SOCIAL NETWORKS AND NOVICE TEACHERS:

AN EXAMINATION OF SUPPORTS

PROVIDED THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

By

SEAN PATRICK FEROLI

Bachelor of Music Education in Instrumental Music
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK
2000

Master of Education in Educational Administration
University of Central Oklahoma
Edmond, OK
2007

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
July, 2015

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND NOVICE TEACHERS:

AN EXAMINATION OF SUPPORTS

PROVIDED THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Bernita L. Krumm

Dissertation Adviser

Dr Katherine A. Curry

Dr. Kerri S. Kearney

Dr. Lou L. Sabina

Dr. Sheri E. Vasinda

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been completed without help from many people. Thank you to everyone at Oklahoma State who provided me with their support. Thank you especially to my committee for providing their expertise and guidance: Dr. Curry, Dr. Kearney, Dr, Vasinda, Dr. Sabina, and especially to Dr. Krumm who provided ongoing support and encouragement.

Thank you to the school district and to the teachers who shared so much and were so willing to assist me in understanding their experiences.

Thank you to my peers who went through this program with me. I especially want to thank Cordell Ehrich, Stephanie Cline, and Shawna Richardson who were great team members on multiple projects and were constant encouragers.

Thank you to my colleagues at work—Howard Erikson and so many others—who were so accommodating to me when I needed to be away for research purposes.

Thank you to my parents who taught me early in life the value of hard work and not quitting. Thank you to my parents-in-law who always encouraged me to push myself a little bit further.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family for being so supportive. Thank you to my amazing children, Harrison and Ashlynn. Thank you so much to my incredible wife, Lynn Ann. She picked up the slack in so many ways and always believed in me.

I'm thankful to have all these friends! Love to you all!

Name: SEAN PATRICK FEROLI

Date of Degree: JULY, 2015

Title of Study: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND NOVICE TEACHERS: AN

EXAMINATION OF SUPPORTS PROVIDED THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

Major Field: DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. Data for this qualitative study were collected and analyzed through use of the Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action developed by Nan Lin (2001). The study participants were middle school teachers. The study participants were interviewed twice, and their responses were subsequently analyzed and compared. Data indicate that in addition to their formal supports, teachers made extensive use of informal interactions for the exchange of social capital. However, the responses also yielded that support for novice teachers, including professional development and mentoring, has room for improvement. Future studies on the exchange of social capital within a school setting, the differing needs of traditionally and non-traditionally certified educatory, how trust affect the flow of information, and a longitudinal study of how social capital is exchanged could be useful.

Keywords: Novice teachers, resident-year teachers, first-year teachers, entry-year teachers, beginning teachers, teaching supports, teacher preparation, teacher education, professional development, social networks, social capital

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Providing students with the highest quality teachers is of utmost importance in education. High quality teachers have been recognized by researchers as being "the most important asset of schools" (Hanushek, 2011, p. 466). More importantly, research indicates that the teacher has the single most influence and impact on what students learn in school (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

School districts typically implement a wide variety of formal supports to assist in the development and improvement of novice teachers. However, teachers' philosophies and practices are also greatly influenced by informal supports. Researchers found this is especially true regarding the influence of teachers' social networks (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Shubert & Ayers, 1992). Upon entry to the teaching profession, every teacher brings his or her own personal philosophy and beliefs, developed through previous experiences. These evolving personal philosophies and beliefs that inform teacher practices are influenced by social networks of the novice teacher. Therefore, to better understand the growth and development of novice teachers, researchers must examine the perceived influence of social networks on novice teachers through the lens of the teachers' unique and personal perspectives.

Research on social networks dates back to the 1930s in the field of organizational research, and dates to the 1950s in the fields of anthropology and sociology (Jack, 2005). For this study, a social network is defined as a "set of actors and the ties among them" (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 9). A novice teacher's social network includes all personal connections or ties between individuals

inside and outside the school. These networks include relationships made up of both strong ties and weak ties. Potentially, a social network would include family members, friends and all acquaintances, colleagues, and connections on social media websites such as Facebook. Through these ties, the exchange of information and knowledge may occur, thereby presenting opportunities for growth and improvement.

Problem Statement

Teachers are a crucial element in improving education (Hanushek, 2011; Harris & Sass, 2011). According to Rice (2003) and Hanushek (2011), the teacher is the single most influential factor in student learning in school. Teachers need time and experience, sometimes as much as seven years, to become proficient in teaching (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Harris & Sass, 2011). Because of the critical role of teachers and the time necessary to become proficient, the retention of quality teachers is a concerning issue. In fact, researchers reported nearly half of all novice teachers leave the education profession within five years (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Stanulis & Floden, 2009; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). This high turnover rate costs school districts a conservative $2.6 billion per year (Weibke & Bardin, 2009) and possibly as much as $7 billion (Pogodzinski, 2012).

But the need to retain quality teachers is not only a cost concern. Retention is also necessary for the continuation of quality education. Providing effective supports to novice teachers was found to contribute to improved retention and sustainability (De Vries, Vand de Grift, & Jansen, 2013; Yuen, 2012) while also increasing the chance for their success in teacher practice and careers (Tynjala, 2008). Another potential benefit of providing support to novice teachers is higher levels of teacher effectiveness (Moir, 2009; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009).

While support for novice teachers is designed to improve teacher effectiveness, research indicates that support accomplished these goals in some instances (Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, & Jacobus, 2010; Pogodzinski, 2013) and not in others (Hill, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013). Hill (2009) explained this lack of success from

supports may be attributed partially to teachers receiving "uninspired and often poor-quality professional development and related learning opportunities" (p. 470). Specifically, Hill cited low quality of the professional development opportunities, low capacity of the professional development providers, difficulty in transfer of professional development learning activities into the classroom, and lack of coherence of professional development into site and district curricula as issues that contribute to the ineffectiveness of professional development opportunities (p. 472).

However, other issues may factor into the improvement of teacher effectiveness. This anomaly of novice teachers improving in some instances and not in others may be explained through the engagement or lack of engagement in social networks between novice teachers and other people who influence those teachers. Researchers in other fields found novice employees' interactions with others in their social networks sometimes influence the success of the employee (Biesta, 2008; Eraut, 2007; Tynjala, 2008). This may or may not hold true for novices in the education field. Therefore, a study to examine the social networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to novice teachers through their social networks may yield information valuable to education professionals, policy makers, and other decision makers. Findings from this study may assist these leaders in making effective use of social networks to enhance the development and overall effectiveness of teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. Researchers found novice employees' interactions with others, both inside and outside the workplace, are sometimes the difference between success and failure (Biesta, 2008; Eraut, 2007; Tynjala, 2008). This may apply to novice teachers too. In seeking ways to support the development and overall effectiveness of teachers, this study will examine the social capital embedded within the social networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to novice teachers through Lin's *Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action* (2001).

Research Questions

1. How do novice teachers use social networks to develop as teaching professionals?
    A. With whom do novice teachers interact to gain support?
    B. How do novice teachers engage with others?
2. How does Lin's *Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action* explain the support and development of novice teachers?
3. What other realities are revealed in this study?

Theoretical Framework

Lin's (2001) *Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action* will serve as the theoretical framework for this study. Lin's Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action provides a tool that will allow for the examination of the resources or social capital available to novice teachers through their own social networks. These social networks may include other educators, mentors, family and friends, or others. As described by Lin, the Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action "describes the process by which capital is captured and reproduced for returns" (Lin, 2001, p. 3). Lin further explained that actors within a social network may "borrow or capture" (p. 4) other actors' resources. The interactions and collaboration among these individuals and groups may serve to facilitate the development of novice teachers through the sharing of information and resources among the social network.

Lin (2001) identified three primary sources of social capital that may provide returns from within a social network. The first area is structural positions, meaning the actor's position within the hierarchy of a network. The second area for returns on social capital is network locations. Network locations refer to the openness or closure of a network and to the strength of ties between actors. The third and final source for social capital returns is the purpose. The purpose of action may affect availability of resources and information. The interactions and collaboration among these individuals

and groups may serve to facilitate the development of the novice teacher through the sharing of information within their social networks.

Lin's Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action provides a tool that will allow for the examination of embedded social capital that may be found within the social networks of novice teachers. Lin defined social capital as "resources embedded in one's social networks that may be mobilized through ties in the networks" (Lin, 2001, p. 4). This social capital may come from ties with other network members including other educators, mentors, family and friends. According to Lin (2001) and Granovetter (1973; 1984), any friend or acquaintance is a tie, and any tie could serve as a bridge to useful information that may not have been provided to the novice teacher through formal supports. The interactions and collaboration among these individuals and groups may serve to facilitate the development of the novice teacher through the sharing of social capital among members of the social network.

Through her *Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action*, Lin (2001) identified two approaches that describe how support may be provided. The first approach focuses on capacity, meaning "the pool of resources in one's social networks" (p. 5). In this approach, the expectation is that richer and greater capacity will yield greater support. The second approach addresses the quality of the capital used. This approach focuses on mobilized social capital with the "expectation that the better the capital used, the better the return" (p. 5).

In order to explore support provided to novice teachers through their social networks, I selected a purposeful sample of teachers. The study took an inductive and constructivist approach in gathering data from the participants. Through examination of participants' personal social networks, I collected data to examine the collaborative relationships with others. The data were gathered through personal interviews with teachers of differing levels of experience. By investigating the networks through the perspective of the individual teachers and utilizing the lens of Lin's Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action, I gained a better understanding of the supports and

influence of these networks on novice teachers. The findings of this study may serve education practitioners, researchers, and policy makers by informing their decisions.

Procedures

For the design of this study, I used a constructivist epistemology. According to Crotty (1998), a constructivist approach is interested in the "meaning-making activity of the individual mind … and constructivism points out the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other" (p. 58). To explain the constructivist approach, Creswell (2009) wrote,

> Constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences…. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (p. 8).

Creswell (2009) explained the goal of a constructivist researcher is to "make sense of the meanings others have about the world" (p. 8). He (2009) identified three assumptions adopted by constructivist researchers. First, "Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (p. 8). Second, "Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives" (p. 8-9). Finally, Creswell asserted, "The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community" (p. 9). Through the constructivist approach, researchers seek to understand others' varied perspectives.

I used the case study approach for this study. Researchers select case study design to focus on "insight, discovery, and interpretation" (Merriam, 2001, pp. 28-29). Through case study, researchers may "establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 16). Merriam (2001) explained that case studies "are employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p. 19). Merriam described this

approach as more focused on discovery rather than for confirmation. She defined a case study as an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27).

