas and innovations [being] spread beyond individual members” (Collinson & Cook, 2007, p. 15), something that may not happen if teachers' primary focus continues to be the sharing of already-established classroom practices.
As part of their five assumptions of organizational learning, Collinson and Cook insist that “learners cannot afford to be inhibited by fear of failure” (2007, p. 71). As indicated by the findings of this study, however, fear of failure is something mentees were potentially inhibited by. Mentees certainly expressed fears and doubts concerning their ability to conduct action research, even though mentees were “allowed to experiment and takes risks,” something Collinson and Cook (2007, p. 71) identify as necessary for organizational learning. Most mentees did not take these risks, mostly due to their hesitancy in pursuing action research and sharing their instructional practices online. As one mentor phrased it, the mentees were in fear of “Big Brother,” preferring the safety of employing best practices in the classroom. Although the Plymouth Public Schools recognized that “analysis, evaluation, and experimentation in concert with colleagues are conditions under which teachers improve instructionally” as stated by Rosenholtz (1989, p. 104), action research, as a primary activity of the second-year teacher mentoring program, did not prove to lead to organizational learning because the mentees felt incapable of conducting action research, encouraged instead by their peers and by their mentors to simply share classroom practices. Perhaps, as posited earlier, second-year teachers are not only not ready for transformational learning, but are also not ready for the process of action research. Indeed, as stated by one mentee, perhaps these practices “would be better used with teachers who have more mastery of fundamental instructional methods.”

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature Review of this Study

The findings of this study directly relate to the literature review presented in Chapter 2. This literature review was comprised of six themes exploring how activities like collaboration and reflective practitionering can function effectively in a mentoring program: (1) redefining and expanding traditional views of mentoring; (2) promoting collaboration and reducing teacher
isolation; (3) promoting the instructional growth of beginning teachers; (4) mentors as leaders and learners; (5) action research; and (6) social networking.

**Redefining and expanding traditional views of mentoring.** Mentoring programs are slowly moving away from the traditional one-on-one emotional support for a first-year teacher because these types of programs are primarily concerned with “classroom management, curriculum resources, and beginning teachers' relationships with students, instead of the quality of their teaching and student learning” (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008, p. 9). It was partly the perception of this need to focus more on teaching quality and student learning that drove the Plymouth Public Schools to implement the second-year teacher mentoring program. After all, “feeling comfortable does not necessarily lead to effective teaching and student learning” (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008, p. 2) and PPS wished to, as Ellen Moir (2009) of the New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California recommends, use the mentoring program to “accelerate the effectiveness of new teachers, fast-tracking their progress to exemplary teachers” (p. 16). This acceleration required the reform of the PPS mentoring program to include a second year that focused not on emotional or procedural support, but on instructional knowledge growth via problem-solving and inquiry-based activities like conducting collaborative action research. However, the second-year teachers of Plymouth felt uncomfortable with this “fast-tracking,” claiming that, while they could see some benefits of action research, they felt unready to tackle this challenge. As one mentee explained,

I feel that this action research process is something that would be much more useful after five years of experience, rather than two. As a second year teacher, I am still focused on basic instructional practices and still worrying about covering curricular materials. The step by step . . . process would be better used with teachers who have more mastery of
fundamental[s].

Second-year teachers were mostly in agreement that someone with “five years of experience” (versus one or two) is better equipped to be “fast-tracked” towards exemplary teaching.

Much of the literature that calls for mentoring programs to be redefined calls for not only the instructional knowledge ante to be upped, but also for the role of the mentor to adjust. In focusing more on instructional practices and less on emotional support, this new type of mentor is an educative one, who acts as a “co-think[er] with beginning teachers about teaching, instead of being an expert who imposes ideas” (Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008, p. 4). This shift towards co-thinking may have proved overwhelming for many of the second-year teacher participants of this study, who reported they wanted a mentor who would discuss their problems in the classroom with them, and share ideas for classroom practice, handing down tried-and-true teaching methods versus conducting more specific inquiry together. Although recent literature calls for mentor programs that emphasize “developing interpretations and researching together” (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 5), these two activities of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program were not found useful by mentees.

Despite the attitudes of the second-year teacher participants of this study towards some of the elements of action research (namely those such as inquiry and interpretation), second-year teachers did still express their want to be mentored during their second-year. The idea of including subsequent mentoring beyond year one for beginning teachers comes to the surface in more recent literature. As Drago-Severson (2004) maintains, mentoring must “[stick] around' in order to provide continuity and a context of stability” (p. 34). Yet what some mentees seemed to want may be too much “continuity” according to the research. As one mentee stated, “Second
year mentoring would be more effective if it resembled first year mentoring,” a suggestion that would not seemingly result in the “fast-tracked” growth of beginning teachers' instructional knowledge that Moir (2009) calls for.

