

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

TITLE: Informal Mentoring Strategies Training for California Mentors

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DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: 07/28/2020

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE PROJECT COMMITTEE IN

PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Informal Mentoring Training in Induction Programs

Informal Mentoring Strategies Training for  
California Mentors

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree  
in

Special Education

California State University San Marcos

Summer, 2020

### Abstract

Much research in the field has established that many new teachers struggle with maintaining a balance and leveraging support with responsibilities in their professional lives, particularly those who serve in the field of special education. In turn, these factors contribute to the high attrition rates prevalent in the special education teaching field. Induction programs are one method that states, including California, utilize in an attempt to address this issue. Despite pointed efforts, data shows that attrition rates have continued to grow, even with induction programs in place. The formal mentoring that constitutes a large portion of most induction programs is examined in this work and has revealed a gap between the less beneficial formal process and the more success found in informal mentoring strategies at retaining education specialists.

This study discusses this gap in research that has resulted in a training manual about the best methods and strategies to incorporate informal mentoring procedures into typically formal induction programs within California. Incorporating informal mentoring includes a) establishing a rapport with mentees, b) developing and maintaining trust, c) phrasing feedback to alleviate pressure, and d) appropriately structuring formal meetings. The training manual explores and provides an alternative approach which is promising for both mentors and new teachers.

*Keywords:* Mentor, Induction Program, Beginning Special Education Teacher, Informal Mentoring

### Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, thank you for always being there to love and support me. To my parents, your continued support has propelled me through this program, and I would not be here without you. To my friends, Tori Takeshita, Kristen Velit, and Corryn Caze, you have continued to be my light and guide throughout and kept me prepared for what was ahead. Finally, thank you to my professors for the continued help and guidance throughout the program.

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## Chapter One

### **Introduction**

The California law, Marian Bergeson Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System (1998) requires all beginning teachers, including special education teachers, to participate in induction programs with mentors in order to guide them through their first two years in the field. Despite these requirements, researchers at the Learning Policy Institute found that in California, between the academic years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, one out of five special education teachers left their positions (Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott & Darling-Hammond, 2020). This staggering statistic clearly highlights the need for improved new teacher support for special education teachers in California.

Multiple studies have confirmed the high attrition rate for special education teachers in California throughout the past two decades (Wasburn, Wasburn-Moses and Davis, 2010 & Emery & Vandenberg, 2010 & Vittek, 2015). The reasons a special education teacher might leave the field have been attributed to lack of self-efficacy (Guo, Dynia, Pelatti, & Justice, 2014), the feeling of isolation (Ondrasek, et al., 2020), and little to no collegial support (Hagaman, 2017). This author found that little has been done to try to combat this problem, beyond imposing the requirement for participating in an induction program (Brunsting, et al., 2014).

Despite the best intentions of existing induction programs, studies like Griffin (2010), Cancio, et al. (2013) and Brunsting, et al. (2014) show little change to attrition rates, even in districts with induction programs embedded in the new teacher procedures. The concepts behind the support and mentoring of beginning teachers has been shown to be a foundationally sound practice (Wasburn, et al., 2010). A study done by Vittek (2015) confirms that, “Comprehensive induction programs provide a new teacher with guidance that allows them to grow professionally

and personally” (p. 3). This creates a gap in study outcomes, which bears further examination regarding the success and viability of induction programs. The literature review in this paper provides extensive comparisons and contrasts among program effectiveness and rates of attrition. The results from this examination sift out to conclude that in order for new teacher mentoring to become a successful method of preventing attrition, mentors must be fully vetted and trained about the methods of mentoring and further, how to best help and educate the new teachers (Griffin, 2010). In the sections that follow, the purpose, significance and the definition of terms found in this project are explored.

#### Purpose of Project/Statement of the Problem

Attrition rates for special education teachers have been very high for decades (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010 & Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff and Harniss, 2001). Researchers are attempting to establish the primary reasons for the attrition rates. Some of the reasons have been tentatively identified including stress of the job (Gersten, et al., 2001 & Cancio, et al., 2018), role ambiguity (Adera, 2010), lack of self-efficacy (Sarıçam & Sakız 2014), and poor relationships with administrators and other educators (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013 & Hagaman, 2017). Although tentative reasons are evident, effective strategies for how to combat teacher loss have been limited.

Induction programs have been the way many states, and in particular, California, have attempted to solve or mitigate this issue of teacher attrition (Vittekk, 2015). Research identifies that the quality of mentoring and mentors themselves determine the successful outcomes of induction. These mentors play a significant role in how much the beginning teachers absorbs and gains from an induction program (Wasburn, et al., 2010). It has been further confirmed by researchers that informal mentoring is the most helpful type of support to offer to beginning

teachers (Griffin, 2010). The conversational nature of this type of informal mentoring is shown to produce higher satisfaction rates for the beginning teacher than formal, evaluative mentoring (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). With this finding in hand, it becomes clear that there is an arena open for contributions toward the improvement of such mentoring programs. The research project and resulting training are designed to address this need. It is clear that training with practice for mentors must be conducted to appropriately use informal mentoring within an induction program (Desimone, et al., 2014).

### Significance of Project

This training is designed to be used by mentors who actively work in an induction program required of new teachers by the state of California. All mentors in California must be vetted according to pre-established criteria, and then fully trained in order to become a mentor (Marian Bergeson Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System, 1998). The trainings must include, but are not limited to:

...coaching and mentoring, goal setting, use of appropriate mentoring instruments, best practices in adult learning, support for individualized mentoring challenges, reflection on mentoring practice, opportunities to engage with mentoring peers in professional learning networks, and program processes designed to support candidate growth and effectiveness (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017, p. 3).

The informal approach to mentoring training chosen by the author is intended to focus on creating a supportive culture between mentors and their assigned beginning teacher candidates. This will support and encourage the beginning education specialist with their teaching practices and provide them with the professional and emotional support they need in their first two years of teaching (Vitteck, 2015). It is also intended to assist the beginning teacher's present and future



students by producing more experienced, well-rounded and professionally stable teachers. The mentors are trained to reflect on their practices to better aid the beginning teacher through the first two years of their teaching. The training builds upon research that establishes the importance of informal mentoring in induction programs, and in ways that informal mentoring retains and nurtures education specialists in the field in order to reduce attrition rates.

#### Definition of Terms

**Attrition.** The definition of attrition is as follows, “a reduction in numbers usually as a result of resignation, retirement, or death” (Merriam-Webster, 2016). In special education, attrition is seen as the resignation from an education specialist job in order to peruse a career path in another aspect of education or leaving the education field entirely.

**Beginning education specialist.** A beginning education specialist or a beginning teacher candidate is a special education teacher that is in their first two years of teaching. In the state of California teachers who fall into this category must participate in a two-year induction program to support them through their first years of teaching (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

**Burnout.** One academic study defines burnout as, “...a unique stress syndrome that results from coping unsuccessfully with chronic stress in the classroom” (Coman, et al., 2013, p. 345). When education specialists “burnout” they tend to leave the special education profession.

**Formal mentoring.** Desimone, et al. (2014) describes formal mentoring as, “where a mentor is assigned by the school, district, or state, being by far the most common form of induction” (p. 88). Formal mentoring is evaluative in nature and mainly consists of observations and set meeting times with the mentee or beginning teacher.

**Induction program.** For the purposes of this project, the author limited its scope to California induction programs. California induction programs are used to support beginning teachers through their first two years in a California elementary, middle or high school. Every California induction program must meet a set of requirements established by state law. These requirements include employing mentors to help guide the beginning teachers, creating goals for the beginning teachers to meet, and having mandated hours of mentoring and guidance. These requirements are for both education specialists and general education teachers, TK-12 (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

**Informal mentoring.** Informal mentoring is conversational and relaxed in nature. It does not feel evaluative and the mentee feels comfortable speaking about complex topics in this setting. Desimone, et al. (2014) describes informal mentors as, "... people whom new teachers themselves choose to go to for help" (p. 88).

**Mentor.** A mentor can take on many definitions in education depending on the setting and purpose of the role. For the purposes of this program, a mentor is a formal role assigned to a special education teacher who is formally employed in a California induction program and is trained and vetted in accordance with the requirements of California law. Such mentors are assigned to a beginning education specialist participating in the induction program and meet the qualifications associated with induction programs. Mentors have the same credential and teach the same grade levels and/or subject area as the beginning teacher. The mentor must also have at minimum three years of teaching experience. The mentor's job is to provide support to the beginning teacher candidate and facilitate the candidate's growth and development as a teacher (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

### Summary

Special education teachers' attrition rates in California have been high for decades. First-year teachers comprise nearly 20% of the teaching workforce (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010) making it crucial that they are mentored and taught how to manage the job appropriately. Induction programs are a great way to support beginning education specialists if done with strategies that research proves best help beginning teachers (Vittekk, 2015).

This project was intended by its author to provide supplemental training to the required trainings by the State of California in order to train mentors, working in California induction programs, to appropriately use and integrate the ideas of informal mentoring within the confines of a formal, state approved, induction program. The training guide, or manual, discusses ways to develop trust between the mentor and beginning special education teacher, build a rapport, provide appropriate constructive feedback or advice, and schedule formal meetings. The following chapter discusses current research surrounding the topics of California induction programs, attrition rates, and formal/informal mentoring.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

This research project addresses a measurable need in the area of Teacher Induction in California. One topic that almost all educational researchers who study the longevity of teacher employment agree on is the high attrition rates for special education teachers. Lawmakers, consultants, trainers, school districts and California county departments of education have attempted to address this condition for several decades (Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott & Darling-Hammond, 2020). State legislatures have passed regulations and laws to correct this in most states through the use of an induction program for new or beginning teachers. Marian Bergeson Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System (1998) is the California law that requires all beginning teachers to participate in an induction program in their first two years of teaching.