The case study methodology is a bounded system, meaning there are boundaries to the object of study. For this study, the bounded system is the set timeframe of the participant interviews. Additionally, case studies are conducted over a set time. The interviews for the study took place during November and December of 2014.

In order to study the meanings of individual participants, I conducted individual face-to-face interviews with the novice teachers. These interviews served as the primary data collection method. "It is in fact the strength of the interview conversation to capture the multitude of subjects' views of a theme and to picture a manifold and controversial human world" (Kvale, 1996, p.7). Upon completion of interviews, I analyzed the data through use of Lin's social capital theory (Lin, 2001). The examination identified the teachers' perceptions on their available social capital and the influence of those networks on the development of the novice teachers.

Data Needs

In order to understand the extent of the influence of novice teachers' social networks in a more complete way, a researcher's understanding of the formal supports that the school district provides to novice teachers would be useful. I collected data through interviews with teachers of different levels of experience. Through my understanding of the formal supports provided by the school district to the novice teacher, the data gathered through the study will provide a more complete picture. This information should assist in determining whether solely district supports caused novice teacher development, whether supports from the novice teachers' social networks caused this development, or if a combination of the two supports was responsible.

Data Sources

Merriam (2001) asserted, "To find the best case to study, you would first establish the criteria that will guide case selection and then select a case that meets those criteria" (p. 65). For this study, I

chose an Oklahoma school district as my purposeful sample. Merriam (2001) argued that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 61). I selected this particular district because the size was likely to provide a large enough sample for this study.

In order to reach "the expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (Merriam, 2001, p. 64), I selected nine middle school teachers as participants. Participants comprised three subgroups based on the participants' years of teaching experience in public schools. The required criterion for the first group was completion of zero to one year of teaching. The required criterion for the second group was the participants had completed two to three years of teaching. The required criterion for the third group was the participants had completed four or more years of teaching. These groups in different stages of their teaching careers provided varied perspectives on the differing stages of development. These criteria focused the area of study to allow me to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks.

Significance of Study

This study has implications for both the existing body of research and current educational policy. Results from this study may provide additional useful information on the story of teachers just beginning their careers. Based on the results of this study, education professionals and leaders can use the information to guide future decisions regarding supports for novice teachers. These results may provide additional support to theory, research, and practice.

Theory

Moolenaar (2012) stated, "In education, social network research can be used to shed light on concepts such as, among others, (distributed) leadership, professional learning communities, teacher collaboration, reform implementation, and teacher induction" (p. 10). For this study, I used Lin's (2001) social capital theory (explained in detail in Chapter 2) to examine the social capital within the

networks of novice teachers and the supports that are gained or absent from those networks. Through my analysis of the collected data, this study may contribute to Lin's Social Capital Theory on the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes of social network influence.

Research

Research has demonstrated social networks can provide supports and influence employees (Daly, 2010). This influence greatly affects the development of new employees. This study builds on existing research pertaining to relationships and their influence on new employees, specifically novice teachers.

Practice

This study was designed to shed light on the influences and supports or potential supports of novice teachers. This information may be useful to educators, education administrators, professional development planners, and other people in the education field in guiding decisions regarding supports for novice teachers. This information may also be of use in other professions as some of the findings may be relevant to other fields.

Assumptions

An underlying assumption of this study is that all novice teachers have active social networks that have valuable social capital embedded. While it is practically impossible for a teacher to be without a social network, a teacher may have a social network with limited social capital useful to the development of a novice teacher. In a case where a teacher has this limitation, influence and support from a social network could be minimal.

A second assumption of this study is that resources and information are shared among individuals. Moolenaar (2012) stated, "A social network perspective first assumes that resources, such as information and knowledge, are exchanged in the relationship among individuals" (p. 10). Moolenaar explained that social network theorists discard the idea that individuals are independent of

each other because the participants are embedded in a social structure, and therefore, are interdependent.

Definition of Terms

Formal Supports. Formal supports are provided by the school or district. These supports are intentional and planned. Formal supports are "opportunities for support that are provided to all beginning teachers across a school" (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2010).

Informal Supports. Informal supports are provided through social networks in a non-structured context. Informal supports are not arranged by the school or school district. Informal supports can come from personnel within the school, family and friends outside of the school, or other ties.

Novice Teacher. For this study, a novice teacher is a teacher who has completed fewer than four years of teaching in a public school setting.

Social Capital: Resources embedded in one's social networks resources that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks (Lin, 2001, p. 4).

Social Network. "A set of actors and the ties among them" (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 9). For this study, a social network refers to the connections or ties between individuals, both inside and outside the school. Networks are made up of interactions and connectivity among individuals, groups, and organizations. These interactions may be in person or through some other media such as the internet.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. Chapter I introduced the need for the study, the research questions, and the theoretical framework for this study, Lin's (2001) Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action. Through use of this model, I conducted a detailed examination of teacher supports gained from social networks. Chapter I introduced the procedures used for the study to include the constructivist epistemology and the case study approach. I briefly discussed the value of the case

study approach. I further explained the methodology for this study through discussion of data needs and data sources. The study's significance to research, theory, and practice were presented, assumptions were introduced, and operational terms used in the study were defined.

Organization of the Study

Chapter II presents the relevant literature on the Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action (2001) and the development of novice teachers. Chapter III provides a detailed description of the design of the study and provides information on trustworthiness. Chapter IV provides the data collected through the research process and the findings relative to the social networks of novice teachers. Chapter V provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researchers have identified the teacher as being the key element in improving education (Harris & Sass, 2011; Hanushek, 2011). Some researchers have gone so far as to declare teachers the most influential and beneficial asset of schools (Hanushek, 2011; Rice, 2006). Because social networks hold the potential to affect teachers' instructional practices and to eventually impact student outcomes, how teachers' social networks affect teacher development and teaching practices is a critical component to better understanding the development of these professionals (Moolenaar, Sleegers, Karsten, & Daly, 2012).

The effectiveness of teachers is greatly enhanced early in their careers as the teachers become more experienced (Harris & Sass, 2011). As teachers gain more familiarity with the standards, gain more experience in classroom management, and receive input from strong and weak ties within social networks, teachers are likely to improve their teaching skills in subsequent years (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2010). In addition to the improvement of teaching skills and effectiveness, teacher support is a fiscally responsible approach used by school districts as this supports greater teacher retention (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Moir, 2009; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). The support gained by novice teachers through their social networks is the focal point of this study.

The following review of the literature will first address the key role of effective teacher supports in improving teacher effectiveness. Secondly, the review of literature will describe the

influence and support that social networks may provide to teachers as they pertain to teacher improvement and professional development. Finally, the review presents some possible reasons that new teachers receive varying qualities, relevance, and levels of support from their social networks and possible implications.

Teacher Impact on Student Achievement

The importance of teachers and teachers' impact on student achievement has been extensively researched (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hanushek, 2011; Harris & Sass, 2011; Wechsler, Caspary, & Humphrey, 2012). Hanushek (2011) asserted, "Literally hundreds of research studies have focused on the importance of teachers for student achievement." Based on the numerous research studies on this aspect, the consensus appears to be that teachers are a key component to student achievement. Research indicates that the teacher has the single most influence and impact on what students learn in school (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Lom and Sullenger (2010) reported teacher inadequacy as "the most widely cited explanation for why students do not learn" (p. 57). Addressing the topic of the importance of teachers, Hanushek (2011) explained, "No other attribute of schools comes close to having this much influence on student achievement" (p. 467).

Need for Continued Teacher Support

Researchers have cited a variety of reasons underscoring the importance of ongoing support provided to teachers. Among others reasons, effective teacher supports meet three key objectives. Those broad objectives are to (1) support teachers to improve teacher effectiveness, (2) to improve job satisfaction, and (3) to make the best use of financial resources and human capital (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). A primary benefit of providing support to teachers is to reach higher levels of teacher effectiveness (Moir, 2009; Pogodzinski, 2012; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). Moir (2009) explained that supports may accelerate the effectiveness of teachers and assist those teachers in "becoming exemplary teachers with the ability to positively impact student achievement."

According to Tynjala (2009), the increased need for workplace learning within the education profession and other professions has expanded drastically over the last 40 years. Tynjala stated educational institutions and other work organizations have been challenged by the need to develop new ways to ensure competence in the workforce. These challenges were brought on during the past few decades by "rapid development of information and communications technology, the growing production of knowledge in the economy, increasing internationalization and globalization as well as changes in occupational structures and in the contents and organization of work" (Tynjala, 2008, p. 131).

Improving Teacher Effectiveness

In the school setting, teachers of all experience levels need continued support because teacher development is a complex process that assists in "teachers learning - teachers learning how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their students' growth" (Avalos, 2011). Effective supports meet this need by providing opportunities for increasing teacher quality, improving schools, and improvement of student learning (De Vries, Van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013). Researchers indicated that these formal and informal supports provided to teachers not only influence the instructional practices of teachers, but teachers' instructional practices are "*partially constituted* by the formal and informal sources of assistance on which they draw" (Cobb, Zhao, & Dean, 2009).

Karagiorgi and Symeou (2006) explained that teacher supports should be aimed at the enhancement of teacher and student learning. These supports may occur through professional development programs, personal reflection opportunities, action research, collaboration with colleagues, or other development opportunities (De Vries, Van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013; Yuen, 2012). Supports provided to teachers may be formal or informal as teachers learn "through social participation in both formal and non-formal ways" (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011). These supports may be self-directed or prescribed by school leadership, or the supports may be unstructured and

unintended (Tynjala, 2008). A variety of supports may be found inside the school setting, but teachers may find some supports outside of the school setting as well (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2006).

Researchers (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007; Yuen, 2012) stated that effective supports contribute to the development of school-based conditions necessary for sustainability. These conditions play a key role in school improvement. The development of these school-based conditions allows teachers to more readily adopt new practices in their classrooms and to sustain those desired practices over the long term (De Vries, Van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013; Yuen, 2012).

Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) described desired supports as contributing to the improvement of professional practice and student outcomes. These researchers posited, "Opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning and development can have a substantial impact on student learning" (p. 25). As an example, an article by Timperley (2006) compared student achievement between classes of teachers with extensive supports compared with classes of teachers without extensive supports. The significant gains of the classes with extensive supports equated to the progress of a normal two-year period within a single year (Timperley, 2006).