Perhaps the findings of this study suggest a happy medium, however – a balance of redefining and expanding mentoring programs in order to promote the instructional growth of beginning teachers while still maintaining the feelings of support that mentees of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program missed. This could be accomplished through less of a strict focus on the action research process and more of a focus on reflective practice in general. Wang, Odell, and Schwille (2008) do call for reflective practitionering, suggesting that mentors “[help] beginning teachers frame their self-identified teaching problems and articulate reasons for them” (p. 4), while Moir (2009) recommends a mentoring group that “identifies an inquiry subject . . . [and that] design(s) powerful lessons . . . and analyze(s) student data to ensure that students are learning” (p. 17). While both of these suggestions contain elements of the action research process, they seem to pare it down to the essentials, including collaborative reflective practitionering, and some data analysis. This idea of paring down action research to make it more accessible for second-year teachers in expanding traditional mentoring programs was also brought up by the mentor participants of this study. As one mentor put it,

Maybe if the action research was scaled down a little bit . . . I think if we want the second year teachers to buy in, we should make it less focused on – I don't know – even the vocabulary of action research kind of turns them off . . . if we could just say, . . . 'Oh let's focus on just a few areas of concern for you and we'll just keep coming back to that to see how it develops' and then maybe after a month of doing that, going, 'Wow, you know what? This is really like action research. Oh, look, you're doing action research!'
Promoting collaboration and reducing teacher isolation. Collaboration was a key component of the logic model for the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program, based largely on the research that insists on the need to encourage teachers to engage in collaboration so that they “have opportunities to break down the isolation of the classrooms in collaborative, problem-setting, and problem-solving activities with colleagues” (Halverson, 2007, p. 36).

Interestingly, Ginns et al. (2001) point to collaborative action research as encouraging the types of “critical reflection that can lead to change, progress, and reflecting on practice” versus “the traditional induction methods [that] tend to reproduce the profession.” The activity of sharing classroom practices was one that was seen as highly valuable by both mentee and mentor participants of this study, yet the question remains of whether or not this type of activity only “reproduces the profession” rather than pushing beginning (and veteran) teachers to truly conduct critical inquiry and reflection.

The other major factor of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program that impacted the perceived usefulness of the collaboration program component according to the mentors was the cohesiveness of the mentoring group itself. As Blair (2008) found, beginning teachers are “interest[ed] not only in growing individually, but also, as they [develop] collegial relationships, in supporting one another’s growth” (p. 113). Some mentors did experience this type of growth through “collegial relationships,” and attributed this to the cohesiveness of their mentoring group, a quality that mentors who did not see this type of growth through collaboration did not experience within their group. The cohesiveness of the group, according to mentors, was due to mentees who taught at the same grade level or who were investigating the same or similar action research topics. One mentor explained, “I had three grade K [teachers in my group] and I think those three bonded and it was always this day to day collaboration that you would really expect
teachers to have.” Another mentor stated, “I know that [my mentees] felt that connection because they were doing something very, very similar [with their action research topics], that helped them to feel that way.”

**Promoting the instructional growth of beginning teachers.** The literature supports the idea that with an emphasis on educative mentoring, collaboration, and reflective practice, mentoring programs can indeed result in gains in instructional knowledge of beginning teachers. This corresponds with the activities and with the goals of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program and with this study's findings.

Schwille (2008) and Collinson and Cook (2007) all contend that when mentors work with “novices [to] think through teaching” (Schwille, 2008, p. 156), the result is improved instructional knowledge. Drago-Severson (2004) also maintains that “there is an intimate connection between transformational learning and self-examination” (p. 23). This type of “self-examination” was an activity of the second-year teacher mentoring program, leading to a growth in reflective practice being the most successfully perceived program outcome (as compared to reduced teacher isolation and instructional knowledge gains), and was most evidenced in the online blogs and discussion forums posted by mentees. In addition to “self-examination,” the program also “include[d] opportunities for deep and rich reflection on practice with the participation of a mentor who helps to shape and instill this intellectual habit” (Schwille, 2008, p.141). This “shaping” on the part of the mentor was also evident in the online blogs and discussion forums, as can be seen in the representative dialogue below between one mentor and his mentee:

Mentee: I am finding at this point that the most important ways to move towards a student-centered classroom and student-centered discussions are modeling and practice.
It's hard to get buy in from all the students, particularly the quiet ones, as they are seeing an increase in classroom conversation as a lessening of their responsibilities, and not acknowledging their necessity to become involved.

Mentor: Your last line intrigued me – I hadn't thought that students who were quiet would actually see increased class discussion as simple a 'lessening of their responsibilities.' Is that your guess or have they actually said that? Is classroom participation a specific aspect of their grade (if so, they may see increased classroom conversation as a greater responsibility) or are you trying to focus more on the intrinsic angle of motivating students (without a grade reward) or talking more in class?

Interestingly, even with this type of dialogue occurring via the online blogs and discussion forums, by the end of the program only 21 percent of mentees reported that they made gains in instructional knowledge thanks to the social networking component of the program, compared to the 84 percent of mentees who credited the face-to-face meetings with such gains. This could, once again, be a result of the diversions during the face-to-face meetings away from reflecting on their action research work and towards sharing classroom practices, an unplanned-for activity that does not necessarily promote reflective practice. Hellsten et al. (2009), however, do suggest that effective “mentorship . . . occurs as a teacher learns in community with others how to achieve higher student learning” (p. 725), which could be a potential result of sharing classroom practices.