Alhija and Fresko (2010) and Griffin (2010) are separate research studies that both evaluate the effects of induction programs and mentoring for beginning teachers. While the Alhija and Fresko (2010) study reveals that most teachers experience a moderately high satisfaction rate throughout the program, Griffin (2010) cautions that induction programs have both positive and disappointing outcomes specifically for beginning special education teachers. The disappointing aspects of the Griffin study include illuminating surveys of beginning teachers who state that they did not benefit or draw anything professionally helpful from participating in the induction programs. These differing studies confirm that in order to achieve a high satisfaction rate in an induction program, beginning special education teachers must have a mentor who is trained to navigate and provide support in both the affective emotional arena and the pedagogical skills areas (Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

Specific positive traits for mentors who work in induction programs have been found in current research. Spooner-Lane (2017) identifies that the best mentors are ones who have extensive experience teaching and who have also participated in multiple training sessions or professional development about the specific practice of mentoring. That being said, Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) found that mentor training programs vary in nature and quality and are typically poorly attended by the mentors. Many training programs in California are not mandatory, or if they are, require little to no participation or accountability for content from the mentors. California requires mentors to be trained before they begin the program (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017): however, the Commission does not clarify what type of training mentors they must attend or the length of the training program.

Mentoring novice or beginning professionals is not a new concept (Lechuga, 2014). Many professions, like nursing, law, medicine, the sciences and engineering, have been using mentors to aid in retention for the past decades (Lechuga, 2014 & Kowalski, 2019). Research reveals that many of the methods and skills mentors in other professions are employing in other professions with their novice candidates can be transferred and used in the teaching profession for the same supportive outcome (Peiser, Ambrose, Burke, & Davenport, 2018). This researcher seeks to a) understand the best methods in mentoring, and b) how to train mentors employed by a California Induction Program in order to meet the needs of and retain special education teachers.

### **California New Teacher Induction Programs- An Overview of Requirements**

Induction programs can vary from district to district inside their own states. For the purpose of this project, the conditions for California induction programs are explored and reviewed. In the state of California, beginning teacher induction programs must meet multiple preconditions. The districts in California must meet these conditions in order to have their

induction program certified by the California Teaching Commission (CTC). The policy states, “The program’s design features both individually and as a whole must serve to strengthen the candidate’s professional practice and contribute to the candidate’s future retention in the profession” (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017, p.2).

Each district must provide a two-year system of mentoring that is embedded within the job description of the beginning teachers. The district must also assign a mentor to each beginning teacher who holds the same credential and has experience at the same grade level/subject area they are teaching. Each beginning teacher must have, at minimum, one hour per week of individualized support/mentoring provided by the assigned mentor. Finally, the beginning teacher and mentor must create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that includes goals for their teaching skill of the mentee and is implemented for the “professional growth and development for the participating teacher and not for evaluation for employment purposes” (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017, p.1).

In the state of California, beginning teacher induction programs use the same requirements for both a general education credential and an education specialist credential. While the credentials are different in nature, and the advanced education specialist credential requires significantly more training, the state has deemed the preliminary credential and early years of teaching to be similar (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2018).

The Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) goals in an induction program allows for each candidate and mentor pair to make decisions about how best to address the needs of the new teacher, in order for the induction program to be accessible and relevant to the beginning teacher’s credential and grade level/content they are teaching (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2018). These goals are what make the program accessible to each

individual beginning teacher and constitutes the way the program differentiates between credentials, grade levels and subject areas (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

Along with these requirements, the state regulation mandates that beginning teacher programs must provide regular interactions between mentor and candidates. These interactions need to include observations of colleagues and peers by the candidate, and consistent reflections by the mentor on the candidate's instructional delivery development and data collection skills. The mentors must also support the beginning teachers in connecting with the larger teaching professional community. Ultimately, mentors must assess candidate progress towards the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* in order to support the recommendation for a clear credential (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

In order to be effective, mentors chosen to serve as support providers to new teachers must be carefully vetted and fully trained as a prerequisite to selection for a California beginning teacher program. The problem addressed in this project is based in this requirement. The adept and best practiced mentor must know the content area and context in which the beginning teacher teaches, must possess a Clear California Teaching Credential, and a minimum of three years of teaching experience, plus be available to meet all of the candidate's instructional skill needs. These mentors are also responsible for their own professional learning and development of collaborative skills. Each district program is required to provide mentors with strategies and practice regarding mentoring and coaching skills, as well as strategies about how to provide effective support and reassurance to new teachers during the challenges that beginning teachers face (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

Induction programs are also designed to provide training to the mentors about how to engage in personal goal-setting, the use of appropriate mentoring instruments, and the best practices to teach/mentor adults and facilitate growth and effectiveness for the beginning teacher candidates. The teacher induction programs are required to allow the candidates to assess and provide feedback to the administration regarding the quality of service provided to them from the mentors. Leaders of the programs must provide formative feedback to the mentors regarding their work with beginning teacher candidates (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

### **District/County Requirements**

All county offices of education in California must meet the requirements and standards set forth by the Commission on California Teaching Credentialing stated above. In this regard, there exists a certain amount of flexibility within the counties and districts to establish and deliver the requirements of the program in a manner their governing bodies approve. There are 58 counties with offices of education within California. This indicates that the variety of beginning teacher induction program delivery is likely high. Training for mentors must occur in all counties; the CTC does not clarify how it is to be delivered or how much training needs to occur. Herein lies the difficult truth.

### **Attrition in Special Education Teachers**

Employee attrition or turnover occurs when special education teachers leave their classrooms for other positions within education or leave the field entirely. Study results demonstrate that this typically occurs when special education teachers feel an overwhelming sense of emotional exhaustion (Coman, Alessandri, Gutierrez, Novotný, Boyd, Hume & Odom, 2013). Various research articles address the higher than average attrition rates found in teachers



serving in special education. The shortages of quality teachers and the high numbers leaving the profession paint a grim picture for beginning teachers (Cancio, Albrecht & Johns, 2013 & Brunsting, Sreckovic & Lane, 2014). The work of Emery and Vandenberg (2010) and Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, and Harniss (2001) aid in viewing an established a pattern that special education teachers have been leaving the profession and in increasing short supply for over two decades.

Vittek (2015) describes the average special educator who remains in the field over time as being in the demographic group of Caucasian and over thirty years old. The author continues by examining the link between age and attrition rates and determines that younger special educators have a higher ratio of leaving for another profession, or to a different aspect of education. Researchers, Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott, and Darling-Hammond at The Learning Policy Institute show that in California, between the academic years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, one out of five special education teachers left their positions (Ondrasek, et al., 2020). With these statistics, researchers have set out to reveal the reasons why special educators are leaving the field at such an increased rate.

#### Reasons for Attrition

Research addresses the fact that the area of special education has the highest attrition rate for teachers and the reasons as to why education specialists are leaving the field have been identified. As with any profession, there are many personal reasons special education teachers may switch career paths or leave the realm of education. However, the research also reveals that this attrition rate is far higher than in general education, secondary education, or high education (Ondrasek, et al., 2020). While teachers may have one, many, or none of these conditions present

when leaving the field, research has focused on the stressors, lack of support and overwork to be some of the most prevalent.

One indicator of why special education teachers are leaving the field is directly related to the stress of the job (Gersten, et al., 2001 & Cancio, et al., 2018). It has been shown that the more “stress free” a teacher feels, the higher job satisfaction they have. While this is true for any profession, the study by Cancio, et al. (2018) also addresses the feeling of being tired at work as a significant indicator of stress for education specialists. Being tired at work can be attributed to many differing aspects of the job. Studies by Adera (2010) and Brunsting, et al. (2014) both address the job ambiguity and the sheer amount of work that is typically expected of special education teachers to be the cause of stress within and outside of the classroom. The data collected shows that the pervasive feeling of being overworked or of being unable to complete all assigned tasks is seen to contribute to the stress of the job (Hagaman, 2017). With fewer special education teachers at a school site, caseloads can become unmanageable and paperwork may overflow (Ondrasek, et al., 2020). In addition to the stress of completing all required documentation for students comes the need to provide all students with the support outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Building trust between mentor and mentee is one proven method to reduce the stress levels in beginning teachers and help to build their confidence in teaching (Qian, Lin, Han, Chen & Hays, 2014).

When education specialists feel the pressure of job ambiguity and stress, the feeling of isolation within their own classroom occurs, even with twenty to thirty students in the room with them (Bilash, 2009). Cankaya, Karakus, and Demirtas (2009) explain that, “Perceived loneliness has a negative effect on individuals’ psychological well-being, their levels of performance and motivation” (p. 2010). Bilash (2009) describes new teacher’s prevalent reasons for the feeling of

inadequacy or isolation as a) an intimidating environment, b) staff disengagement, and c) scope of the new teacher's roles as an educator. The addition of high-quality mentoring to beginning special education teachers decreases the feeling of isolation and encourages novice teachers to reach out to their assigned mentor when feeling isolated (Peno, Silva Mangiante & Kenahan, 2016 & Strong & Baron, 2004).

Lack of self-efficacy or the noted feeling of inadequacy that education specialists experience lead to them not able to perform their job up to the standards of the profession has been shown to have a link in attrition rates for special education teachers as well (Saricam & Sakız, 2014). The unsurprising findings show that the higher the self-efficacy of the teacher, the more likely the teacher is to remain in the profession. The significance of this is rooted in the self-belief and confidence in achievement and can be incited by mentors assigned to the beginning teacher (Lechuga, 2014). Self-efficacy has also been found to have an effect upon the gains that children make in the special education classrooms. The study conducted by Guo, Dynia, Pelatti, and Justice (2014) shows a positive correlation between the self-efficacy of a new teacher and their student's gain of knowledge in language and literacy throughout the academic year. Student success is the single largest factor in drawing teachers into the field, yet the success of the student cannot occur when the teacher is performing under ongoing stress, without collegial support, and an overload of responsibilities (Ondrasek, et al., 2020). Effective mentoring is one proven way to increase the self-efficacy of beginning teachers (Pham, et al., 2019).

Another factor in education specialist attrition lies in the area of collegial relationships at the school site. Creating and maintaining a positive relationship with administrators has been shown to reduce attrition rates (Cancio, et al., 2013 & Hagaman, 2017 & Griffin, 2010). Regular

meetings and reports from administrators have been linked to special education teacher preparedness and an increase in their self-efficacy. Administrators, particularly principals, have been identified as filling an important role in keeping education specialists teaching. Hagaman (2017) also identifies the lack of relationships with other teachers as being a chief reason for special educators leaving the field. When education specialists feel supported in their school, they are more likely to have self-efficacy and feel less stress in their day-to-day routines (Brunsting, et al., 2014).