Improving Work Environment

A second objective of providing teacher supports is to increase teacher job satisfaction (Berry, 2012; Stanulis & Floden, 2009) and to reduce teacher burnout and stress (Westling, Cooper-Duffey, Prohn, Ray, & Herzog, 2005) while improving teacher confidence (De Vries, Van de Grift, & Jansen, 2013). Research indicates positive working conditions that are a result of supports generate a greater commitment from teachers (Berry, 2012). Stanulis and Floden (2009) reported that school leaders and policy makers often overlook the fact that supports can "make a tremendous difference in teacher satisfaction, growth, retention, and impact on students." De Vries, Van de Grift, and Jansen (2013) explained that improved teaching and greater learning outcomes may be the product of effective supports that inspired teacher confidence and enabled the reduction of teacher stress.

Improving Use of Financial and Human Resources

A final objective of teacher supports is to retain teachers because retention of teachers is fiscally responsible. Through retention of teachers, school districts save the cost of recruiting and hiring new teachers (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Moir, 2009; Pogodzinski, 2012; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). Researchers claim teacher turnover costs school districts between a conservative $2.6 billion per year (Weibke & Bardin, 2009) and possibly up to $7 billion per year (Pogodzinski, 2012).

In addition to saving fiscal resources, retention of teachers may save schools in other ways too. High teacher turnover is costly to schools and students in regard to stability and the effective continuation of programs and reforms. Barrera, Braley, and Slate (2010) claimed that "student education is affected by high teacher turnover and unstable educational programs that result from this loss." Pogodzinski (2012) outlined the problem of high teacher turnover by stating "the continual churn of teachers reduces organizational capacity to improve student achievement due to the lack of shared human capital and the difficulty of maintaining reforms" (p. 982).

This problem of high teacher turnover presents unique challenges to schools. Researchers found that younger teachers, inexperienced teachers, or insufficiently certified teachers leave their positions at the highest rates (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Teachers' backgrounds in regard to age, experience, and certification are difficult and perhaps impossible to change. However, working conditions also influence teacher turnover (Berry, 2012; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Stanulus & Floden, 2009; Westling et al., 2005). Fortunately, through implementation of effective supports, working conditions can improve and may lead to better teacher retention (Berry, 2012; Stanulus & Floden, 2009).

Development of Novice Teachers

In most cases, novice teachers are not as effective as their more experienced peers in improving student achievement (Pogodzinski, 2012). According to researchers, (Eraut, 2004; Tynjala, 2008), a gap exists between knowledge gained through teacher preparation programs and the

knowledge that a teacher needs in order to be proficient. Eraut (2004) explained teacher preparation programs claim to provide "theoretical knowledge, methodological knowledge, practical skills and techniques, generic skills, and general knowledge" about the profession. However, although it is widely assumed by education professionals that these skills are transferable, little evidence exists supporting the transferability of this knowledge into the workplace (Eraut, 2004; Stenstrom, 2006; Tynjala, 2008).

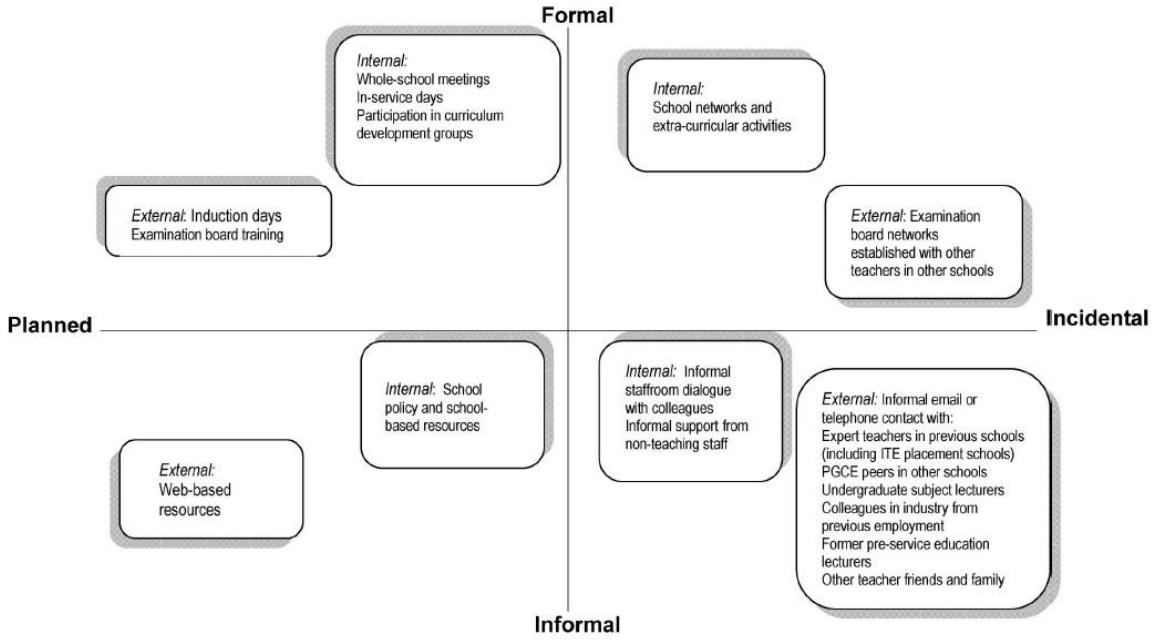
Due in part to this lack of immediate transferability of knowledge into practice, beginning teachers need time and experience to reach proficiency (Portner, 2008; Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Teachers improve with experience early in their careers (Harris & Sass, 2011). The performance of teachers typically improves significantly with experience during the teacher's initial three to four years in the profession (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010; Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013). Some researchers documented that beginning teachers make significant gains in their first year of teaching experience; then, those teachers make smaller gains with the next few years of experience (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Barrera, Braley, and Slate (2010) indicated beginning teachers may need up to seven years of experience to reach proficiency as opposed to just three to four years.

During their first three years of experience, novice teachers learn how to fill their role as a teacher through a variety of methods. As teachers gain familiarity with standards, classroom management, and other expectations of the job, they are likely to improve their teaching skills (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2010, Hanushek, 2011). Hanushek (2011) explained that during the early years in a teacher's career, "She will develop her craft, learn her tasks, learn classroom management, and find ways to help students learn" (p. 468). Novice teachers are learning how to be a teacher through their participation as a person in the teacher role (Hoekstra, Brekelmans, & Korthagen, 2009).

Mansvelder-Longayroux, Beijaard, and Verloop, (2007) stated novice teachers may learn reflexively through action, reification (making learning explicit), reflection, and dialogue. This informative participation includes daily interactions with others. These interactions may be with

experienced teachers, other novice teachers, and other influences inside and outside the school that provide additional support (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011; Wilson & Demetriou, 2007). Wilson and Demetriou (2007) presented the visual aid shown in Figure 1 to assist in explaining where new teacher learning happens.

Figure 1. Where new teacher learning happens



From "New teacher learning: substantive knowledge and contextual factors," by E. Wilson and H. Demetriou, 2007, *The Curriculum Journal*, 18, p. 220. Copyright 2007 by Copyright Holder.

Dialogue

Novice teachers may adjust practices in response to input from other ties; teachers may alter practices based on self-reflections; or novice teachers may modify teaching practices based on personal beliefs and values (Wilson & Demetriou, 2007). The ability to interact and collaborate with others both inside and outside the school, "often makes the difference between success and failure" (Tynjala, 2008, p. 135). These experiences and interactions afford the novice teacher the opportunity to develop the capacity to make appropriate judgments in a variety of circumstances (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011). Through their varied experiences in their unique situations, novice teachers develop

the ability to negotiate their experiences through social engagement (Biesta, 2008). This pro-active and agentic interaction empowers novice teachers to develop their teaching abilities in a self-directed manner (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011).

Much of the knowledge that novice teachers gain through participation and social engagement may be what Eraut (2007) referred to as cultural knowledge. This knowledge is frequently overlooked by practitioners and "taken for granted" to such a degree that people are unaware of its influence. Eraut explained that "cultural knowledge permeates the beliefs and behaviors of their co-workers, their clients and the general public" (p. 406). In the school setting, this group that influences a teacher's cultural knowledge, possibly without the teacher even being aware of its influence, includes administrators, other colleagues, students, parents of students, community members, families, friends, and any other person in a teacher's social network.

The early years of a teacher's career are a complex and crucial stage of teacher learning (Avalos, 2011). Researchers and educators have labeled the first years of teaching as being "the most difficult time in a teacher's career" (Gavish & Friedman, 2010, p. 145). Due to unsuccessful attempts to identify and implement effective supports, beginning teachers sometimes "have to make do with little more than a few introductory moments–the photocopier is here, the classroom is there and you are basically on your own after that" (Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012, p. 622).

Some researchers identified teachers working alongside other more experienced teachers as the ideal learning environment for beginning teachers (Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012; Murphy & Hall, 2008). Tynjala (2008) explained, "Interaction between novices and experts is of crucial importance in workplace learning" (p. 135). Other professions such as nursing and more recently, engineering, already have systems in place that allow new personnel to work alongside more experienced individuals upon entry into the profession (Eraut, 2007). Eraut (2007) stated "*Trying things out* is often the preferred approach of engineers," (p. 411), and Eraut (2007) suggested this approach may apply to the teaching profession too.

This situational process of working alongside other professionals stems from Vygotsky's action theory (Langford, 2005). According to Murphy and Hall (2008), this preferred action theory approach to the ideal teacher learning process supports a transformation from "legitimate peripheral participation" to "central participation" (p. 6). In other words, a pre-service teacher may gain the required codified knowledge through classes and other activities. The teacher would then enter the education profession as a novice teacher working alongside an expert teacher. Working in this setting allows the novice teacher and expert teacher to problem-solve together. As the novice teacher gains greater understanding, the novice teacher moves closer to "central participation" or teacher proficiency (Murphy & Hall, 2008, p. 6).

In addition to figuring out how to put theoretical and formal knowledge gained through teacher preparation programs into practice, new teachers have to assimilate into the new working environment (Eraut, 2007), and the new teachers are expected to begin teaching ready to perform at a proficient level (Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013). According to Wiebke and Bardin (2009), nearly 50% of these new teachers leave the education field within five years of teaching. These teachers leaving the profession cited a lack of support as a primary factor in their decision to leave the field of education to pursue careers in other fields (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009).