Mentors as leaders and learners. Part of the decision to make the practice of action research a program activity during the development of the logic model was due to the belief that this type of intellectual practice (versus merely providing emotional and procedural support for mentees) would benefit the learning of mentors in addition to their mentees. As Drago-Severson
(2004) suggests, mentoring should be “a reciprocal learning opportunity, meaning that mentees and mentors reap benefits from mentoring, because both learn as a result of the relationship” (p. 123).

In her study of mentors from the New Teacher Center, Hanson (2010) found mentors’ leadership skills being developed in the context of mentoring programs in addition to learning as mentors. As an example, she cites one mentor's reflections as follows:

As a teacher, I was quite happy to just close my door and be in my room because I was good at it and my kids were good at it and so it was easy to just think, 'All you other people [need to] figure out how to get it good in your room.' That's different for me now. (p. 78)

A mentor from the second-year teacher mentoring program also expressed the joy she received as she developed leadership skills in her role as a mentor: “[During our face-to-face meetings,] we were just chatting, chatting, chatting. And it was those kind of conversations that when I left there I was just like, 'We are HELPING these people! This is so awesome!'” Indeed, the other mentor participants corroborated this feeling, what Hanson would attribute to their “gain[ing] a 'global view' that affected their vision of good schools and good teaching” (2010, p. 77).

What seemed to impact most mentors' perspectives of themselves as leaders and learners were the face-to-face meetings, where mentors and mentees typically left the topic of action research behind, preferring to share classroom practices. Mentors felt that they were most effectively leading their mentees when they were sharing ideas about classroom practice with them, and felt they themselves were learning most when picking up ideas about classroom practice from their mentees. One mentor stated that what she found most valuable was “... to
reach out to colleagues for new ways to tackle old problems! I was able to give my mentees ideas that have worked well for me, as well as hear ideas they tried and took them back to my own classroom.”

The goal of the second-year teacher mentoring program, however, was for mentors and mentees to do more than just share classroom practices. While this activity was clearly valued by both groups, it may not be enough to fully allow for gains in instructional growth and reflective practice. As Hanson and Moir found in their study, *Beyond Mentoring* (2008), “mentors have played leading roles in cultural shifts in their schools that encourage . . . the development of adult learning communities focused on reflective conversations about teaching and learning” (p. 8). Therefore, it would seem that in order to ensure organizational change and organizational learning, mentoring programs should foster the ability of mentors as leaders and learners to impact both instructional knowledge and reflective practice growth and should perhaps not only consist of sharing classroom practices.

**Action research.** As Gilles et al. (2010) state, “one of the important benefits from action research is the creating or strengthening of a Professional Learning Community (PLC), [which] can be characterized by: collaboration, . . . dialogue and reflection on practice, and increased awareness of others’ practices” (p. 93). These benefits are in large part why action research was included as such a central activity of the logic model for the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program and were part of the program's outcomes, yet, ironically, these were not perceived by mentees or mentors to have been a result of the practice of action research. Although mentees did acknowledge that the reflective nature of action research was useful (even if seen as the only useful element of it), both groups attributed meeting face-to-face with their mentoring group as having the most impact on their reflective practice and their awareness of others' practices,
especially since they would digress from discussing their action research work to instead share classroom practices, which they saw as one of the most valuable, albeit unplanned, activities of the program. This is interesting in terms of the literature, since Ginns et al. (2001) believed that collaborative action research is “more effective in addressing the concerns of the teachers themselves” (p. 14). However, the mentees felt that working together on action research limited what they could discuss with their mentoring group to just the one, more narrow topic, versus being able to discuss any questions or ideas about classroom practice depending on their need at that particular time, which they felt “addressed their concerns” better than action research did. As one mentee explained, “I don't feel we have had much wiggle room to collaborate as the . . . nature of action research is so specific and restricting.”

Another reason that the Plymouth Public Schools decided to include action research as a focus of the second-year teacher mentoring program was to promote organizational change. As Gilles et al. (2010) stated, “some researchers have found action research to be a professional development tool that uses inquiry and reflection to promote change in a school” (p. 93). However, for such change to occur, there would first have to be buy-in from the teachers conducting action research, buy-in that did not, for the most part, exist among the mentee participants of this study, mainly because they saw themselves, as second-year teachers, as incapable of conducting action research, summed up by one mentee as follows: “the action research project was initially too demanding for a second year teacher.” Yet, mentees were also not fully dismissive of the practice of action research. They simply thought, as one mentee put it, that “it would better serve a more experienced teacher.” Perhaps the call, then, for action research as an organizational change initiative is to at least begin with more veteran teachers. In this sense, it may be more beneficial to use a second-year mentoring program to work with
beginning teachers on skills and strategies that would prepare them to undertake action research at a later point in their careers. In this way, the program could still potentially achieve one of its overall goals, for “classroom research [i.e., action research] . . . [to] become the norm, not the exception,” as Gilles et al. (2010, p. 99) found in their study of how to institutionalize action research in a school setting.