Mentors must introduce and initiate interaction between the beginning teachers and administrators or other teachers at their school site (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). According to CTC guidelines, the mentor assigned to the beginning special education teacher has at least three years of experience teaching in the same grade level/subject area (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2017). This requirement suggests that each mentor has established connections and contacts that they can introduce to their beginning teacher mentee while working with them.

Stress of the job, isolation, lack of self-efficacy and non-existent or few collegial relationships are seen as the main contributing factors for attrition in special education teachers. Much of the research addresses multiple reasons for attrition or that the causes of attrition may overlap (Brunsting, et al., 2014 & Cancio, et al., 2013 & Griffin, 2010). With research focused on the reasons that special education teachers leave the field little has been done to generate methods to encourage them to remain in the field. Most research located by this author focuses on the role of mentoring within the confines of induction programs to help provide support to special education beginning teachers in order to facilitate retention.

## Mentoring

The act of mentoring is seen in numerous studies as the single most important part of an induction program (Wasburn, Washburn-Moses & Davis, 2010). Mentoring as a practice is a very general term and used widely in education. The article by Peno, et al. (2016) explores the different ways mentoring can help a beginning teacher. This researcher further states that mentors can provide both career and psychological support to the candidate. There are different styles, methods, and forms of mentoring that can be found throughout the literature; however, in teacher induction programs, mentors are defined as the teachers who support and sometimes evaluate the beginning teacher candidates. They can support the candidates in many ways, including formal and informal mentoring.

## Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring is essential to a California induction program. It is written in the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (2017) guidelines that in order for a beginning teacher to be recommended for a clear credential, their work "...must be based on a review of observed and documented evidence, collaboratively assembled by the candidate, the mentor and/or other colleagues, according to the programs design" (p.3). This establishes the program as inherently formal in nature.

Formal mentoring supports include a) scheduled meetings and b) arranged observations between mentors and beginning teachers. Most formal mentoring that occurs in induction programs is designed to fill a mandated report or to provide documented, evaluative feedback. The term "formal" is considered as anything that is evaluative of the beginning teacher. The study by Wasburn, et al. (2010) reveals that mentors perform most of their actions in their roles

in the formal mentoring setting, although research done by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) shows that formal settings do not inspire the trust or the support that mentors must provide for their beginning teachers. The training manual created by this researcher provides a practical and focused guide for mentors through the use of a more informal approach to mentoring that inspires trust and support throughout mentorship.

Beginning teachers in the Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) study stated that they found that mentors tend to take on an evaluator role most of the time, and that this is shown to be unnecessary in managing/creating the relationship between mentor and the new teacher. The researchers continue to posit that mentors must be more mindful of how they present feedback, and that they need to attempt to make it sound non-evaluative in nature. Another study by Griffin (2010) reveals that beginning special educators find it discomforting when mentors take on an evaluative role that will lead to decisions about certification. This clarifies why new teachers find it difficult to disclose the problems they are having or to ask for support they may need to a person of authority who is recommending them for a Clear Credential.

Although some of the requirements set forth by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing must be maintained in order to constitute the validity of the program, there are methods to incorporating a more informal approach to mentoring that research discloses as the most appropriate form of mentoring guidance (Wasburn, et al., 2010). Formal observations and feedback are considered important to most beginning teacher candidates. According to Desimone, et al. (2014) feedback about specific tasks completed or executed well or that need improvement from mentors in a formal setting is helpful to the beginning teachers and sought after in the profession. Informal mentoring furthers this practice by incorporating emotional support and pedagogical guidance into a formal mentoring structure.

### Informal Mentoring

For the purposes of this project, informal mentoring is defined as a mentor creating a culture of comfort with beginning teachers in order to allow them to feel supported in their teaching. This role and resulting action appear to the new teacher akin to advice or conversation rather than evaluative feedback. Desimone, et al. (2014) describes formal and informal mentoring as going hand-in-hand. They can be “compensatory and complementary support” (p. 88) and work in conjunction to benefit beginning teachers.

There are many mentoring styles or roles that can be used throughout the two-year induction program and beyond. The work by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) makes known the thirteen different roles mentors utilize. The roles include: a) communicator-establishes an environment for open interaction, listens actively, and plans uninterrupted time with their mentee, b) counsellor-assists in planning strategies to achieve objectives, c) adviser-recommends formal and informal professional development opportunities, d) broker-helps their mentee develop necessary contacts in the profession, e) savvy insider-provides intuitive and informal knowledge about the school site or teaching profession, f) advocate-arranges for their mentee to be involved in projects or other services around the school site, g) ally-encourages their mentee to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, h) guide-provides learning opportunities for the beginning teacher to develop their own strategies in teaching, i) model role-allows their mentee to observe and emulate their behavior, j) teacher or trainer-helps the beginning teacher to become socialized, k) supporter-provides safe conditions for the mentee to release emotion, and l) coach-clarifies developmental needs and objective of the mentor/mentee relationship (Maria-Monica and Alina, 2011). These roles range from formal, which are discussed in CTC guidelines, to informal that a mentor uses in order to better encourage and develop the beginning teacher.

Although Griffin (2010) describes informal mentoring as the most helpful to beginning teachers, the formal roles are both mandated and relevant to assisting the novice teacher through their first years in the teaching profession.

The strategies to incorporating informal mentoring into an induction program vary widely yet are established at the beginning of the mentor/mentee relationship and continue throughout the entirety of the program. Rapport is related positively to the willingness to both mentor and be mentored (Pham, et al., 2019). Establishing a rapport between a mentor and their mentee has been proven to increase a beginning teacher's self-efficacy (Pham, et al., 2019). In order to create rapport, mentors must exhibit enthusiasm, particularly during initial meetings with their novice teacher (Quarry & ClickView Pty Limited, 2008). Mentors must also clarify expectations and discuss guidelines with the beginning teacher about their professional goals and personal reflections (Kowalski, 2019). The final step in generating a strong relationship with a new teacher includes getting to know the mentee as a person, and seeking to create a bond with the beginning teacher confirms that the rapport can last throughout the entirety of the mentorship (Mills, Francis, & Bonner, 2008).

Effective mentors also must be able to establish and develop trustworthiness with their mentee. Trust between the beginning teachers and the mentor is foundational to the mentor-mentee relationship (Costa & Garmston, 1993). With the development of trust comes the understanding that the candidates can confide in their mentors and are therefore more likely to be receptive to constructive feedback and experience less stress with their job (Qian, Lin, Han, Chen & Hays, 2014). Mentors are directed to utilize the Williams (2007) method of developing and maintaining trust in their beginning teachers. This method includes taking the perspective or point-of-view of reducing any perceived threats and reflecting upon their own mentoring practice



with their beginning teachers. Mentors reduce perceived threats through “Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies” (IEMS) (Williams, 2007, p. 605) that involve altering a situation, physically or mentally, in which the beginning teacher might be uncomfortable with their mentor.

The Desimone research describes informal mentoring conversations that are most useful and successful tend to focus more on expectations for teachers, parent involvement and emotional support. These supportive conversations statistically happen more in informal mentoring than formal mentoring opportunities and because of the more conversational nature of informal mentoring beginning teachers feel more comfortable in discussing these complex topics (Desimone et al., 2014). There are many different methods that mentors must employ when speaking with beginning special education teachers. Further research has shown that mentors must promote critical thinking and an in-depth analysis of teaching. This is best achieved through questions asked with the beginning teachers that employ their higher cognitive functions (Costa & Garmston, 1993 & Strong & Baron, 2004).

Mentors must be trained to implement the required actions from their induction program while still being cognizant of their feedback and how to alleviate the pressures of evaluation on beginning teachers (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). These researchers further expose that even when following mandated actions from the induction program, mentors can provide feedback informally. Mentors must be supportive, approachable, nonjudgmental and trustworthy, and need to discuss any challenges the beginning teacher might be facing at their school site (Hobson, et al., 2009).

Induction programs are required to include contracted hours for observations and meetings between beginning teachers and mentors. This provides more meaningful and long-

lasting outcomes in the mentor/beginning teacher relationships (Spooner-Lane, 2017). Formal meetings between mentor and mentee must include the mentor talking to candidates in a relaxed setting while giving positive feedback that does not feel evaluative to the candidate. It can also involve bringing up topics including, but not limited to, emotional support, relationships with school personnel, guidance on paperwork, students experiencing behavioral disruptions, and much more (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011).

### Summary

In the past two decades, induction programs in California have been one potential solution to the increased attrition rates of all teachers, especially education specialists (Ondrasek, et al., 2020, and Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). Marian Bergeson Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System (1998) is the California law that requires all beginning teachers to participate in an induction program in their first two years of teaching. A mentor must be assigned to each beginning teacher in the state of California and mentors must adhere to all requirements set forth by law (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

The attrition or burnout in the special education teaching profession is mainly attributed to factors that include stress of the job, isolation, lack of self-efficacy and non-existent or few collegial relationships (Cancio, et al., 2018 & Bilash, 2009 & Saricam & Sakız, 2014 & Hagaman, 2017). Assigned mentorship, through induction programs, can alleviate some or all factors of burnout for novice teachers if trained appropriately on mentoring techniques (Alhija & Fresko, 2010).

California induction programs are inherently formal in nature and require mandated observations from mentors (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017). Although formal mentoring is essential to induction programs, research in this paper focuses on the

importance of informal mentoring with beginning teachers (Wasburn, et al., 2010). Incorporating informal mentoring includes a) establishing a rapport with mentees, b) developing and maintaining trust, c) phrasing feedback to alleviate pressure, and d) appropriately structuring formal meetings (Pham, et al., 2019 & Qian, et al., 2014 & Desimone, et al., 2014 & Spooner-Lane, 2017). With training regarding the skills which incorporate informal mentoring into an inherently formal induction program, mentors are able to assist in decreasing the attrition rate for special education teachers (Wasburn, et al., 2010).

## Chapter Three

### **Methodology**

Attrition rates for special education teachers have been high for decades (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010, and Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott & Darling-Hammond, 2020). Laws have been created in an attempt to decrease attrition rates and reform induction programs. In California, this includes Marian Bergeson Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System (1998) which requires all beginning teachers to participate in a two-year induction program. All induction programs within California include mentors who are fully vetted and trained. Mentors are required to support and guide the beginning teachers through the induction program (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

Alhija and Fresko (2010), a research study about induction programs and mentoring outcomes, reveals that most teachers experience a moderately high satisfaction rate throughout the program. A study by Wasburn, Wasburn-Moses, and Davis (2010) confirms that mentors have a strong effect on the amount of knowledge, support and skill that beginning teachers absorb from an induction program. Although this is true, a research gap is presented through studies like Griffin (2010), Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns (2013) and Brunsting, Sreckovic, and Lane (2014), all of which show that the programs result in little change to attrition rates in districts with induction programs and mentoring embedded in the new teacher procedures.