Induction Programs

In order to counter the challenges that novice teachers face and to improve the effectiveness of teachers, many school districts have implemented some form of a formal induction process (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013). More than 30 states require these inductions for teachers (Johnson, Goldrick, & Lasagna, 2010). According to Wei, Darling-Hammond, and Adamson (2010), new teachers are receiving more support than ever before thanks in part to these state-mandated induction programs.

Induction programs normally provide learning opportunities to novice teachers on the topics of administrative responsibilities, access to resources, incorporating standards requirements, formal

mentoring, integrating into the school's culture, and managing one's workload (Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013). Teacher knowledge on these topics is valuable because these issues have been shown to be related to issues that have implications on teacher quality including teacher stress, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and career decisions (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). When novice teachers receive sustained support from their expert colleagues who are responsive to their teaching, the novice teachers feel like they are "part of a supportive community that sees them as both teachers and learners" (Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013).

While formal and informal supports are very different, both types of supports are valuable and desired in the development of teachers, and both types of supports are necessary in order to develop professional expertise (Tynjala, 2008). The formal and informal ties that support teacher learning also seem to provide support for each other. This inter-play between learning gained from formal and informal supports has been emphasized in research (Eraut, 2004; Markowitsch & Messerer, 2006; Tynjala, 2008). According to Tynjala (2008), this mutually supportive relationship between formal and informal learning is one key to the development of expertise in the education profession.

Mixed Results from Supports for Novice Teachers

Supports for novice teachers are intended to accelerate and improve teacher effectiveness (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013; Borko, Jacobs, & Koellner, 2010; Moir, 2009; Pogodzinski, 2012; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009) and to "enhance and prevent the loss of teachers' human capital" (Ingersoll, 2012, p. 46). Researchers have found that supports of novice teachers are sometimes successful at reaching this goal of improvement (Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, & Jacobus, 2010; Glazerman, Senesky, Seftor, & Johnson, 2006; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). However, these supports are sometimes unsuccessful (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013).

Hill (2009) identified five key factors crucial in achieving success or lack of success in a formal support program. Those factors are 1) quality of the formal support program, 2) capacity and quality of the providers, 3) transferability into teaching practices, 4) coherence within the overall district-adopted curricula and instructional approaches, and 5) reaching all teachers rather than a select few (p. 472). Problems regarding these issues may help to explain why teacher attendance and participation in these formal supports does not always develop into the desired gains in student outcomes (Hill, 2009).

Quality of Support Program

According to Wilson and Demetriou (2007), teachers learn individually through experience whereby they constantly adjust and modify their teaching practices. Wilson and Demetriou further identified that teachers also learn through interactions with others by "asking questions, sharing information, seeking help, experimenting with innovative actions, and seeking feedback" (p. 214). This combination of personal experiences and interactions with other people shape the learning and development of the teachers.

However, researchers identified significant gaps in the research on formal supports provided to teachers through professional development (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013; Avalos, 2011; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Datnow, 2005; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005). Some researchers explained one shortfall of the research on the associations between teaching supports and improvements in teaching practices and their connection to student achievement is that these studies frequently limit observations to the relationship between effective teaching practices and student achievement (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005). In other words, research has provided limited evidence on the links between teacher supports and improved student outcomes.

In addition to these gaps in the research pertaining to formal supports and their influence on teacher and student outcomes, researchers identified the sustainability of formal supports as another

variable that has not been investigated to a considerable extent (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013; Avalos, 2011; Datnow, 2005). Researchers describe sustainability as the "lasting continuation of achieved benefits and effects of a professional development program beyond its termination" (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013, p. 2). Antoniou and Kyriakides (2013) reported they found no more than 20 studies measuring the sustainability of the results of formal support programs.

One support that many school systems have implemented with the goal of improving teacher effectiveness is a formal induction program to serve as a bridge from pre-service education such as student teaching to teaching students (Barrera, Braley, & Slate, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013). As of 2010, legislation in 30 states required that schools implement an induction program for new teachers (Johnson, Goldrick, & Lasagna, 2010). School districts "often spend thousands of dollars to induct an individual teacher into the profession and the local context" (Pogodzinski, 2013, p. 2). While a significant amount of fiscal resources is spent through formal support programs, researchers have reported only mixed success from these programs in effecting positive change in teacher effectiveness (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzsinski, 2013).

While many school systems provide a formal induction program to assist new teachers upon entry into the education profession, this single support may not be enough. The beginning years of a teacher's career have been described by researchers as a complex, crucial, and most difficult time in a teacher's career (Avalos, 2011; Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012). Feiman-Nemser (2010) suggested that education policy makers and education leaders recognize and accommodate novice teachers' needs as beginners and assign responsibilities to these novice teachers based on his or her experience and expertise. In other words, novice teachers should be sheltered during their transitions into the education profession.

Novice teachers frequently are held to the same expectations as their more experienced and seasoned colleagues (Kennedy, 2005; Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013). However, novice teachers may benefit significantly from not being placed in the all too common "sink or swim" or "lost at sea" scenario (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012; Pogodzinski, 2013).

Ingersoll (2012) reported that fewer than 20% of surveyed beginning teachers stated they had received a reduced teaching load or schedule to ease their transition into the profession. Ingersoll indicated that reduced workload for novice teachers is a support common in higher education, and could be implemented as part of a comprehensive induction program in elementary and secondary education.

Shortages in state funding have caused significant problems regarding the continuation of school districts' induction programs (Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013). Comprehensive induction programs that include release time to observe experienced teachers, mentorship opportunities, and other professional development opportunities can cost up to $7,000 per teacher per year (Villar & Strong, 2007). The current research on the success of induction programs has produced mixed results in respect to new teachers' effectiveness and retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013). Due to the high cost of comprehensive induction programs and the conflicting research results on the effectiveness of the programs, many schools have scaled back their induction programs, leaving teachers to identify experts and seek guidance on their own accord (Pogodzinski, 2012).

Studies indicate that leaders should not assume teachers are seeking guidance from the experts within a social network or that the experts are even recognized as experts within their social networks. Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011) found that teachers often did not initially seek out people with expertise. Instead, novice teachers "were more prone to developing relationships with those they considered affable, rather than knowledgeable, resulting in some isolation of 'expert' teachers" (p. 89).

Another issue stemming from teacher supports, or lack of supports, is the manageability of the novice teacher's working conditions (Berry, 2012; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Stanulus & Floden, 2009; Westling, Cooper-Duffey, Prohn, Ray, & Herzog, 2005). While many schools provide formal supports, schools may fail to identify and implement effective supports regarding working conditions. Researchers have found working conditions to have a significant impact on teacher self-efficacy, teacher stress, job satisfaction, and career decisions (Berry, 2012; Collie, Shapka, & Perry,

2012; Stanulus & Floden, 2009; Westling, Cooper-Duffey, Prohn, Ray, & Herzog, 2005). This failure to effectively address working conditions may leave the novice teacher to "believe that real teachers have to swim when asked to do so and not sink and that real teachers need not expect anyone to throw them a lifeline" (Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012, p. 622). Ingall (2006) described the teaching profession as an occupation that "cannibalizes its young" (p. 140). Ingall explained the three novice teachers who participated in her study had strong characteristics that would serve them well as teachers, but each participant left the profession within four years. Their departures were on negative terms, and the teachers had no plans to return. Ingall described these "once-idealistic teachers" as "overwhelmed," "befuddled," and "dispirited." Ingall summarized, "The fun seeped out of their work as their morale was sapped" (p. 108).

Quality of Support Providers

Teacher participation in formal supports does not always translate into successful results. Hill (2009) claimed that while observers might see that nearly every teacher participates in formal supports and numerous articles on the success of specific support methods are frequently published are full of individual accounts of phenomenal success, there are chilling facts "buried beneath these often-glowing reports" (p. 471). To summarize Hill's explanation based on statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, it appears that teachers "are lukewarm about their professional development experiences" (p. 472), and teachers place their own formal learning at a very low priority.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2001) reported that over half of the survey participants reported spending one full day or less in professional development within the past year. Because most states typically require 15 professional development days over a five-year period, this low participation rate suggests that typically, teachers complete only the minimum professional development time required by law (Hill, 2009). Hill (2009) attributed this lukewarm attitude toward professional development to the fact that only a small number of teachers receive high quality

professional development opportunities with subject matter experts while the remaining teachers receive second-hand information.

Transferability of Knowledge into Practice

Research indicates teachers sometimes find difficulty in putting theoretical knowledge gained through a professional development opportunity into practice in the classroom. Hill (2011) maintained some teachers attempted to import activities into their classrooms, but the practice was distorted. Other researchers found that teachers commonly do not generalize their skills learned through formal supports into their classrooms once the formal training has ended (Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013).

An additional problem faced by schools and novice teachers is the teacher's belief in the lack of value of formal teacher learning (Britzman, 2007; Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012). Teachers often have a negative perspective on their pre-service preparation that provided "ivory tower" theoretical advice bestowed upon them by the university (Britzman, 2007; Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012). According to Britzman (2007), "The way this hatred of learning plays out in our field resides in the terrible fact that many teachers hate their own teacher education" (p. 8). This negative mantra sometimes continues well into teachers' careers (Britzman, 2007; Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012). This line of thought that only classroom experience counts and that the lecture hall is useless and irrelevant in regard to teacher learning can downplay the importance and value of any formal support provided to novice teachers (Britzman, 2007; Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012).

Another challenge novice teachers face is the high level of job performance expected of them. Supervisors, colleagues, outside community-members, and novice teachers themselves often hold extremely high expectations of novice teachers (Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012). Sometimes the same level of expectations held for experienced teachers is also held for novice teachers (Kennedy, 2005). This high level of expectations for novice teachers may lead some novice teachers

to hide their weaknesses and vulnerabilities and "to pretend they have no problems when they actually do have problems. They want to hide and take refuge in the mirror of make-believe" (Long, Hall, Conway, & Murphy, 2012, p. 622).

Furthermore, novice teachers are frequently given the more challenging and difficult teaching assignments (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2005). Ideally, school decision-makers would, as stated by Kardos and Moore Johnson (2007),

> recognize and accommodate their needs as beginners. A new teacher with novice status is expected and encouraged to seek help, is provided with extra assistance, and is given roles appropriate to her or his experience and expertise. New teachers with novice status are sheltered somewhat from the full range of responsibilities shouldered by their more experienced colleagues. (pp. 2095-2096)

This "sink or swim" reality may create additional stress for novice teachers.