Social networking. Knowing what busy and diverse schedules teachers have, and that “competing work, school, and family commitments often make it difficult for participants to engage in and sustain mentoring programs” (Kasprisin et al., 2008, p. 163), collaboration via social networking was an integral part of the logic model design for the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program, based on the belief that this would “[allow mentors and mentees] to stay in contact . . . at their convenience” (p. 164).

Although the mentee participants certainly felt the time crunch of beginning teaching – one mentee blogged, “Unfortunately we're pulled in EVERY direction and I guess there just isn't always enough time” – they surprisingly, and overwhelmingly, preferred meeting face-to-face than via social networking. Many mentors and mentees attributed this to what they saw as the social nature of teachers. As one mentor stated, “I think teaching by nature is a social job . . . we prefer to not sit behind computers unless we're chained to them.” This potential aversion to online collaboration due to a preference for more traditionally social opportunities may have also been impacted by a lack of consistency on the part of the mentee participation online. As one mentor simply put it, “It's hard to network with others who aren't networking!”

Furthermore, and potentially most interesting in light of the literature, mentees felt uncomfortable sharing their classroom concerns online, even though Collinson and Cook (2007) claim that “e-mail and chat rooms seem to ease discussion of 'undiscussable' topics that remain
off limits in face-to-face conversations” (p. 112). Some mentees felt the exact opposite. As one of their mentors explained,

When you're not at professional status and that if they're not following the rules or let's just say it's action research – so it's something that didn't go well in your classroom last year ... now they're saying, 'Oh my Gosh, I'm a bad teacher. Is the administration going to say that? And look at that and look down upon me because I don't have classroom management or I wasn't able to get my spelling program off the ground' or something like that. That was a concern. . . they felt that it was Big Brother looking on.

Validity and Limitations

This study employed validation strategies within three significant areas of validity and credibility as outlined in Chapter 3: trustworthiness, consensual validation, and objectivity and positionality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Creswell (2007) recommend consistent engagement in the field in order to build trust with participants and to learn the culture. Trustworthiness of this study was established due to the researcher’s role as program coordinator, which provided the researcher ample opportunity to establish a trusting relationship with participants. The researcher’s eleven year of engagement with the district enhanced her capacity to continue to learn about the district’s culture in studying the implementation of this new program. Providing corroborating evidence, another factor in trustworthiness, was accomplished through the triangulation of data, which allowed the researcher to “cross-check [findings] through different modes of inquiry” (Weiss, 1998, p. 263).

Consensual validation was achieved through peer review and member checking. Peer review, sought from district administrators, peers, and the researcher’s advisor, as well as member checking the data, analyses, and interpretations with participants, provided external
checks to “[keep] the researcher honest” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). These types of consensual validation were essential given the dual position of the researcher as program coordinator. Throughout the study, the researcher reflected on her positionality within the research, acknowledging potential biases towards the program and the stakes the program outcomes held for her. Also, the power she held as program coordinator may have influenced participants’ responses to survey and focus group questions. The need for objectivity was recognized, and was met largely through data triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking, as well as anonymity of participants for the survey responses.

Because participants of this study were mentees and mentors of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program, the findings of this study are not representative of other mentoring programs. Since this study was primarily conducted to evaluate the first year of this program in order to continue to revise and refine the program, it is appropriate the findings be only representative of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program.

One large limitation of this study is that it was only conducted for the first year of implementation of the program. This limited any findings regarding the program’s impact on organizational change and organizational learning. Data should continue to be collected regarding these longer-reaching outcomes. The second major limitation is the low number of participants. Twenty-three mentees (of the twenty-eight total) participated in the mid-program survey and nineteen mentees participated in the end-of-program survey. Seven of the eight total mentors participated in the mid-program survey, and five participated in the end-of-program focus group. Although these numbers are relatively high percentages of the total number of mentees and mentors in the program, they are still a small number of participants for a study, and this should be noted in using the data.
Conclusion

In exploring the documented perceptions of both mentee and mentor study participants, this program evaluation study investigated to what extent the expected outcomes of the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program (growth in instructional knowledge and reflective practice, and reduced teacher isolation) were achieved, and also investigated which program components contributed the most to the desired outcomes. Data from the mid-program and end-of-program Likert scale survey items was analyzed in order to initially determine the range of participants' perspectives. Then, qualitative data was used to give a voice to the mentee and mentor study participants. Through their words, as recorded on open-ended mid- and end-of-program survey questions and a focus group transcript as well as via online documents, mentees and mentors of the PPS second-year teacher mentoring program shed light on the outcomes of the program when describing their experiences. What was discovered was that each of the three program outcomes was achieved, though the degree to which each was achieved varied. Gains in instructional knowledge were perceived by some mentees and by most mentors to have been achieved, mostly as a result of the face-to-face meetings mentoring groups participated in. Gains in reflective practice were found to be the most achieved outcome of the program, with study participants attributing the face-to-face meetings to have supported this activity the most, but also to the reflective nature of action research. Reducing teacher isolation was also somewhat achieved, but was identified by participants as the least achieved outcome of the program overall. This may be because participants only reported a reduced sense of isolation during face-to-face meetings, which occurred far less than the online collaboration of the program, a component which was blamed by many for actually increasing isolation due to its perceived impersonal nature.
Mentee and mentor study participants pointed to several program components that led to the expected program outcomes, as well as to those that did not. Both groups heavily valued the face-to-face meetings, mostly as an opportunity to discuss and share classroom practices. This activity was not planned for in the logic model, which focuses on collaborative action research as the topic for discussion both online and face-to-face. However, the practice of action research was not valued, most participants finding it to be too challenging for second-year teachers, and too limiting for beneficial collaborative dialogue. The only aspect of action research valued by mentees was its reflective nature, which they indicated as a useful program component.