This information indicates a significant gap in research that is solved through appropriate training of mentors in California induction programs. Most research explored by this author focuses on the role of mentoring within the confines of induction programs to help provide support to special education beginning teachers in order to aid in retention. Informal mentoring practices and strategies are seen as the most helpful to beginning teachers (Griffin, 2010). The

training provided in this project focuses on creating a culture of support with the beginning teacher and provides effective information on using informal mentoring strategies in a formally structured program.

### Audience and Setting

This project was intended by its author to be a supplemental training for mentors who meet all of the qualifications and are employed by the State of California in an induction program. All induction programs, within California, must appropriately train and hire credentialed mentors (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017). Per the California on Teaching Credentialing standards, this training focuses on the areas of, “coaching and mentoring, ...best practices in adult learning, support for individualized mentoring challenges, reflection on mentoring practices, and opportunities to engage with mentoring peers in professional learning networks...” (p. 3).

Mentors are trained to use best practices within induction programs and to ensure that beginning teachers are supported through their first two years in the teaching profession. This mentoring training on informal strategies supports the mentors by providing development and resources appropriately to beginning special education teachers within the induction program. Desimone, et al. (2014) confirms the importance of informal mentoring for beginning teachers within induction programs. Surveys collected by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) verify that beginning teachers prefer informal, relaxed mentoring over formal, evaluative mentoring.

This project is created for mentors in a California induction program. This diverse population of special education teachers who are mentoring within a California induction program can range in age, experience and background. Although mentors must meet the requirements of having at least three years of teaching experience, hold the same credential, and

serve in the subject areas/grade levels as the beginning teacher (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017), mentors come into this training at a variety of skill levels. This includes the number of years spent as a mentor in an induction program and the number of years they have taught at the same school site as the beginning teacher or/and in the same grade levels/subject areas. These mentors also vary in the amount and type of training they have received about how to appropriately facilitate learning in adults and mentor beginning education specialists.

Along with experience and years of service, school culture can vary drastically among school sites. Although this will not affect the overall application of this informal mentoring training, it could have an impact on how it is applied in certain school sites. The culture of a school is an essential aspect in teacher attrition (Cancio, et al., 2013). The author does not include aspects of correcting culture within a school site and it is noted that this can result in a diminished effective application of the training if the school site does not possess or promote a supportive culture with its staff.

#### Procedures for Developing the Project

The disturbing issues associated with the high attrition rates for special education teachers (Ondrasek, et al., 2020) was the catalyst for this project. The author determined that this daunting number was detrimental to the teaching profession and began research to answer the questions of why one out of every five education specialists left their positions (Ondrasek, et al., 2020) and what was being done to combat the problem.

Through research, the author discovered tentative reasons for attrition in special education teachers to be stress of the job (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff & Harniss 2001 & Cancio, et al., 2018), role ambiguity (Adera, 2010), isolation (Bilash, 2009), lack of self-efficacy

(Sarıçam & Sakız, 2014), and poor collegial relationships with administrators and other educators (Cancio, et al., 2013 & Hagaman, 2017). The author ascertained that the majority of studies focused on the reasons for the attrition and concluded with discussion about how to best combat this issue through the appropriate training of mentors.

With the main purpose of induction programs in California using mentors to “...support candidate development and growth in the profession...” (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017, p. 2) induction programs appeared to be the state’s answer to reducing attrition rates. However, according to studies like Wasburn, et al. (2010), Emery and Vandenberg (2010), and Vittek (2015), attrition rates have remained high during the age of induction programs. This presented another gap in research as to why induction programs and mentoring did not seem to be producing the intended results.

With this arena in research open for contributions, the author exhaustively explored studies, including Spooner-Lane (2016) and Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) which demonstrated that there are many roles a mentor may take on with the beginning teacher or mentee, and that most novice teachers prefer an informal style and gain more information for their mentors with this form of support. Informal mentoring produces better outcomes in induction programs than a more formal approach (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009 & Wasburn, et al., 2012). The author then informally interviewed past and present education specialists in the State of California in order to determine their experience with induction programs as a novice teacher. It was concluded from these interviews, and more robustly supported through research that most teachers who reported feeling supported and comforted by their mentor gained beneficial information and training from their induction program. Teachers

who stated they did not receive valuable insight from the program also reported having felt little to no support or relationship with their mentors.

This supplemental training designed by the author fills this perceived gap in the research. Although formal mentoring is essential to maintaining the integrity of induction programs and ensuring beginning teachers meet all of the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession*; research findings uncovered by the author revealed that the introduction of informal mentoring procedures in induction programs created a deeper connection between mentor and mentee. This connection may foster the novice teacher's self-efficacy in their work, decrease the feeling of isolation and create lasting support in collegial relationships with the beginning teacher.

Through additional research, the author determined the essential components needed to incorporate informal mentoring throughout the two-year induction program. These strategies include developing and maintaining trust (Williams, 2007), building rapport (Pham, et al., 2019), providing informal constructive feedback (Desimone, et al., 2014), developing collegial relationships (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011) and structuring meetings appropriately with beginning teachers (Spooner-Lane, 2017).

Once these strategies were determined, the author created a manual for training mentors who are employed by a California induction program. The manual outlines the strategies that promotes critical thinking and reflection in mentors. Discussion and description include how to incorporate these strategies into an inherently formal induction program and forms/checklist are provided in order to better reflect and contribute to the mentor's mentoring practice.



## Chapter Four

### Results

The training manual entitled *Informal Mentoring Training for use in Induction Programs with new Special Educators* is designed to be used by mentors who actively work in an induction program required of new teachers by the state of California. All mentors in California must be vetted according to pre-established criteria, and then fully trained in order to become a mentor (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2017). The author intends this training to encourage and develop informal mentoring procedures in a primarily formal California induction program.

The manual, located in Appendix A of this paper, provides specialized training that is divided into nine sections, each containing an aspect of numerous informal mentoring strategies. The first section is titled *Introduction & Rationale* and addresses the high attrition rates and qualities found in special education teachers who leave the field as well as the importance of quality mentoring within the special education teaching realm. The next section, *Mentoring-Definition and Types* expounds upon the difference between formal and informal mentoring procedures and describes how to incorporate informal mentoring into every section of an induction program.

The third section entitled *Mentoring 101: Getting to Know the Beginning Teacher*. This section describes and teaches training participants about how mentors can establish a rapport with their mentee, and more importantly, how to develop trust that will withstand the entirety of their mentorship. The significance of embracing these two fields from the beginning of the mentor/mentee relationship and the methods about how best to maintain both trust and rapport throughout the mentorship are examined in detail. The author utilizes the Williams (2007)

method of perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection to aid in developing trust and has created a *Get to Know You* form in order to support mentors in establishing a rapport with the beginning teacher.

*Mentoring and Coaching Sessions* is the fourth section, which explores mentoring roles, conversation topics, and formal meeting outlines. Work by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) describing the different roles mentors use throughout their time with the beginning teacher are used as a defining factor in this section. Each role is discussed and outlined and the importance of using all roles in order to successfully accompany the beginning teacher through their first years in the profession is examined. *Mentoring and Coaching Sessions* also discusses techniques and topics in conversations that are of pivotal importance to utilize with beginning teachers in order to meet the mentee's needs at all times. Finally, section four outlines formal meetings. This includes the significance of arranging and holding meetings effectively, and specifically to properly use the formal meeting structure to provide appropriate constructive feedback to beginning teachers.

*Mentor for Feeling "At Home" as a Teacher* is the fifth section and outlines the mentoring role of well-informed insider or broker for the beginning teacher. The section inspects the importance of the mentor introducing and establishing a network of professional collegial relationships for their assigned beginning teacher. A subsection about how to foster and form other mentor relationships with those who can continue encouraging the beginning teacher after the induction program has ended is also addressed.

*Mentor Notes to Self* is the sixth section that concludes the manual and encourages mentors to apply this training throughout their mentorship with their beginning teacher. The section compiles necessary ideals and information mentors can use to better their relationships

with the mentees. Section seven, *Forms and Checklists*, include two mentoring checklists that the mentors use in order to better form their mentoring at the beginning of the relationship and support/evaluate their mentoring during intervals of the two-year induction program. This section also includes a *Get to Know You* form with suggested questions that mentors can utilize in order to become better acquainted with their mentee. Another form is provided entitled *Feedback Sentence Starters* with sentence frames to use when providing feedback to the beginning teacher. These informal sentence starters help mentors to monitor how they are providing feedback and encourage them to keep discussions and constructive feedback informal and supportive in nature.

The last two sections of the training manual on incorporating informal mentoring are *Resources* and *Bibliography*. *Resources* contains six beneficial studies or articles that can continue to develop a mentor's practice after a mentor finishes this training. The final section, *Bibliography*, provides the reader with all of the sources used throughout the manual.

The author contributes this informal mentoring training in order to benefit both mentors and beginning teachers in a California induction program. Mentors gain insights and strategies about incorporating informal mentoring procedures into their practice. Beginning teachers benefit from research based beneficial practices and strategies designed to improve retention and outcomes when entering the teaching profession. Appendix A holds the manual on the informal mentoring training created by this author.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

Many new teachers, particularly working in special education, struggle to maintain a balance in their professional lives and, in turn, contribute to the high attrition rates prevalent in the special education teaching field. Induction programs are one method that states, including California, use in an attempt to address this issue of attrition. Despite programs to address this, attrition rates have continued to be elevated, even with induction programs in place. The research surrounding the formal mentoring that constitutes a large portion of most induction programs has been explored and this researcher found data that has determined it to be less beneficial than informal mentoring strategies for retaining education specialists.

This study addresses this gap in research and this researcher has created a training manual about the best methods and strategies to incorporate informal mentoring procedures into inherently formal induction programs within California. Incorporating informal mentoring includes a) establishing a rapport with mentees, b) developing and maintaining trust, c) phrasing feedback to alleviate pressure, and d) appropriately structuring formal meetings.