Because beginning teachers have unique needs as individuals and schools and students stand to benefit from the retention of these novice teachers, researchers have encouraged school leaders to attempt to provide supports to meet the individual needs of these novice teachers. These individualized supports could cover a spectrum of issues. As identified by researchers through case studies, some new teachers need confidants offering emotional support (Fox & Wilson, 2009), while other novice teachers need more cognitive support or inspiration (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2010; Granovetter, 1973). Some novice teachers are more independent and take a conscious and proactive role in finding supports (Fox et al., 2010) while other novice teachers seem to fall victim to a sense of disidentification (Hodges, 1998) or lack of a sense of belonging within the school system (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2010).

Coherence of Program

With or without formal induction programs, new teachers are still socialized or "inducted" into the education profession through a variety of mechanisms that may not be a part of a formal

induction process (Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Pogodzinski, 2013). However, the development of teachers and other employees is not always positive. Sometimes undesirable outcomes are the result of teacher learning. Tynjala (2008) explained employees sometimes learn negative practices such as "bad practices, disadvantages of the field, and how to shirk their duties" (p. 134). These negative practices could presumably detract from a positive work environment and possibly lead to a decrease in teacher commitment and success in the classroom.

Novice teachers may receive support informally from colleagues and other influences. Powell and Colyvas (2007) explained that each day, schools and other organizations are replicated through the daily activities of the individuals who make up the organization. The participants theorize their work activities and develop their own understandings of the workplace. Participants of institutions gradually shift from prescribed rules and policies to their own locally adapted understandings in order to meet the immediate demands of work and to "adjust to their own realities" (Powell & Colyvas, 2007, p. 283). During this sense-making process, participants sometimes generate misperceptions and an inaccurate interpretation of the rules and expectations.

While schools continue to attempt to improve their formal programs and address these concerns, schools face another critical problem concerning novice teachers. Almost half of all novice teachers leave the profession within five years of becoming a teacher (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Stanulis & Floden, 2009; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). Stanulis and Floden (2009) explained, "At the point when a teacher is ready to make a major impact on student achievement, he or she is likely to have left the profession" (p. 112). Relatively speaking, the teaching profession has a high attrition rate in comparison to other professions such as engineers, lawyers, architects, professors, pharmacists, and nurses (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In order to combat high attrition rates and to improve teaching practice, researchers have identified a number of components that may influence the decision-making and development of novice teachers. Of those components, Wiebke and Bardin (2009) identified the use of social networks as an influential component in the improvement of teacher effectiveness.

Social Networks

According to Hill (2009), only a limited number of teachers receive high quality formal supports. She explained that despite evidence specific programs can improve teacher knowledge and practice and student outcomes, these programs seldom reach real teachers on a large scale" (p. 470). Hill (2009) explained that relatively few teachers receive high-quality professional development opportunities from subject matter experts, while most teachers are left to receive second hand information resulting in "uninspired and often poor-quality professional development and related learning opportunities" (p. 470). Hill compared these low-quality professional development opportunities, along with other "fads," to "pouring new wine into old bottles" (p. 471).

The concept of social networks dates back to the 1930s in the field of organizational research, and to the 1950s in the fields of anthropology and sociology (Jack, 2005). A social network is described as a way of thinking about the connectivity and interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011). Jack (2005) explained that the network concept has been used to "demonstrate the nature and effect of the interaction and exchange that takes place between individuals" (p. 1234), and the concept has become increasingly popular. However, the term *social network* has "acquired the character of an umbrella, a catch-all term under which a variety of theoretical and methodological positions in the social sciences seek refuge" (Jack, 2005, p. 1234).

According to researchers, some significant criticisms and gaps within the literature remain on the topic of social networks. The primary criticism of network theory is that the network perspective assumes social structures are a given. Critics claim this assumption could affect "the perception and interpretation of structure and agency in terms of influencing behaviour and how the initiation, reproduction and change of structures are brought about" (Jack, 2005, p. 1235). Jack explained gaps primarily stem from lack of understanding of the content of network interactions. Those gaps include the origins and persistence of structural embeddedness and social mechanisms, the extent and range of contacts within a network, the actual structure of a network, a unit of analysis for networks, and the evolution of networks. Regardless, social network theory has been generally recognized by

researchers as an acceptable tool in the analysis of a range of social science topics (Jack, 2005). Jack claimed "understanding what really goes on within a network remains limited" (p. 1235).

Despite the limited understanding of networks, researchers have come to a general consensus that social networks seem to enable organizations in achieving desired outcomes (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Jack, 2005; Moolenaar, 2012; Penuel, Krause, & Frank, 2009). Some researchers stated a network approach is necessary to consider the novice teachers' potential benefit from learning opportunities both inside and outside the school setting (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011). While some researchers claim there are too many gaps in research and social network theory is simply a catch-all, other researchers argue that social network theory contributes to a greater understanding of teachers' networks (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Daly, 2010; Moolenaar, 2012; Penuel, Krause, & Frank, 2009). These contributions are seen in that social network theory provides a "powerful analytical framework and mechanisms that allow for a detailed investigation of the nature, antecedents, and outcomes (Moolenaar, 2012)." Moolenaar (2012) explained, "Research on social networks builds on a long tradition of advanced and rigorous methodology and visualization to study relationships among individuals" (p. 9). Moolenaar (2012) further explained, "By embedding teachers' individual behaviors in the pattern of their interpersonal relationships, social network analysis can capture the multilevel nature of teacher collaboration to an extent that conventional methods and measures cannot" (p. 9).

Lin (2001) defined social capital as "resources embedded in social networks accessed and used by actors for actions" (p. 25). She described social capital as residing within relationships rather than in individuals, and the decision to access and use social capital lies entirely with the actors. However, this requires awareness by the actor of the social capital that is available. "Only when the individual is aware of their presence and of what resources they possess or can access, can the individual capitalize such ties and resources" (p. 25).

Lin explained social capital works through social networks to enhance actions and outcomes through four different ways. First, the "flow of information is facilitated" (p. 20). For example, if a

teacher has a tie in a strategically valuable position, the teacher may have access to useful information that otherwise would not have been available to the teacher. In addition, the transaction cost is reduced through this mode of communication.

Second, social agents may exert influence in the decision-making process. Some actors within a network carry more social capital due to their positions. These actors with greater social capital may exert influence simply by "putting in a word" (p. 20). Lin explained, "Some social ties, due to their strategic locations and positions, also carry more valued resources and exercise greater power on organizational agents' decision making" (p. 20).

The third way that social capital works is through acknowledged relationships to an individual. These relationships may serve as "social credentials" or certifications. Lin (2001) explained, "Standing behind the individual by these ties reassures the organization that the individual can provide added resources beyond the individual's personal capital, some of which may be useful to the organization" (p. 20).

The final way social capital works is through social relations. Social relations are expected to influence social capital by reinforcing one's identity and recognition within a social network. Lin (2001) stated, "Being assured of and recognized for one's worthiness as an individual and a member of a social group sharing similar interests and resources not only provides emotional support but also public acknowledgment of one's claim to certain resources" (p. 20).

Over the last 20 years, researchers and policy makers have gained an interest in social networks as they pertain to teacher collaboration, teacher relationships, capacity building in schools, and the enhancement of student achievement (Moolenaar, 2012). Studies suggest social networks are a key component in any organizational change (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Daly, 2010; Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Mohrman, Tenkasi, & Mohrman, 2003). Social networks ultimately influence, moderate, and determine the direction, speed and depth of planned changes (Daly, 2012). Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011) identified five key aspects of social networks that influence teacher learning including

1. openness to new ideas and concepts;
2. understanding, perceiving and modifying practices to fit within a particular context;
3. sharing complex and tacit knowledge;
4. the capacity for a learning community to support reform and change; and
5. sustaining commitment to the community or activity (p. 77).

Daly, Moolenar, Bolivar, and Burke (2010) simplified this outline when they suggested the adage "It's not what you know, but who you know" is more accurately stated, "Who you know defines what you know" (p. 364).

Openness to New Ideas and Concepts

Research has highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships in teacher development. In addition to, or in the absence of formal induction programs, novice teachers receive resources and informal support from colleagues and other acquaintances both inside and outside the school (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011; Feiman-Nemser, 2010; Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013). "Formal and informal teacher networks have been shown to provide flexible, ongoing professional support, and are important sources of teacher knowledge" (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011, p. 75).

Amin and Roberts (2008) explained that while elements of knowledge may be codified, most knowledge is "embedded within individuals and the sociocultural context" (p. 358). Daly et al. (2010) suggested that teachers who leverage their social networks are "better able to access and make use of the individual and collective resources embedded in their professional network" (p. 363). These interactions with informal mentors within a social network can provide new ideas and alternative perspectives to teachers (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011; Granovetter, 1973, 1983) as well as influence novice teachers' perceptions of the workplace, school practices, and career decisions (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Penuel, Riel, Joshi, Pearlman, Kim, & Frank, 2010; Pogodzinski, 2013).

Understanding, Perceiving, and Modifying Practices

Research has revealed that teacher learning occurs in formal and non-formal ways (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011). In addition to formal supports, novice teachers learn through participation and through daily interactions with teachers and others in their networks (Fox, Wilson, & Deaney, 2011; Hoekstra, Brekelmans, Beijard, & Korthagen, 2009). In response to dialogue and information provided to novice teachers from other people, novice teachers may modify and adjust their teaching practice (Fox et al, 2011; Hoekstra et al, 2009; Wilson & Demetriou, 2007). Lom and Sullenger (2010) explained that many teachers find learning through social networks to be easier because it is more relaxed and provides a self-paced environment that allows the teacher to "take away what they wanted and tried new strategies at their own initiative and pace" (p. 68).

Teachers in schools that lack substantial interpersonal ties among knowledgeable people have difficulty in adapting to new ideas due to the missing element of social support (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011). Novice teachers engage in personal and professional relationships to assist them in addressing work-related problems and concerns (Feiman-Nemser, 2010). As an example, Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011) conveyed that a novice teacher who is unfamiliar with a program or may have no background knowledge on a given program will "often reach out to members of their social network for pedagogical and content-related information" (p. 77).