Not surprisingly, considering how valued face-to-face meetings were, the practice of social networking was seen as the least valuable program component, with participants attributing this to its perceived impersonal nature as well as a mentee fear of Big Brother monitoring. Mentors also felt that the size and cohesiveness of the group made a difference regarding whether or not social networking had an impact, while some mentees still wanted the type of support they experienced in the first-year mentoring program, with a mentor assigned to them from the school at which they taught.

**Significance of the Study to the Field**

The capacity of a mentoring program to result in gains for beginning teachers (not simply during their first year only) in instructional knowledge and in reflective practice, as well as reduced teacher isolation, must be studied in the field of education. This particular study investigated one second-year teacher mentoring program to determine which components of the program led to these outcomes. Program components were identified by the logic model, which was informed by research indicating a need for expanding traditional mentoring programs to include opportunities for collaboration, instructional growth for beginning teachers, and mentor
learning and leadership, opportunities that could take place via action research and social networking. These program components were designed according to the research on adult learning and transformational learning, as well as organizational change and organizational learning, all goals for the ultimate impact of the program according to the logic model.

This study supports some of this research, but not all of it. The idea of expanding traditional mentoring programs beyond providing emotional and procedural support and towards instructional support proved to be too much for many of the second-year teachers, who enjoyed the collaboration with teachers of similar grade levels to their own, but who still yearned for more of a support system rather than an opportunity to delve into inquiry, and who overwhelmingly preferred this support to be in the form of face-to-face meetings rather than via social networking (even though this practice, according to the research, would free up time constraints, something mentees did claim to have). In this sense, action research, though heavily supported by the research, was found to be too overwhelming of a process for the second-year teachers, who felt they were not ready for such practice.

Mentees did not feel action research to be relevant to their day-to-day jobs, a relevance required for adult learning to occur, which is interesting since most research on adult learning points to practices like action research as effective. The only impactful aspect of action research perceived by mentees was its reflective nature, which supports the call for reflective practice in the literature on adult learning theory. Even though adult learning theory and transformational learning theory are linked, and even though mentees are clearly adult learners, the resistance to action research on the part of the mentees points to the idea that these mentees were not ready for transformational learning, especially since they were still looking for what Berger (2004) termed “support as comfort” (as cited in Taylor, 2005, p. 185). This comfort and support came for
mentees in the form of sharing classroom practices, a practice that does not on its own lead to organizational change or organizational learning since it is more focused on reproducing the profession than on inquiry and innovation.

These discrepancies between the research and the findings of this study point to what must still be studied concerning mentoring programs for beginning teachers. How to best achieve a balance between acknowledging a beginning teacher's need for support while still guiding them towards instructional growth and, eventually, transformational learning must be further investigated. This could potentially involve scaffolding for beginning teachers, building their inquiry-based reflective skills throughout a two- or even three-year mentoring program towards the practice of action research. Yet, as indicated by this study, there is also a range of beginning teacher capacity. For example, while the majority of participants did not feel comfortable with action research, there were still some (even if a small percentage) who did. This points to the need to investigate how to potentially differentiate professional development for beginning teachers based on their mentoring needs. Arguably, this also points to the need for school districts to be able to shape hiring practices around the search for candidates who are likely ready, or soon to be ready, for transformational learning. If the problem of how to best redefine mentoring so that it best fits with adult learning, leading to transformational learning and even organizational change and organizational learning, could be met with multiple, viable solutions, then the profession of teaching at large would be enhanced and, as such, would lead to more effective teaching and more effective student learning.

Next Steps

While the Plymouth Public Schools' second-year teacher mentoring program may never be able to reach all of its participants, the program can improve in ways that will potentially
reach most. Both mentee and mentor study participants offered suggestions based on their own experiences within the program, indicating some components that should be added to the program and also others that should be removed. Additionally, the researcher as program coordinator's own reflections about how best to improve the program should be considered.

The appreciation of the face-to-face meetings on the part of both mentees and mentors must be considered, yet mentees' concerns about the time constraints as reported online must also be taken into account. Therefore, more of a balance between the amount of face-to-face meetings and online dialogue should be planned for. Additionally, mentees should be consistently reassured about the privacy settings of such social networking that ensure that only one's fellow mentees and a mentor (who is there to help protect the mentees' privacy) will be able to access it, alleviating the fear of Big Brother-like monitoring. Elements of action research should continue to be implemented, particularly reflective practice. Steps towards transitioning second-year teachers more smoothly towards the work of inquiry and away from a reliance on emotional support and on others' classroom practices must be taken if transformational learning, leading to organizational change and learning, is to occur.