### Limitations of Project

The author intended this study and subsequent training to be implemented with mentors employed by a California induction program. The biggest limitation faced when creating this project was the inability to interview mentors in order to gain better insights on the structure of the project/training and enact the training with mentors after its completion.

With unlimited resources, the author could interview mentors employed by various California induction programs. These interviews would provide subsequent information about individual induction program trainings, working conditions, and cultures at each school site.

With this information, the author could have better equipped each county of education in California with the appropriate training for their mentors. The training could then be developed by county based upon the depth of local examples provided and hybridize the manner in which mentors could encourage and discuss complex topics and issues they face in the field.

Another limitation faced during this study and project development was that of time. With ample time to review and gather feedback on the training manual, the author could gain valuable insights to the workings of the induction programs to provide more in-depth support to mentors. With unlimited resources and time, the author would be able to enact this informal mentoring strategies training with mentors in California and gather data about various portions of the manual.

The final limitation of this project was the COVID 19 pandemic. During these uncertain times, school closures, coupled with general unrest in the community, this author struggled to find willing participants for interviews on the subject of induction programs and mentoring. Developing the training with beginning teachers and seasoned mentors as helpful guides was difficult during these circumstances. Although some Zoom interviews were able to be conducted, the majority of information presented by the author had to be retrieved from research acquired on the internet and from local schools.

### Next Steps

The next steps for this project include gathering data from the implementation of this training manual. The author recommends a longitudinal study on the training in order to determine if informal mentoring in induction programs produces the intended result. This information could be collected through attrition rates in districts that incorporate the training presented in this project. Attrition rates would be noted before the training is given and then

documented each year as the beginning teachers move through their first few years in the profession. This author recommends documentation through the first five years of the beginning teacher's career. With the condition that mentors are employing all informal mentoring strategies with their beginning teacher mentee, the data would reveal whether or not the use of these techniques aid in reducing attrition rates in beginning special education teachers.

#### Lessons Learned and Educational Implications

The act of mentoring has a profound impact on beginning professionals in any career, including education. The emotions shared and displayed by beginning education specialists are some of the main reasons for attrition in the field. Survey results that name isolation, lack of self-efficacy, and little to no collegial support all stem from the beginning teacher's feelings when entering their school site or classroom. Mentors have the ability to decrease the negative feelings beginning teachers may have and replace them with positive outlooks and people to guide and support them through hardships faced in their careers. Mentors must focus on helping the mentees feel a sense of belonging in their school site and classroom.

Creating this training confirmed that the wording used and how a mentor displays important information to the beginning teacher is just as, if not more, important than what the mentor is telling the mentee. The act of evaluation is not the issue, it is the wording and demeanor the mentor exudes that gives the beginning teacher a sense of comfort or judgement. If feedback to lessons and actions are delivered with friendliness and encouragement, the beginning teacher is more likely to be receptive to the information. The informal mentoring training must be utilized in conjunction with a positive attitude toward mentoring, along with a passion for supporting and guiding beginning teachers.

### Conclusion

The staggering statistic of one out of five special education teachers who leave their positions in California between the academic years of 2015-16 and 2016-17, found by the Learning Policy Institute is both disheartening and concerning to beginning special education teachers (Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott & Darling-Hammond, 2020). Despite the best intentions of existing induction programs, attrition rates are shown to continue to be high. The manual and training presented by this author is meant to fill the perceived gap in research found and new teacher satisfaction.

This study aims to effectively incorporate informal mentoring strategies into inherently formal induction programs within the state of California. The hope is that this training and the mentors employed by induction programs will aid in reducing attrition rates by alleviating the feelings of isolation and lack of self-efficacy prevalent in the attrition of special education teachers. Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott and Darling-Hammond (2020) summarized continuingly high attrition rates best by stating, “More action and sustained investments are needed to ensure a robust, well-prepared workforce of special education teachers now and into the future” (p. 28).

*“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves”—Steven Spielberg*

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Appendix A

Informal Mentoring Training for use in Induction Programs with new Special Educators

Informal Mentoring Training for  
use in Induction Programs with  
new Special Educators



by Taylor Beagle

Summer 2020

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## Section 1: Introduction & Rationale

Teaching is a career choice that many express that they felt ‘drawn to’, not for the salary or praise, but to help sculpt student lives for the future. This reason ushers many prospective teachers into the field, but has been found to be an insufficient reason to continue teaching because of the social and job-related hardship, struggles and disappointments new teachers face in their first years of teaching and beyond (Ondrasek, Carver-Thomas, Scott, & Darling-Hammond, 2020).

Teaching, particularly in the special education arena, can become a lonely profession wherein many teachers feel isolated within their own classroom, even with twenty to thirty students in the room with them (Bilash, 2009). The feeling of isolation or loneliness in education has been noted in research for decades and can result in the attrition of special education teachers (Ondrasek, et al., 2020). Çankaya, Karakuş, and Demirtaş (2009) explain that, “Perceived loneliness has a negative effect on individuals’ psychological well-being, their levels of performance and motivation” (p. 2010). Bilash (2009) describes new teacher’s prevalent reasons for the feeling of isolation as being a pervasive sense of an intimidating environment, staff, and/or scope of the expected roles as an educator.

The sense of intimidation that arises from these various roles a new teacher must fulfill as an educator often lead to a lack of self-efficacy (Guo, Dynia, Pelatti, & Justice, 2014). Self-efficacy in teachers can be identified as the belief that personal abilities are pertinent to bringing the desired change in the achievement of their students (Bandure, 1995). When teachers lack self-efficacy, they do not see themselves as able to affect the students they are teaching in a positive way. Two studies, Guo, et al. (2014) and Dilekli and Tezci (2016), that explore self-efficacy and teaching skills, establish that teachers having low self-efficacy are not as successful

as teachers with high self-efficacy. Not only can this result in poor performance from teachers and students, but also in teacher attrition.

Many researchers cite that with help from mentors who offer both formal and informal coaching, teachers continue to thrive in the teaching profession longer (Peno, Silva Mangiante, & Kenahan, 2016 & Costa & Garmston, 1993 & Strong & Baron, 2004). Mentorship, if conducted appropriately, can increase self-efficacy in beginning teachers and decrease the feeling of isolation (Lechuga, 2014). One method that California and other states use to incorporate mentorship into education is through mandated induction programs (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017).

Mentoring as a form of fostering skill, retention and success of professionals is not a new concept (Lechuga, 2014). Many professions, like nursing, the sciences, law, and engineering have been using mentoring with beginning faculty for decades (Lechuga, 2014 & Kowalski, 2019). Gleaning practices from these different professions, the best aspects of a good mentor have come to fruition. Kowalski (2019) discusses the importance of a mentor in the nursing profession as ascending into the role of a registered nurse from a selfless perspective. This role and gradual grasp of empowerment applies to teaching as well. A mentor who enters the position of mentoring solely for the purpose of a promotion or to achieve something for themselves will not support the mentees in their own learning and growing from the perspective that is required for this to successfully occur (Lechuga, 2014). Mentors must take on their mentee's achievements to reflect their own achievements and professional growth as a mentor (Pham, Teng, Friesner, Li, Wu, Chu, et al., 2019).

In a research study that compared mentoring in four different professions of nursing, paramedicine, social work, and teaching, Peiser, Ambrose, Burke, and Davenport (2018) found

that all mentors faced the “...conflict between supporting and assessor roles, and the need to attend to heavy contractual workloads, performance targets and mentoring roles in tandem” (p. 2). Mentoring in a professional arena poses the same conflicting job requirements regardless of the profession. This allows mentor teachers to find solace in the notation that they are not alone in facing the rigor of quality mentoring, and that information from various sources can be used to better mentoring in the teaching field.

Mentoring beginning special education teachers follows many of the same guidelines as these aforementioned professions. Mentors who use the knowledge provided by studies and follow research that promotes importance of mentoring will inevitably help and encourage their mentees more than those who do not follow these guidelines (Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2014). Further, studies also establish that the use of mentoring to offer beginning teachers the advice, support and guidance they need will help those whom might otherwise grow more slowly in the profession or not at all (Kowalski, 2019). In these following chapters, methods to incorporate informal mentoring practices into inherently formal induction programs using research from other professions and education are offered for use in any successful mentoring program.

## Section 2: Mentoring-Definition and Types

The value of induction programs for new teachers has been well-documented in contributing research like Alhija and Fresko (2010). The essential components of these programs can be delivered in face-to-face environments, often after school by experienced teachers. However, someone who has received little training in mentoring and guiding adults in the profession may be delivering these sessions. Further research, in a study done by Griffin (2010), revealed through surveys with beginning teachers that the new teachers did not benefit from the induction experience. A foundational aspect of the success of induction programs lie in the depth of training that the mentor receives prior to starting the relationship with their new teacher candidate.

As a Mentor in a California induction program, mentor teachers must feel prepared to lead the beginning teachers in a journey through their first two years of teaching. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) states, "...not all good teachers make good mentors, while not all good mentors make good mentors of all beginning teachers" (p. 212). It takes a particularly trained and "called" teacher to become a mentor to new teachers. Although there are different mentoring styles, with varied approaches to skill development, when addressing particular subjects with mentees, mentors need to possess the confidence and skills themselves prior to beginning to mentor. This training explores those topics and delves into the various methods available to incorporate informal mentoring into an inherently formal induction program.

### Formal vs. Informal Mentoring

Formal mentoring is a vital part of any California induction program. As written in the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (2017) guidelines, in order for a beginning teachers to be recommended for a clear credential, their work and teaching performance

documented on the recommendation “must be based on a review of observed and documented evidence, collaboratively assembled by the candidate, the mentor and/or other colleagues, according to the programs design” (p.3). This feature of the process marks the program as formal in nature. Although formality is required by statute and in order to ensure teachers are evaluated for their performance, a significant study by Desimone, et al. (2014) confirms that mentors can use informal mentoring within a formal program. This aspect of the process allows for far richer, more meaningful and supportive experiences during the induction process.