Sharing Complex and Tacit Knowledge

Daly and Finnigan (2012) identified social networks as "a critical source of organizational advantage" (p. 498). Social networks have been found to improve the functioning of organizations by increasing the organization's ability to exchange resources and information (Daly & Finnigan, 2012). These interpersonal relationships influence the modalities and complexities of the information that is shared among teachers' social networks. Knowledge and information is more easily communicated because the basis of the social network is friendship, advice, and influence (Amin & Roberts, 2008; Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011). Amin and Roberts (2008) asserted, "While knowledge can be, and is,

codified to facilitate its transfer… the preferred mode of knowledge transfer is through verbal and physical communication" (p. 359).

Because of a shared framework of understanding that was built through prior experiences, teachers are able to share information among their social network more quickly. As an example, Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011) explained that a group of teachers who have developed close relationships through frequent interaction in meetings and other activities may develop a shared dialogue that allows them to easily and quickly discuss various topics. Furthermore, this information may be more useable because teachers are able to tailor the information to the needs of individuals within the network (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011).

Capacity to Support Reform and Change

Over the last 20 years, researchers and policy makers have gained an interest in social networks as they pertain to teacher collaboration, teacher relationships, capacity building in schools, and the enhancement of student achievement (Moolenaar, 2012). Researchers have targeted the enhancement of formal programs through social networks within the organization through use of initiatives such as communities of practice, professional learning communities, and other collaborative initiatives (Moolenaar, 2012; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Daly and Finnigan (2012) suggested that teachers who work in collaboration with individuals within one's social network "may be better able to successfully negotiate sanctions and increase student performance" (p. 496).

Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011) described the key leaders within social networks as centerpieces or bridges for communication and information sharing. The characteristics of these centerpieces and how they interact with others can influence the capacity of a group to increase teacher learning (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011). Studies suggest teachers working with other teachers within their network were able to engage reforms "with a level of depth that went beyond surface structures and procedures to include a focus on changing classroom practice" (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010, p. 383).

Sustainment Commitment

Teachers' social networks also influence the sustainability of lasting change (Amin & Roberts, 2008; Baker-Doyle, 2011; Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Mohrman, Tenkasi, & Mohrman, 2003). Researchers describe sustainability as the "lasting continuation of achieved benefits and effects of a professional development program beyond its termination" (Antoniou & Kyriakides (2013, p. 2). Daly and Finnigan (2012) stated, "Strong reciprocated relationships within and across a network have been associated with initiating and sustaining change efforts" (p. 498). Mohrman, Tenkasi, and Mohrman (2003) maintained that because plans are embedded in communities and emerge through interactions among people, "Lasting change does not result from plans, blueprints, and events. Rather, change occurs through the interaction of participants" (p. 321).

Impact of Technology

Researchers found media such as letters, phone calls, and especially the internet help to increase the number of ties and the ability to engage ties across social networks. This ability to maintain and cultivate relationships may benefit individuals and organizations. Through email, social media, and other forms of communication, "people are able to maintain contact with member of their social network cultivate ties, and garner aid and resources, including information" (Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, & Rosson, 2005, p. 119). Through technology, teachers may make effective use of their virtual networks in addition to face-to-face interaction. Jones (2004) claimed, "The internet is especially effective at maintaining weak ties as well as strong ties at a distance" (p. 81). Kavanaugh, Reese, Carroll, and Rosson (2005) also found that "leaders noted the importance of internet services in strengthening social ties and information exchange with their organization" (p. 121).

The proliferation of new technology and online communities may be used to support teacher development (Amin & Roberts, 2008). The internet provides opportunities for participants to become "glocalized" participating in a social network on both local and global levels (Ryberg & Larsen, 2008). A wide variety of online communities exist and include a variety of platforms ranging from

databases and repositories that require little interaction to online clubs and online social networks that may involve intense interaction (Amin & Roberts, 2008). Ryberg and Larsen (2008) reported that when operating within an online social network, young adults "really do not distinguish between online and off-line," and that this interaction "is just a part of their everyday life" (p. 105). Researchers advocated for use of online social media stating, "Facebook in particular, with their emphasis on connection, collaboration, and community could serve as the ideal support system to address the unique needs of novice teachers and to integrate them into a community of practice" (Staudt, St. Clair, & Martinez, 2013, p. 153).

Potential Benefits

A greater understanding of the structure of social networks may assist educational leaders in "managing and leveraging patterns of interactions in support of meeting specific targeted academic goals" (Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010, p. 360). According to Baker-Doyle and Yoon (2011), developers of social networks who have a strong understanding of social network theory are useful in serving as "bridge-builders" and promoting networking that will better meet the needs of the teachers. Baker-Doyle and Yoon explained that developers can "take an active stance in fostering the type of strategic networking that will enhance the practitioner-based social capital in a group" (p. 89).

In addition to making use of developers to enhance learning through social networks, individual learners can have an agentic or constructive role in their learning. Researchers have found that novice teachers can respond to self-identified needs through the engagement of their social networks. Novice teachers enhance their ability to make appropriate judgments through their negotiation of experiences gained through social engagement (Fox et al, 2011). Some researchers claim the onus and responsibility for using social networks for personal improvement is on the individual teacher, and novice teachers should be proactive in creating and engaging their social networks (Fox et al, 2011).

Summary

This literature review provided foundational information relevant to the support of novice teachers through social networks. I opened this review with discussion on the key role played by teachers. Researchers cited teachers as the primary reason students either learn or do not learn (Lom & Sullenger, 2010).

I continued the review by explaining the need for effective teacher supports. Researchers explained that by providing effective support, teacher effectiveness is improved, teacher job satisfaction is improved, and school districts make the best use of financial and human capital (Moir, 2009; Wiebke & Bardin, 2009; Pogodzinski, 2012). Effective teacher supports contribute to improved teacher effectiveness and student achievement through the development of conditions that are necessary for sustainability.

I continued this literature review by highlighting the mixed results of teacher supports. Teacher supports are intended to accelerate and improve development of teachers; however, supports are sometimes unsuccessful (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Pogodzinski, 2013; Antoniou & Kyriakides, 2013). The review included discussion on several factors that researchers cited as contributing to the success or lack of success of teacher supports, as well as discussion on other studies that informed and shaped the framework for this study.

One of the factors researchers cited as influencing the development and effectiveness of teachers was the engagement or lack of engagement of social networks. Through recognizing and acting on social capital embedded within one's social network, novice teachers may find support for their personal development as a teacher. By accessing this social capital found within their social networks, effectiveness of novice teachers may be enhanced early in their careers.

Chapter III provides a detailed explanation of the design of the study and the procedures used to collect and analyze the data. In Chapter IV, I provide the data in a narrative format. I present a detailed discussion of the data relative to the novice teachers' social networks including a summary of findings, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations in the final chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Schools are faced with the challenge of supporting teachers to improve teacher effectiveness, improving job satisfaction, and making the best use of financial resources and human capital (Wiebke & Bardin, 2009). Among other areas, these challenges include aspects such as teacher development (Avalos, 2011), the development of a positive work environment (Berry, 2012), and fiscal responsibility through the retention of teachers (Pogodzinski, 2012). Through the engagement of social networks, teachers may gain support to assist in facing these challenges.

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the design of the study and the procedures I used to collect and analyze the data. The purpose of this study is to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. This study was guided by two key objectives. The first objective was to examine the social capital embedded in the networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to them through their networks. The second objective was to investigate the applicability of Lin's Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action to explain the support and development of novice teachers. The research questions that guided the study and were used to meet these objectives follow:

1. How do novice teachers use social networks to develop as teaching professionals?
    A. With whom do novice teachers interact to gain support?
    B. How do novice teachers engage with others?

2. How does Lin's (2001) *Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action* explain the support and development of novice teachers?
3. What other realities are revealed in this study?

Research Design

My focus was to gain a better understanding of the influence of social networks and the supports provided to novice teachers through their social networks. In seeking that understanding, I used a qualitative method of inquiry for this study. In support of the use of a qualitative approach, Patton (2002) professed, "Qualitative inquiry is particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic" (p. 55). Creswell (2009) expressed the value of qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation. (p. 4)

Quantitative research tests hypotheses while qualitative research is "interpretive research" (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). I adopted a qualitative approach because I sought "to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 16). In this vein, I conducted this study to gain a greater understanding of each teacher's personal meanings.

This study followed the constructivist paradigm. On social constructivism, Creswell (2009) claimed, "Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 8). He explained that individuals develop varied and multiple meanings through their experiences. Creswell clarified that the goal of the constructivist researcher is to "look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (p. 8) through the participants' views. Participants' views "are formed

through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (p. 8).

Patton recognized that multiple realities exist between people and that a singular knowable external reality does not exist. Patton (2002) explained,

> Because human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and *construct* reality - indeed, they cannot do otherwise—the world of human perception is not real in an absolute sense, as the sun is real, but is "made up" and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs. (p. 96)

The methodology for my study was case study because this methodology is conducive to understanding a participant's personal perspective. According to Merriam (2001),

> Education is considered to be a process and school is a lived experience. Understanding the meaning of the process or experience constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive, hypotheses- or theory- generating (rather than a deductive or testing) mode of inquiry. (p. 4).

Merriam explained the case study methodology is ideal when the researcher seeks to gain a thorough understanding of the participants. "The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (p. 19).

Case studies are different than other types of qualitative research in that case studies "are intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system" (Merriam, 2001, p. 19). Examples of the bounded phenomena in case studies in the field of education may include "a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (Merriam, 1988, p. 13). Patton (2002) asserted "Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. 297). For this study, each case was comprised of three teachers based on the years of teaching experience. One case included teachers who completed zero to one year of teaching. The second case was comprised

of teachers with two to three years of teaching experience. The third case included teachers with more than three years of teaching experience.

I selected case study because this methodology allowed me to explore individual cases in depth while providing a holistic product, (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). Also, case studies are unique in that they "investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). Case studies provide a greater understanding of processes and events, and assist researchers in discovering "context characteristics that will shed light on an issue or object" (Merriam, 2001, p. 33).

On the advantages of case study, Merriam (2001) listed the following:

1. Illustrate the complexities of a situation;
2. Have the advantage of hindsight yet can be relevant in the present;
3. Show the influence of personalities on the issue;
4. Include vivid material—quotations, interviews, and so on;
5. Spell out differences of opinion on the issue and suggest how these differences have influenced the result;
6. Present information in a wide variety of ways and from the viewpoints of different groups. (p. 30-31)

Through conducting this case study, I gained a greater understanding of the relationships between people and a greater understanding of the complexities of those relationships without making prior assumptions.