Final Words

The PPS second-year teacher mentoring program did achieve its outcomes, to some extent. Some outcomes were perceived as more achieved than others, due to the impact of certain program components and even due to some unplanned program activities. While a reduced experience of teacher isolation was the least achieved outcome (mostly due to the practice of social networking versus the less frequent, yet found to be more useful, face-to-face meetings), gains in instructional knowledge and especially in reflective practice were evident. However, these were due more to the practice of sharing classroom practices during face-to-face
meetings than to any other program component, which is interesting considering this particular activity was not planned for in the program's logic model and was mostly a result of second-year teachers seeking classroom support versus stretching themselves towards a more inquiry- and research-based practice. Ways to achieve a balance between providing second-year teachers with the support they still most want and pushing them to become inquiry-based reflective teachers (who achieve transformational learning and ultimately help their organizations to change and learn) must continue to be investigated.
References


Quarterly, 148 (7).


Appendix A

Permission Letter Superintendent of Schools

July 7, 2011
Dear Dr. Maestas,

As you know, as program coordinator of the second-year teacher mentoring program for the Plymouth Public Schools, I have recently designed this new program, which will be implemented district-wide beginning in September of 2011. My interest in effective mentoring practices has grown sharper through my studies as a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, where I am currently planning on conducting a study concerning the evaluation of this new mentoring program in Plymouth. This study would require data to be collected from both the mentees and the mentors of the program (meaning both second-year and veteran teachers of the Plymouth Public Schools). Therefore, I am requesting permission to elicit participation in this study from these mentees and mentors.

This program evaluation study will allow me to investigate whether the program is meeting its intended outcomes of an increase in instructional knowledge and in reflective practice for both mentees and mentors, and a reduced sense of teacher isolation among both mentees and mentors. I plan on surveying study participants, as well as conducting focus groups of participants and document analysis on products of the mentoring program, such as participants' online blogs and discussion forum archives.

I believe this program evaluation study will only serve to benefit the Plymouth Public Schools as it should indicate both strengths and weaknesses of the new second-year teacher mentoring program, allowing for further refinement of the program.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (508) 451-2334 or via e-mail at ebettencourt@plymouth.k12.ma.us, or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Christopher Unger at Northeastern University, (617) 909-1360. Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this request for permission.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Bettencourt
Lead ELA teacher, Plymouth South High School
Second-year teacher mentoring program coordinator
Plymouth, MA
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston
Initial Participant Recruitment Letter – e-mail

July 7, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, I am currently pursuing my doctorate in education from Northeastern University, and, as part of this pursuit, will be conducting a research study beginning in the fall of 2011. My study will be a program evaluation of the newly implemented second-year teacher mentoring program of the Plymouth Public School district.

I am currently looking for both mentees and mentors of this second-year teacher mentoring program who would be interested in participating in this program evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to investigate to what extent the program is achieving its intended outcomes of an increase in both instructional knowledge and reflective practice for both mentees and mentors, and a reduced sense of teacher isolation for both mentees and mentors, and to investigate which aspects of the program contribute the most to these outcomes. By participating, you would aid the district at large in improving and refining the mentoring program. Participating in this study would entail the completion of a survey, participating in a focus group, and giving permission to the researcher to collect participant blogs and discussion forum archives dating from September 2011 onward, as well as field notes taken by the researcher during face-to-face meetings of mentors and mentees dating from September 2011 onward, as data.

Once I complete my proposal of this study and receive approval from Northeastern University, I will formally request your participation. At this time, I am simply looking for an initial interest response from mentees and mentors of the second-year teacher mentoring program. Please be aware that agreeing or not agreeing to participate in this study will have no reflection on your work within the mentoring program or as a teacher in the district whatsoever. Also, any participation in the study will be completely confidential; names and other personal information will not be used.

Please respond via e-mail to ebettencourt@plymouth.k12.ma.us if you are interested or have any questions. Thank you in advance for your time.

~Elizabeth Bettencourt
Appendix C

Signed Informed Consent Document
Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

Investigator Name: Elizabeth Bettencourt
Title of Project: Redefining Mentoring: An Evaluation of a Second-Year Teacher Mentoring Program

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**
You have been asked to participate since you expressed an initial interest in participating from a request letter sent in July 2011.

**Why is this research study being done?**
The purpose of this study is to evaluate the second-year teacher mentoring program's success in achieving its intended outcomes of growth in instructional knowledge and reflective practice, and reduced experience of teacher isolation, and to determine which aspects of the program contributed most to these intended outcomes.