Formal observations, feedback and analysis of the beginning teachers Individual Learning Plan (ILP) goals are conducted regularly throughout the two-year process as required in the guidelines set forth by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (2017). Before, during and following these observations, meetings and conversations, the mentor is assessing the candidate’s growth and aptitude through various forms of documentation. This multistep, formal portion is what determines the recommendation for a clear credential at the end of the two-year induction program. The addition of informal mentoring does not take the formality out of the program but is an addition to or an extension of what the mentor is already doing. However, its value cannot be underestimated.

Informal mentoring is defined as a situation in which the mentor creates a culture of comfort and, eventually, trust with beginning teachers in order to encourage them to feel supported in their teaching. Informal mentoring specifically addresses the development of a positive and trusting relationship being built between a mentor and mentee (Desimone, et al., 2014). The goal of this style is to build a consistent and reliable relationship so that the beginning teachers feel comfortable enough to begin to trust their mentor. An example of this would include the situations in which conversations feel more like advice and help than evaluative

feedback and, when beginning teachers feel comfortable, they are able to speak to more complex topics with their mentor, thus gaining deeper and more personalized understandings of the teaching profession (Desimone, et al., 2014). This is especially relevant in special education because of the complexity of working with children with special needs and the high rate of burnout and attrition in the field (Ondrasek, et al., 2020).

### **Adding Informal Mentoring**

Informal mentoring can be introduced into induction programs in all stages. This training examines the use of this form of mentoring in developing trust/establishing a rapport, coaching the mentee, meetings, and creating a community for beginning teachers. This manual aims to foster this and provides templates and checklists to use for generating healthy communication practices between mentor and mentee.

The checklists labeled *Mentoring* and *Mentoring Check-In* in section 7 of this manual are provided to the beginning teacher three times during the two-year induction program. These checklists can be used as a formative assessment in order to guide the mentor in distinguishing areas in which they need to focus their time and support with their mentees. These checklists are designed to be used not for evaluative purposes, but to establish transparency and to determine what topics the mentors focus on during exchanges with the mentee teacher. How to discuss these topics are described in section 4, *Mentoring and Coaching Sessions*, of the manual. The first checklist, *Mentoring*, is given at the beginning of the program. This helps the mentor and beginning teacher get ready for the impending relationship between them. The checklist helps the mentor understand the beginning teacher and where they are as they start their new job. The second checklist, *Mentoring Check-in*, is given at the end of the first and second year of the induction program. By giving this checklist at the end of each year, the mentor is able to reflect

on their relationship with the mentee and make any necessary changes to their mentoring process if needed.

These checklists are to be used to escort each mentor through the process of a California induction program. The ratings the beginning teacher gives on the various topics will support the mentor in deciding important topics and conversations to have throughout the year with their mentee. These checklists are not evaluative of the beginning teacher or mentor but used to improve the mentor's practice and discover topics to focus on with each individual candidate.

### **Section 3: Mentoring 101: Getting to Know the Beginning Teacher**

Learning about and getting to know the beginning teacher is possibly the most important step in mentorship (Desimone, et al., 2014). If a mentor does not understand the mentee and vice-versa, or facilitate the relationship, the development of rapport or trust is far more difficult. The initial goal is to develop a relationship that can withstand discussing complex, sensitive topics. These two aspects of mentoring determine the viability of the relationship and influence the positive or negative outcome of the experience for the mentor and mentee. While it is important to establish these aspects of the relationship at the beginning of the mentor/mentee relationship, these two dimensions must be assessed and addressed on an ongoing basis throughout the induction timeframe.

#### **Establishing Rapport**

Rapport is positively related to the willingness of both the mentor and mentee (Pham, et al., 2019). Creating a positive relationship or rapport with the mentee is the first focus of being a mentor. Before achieving teachable moments or organizing observations, a mentor must create an interpersonal relationship with their mentee that can facilitate shared discussions. Establishing a good rapport with the mentee also increases the beginning teacher's self-efficacy (Pham, et al., 2019). In order to establish a rapport with the beginning teacher, mentors must exhibit enthusiasm, clarify expectations, and get to know their beginning teacher.

Showing enthusiasm is crucial to establishing a rapport with the beginning teacher (Quarry & ClickView Pty Limited, 2008). First impressions are always important and creating an opening session that allows the mentee to feel that their mentor is excited to be working with them will ease any nervousness the beginning teacher may feel. During the initial meeting the mentor will take the lead in the conversation (Pham, et al., 2019). By displaying excitement and leading the



conversation, a mutually beneficial rapport is established. Enthusiasm for mentorship is best when continued through the two-year induction program but is pivotal during the first meeting.

During any initial meeting with the beginning teacher, mentor's must clarify their expectations for their mentee (Quarry & ClickView Pty Limited, 2008). Mentors discuss the guidelines, both formal and informal, to the parameters of their relationship and explain that the relationship will be focused on goals, reflections and facilitation of success for the beginning teacher's practice (Kowalski, 2019). This manual further discusses the establishment of a mentor's coaching style in section 4. A mentor's coaching style and approach must be practiced and formed before the first meeting in order for the discussion about shared expectations to occur and for establishing the basis for rapport to be built. A mentor must know how s/he works in a mentorship before explaining their methods to the beginning teacher. The mentor will also encourage the mentee to discuss any concerns he or she might have about the induction program, the impending mentorship, or the teaching profession (Pham, et al., 2019). By identifying and clarifying different conceptions that the beginning teacher has about teaching or the mentoring process, the mentor encourages their mentee to begin thinking critically and developing the ability to ask complex questions to their mentor (Hobson, et al., 2009).

Getting to know the mentee as a person is relevant to developing trust and creating a rapport between a mentor and beginning teacher. Identifying similar interests and values in each other creates a bond that is a prerequisite to a successful mentoring relationship (Mills, Francis, & Bonner, 2008). Hobson, et al. (2009) describes a mentoring relationship with no rapport as a 'forced marriage' and cautions that the more forced the relationship is the less likely it is to succeed. In section 7 of this manual, there is a *Get to Know You* form that can be used as either a guide in conversation or questionnaire sheet to be completed with the beginning teacher during

the initial meeting. This form models questions that the mentor asks their beginning teacher in order to understand them as a person and get to know them on a deeper level before beginning their relationship. Mentors answer the guiding question on the *Get to Know You* form in conjunction with their mentees. The goal is to discover common ground and interests in order to develop a strong relationship. Use of this form is most successful when it can be used as a means of conversation rather than like an interview.

### **Developing Trust**

Trust is a key aspect for establishing a positive relationship with the mentee (Costa & Garmston, 1993) and cannot be manufactured. Trust provides the mentees with the confidence that they can confide in their mentors and bring any problems they might be having to the mentor. The new teacher needs to be made aware that s/he can gain valuable insights from the more experienced teacher. Trust can assist the beginning teachers in becoming more receptive to the information the mentors are sharing with them (Costa & Garmston, 1993). Researchers, Qian, Lin, Han, Chen, and Hays (2014) conclude that with a high level of trust between the mentor and mentee comes a reduction in the mentee's stress level with their job at hand. There is a direct correlation between the development of trust and the decrease in the stress of running a classroom alone for the mentee. Developing trust with the beginning teacher starts at the first meeting and continues through the two-year induction program. Williams (2007) discusses the three aspects to developing trust as, "...a) perspective taking, b) threat-reducing behavior, and c) reflection" (p. 596). When these three behaviors are practiced between mentor and mentee throughout their involvement with each other, trust is developed and maintained.

Perspective taking involves imagining the beginning teachers' thoughts and feelings from their point-of-view (Williams, 2007). By continually examining the different problems or aspects

of teaching from the point-of-view of a beginning teacher, mentors are able to understand the perspective of the new teacher, both emotionally and cognitively (Qian, et al., 2014). This allows mentors to respond to the mentee with empathy and to note how the mentee is feeling and coping in a certain situation. Trust is built when the mentor acknowledges the beginning teacher and affirms that their perspective is valid.

Threat-reducing behavior, by definition, is the intent of the mentor to minimize or eliminate the perception that their actions will have a negative impact on the beginning teacher's goals, concerns, or well-being (Williams, 2007). A threat can be anything from constructive feedback to unintended neglect of the beginning teacher's thoughts and feelings on a subject (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In order to avoid these threats, mentors engage in Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies (Williams, 2007, p. 605) that involve altering a situation the beginning teacher finds as a threat. These strategies are outlined here.

There are four interpersonal emotion management strategies. The first strategy is to alter the situation. This can include moving an observation back in order to give the beginning teacher more time to prepare their lesson or holding a meeting with your mentee in a coffee shop or other non-intimidating location. A mentor can also alter attention away from the perceived threat. Changing the subject during meetings if the current topic becomes overbearing for the beginning teacher or allowing for some informality in the conversation in order to provide an intermission from more complex or disheartening topics, are two strategies that can draw the beginning teacher's attention away from the perceived threat.

The third emotion management strategy to reduce a threat and improve trust between a mentor and mentee, consists of the practice of reframing the way a mentor evaluates their mentee. This includes taking a negative and reframing it into a positive statement that the

beginning teacher can use to improve their practice (Williams, 2007). An example of reframing a conversation can be seen in changing a mentor's wording from "You did not include enough visuals in this lesson for the students" to "In your next lesson try to include more visuals. You might find that the students will respond better to your teaching." By changing the wording from a negative aspect of the mentee's teaching into a positive way to improve their practice, the mentor is reducing the threat of evaluation for the beginning teacher.

When a mentee's emotions are observed to become overpowering, the final emotion management strategy of modulating emotional response can be used appropriately (Williams, 2007). This is seen as a last resort if the mentor is unable to reduce an emotional reaction from the beginning teacher with the previous strategies. Modulating emotional responses can include taking a walk with the beginning teacher to allow for fresh air and to clear their head, or possibly working on deep breathing with the mentee in order to decrease the current emotion being displayed. Using these four emotion management techniques can build trust in the beginning teacher's mentor by reducing any perceived threats the mentor may demonstrate when evaluating their mentee's career goals within teaching.

The last aspect or strategy for developing trust is reflection (Williams, 2007). Mentors must evaluate themselves after each meeting or observation with their beginning teachers. They must ask themselves: "Did my mentee perceive any of my actions as a threat to their goals or career? If so, when did this occur and how can I better use their perspective to determine when a threat is coming? How can I use the Interpersonal Emotion Management Strategies to diffuse the threat in the future?"