Researcher Role

My past experiences as an educator in public schools have placed me in a unique position to serve as the researcher for this study. For ten years, I taught middle school through high school in the subject area of instrumental music. In my first teaching job, I served as the only band

director at a rural school district in Oklahoma. Comparatively speaking, very few school employees were qualified to serve as mentor to me concerning certain aspects of teaching instrumental music. Because of the limited subject-specific mentorship provided to me by my school district, I sought information and support from band directors at neighboring school districts, from acquaintances through professional associations, and from my personal university connections. At the time, I recognized that I could reach out to others to gain their advice. I recognized that this social capital was embedded within my social network, and I acted to mobilize that capital. This network included some of my previous teachers who had vast amounts of experience in the teaching profession, and also friends I knew from college who had entered the teaching profession before me and who had already experienced some of the same challenges I was experiencing.

Some of the network ties I engaged included band teachers from nearby schools who I perceived to be good teachers and were willing to share their thoughts with me. While I continued to engage strong and weak ties throughout my teaching career, I made extensive use of my strong and weak ties during my early years of teaching. My engagement of those ties resulted in me being a better teacher, improved student performance, and better learning opportunities for my students.

As my teaching career progressed, I found myself in a position in which young teachers were engaging weak ties to gain information and support from me. Thus, I have the unique but relevant experience on both sides of this scenario. I personally experienced seeking support through strong and weak ties as a novice teacher. I also had the experience of providing support to novice teachers through strong and weak ties.

Methods

Participant Selection

Creswell (2009) contended, "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p.178). Patton (2002) reasoned that while purposeful participant selection creates a bias and, therefore, a weakness in a quantitative study, purposeful participant selection is a strength in qualitative studies because this type of sampling is "information-rich and illuminative; that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 40). To gain information-rich cases, I selected three participants per case. To that end, I chose a purposeful participant selection from a purposefully selected school district.

I selected this particular school district because the district was likely to be able to provide several novice teachers. Due to the size of the district and schools, these schools were likely to yield an appropriate number of participants for each experience-based group. All participants were from a particular school district in northern Oklahoma County, Oklahoma.

The population of this study was middle school teachers within the school district. The sample for this study was teachers within the population who were willing to participate and met the required criteria. In addition to willingness to participate, the study called for three participants within three experience-based groups. I selected the first three volunteers in each experienced-based group to participate in this study.

According to Hatch (2002), there are two criteria for the ideal number of participants in a qualitative study. The first criterion is sufficiency. A sufficient number of participants allows others outside the sample to have a chance to connect to the experiences in the sample. The second criterion is "saturation of information" (p. 55). This saturation of information is when the researcher begins to hear the same information reported and is no longer discovering new information.

Because this study focused on social capital embedded within the social networks of novice teachers, the required criterion for the first group of participants is being a teacher with zero to two years of teaching experience. The second group of participants consisted of teachers with two to three years of teaching experience. The third group of participants consisted of teachers with four or more years of experience.

Patton (2001) explained a stratified sample as having samples within samples. For this study, the population was all middle school teachers within the school district. The sample was drawn from those teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. Finally, the sample was stratified by subject area and multiple middle school sites. I selected participants from four different schools, and multiple subject areas were represented.

Before I solicited participants, I gained approval (Appendix A) from the school superintendent. To solicit participants for this study, I emailed the school principals and requested the principal to forward the recruitment letter (Appendix B) to potential participants. The recruitment letter described the basic goal of the study and provided information on participant involvement. The letter also explained each participant would receive $30.00 in the form of a check as an incentive to participate in the study. The pool of potential participants was approximately 290 middle school teachers. In addition to their years of experience in the education profession, I selected participants based on their willingness to participate in the study. I selected the first three individuals who volunteered for each experience-based group as participants.

After the selection of potential participants, I notified each volunteer for the study. I notified those who were not selected through email. I contacted each selected participant through email to set up a suitable time and place for a face-to-face meeting. At the onset of our first meeting, I reviewed the consent form with the participant and requested the individual to sign the adult consent form (Appendix C). All selected volunteers signed the consent form, and interviews proceeded.

Data collected through individual face-to-face interviews allowed the participants to share their experiences. Seidman (2006) explained, "Telling stories is essentially a meaning making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness" (p. 7). The interview process followed the interview protocol as described by Creswell (2009, p. 183). This protocol included specific questions and specific probes to ensure the same questions and format were followed throughout all interviews.

I recorded and transcribed each interview to ensure the data were accurate and meaning was not lost. Seidman (2006) explained, "A detailed and careful transcript that re-creates the verbal and non-verbal material of the interview can be of great benefit to a researcher who may be studying the transcript a month after the interview occurred" (p. 116). Furthermore, by transcribing the interviews, I was able to more deeply immerse myself in the data. Patton (2002) explained this assists the researcher "in the transition between fieldwork and full analysis" and to "get a feel for the cumulative data as a whole" (p. 441). After I transcribed each interview, I conducted member checks to allow participants to review their respective transcripts for accuracy and to ask the participant any clarifying questions pertaining to the interview. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), conducting member checks in this way served to ensure data credibility.

I also used peer debriefers and reflexive journaling to enhance credibility and trustworthiness. Peer debriefing is a method used to increase credibility and trustworthiness (Figg, Wenrick, Youker, Heilman, & Schneider, 2010). A peer debriefer is a "knowledgeable other" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or "critical friend who challenges and critiques interpretations in order to reduce or even remove blind spots associated with qualitative data analysis" (Figg, et al., 2010, p. 22). Two fellow doctoral students served as peer debriefers. Reflexive journaling documented activities and decisions that I made throughout the research process. The journal may also serve to provide documentation for an audit trail as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

To ensure the integrity of the study and the privacy of the participants, I maintained anonymity of each participant through use of pseudonyms. I maintained a list that identified the participants and their pseudonyms. Audio recordings, transcripts, participant list, list of pseudonyms, and consent forms were stored separately in secure locations. Electronic documents were encrypted for security purposes. I was the only person with access to the data. All data and documentation will be destroyed one year after the project is completed.

No physical risks for this study were identified. Privacy and confidentiality were risk concerns. This risk was mitigated through use of pseudonyms, encryption of files, storing data in locked containers, and planned destruction of files. I adhered to the guidelines and requirements of the Institutional Review Board by conducting the study exactly as it was approved.

Data Collection Techniques

I used multiple methods of data collection to increase the validity of this study. Denzin (1978) maintained,

> No single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed…I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation. (p. 28)

Marshall and Rossman (1989) contended that through use of a combination of data types, researchers are able to increase a study's validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach (p. 79). By interviewing teachers of differing levels of experience and from different schools and differing subject areas, validity and credibility of the collected data will be enhanced. This data provides an opportunity to test for consistency between data sources and "to illuminate an inquiry question" (Patton, 2002, p. 248).

Procedures

Upon conditional approval of the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix D) and my committee, I sought permission from the district superintendent to conduct my research within the school district. The reply letter from the superintendent granting permission for me to conduct research within the district is included as an appendix (Appendix A). Upon receiving permission to conduct research in the district, I contacted school principals to request permission to conduct research within their schools. I also included the letter from the school principals granting permission to me to conduct research at the site (Appendix E).

I contacted the potential participants through the school principals. The school principals emailed my recruitment letter to their teachers. I initially contacted potential participants via the principals with this email attachment.

I gained nine willing participants through the email recruitment letter. The potential participants contacted me through the contact information in the email. I selected the first eligible participants who contacted me and met the required criteria of the study. Upon contact, we made arrangements to meet and review the consent form. From the initial contact through the conclusion of the study, I stressed voluntary participation to all potential participants. Each participant signed an adult consent form (Appendix C) stating his or her understanding of participation before I collected any data.

Upon gathering appropriate permissions from the district, the school site, and completed participant consent agreements to participate, I began the participant interviews. Member checks were ongoing throughout the interview process. In addition to using member checks, I compared experiences of participants to the experiences of other participants. According to Seidman (2006), "By interviewing a number of participants, we can connect their experiences and check the comments of one participant against those of others" (p. 24). Peer debriefings with two doctoral students also occurred shortly after each interview. The peers involved in the debriefings for this study did not know the names or identities of the study participants.

Individual Interviews

I collected the data through individual interviews. Interviews are "the staples of the diet" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 79). Patton (2002) wrote of interviewing,

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational data are more desirable, valid, or meaningful than self-report data. The fact is that we cannot observe everything… We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 340-341)

Another benefit of individual interviews is that interviews may provide insight on some aspects that are impossible to observe. Hatch (2002) explained, "the strength of interviewing is that it provides a means for doing what is very difficult or impossible to do any other way – finding out what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 92). Seidman (2006) posited,

> Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness. It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience. (p. 7)

I used standardized in-depth interviews with open-ended questions (Appendices F and G). Interviews assist researchers in gaining a greater understanding of the lived experience of participants and the meaning they make of their experience (Seidman, 2006). According to Hatch (2002), standardized interviewing is used when "researchers enter the interview setting with predetermined questions that are asked in the same order, using the same words, to all informants" (p. 95). He explained, "The idea is to gather information from several informants that can be compared systematically" (p. 95).

Seidman (2006) explained that through the use of open-ended questions, researchers may "build upon and explore their participants' responses to those questions" (p. 15). Through these open-ended questions, I explored the participants' perspectives and collected highly focused data. These interviews yielded valuable information on perceived available supports to novice teachers. Interviews also provided in-depth insight on informal supports and the context of the participants' experiences. According to Seidman (2006), "interviewing provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" and interviewing also allows researchers to "put behavior in context and provides access to understanding their action" (p. 10).

As recommended by Seidman (2006), I followed the multiple-interview model for interviewing each participant. This model allowed me to place the data in context. Seidman explained, "People's behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. Without context there is little possibility of exploring the meaning of an experience" (pp. 16-17).

I conducted two interviews with each participant. Each interview had a specific purpose. "The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience" (Siedman, 2006, p.17). In the first interview, I sought to build the background story or the history of the participant to put the data in context. "The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs" (p. 17). This interview provided the contemporary experience of the participant. The second interview also served to "encourage the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them" (p. 17), and to focus on the meaning and sense-making of the participants' experiences. Seidman also claimed that interviewers who attempt to gather data in a "one-shot meeting" tread on "thin contextual ice." By conducting two interviews with each participant, I was able to establish the participants' context of their experiences, reconstruct the details of their experiences, and gain a greater understanding of the participants' meanings of their experiences.