**What will I be asked to do?**
The researcher will be looking for you to participate in the following ways:
1. Complete a survey that will be electronically mailed
2. Participate in a focus group session that will be audio taped
3. Allow use of blog posts and archived discussion forums dating from September 2011 onward as data
4. Allow use of researcher’s field notes from face-to-face mentoring meetings dating from September 2011 onward as data

**Where will this take place and how much time will it take?**
The electronically mailed survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. The focus group session will last approximately one to two hours, and will take place at a school in the district that is a convenient location for those participating, and at a convenient time for those participating.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**
Benefits will include opportunity to reflect on your own growth as a participant in the second-year teacher mentoring program, and the opportunity to aid in refining the program for future participants, benefiting yourself and the school district at large.

**Who will see the information about me?**
Your part in the study will be completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for all study participants. Only the researcher will be aware of the participants' identities. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**
You are not required to take part in this study. If you do not want to participate, you do not sign this form.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**
Participation in this study is voluntary, and your participation or non-participation will not in any way affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**
Elizabeth Bettencourt  
Plymouth South High School  
490 Long Pond Road  
Plymouth, MA 02360  
Home # (508) 451-2334  
Work # (508) 224-7512  
E-mail: ebettencourt@plymouth.k12.ma.us

Christopher Unger, Ed. D.  
College of Professional Studies  
50 Nightingale Hall  
Northeastern University, Boston  
Campus # (617) 373-2400  
E-mail: c.unger@neu.edu

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact_______. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
There is no cost to participate in this study.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. Should I be selected, I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

____________________________________  __________________________
Research Participant (Printed Name)  Date
Mid-Program Survey Questions - Mentees

For the purposes of this survey, please consider the following definitions:

- **Action Research** refers to the action research process you are currently undergoing as a part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Collaboration** refers to the experience of collaborating with both your fellow mentees and your mentor as a group as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Social networking** refers to the use of your mentoring group’s Ning site as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Face-to-face meetings** refer to the formally scheduled and required face-to-face meetings you have had as a mentoring group as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Instructional knowledge** refers to your own thinking about your teaching practices (including instruction, assessment, planning, etc.).
- **Reflective practice** refers to your own practice of making instructional decisions based on having reflected about your teaching practices.
- **Teacher isolation** refers to the experience of feeling isolated that often coincides with the autonomous nature of the teaching profession.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 as a measure of no impact and 5 as a measure of powerful impact.

1. How much impact has the practice of action research had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

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2. How much impact has the practice of action research had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

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Please explain:
3. How much impact has the practice of action research had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

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No Impact Little Impact Some Impact Strong Impact Powerful Impact

Please explain:

4. How much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
No Impact Little Impact Some Impact Strong Impact Powerful Impact

Please explain:

5. How much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
No Impact Little Impact Some Impact Strong Impact Powerful Impact

Please explain:
6. How much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
No Impact  Little Impact  Some Impact  Strong Impact  Powerful Impact

Please explain:
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7. How much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own growth in instructional knowledge so far this year?

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8. How much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own growth in reflective practice so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
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9. How much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

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10. How much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

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11. How much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

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12. How much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

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13. What has been most valuable about the second-year teacher mentoring program? Why?

14. What has been least valuable about the second-year teacher mentoring program? Why?

15. How would you redesign any or all aspects of the second-year teacher mentoring program? Please explain.
Appendix E

Mid-Program Survey Questions – Mentors

For the purposes of this survey, please consider the following definitions:

- **Action Research** refers to the action research process your mentees are currently undergoing and you are currently guiding as a mentor of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Collaboration** refers to the experience of collaborating with your mentees as a group as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Social networking** refers to the use of your mentoring group’s Ning site as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Face-to-face meetings** refer to the formally scheduled and required face-to-face meetings you have had as a mentoring group as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Instructional knowledge** refers to your own thinking about your teaching practices (including instruction, assessment, planning, etc.).
- **Reflective practice** refers to your own practice of making instructional decisions based on having reflected about your teaching practices.
- **Teacher isolation** refers to the experience of feeling isolated that often coincides with the autonomous nature of the teaching profession.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 as a measure of no impact and 5 as a measure of powerful impact.

1. How much impact has the practice of guiding action research groups had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

   1  2  3  4  5
   No Little Some Strong Powerful
   Impact Impact Impact Impact Impact

   Please explain:

   _____________________________________________________________
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2. How much impact has the practice of guiding action research groups had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

   1  2  3  4  5
   No Little Some Strong Powerful
   Impact Impact Impact Impact Impact
3. How much impact has the practice of guiding action research groups had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5  
No Impact Little Impact Some Impact Strong Impact Powerful Impact

Please explain:
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4. How much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5  
No Impact Little Impact Some Impact Strong Impact Powerful Impact

Please explain:
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5. How much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5  
No Impact Little Impact Some Impact Strong Impact Powerful Impact
6. How much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
No                 Little          Some        Strong       Powerful
Impact             Impact         Impact        Impact         Impact

Please explain:
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7. How much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
No                 Little          Some        Strong       Powerful
Impact             Impact         Impact        Impact         Impact

Please explain:
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8. How much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
9. How much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5

Please explain:

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10. How much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own gains in instructional knowledge so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5

Please explain:

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11. How much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own gains in reflective practice so far this year?