When Williams (2007) three aspects for developing trust are used, the beginning teacher is able to gain valuable insights and experience. This research shows that beginning teachers feel

comfortable asking complex questions and can maintain a less stressful relationship with their mentor. Again, these behaviors are to be established at the beginning of the mentor/mentee relationship and continued throughout the entirety of the time in the induction program.

## **Section 4: Mentoring and Coaching Session**

Being a mentor essentially signifies that an experienced teacher is coaching the beginning teacher through the hardest part of their career. There are many different coaching styles and methods regarding talking with and evaluating the mentee (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). In this section, the varied styles of mentoring are explored, and include topics and integral parts of conversations to have with the beginning teachers, how to set up and run a formal meeting after observations, and how to self-reflect following a coaching session.

### **Establishing a Mentor Coaching Style**

Mentors adopt various roles throughout their time serving in the induction program. Some roles are formal or written in the bylaws of an induction program by the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CCTC) while other roles are informal or based solely upon bettering the skill and experience of the beginning teacher. One formal role as indicated by the CCTC is that of providing support. The California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (2017) states that mentors provide "...‘just in time’ support for candidates, in accordance with the Individual Learning Plan Goals, along with longer-term guidance to promote enduring professional skills" (p. 3). This is equivalent to the role of coach as described in the study by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011). A coaching situation occurs when the mentor helps to clarify and develop a number of items for the mentee, including a) developmental needs, b) performance, c) objectives of the induction program, d) teacher skills, e) reinforces effective behavior, f) recommends areas of improvement and g) introduces the mentee to the goals and objectives of the induction program.

In the chart below, the numerous roles or features of mentoring that a mentor must utilize are described (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). The grey boxes indicate direct requirements and descriptions from the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing (2017). These descriptions are a pivotal aspect of the requirements for mentors in a California induction program and mentors must demonstrate/practice these roles throughout the two-year program. The roles in white boxes are designed to informally assist the beginning teacher in order to establish self-efficacy, decrease loneliness, and reduce attrition (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011).

Not all roles need to be achieved simultaneously during the induction process but are going to be used appropriately throughout the two-year induction program. These roles and attending rubric must be described to the beginning teacher during the first meeting between mentor and mentee (as stated in Section 3 *Establishing Rapport*). A mentor must first understand how to be a leader in order to be a positive role model for their mentee (Kowalski, 2019). In order to understand leadership, the mentor must understand the roles in which they are embarking on in a mentorship.

***Mentoring Roles***

Roles/Essential Features	Description
<p><b>Communicator/Subject Specialist</b> Someone who interacts with and exchanges information. Someone who transfers/shares knowledge and experience.</p>	<p>The mentor establishes an environment for open interaction, encourages two-way exchange of information, listens actively to the mentee, plans for uninterrupted time with the mentee, and acts as a sounding board for ideas and concerns.</p>
<p><b>Counselor</b> Someone who helps others to think objectively, to learn about oneself and to grow.</p>	<p>The mentor identifies the skills, interests and values of the mentee, discusses and evaluates possible options and assists in planning strategies to achieve objectives, clarify developmental needs and performance objectives.</p>
<p><b>Adviser</b> Someone who considers career pathways and profiles, develops support in specific profession.</p>	<p>The mentor provides both formal and informal information and can recommend professional development opportunities and strategies to help the mentee identify and overcome potential obstacles.</p>

Roles/Essential Features	Description
<p><b>Broker</b> Someone who develop contacts and identify resources.</p>	<p>The mentor advises in strategies for developing contacts and introducing the mentee to their own network. The broker may also assist the mentee to identify resources for teaching.</p>
<p><b>Savvy Insider</b> Someone who develops plans for and moves to maximize career potential.</p>	<p>The mentor provides intuitive and informal knowledge about the school site or profession and connects the mentee with “the right people” who have either the power or knowledge to further enhance the mentee’s learning or performance.</p>
<p><b>Advocate or Sponsor</b> Someone who is a good negotiator, aware of institutional and professional politics.</p>	<p>The mentor may recommend their mentee for involvement in a project and use their professional ability to make things happen to advocate for their mentee.</p>
<p><b>Ally</b> Someone who is a protector and spokesperson in new situations.</p>	<p>The mentor can provide feedback to the mentee, enabling them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, the mentor may act as a catalyst to help the mentee develop alternative views of themselves and their environment.</p>
<p><b>Guide</b> Someone who assists to acclimate and integrate new employees.</p>	<p>The mentor provides the mentee with experimental learning opportunities to develop their own strategies and techniques for a variety of situations.</p>
<p><b>Role Model</b> Someone who is respected because of their professionalism/ability/experience</p>	<p>The mentee observes and emulates the mentor’s behavior. The mentor is a living example of values, ethics, and professional practice.</p>
<p><b>Teacher/Trainer</b> Someone who can demonstrate ways to improve, share skills, and discuss issues.</p>	<p>The mentor actively helps the mentee to learn and to become socialized into their organizational role, creates suitable opportunities for the mentee to learn and to achieve professional learning objectives.</p>
<p><b>Supporter</b> Someone who listens and counsels, encourages and is accessible</p>	<p>The mentor is constantly providing safe conditions for the mentee to release emotions; listens to and reflects what is heard with the intention of unburdening the beginning teacher.</p>
<p><b>Coach</b> Someone who identifies needs, sets appropriate targets, and help develops their performance skills.</p>	<p>The mentor helps to clarify for the new teacher: a) developmental needs, b) performance, c) objectives of the induction program, d) teacher skills, e) reinforces effective behavior, f) recommends areas of improvement and g) introduces the mentee to the goals and objectives of the induction program.</p>

(Adapted from Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011, p. 2079)



### **Conversation Topics to Foster Professional Relationships**

Most of the mentoring roles stated above are performed in conversations with the beginning teacher. Roles like supporter, coach, ally, adviser, counselor and communicator are all prevalent in discussions with the mentee (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). The mentor must utilize these roles at different points in conversations, depending on the mentee's needs at that time. This requires the mentor to be perceptive and responsive to on-the-spot needs.

Conversations with the beginning teacher vary depending on the new teacher priorities and the obstacles they are facing. Every conversation has multiple tiers or dimensions that mentors must identify and incorporate into discussions with their mentees (Kowalski, 2019). Mentors need to be able to ask deep and reflective questions, and then respond with clarifying paraphrases they hear from the beginning teacher (Kowalski, 2019 & Hobson, et al., 2009). Mentors must also provide feedback and support to the beginning teacher when presented with an obstacle they are facing (Kowalski, 2019). Hobson, et al. (2009) describes mentors in conversations as needing to be supportive, approachable, nonjudgmental and trustworthy. As described in section 3 entitled *Developing Trust*, mentors use the Williams (2007) method to develop and maintain the mentees trust throughout their mentorship by incorporating perspective taking, threat-reducing behavior, and reflection into their everyday practice.

Another aspect to conversation that mentors must incorporate is sharing how they overcame any workplace challenges (Pham, et al., 2019). This allows the mentor and mentee to connect and identify with each other because of the shared challenges they face at their worksite. Mentors take on the adviser role in this case and provide essential information about how to overcome obstacles when presented to the beginning teacher (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011).

Conversations that occur after formal observations must promote a deeper thinking from the mentee (Strong & Baron, 2004). With a more informal structure already in place between the mentor and beginning teacher, deeper conversations about the mentee's teaching style and lesson delivery are discussed. The research from Desimone, et al. (2014) shows that these mentoring conversations can include the complex topics like expectations for teachers, parent involvement and emotional support because of the trust and rapport that has already in place.

In section 7 the list entitled, *Feedback Sentence Starters* is a list of sentence starters or sentence stems that are provided for the mentor. Mentors choose from the list of starters when providing feedback to their beginning teacher after an observation. The sentence starters are used to actively engage the mentee and to keep the conversation focused on the important aspects of the observation debrief session (Gnonewleaders, 2011). The sentence starters help the mentor remain conscious of the quality of their feedback while also alleviating the pressures of evaluation on beginning teachers (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). Many of these conversational roles are included in giving feedback after formal observations. Along with feedback, mentors must incorporate time to discuss any questions or concerns the beginning teacher might have about related topics (Desimone, et al., 2014). This can include, but is not limited to, Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings, scheduling, personnel at the school site, or parental involvement.

### **Outline for Formal Meetings**

Meetings between mentor and mentee occur throughout the two-year induction program. The conversation topics and strategies provided in this section reflect both formal and informal meetings that occur with the beginning teachers. One type of meeting that is essential to the induction program is that of formal meetings after observations. The California Commission on

Teaching Credentialing (2017) establishes that mentors must provide support to the candidates regarding their teaching and provide feedback about classroom instruction. Although California code does not explicitly state that meetings after observations must occur, Spooner-Lane (2017) confirms that meetings, instead of sending forms or written feedback, provide better outcomes and allow mentees to gain better insight from the observation debrief.

The study by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011) confirms that providing quality feedback to beginning teachers needs to be a positive and stimulating experience. In order to achieve this, mentors must conduct all formal meetings in a relaxed setting, preferably scheduled on the same day as the observation. The mentor needs to schedule the meeting with ample time for conversation, resisting the practice of setting the meeting into an already overstretched day. As described in this section, these meetings are of the utmost importance to the beginning teacher, and must be treated as such. This conversational debrief time represents learning, reflection, and a unique opportunity for the mentee to gain valuable insights from their mentor, and analyze any obstacles or problems the teacher might be facing in their teaching.

### **Section 5: Mentor for Feeling “At Home” as a Teacher**

A mentor must be both a broker and well-informed insider for their beginning teacher (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011). This signifies that the mentor has the role of introducing the beginning teacher to the right people at their school site and connecting the new teacher with a network of personnel and teachers who can offer support to make the new teacher’s job richer and more efficient.

According to the guidelines presented by the CCTC, a mentor must have at least three years of teaching experience and teach the same grade level(s) and/or subject area(s) as their mentee (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2017). These qualifications provide the mentor with a diverse knowledge and catalog of teachers that reside in the equivalent grade level or subject area and personnel at a school site that beginning teachers should be in contact with throughout the school year.

#### **Introduce to Collogues**

One characteristic of burnout in beginning teachers has been identified as the feeling of isolation in their classroom (Hagaman & Casey, 2017 & Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014). Mentors help combat this feeling through introductions to necessary contacts within and outside of their school site. One of the most significant contacts that must be formed for beginning teachers is with administrators.