1  2  3  4  5
12. How much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation so far this year?

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13. What has been most valuable about the second-year teacher mentoring program? Why?

14. What has been least valuable about the second-year teacher mentoring program? Why?

15. How would you redesign any or all aspects of the second-year teacher mentoring program? Please explain.
Appendix F

End-of-program Survey Questions – Mentees

For the purposes of this survey, please consider the following definitions:

- **Action Research** refers to the action research process you are currently undergoing as a part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Collaboration** refers to the experience of collaborating with both your fellow mentees and your mentor as a group as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Social networking** refers to the use of your mentoring group’s Ning site as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Face-to-face meetings** refer to the formally scheduled and required face-to-face meetings you have had as a mentoring group as part of the second-year teacher mentoring program.
- **Instructional knowledge** refers to your own thinking about your teaching practices (including instruction, assessment, planning, etc.).
- **Reflective practice** refers to your own practice of making instructional decisions based on having reflected about your teaching practices.
- **Teacher isolation** refers to the experience of feeling isolated that often coincides with the autonomous nature of the teaching profession.

Please rate the following on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 as a measure of no impact and 5 as a measure of powerful impact.

1. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of action research had on your own gains in instructional knowledge?

   1  2  3  4  5
   No Impact  Little Impact  Some Impact  Strong Impact  Powerful Impact

Please explain:
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2. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of action research had on your own gains in reflective practice?

   1  2  3  4  5
   No Impact  Little Impact  Some Impact  Strong Impact  Powerful Impact

Please explain:
3. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of action research had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation?

1  2  3  4  5
No Impact   Little Impact   Some Impact   Strong Impact   Powerful Impact

Please explain:

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4. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own gains in instructional knowledge?

1  2  3  4  5
No Impact   Little Impact   Some Impact   Strong Impact   Powerful Impact

Please explain:

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5. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own gains in reflective practice?

1  2  3  4  5
No Impact   Little Impact   Some Impact   Strong Impact   Powerful Impact

Please explain:

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6. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of collaboration had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation?

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7. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own growth in instructional knowledge?

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8. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own growth in reflective practice?

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Please explain:

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9. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of social networking had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation?

1. No Impact
2. Little Impact
3. Some Impact
4. Strong Impact
5. Powerful Impact

Please explain:
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10. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own gains in instructional knowledge?

1. No Impact
2. Little Impact
3. Some Impact
4. Strong Impact
5. Powerful Impact

Please explain:
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11. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own gains in reflective practice?

1. No Impact
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3. Some Impact
4. Strong Impact
5. Powerful Impact
12. Now that you have completed the program, how much impact has the practice of face-to-face meetings had on your own experience of reduced teacher isolation?

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13. Now that you have completed the program, what do you see as most valuable about the second-year teacher mentoring program? Why?

14. Now that you have completed the program, what do you see as least valuable about the second-year teacher mentoring program? Why?

15. Now that you have completed the program, how would you redesign any or all aspects of the second-year teacher mentoring program? Please explain.
Appendix G

End-of-program Focus Group Questions – Mentors

1. Please tell me about your experience in this second-year teacher mentoring program.
   • How has it been helpful, if at all?
     ○ Can you provide an example?
     ○ Does anyone feel differently? If so, how? Can you provide an example?
   • What program components, if any, were really helpful?
     ○ Can you provide an example?
     ○ Does anyone feel differently? If so, how? Can you provide an example?

   Now, I'd like to discuss your experiences with each component of the program . . .

2. How has the practice of guiding action research groups impacted your teaching so far this year, if at all?
   • Please explain, offering specific examples.
   • Do you feel it has increased your knowledge of instructional practice, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has made you a more reflective practitioner, or not? How so or why not?

3. How has the collaborative nature of the second-year teacher mentoring program impacted your teaching so far this year, if at all?
   • Please explain, offering specific examples.
   • Do you feel it has increased your knowledge of instructional practice, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has made you a more reflective practitioner, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has reduced any sense of teacher isolation for you, or not? (Do you feel less isolated from your peers as a result, or not?) How so or why not?

4. How have the social networking aspects of the second-year teacher mentoring program impacted your teaching so far this year, if at all?
   • Please explain, offering specific examples.
   • Do you feel it has increased your knowledge of instructional practice, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has made you a more reflective practitioner, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has reduced any sense of teacher isolation for you, or not? (Do you feel less isolated from your peers as a result, or not?) How so or why not?
5. How has the face-to-face meeting component of the second-year teacher mentoring program impacted your teaching so far this year, if at all?
   • Please explain, offering specific examples.
   • Do you feel it has increased your knowledge of instructional practice, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has made you a more reflective practitioner, or not? How so or why not?
   • Do you feel it has reduced any sense of teacher isolation for you, or not? (Do you feel less isolated from your peers as a result, or not?) How so or why not?

6. Finally, which program components were most helpful? How and/or why? Which were least helpful? How and/or why?

7. What are your recommendations for next year's implementation of the second-year teacher mentoring program? Please provide reasons for your recommendations.