Positive relationships with administrators are linked to the feeling of preparedness in special education teachers (Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013 & Hagaman & Casey, 2017 & Griffin, 2010). Mentors need to help their mentee develop these connections with administration. Depending upon the needs of the beginning teacher, this can be accomplished through a basic introduction or by arranging for the beginning teacher to ask administrators to come to meetings

or to join in an observation of their teaching. The idea behind this practice is to foster the growth of the relationship and to provide the knowledge that the beginning teacher has access to administrators when they need them. Most administration are open to this and recognize the process when requested to participate in an observation.

Beginning teachers must also develop and establish contacts with other teachers at their school site. These contacts are a secondary source of mentorship for the beginning teacher and cannot be overlooked in their importance (Desimone, et al., 2014). Mentors need to introduce their mentees to a variety of teachers and personnel at the school site. This is typically achieved informally, unless a mentor deems it necessary for a formal introduction to be made through a sit-down meeting.

### **Fostering Other Mentors**

In California, each induction program is structured to occur during a two-year period (California Commission on Teaching Credentialing, 2017). After this mentorship is complete, beginning teachers must have developed some mentors in the field who can continue to support them through their teaching practices (Desimone, et al., 2014). Although this might not be the same mentor assigned in the induction program or contain the same level of formality, these collegial mentorships are just as important. It is at this time the goal of the original mentor to help arrange, set up and foster other mentors for the beginning teacher.

Fostering other mentors occurs through various means. Mentors can physically take their mentees to other teacher's classrooms in order to introduce them and to discuss topics of interest with the new contact. The mentor can also set up observations for the beginning teacher to visit another teacher. A beginning teacher can take time to watch a senior teacher lesson plan, teach, conduct an IEP meeting, or much more. The purpose of fostering the development of other

mentors for the beginning teacher is to allow for more interactions and to ensure the mentee is not without support and reliable help in the teaching profession.

This extends to having a network in place wherein the teachers work can "...likely play a substantial role in novice teacher learning..." (Desimone, et al., 2014). Mentors, both within a formal program and out, must be a consistent presence in the beginning teacher's life. Without people to voice their support, concerns, wishes, and goals on a consistent basis, the new or novice teacher is likely to experience burnout or isolation in their classroom (Desimone, et al., 2014). Every new teacher has unique needs and the manner in which a mentor helps to establish the beginning teacher's network is largely a result of and conditioned upon their personalities. Although the methods described here for fostering mentorship are helpful guides, developing trust and rapport with the mentee provides the best information for the mentor to decide how to effectively establish or foster other mentor relationships.

## Section 6: Mentor Notes to Self

Beginning a new job in any profession is demanding and can be isolating (Bilash, 2009). However, with the help of a mentor to guide the beginning teacher through the challenges and hardships they face during the first two years, these new teachers are better equipped to continue to flourish and grow in the profession. This in turn serves to challenge the ominous attrition rates that exist (Ondrasek, et al., 2020). Mentor teachers are intended to become the beginning teacher's first confidante within the teaching field and mentors must keep the importance of that role in mind throughout their work with the new teacher.

In order to be a mentor who is equipped and ready to support a beginning special education teacher, the mentor must learn and know how to accurately and effectively communicate with and teach adult learners (Griffin, 2010). Through the use and application of the strategies found in this training manual, mentors are able, through diligent practice and the stance of empathetic encouragement, to establish a rapport, develop and maintain trust, provide thoughtful coaching, and assimilate beginning teachers into their new surroundings.

One way to begin this process is for the seasoned mentor to take the initial risk and answer some of the questions posed to the mentee before asking for revelations by the new teacher. Often, by sharing experiences and relating professional stories with humor, the discomfort can be alleviated (Hobson, et al., 2009). Establishing the groundwork for the mentor/mentee relationship cannot be over emphasized; however, the constancy and steadfastness of the demeanor of the mentor must follow in the same vein in which it is established. Approaching the mentee from a position of supportive and respectful professionalism is a skill developed over time and one that requires practice, self-evaluation, and refinement (Griffin, 2010).

Another salient factor that undergirds the development of a healthy relationship is one of friendly boundaries and confidentiality. Just as any relationship had boundaries, the mentor must establish early on that the shared journey is not one that demeans or undermines the new teacher in any way. Determine practical boundaries regarding communication, observation visits and meetings as well as straightforward personal promise of trustworthiness.

The forms and templates provided in section 7 are designed to promote, cultivate and nurture this delicate but pivotal relationship. It is this author's wish that the mentor who is truly interested in supporting new teachers toward a lifelong career in teaching utilize these templates to the best possible end.

“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves”—Steven Spielberg



**Section 7: Forms and Checklists**

**Mentoring**

<p><b>The mentee will rate the following questions on a scale from 1-5. Five being “absolutely” and one being “not at all”. *This will not be used for any evaluative purpose, but for guiding discussions with your mentor.*</b></p>	<p><b>Scale: 1-5</b></p>
<p>1. I want to have a mentor or someone to talk to about any work problems I may have.</p>	
<p>2. I have had a mentor previously in a professional or informal setting.</p>	
<p>3. I enjoy receiving constructive feedback as long as it is helpful.</p>	
<p>4. I am nervous about my new job.</p>	
<p>5. I enjoy being observed in the classroom.</p>	
<p>6. I am confident in my abilities in case managing an IEP meeting.</p>	
<p>7. I am comfortable reaching out and asking for help when needed.</p>	
<p>8. I am confident in my classroom management abilities.</p>	
<p>9. I am confident in my interactions with parents/guardians.</p>	
<p>Please list below any specific things you are not comfortable with yet. These will be a focus for you and your mentor during discussions throughout the year.</p>	

(Beagle, 2020)

\*indicates beginning and end of red text for emphasis.

**Mentoring Check-in**

<p><b>The mentee will rate the following questions on a scale from 1-5. Five being “absolutely” and one being “not at all”. *This will not be used for any evaluative purpose.*</b></p>	<p><b>Scale 1-5</b></p>
<p>1. I feel comfortable talking with my mentor about all subjects.</p>	
<p>2. I enjoy receiving constructive feedback.</p>	
<p>3. I am comfortable being observed in my classroom.</p>	
<p>4. I am comfortable asking for help from my mentor.</p>	
<p>5. I have other teachers I can go to for help and advice.</p>	
<p>6. I am confident in my classroom management abilities.</p>	
<p>7. I am confident in my interactions with parents/guardians.</p>	
<p>8. I am confident in my abilities in case managing an IEP meeting.</p>	
<p>9. I have established a positive relationship with an administrator(s) at my school site.</p>	
<p>Please list below any subjects you wish to improve on in your teaching.</p>	

**Get to Know You**

1. What was the deciding factor(s) for choosing the teaching profession and more specifically, special education?
2. What motivates you to work hard?
3. What makes you the happiest while teaching? What makes you the most upset?
4. About what are you passionate? In teaching? Outside of teaching?
5. What are you looking forward to the most in your new classroom?
6. What makes you nervous?
7. If you had to describe yourself in three words, what would they be? Why?
8. What qualities or characteristics makes a person trustworthy?

(Beagle, 2020)

**Feedback Sentence Starters**

<p><b>Mentors choose from this list of sentence/question starters when providing feedback to their beginning teacher after an observation. The sentence starters are used to actively engage the mentee and to keep the conversation focused on the important aspects of the observation debrief session. The sentence/question starters are to be used to guide the conversation.</b></p>
<p>Could you tell me more about...?</p>
<p>I am not sure I understand (or that I saw...) can you tell me what you were expecting?</p>
<p>I noticed that... (this student did..., the learning outcome was..., the lesson steps included...) Tell me more about what was happening when...</p>
<p>When I observed..., it made me think of/wonder/consider...</p>
<p>What did you want to see happen when...?</p>
<p>We've been talking about... during professional development, how does this lesson support that work?</p>
<p>How does this lesson fit into the work being done by your grade level/content area team?</p>
<p>Was there anything that surprised you?</p>
<p>What will be your plan in the next week to...?</p>
<p>What do you think about...?</p>
<p>What steps have you taken/will you take in order to...?</p>
<p>Do students have the opportunity to...</p>
<p>It might be helpful to...</p>
<p>Did you get the response from the students that you wanted?</p>
<p>How did this lesson match the data from previous formative/summative assessments you have done?</p>
<p>How did you support higher order thinking skills within the lesson?</p>
<p>What were three successful things about this lesson? What would you do differently if you were to teach this lesson again?</p>
<p>What data were you able to informally/formally collect during the lesson?</p>

(Adapted from gnonewleaders, 2011)

## Section 8: Resources

Mentoring in induction programs is not a new concept. There are copious amounts of literature that can inform and develop mentors continuously throughout induction programs. The following list is further research or articles that can be read in order to continue to better a mentor's practice. It is noted that not all research/articles have been used in this informal mentoring training but are seen as relevant in continuing a mentor's education.

- For inquiries about requirements, standards and laws for induction programs in California, the California Commission on Teaching Credentialing has a webpage dedicated to displaying this information: <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/teacher-induction>
- During the current treacherous climate of COVID 19 and school closures traditional mentors might find themselves attempting to navigate induction programs from the home. Edutopia, a leading education website, developed six tips for mentoring during distance learning. The article focuses on ways to maintain a reciprocal and beneficial mentor/mentee relationship and can be found at: <https://www.edutopia.org/article/6-tips-mentoring-new-teachers-during-distance-learning>
- Many of the roles and essential features gleaned from this informal training are found in the study completed by Maria-Monica and Alina (2011). More information on the study and the roles of a mentor can be found in: New perspectives on roles of the mentor-teacher for pedagogical practice. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 15, 2078–2082. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.04.057
- The Williams (2007) method to developing and maintaining trust can be inquired further in the research study: Building genuine trust through interpersonal emotion management:

A threat regulation model of trust and collaboration across boundaries. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 595-621. doi:10.5465/amr.2007.24351867

- Finally, for more information on how to develop relevant and successful mentoring behaviors mentors can read the following two texts:
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  - Gravells, J., & Wallace, S. (2007). *Mentoring in the Lifelong Learning Sector* (2nd ed., Professional Development in the Lifelong Learning Sector Series). SAGE Publications.

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