Seidman (2006) recommended conducting interviews with a limit of 90 minutes; I limited these interviews to 45 minutes. By having a set limit, Seidman claimed, researchers avoid undue participant and interviewer anxiety that may be created if the timeframe was open-ended. Additionally, the limited time interview "gives unity to each interview" (p. 20) as well as being long enough to "make them feel like they are being taken seriously" (p. 20). Seidman (2006) also recommended conducting each participant's interviews within a two-week period. I followed this guideline. "This allows time for the participant to mull over the preceding interview but not enough time to lose the connection between the two" (p. 21). This model allows the development of a positive relationship between the interviewer and the participant while completing a participant's interviews within the set timeframe of a two-week period. These interviews allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the phenomena through the perspectives of the teachers. Through the participant interviews, I identified emerging themes and the participants' perceptions of supports provided to novice teachers.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2001) described data analysis as "the process of making sense out of the data" (p. 178). As suggested by Patton (2002), I recorded a post-interview review in my journal after each interview. Upon the identification of any unclear information, I sought clarification from the participant in a timely manner. This process helped in ensuring accuracy of data and analysis.

I also maintained a reflexive journal. My reflexive journal provided an account of my activities. Patton (2002) explained that reflexive journaling helps to answer "what I know and how I know it" (p. 64) through ongoing examination. Through the reflexive journal, I explicitly identified "biases, values, and personal background" (Creswell, 2002, p. 177) that may have shaped my interpretations of this study. This journal reported my thoughts, challenges, and questions during the process as well as reported issues of concern and provided assistance in organization of the data.

I personally transcribed interviews to ensure the data were accurate, meaning was not lost, and to gain a better working knowledge of each individual interview. Seidman (2006) posited, "Interviewers who transcribe their own tapes come to know their interviews better" (p. 115). Seidman also explained, "A detailed and careful transcript that re-creates the verbal and non-verbal material of the interview can be of great benefit to a researcher who may be studying the transcript a month after the interview occurred" (p. 116).

I began analysis of the raw data by classifying the data through use of a coding scheme. I identified recurring themes through this process. "Without classification there is chaos and confusion. Content analysis, then, involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 2002, p. 463). The implementation of a coding scheme provided organization to the data. "Classifying and coding qualitative data produce a framework for organizing and describing what has been collected during fieldwork" (Patton, 2002, p. 465).

After I classified the data into manageable groupings, I analyzed the data through the lens of Lin's Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action to identify supports from the participants' social networks. After a thorough examination of teachers' interview data, I analyzed the data to identify recurring themes and patterns. Analysis of these data helped me to identify novice teachers' supports through engagement of their ties within their social networks.

Ethical Considerations

As explained by Creswell (2009), the consideration of ethical issues that may arise during the research process is critical. Ethical concerns in this study included informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality concerns. These concerns were addressed in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. IRB approval is included as an appendix (Appendix D). I explained these concerns in writing to the participants through the adult consent form (Appendix C). This form

was signed by each of the participants prior to the collection of any data. All participant names and school district names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Trustworthiness

As put forward by several researchers, trustworthiness in qualitative research consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). "Trustworthiness enables naturalistic study to make a reasonable claim to methodological soundness" (Erlandson et al., 2004, p. 131). Through explanation of trustworthiness and authenticity, I attempted to give the reader greater understanding of the "balance, fairness, and completeness" (Patton, 2002, p. 51) of this study.

Credibility

To address the issue of credibility of this study, I incorporated triangulation of data. Triangulation strengthens a study by cross-checking findings through integration of a variety of data sources and observational approaches (Patton, 2002). In addition to interviews of novice teachers, I also collected data from teachers with two to four years of teaching experience and teachers who had four or more years of teaching experience.

Additionally, the multiple interview "structure incorporates features that enhance the accomplishment of validity. It places participants' comments in context" (Seidman, 2006, p. 24). Through this model, researchers can check for internal consistency within a participant's interviews as well as the ability to check and compare the experiences and comments of one participant against the experiences and comments of other participants.

Finally, the transcripts contribute to validity. Seidman (2006) explained the authenticity of the transcript may lead to reader confidence. On interview transcripts, Seidman claimed,

> The structure of the interviews, the passage of time over which the interviews occur, the internal consistency and possible external consistency of the passages, the syntax, diction,

and even nonverbal aspects of the passage, and the discovery and sense of learning that I get from reading the passage lead me to have confidence in its authenticity.

Because the primary concern is to gain insight concerning "the participant's understanding of her experience," (Seidmann, 2006, p. 26) the authenticity of what the participant said lends to enhance confidence in validity of the interviews. Additionally, member checks were used to enhance credibility.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "the naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (p. 316). In order to meet the requirement of transferability as described by Lincoln and Guba, I included a thick description of the interviews and participants. By providing a thick description, I attempted to "make transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). By coding and analyzing the data to identify recurring themes, I attempted to facilitate the process of transfer for my readers. "Readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred" (Merriam, 2001, p. 211).

Dependability and Confirmability

To meet the requirements for dependability and confirmability, I maintained all records. Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited confirmability audits as "the major technique for establishing confirmability" (p. 318). They further explained, "An inquiry audit cannot be conducted without a residue of records stemming from the inquiry, just as a fiscal audit cannot be conducted without a residue of records from the business transactions involved" (p. 319). As recommended by Lincoln and Guba, my records include all raw data, interview transcripts, interview protocol, the inquiry proposal, and my reflexive journal.

Table 1 summarizes the activities used in this study to ensure trustworthiness.

Table 1

Trustworthiness Table

Criteria/Technique	Examples of activities	Section
Credibility		
Triangulation	Interview teachers of multiple experience levels, member checks with participants, interview transcriptions	Methodology
Persistent observation	Two-interview technique will afford opportunity to check for consistency	Methodology
Peer debriefings	Informal discussions with two doctoral students will provide additional perspective, feedback, identifying alternative explanations, and references	Methodology
Member checks	Participants will receive transcripts to check for accuracy and an opportunity to provide clarification	Methodology
Reflexive Journal	Diary documenting decisions, questions, challenges, doubts, and other concerns or items of interest	Methodology
Transcripts of interviews	Transcripts provide authenticity	Methodology
Purposeful sampling	Information-rich cases with variation in grade levels and subject areas	Methodology
Transferability		
Thick description	Include portrait of individual participants, their perspectives, description of their networks, how those networks may be engaged	Data presentation
Dependability / Conformability		
Audit trail	All raw data will be available for audit. Available documents will include interview transcripts, interview protocol, inquiry proposal, and my reflexive journal.	Methodology

Limitations of Study

Limitations include the possibility that some participants may behave differently due to the knowledge that they are being observed (Patton, 2002). While I did not directly observe the participants, I analyzed the actions of the participants. The participants were fully aware that I was collecting data through interviews and that these interviews were on the topic of communications and interactions with other people. Participants in this study may have adjusted some of their own behaviors in reaction to some of the interactions that took place as part of this study. The interview questions may have led a participant to reflect on support from social networks, and may have led to a change in the engagement of those networks.

Another potential limitation is interview data. Limitations of interview data can stem from distorted responses due to personal bias, anxiety, politics, and lack of interest, emotions, or a variety of other factors (Patton, 2002). I minimized this potential weakness through use of multiple sources for interview data. By interviewing multiple participants, I gained greater understanding of the phenomenon by gaining the experiences of multiple people.

The a priori approach could be a limitation of this study. The selection and use of a theoretical framework limits the scope of visibility to what is being observed. This limited scope of visibility may be perceived by some people as providing a focus too narrow.

Sense perception and the reliability thereof could also limit the reliability of this study. The sense perception of the participants may affect what was reported during interviews. A significant challenge stems from the lack of recognition by teachers that learning is taking place due to the informal nature of the learning (Eraut, 2007; Tynjala, 2008). According to Eraut (2007), "people are often unaware that they are learning through the work they do"… and "the word 'learning' weakens awareness of informal learning modes through its close association with formal class-based teaching." I suspect participants of this study may have viewed support as only occurring in a formal and structured setting, and the participants may not recognize their informal supports.

Sense reliability of my own sense perception as a researcher may also be a limitation. Creswell (2009) recognized that researchers "own backgrounds shape their interpretations," and the researchers should "position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experience" (p. 8). I analyzed and reported the information that the participants reported to me as the interviewer based on my personal senses and how I personally understood the situations.

A final limitation of my study is my lack of experience as an interviewer and researcher. I was concerned with the possibility of developing questions that were too specific. I countered that concern by gaining input from Dr. Krumm, my committee members, and peers. I also read quality qualitative research to provide examples of data analysis and examples of appropriate interview questions.

Summary

Chapter III details my research design. I opened the chapter with a discussion on the epistemological perspective that shaped the methodology for this study. I also explained why case study is a suitable approach for this study. This chapter includes an explanation of the sampling technique of sites and participants. Data collection procedures and data analysis procedures are also included in this chapter. I established trustworthiness through the discussion of the trustworthiness criteria as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), and I also included a trustworthiness table at the end of this section.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Teachers play a critical role in school improvement and the success of students (Hanushek, 2011; Harris & Sass, 2011, Lom & Sullenger, 2010). Social networks have potential to improve teacher effectiveness due to their ability to access the social capital that may be embedded within their social networks (Moolenaar, Sleegers, Karsten, & Daly, 2012). A greater understanding of how these networks affect teacher development may serve educational leaders and practitioners in capitalizing on resources that may be available to teachers and eventually may have a greater positive influence on student outcomes (Daly et al., 2010).

Researchers explained social networks are useful in bridging knowledge gaps (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011). Actors may or may not take an active role in the development and engagement of social networks that will "enhance the practitioner-based social capital in a group" (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, p. 89); however, with a better understanding of teachers' social networks and social capital, administrators and educational leaders may be able to foster strategic networking (Baker-Doyle & Yoon). Through recognition of the availability of social capital embedded with social networks and accessing that social capital, novice teachers may find greater support in their development as teachers.

The purpose of this study was to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. Chapter IV provides a comprehensive overview of the data collected through face-to-face interviews with each of the nine middle school teachers who participated in this study. I conducted two interviews with each participant. According to Creswell (2002),

case study analysis includes "a descriptive picture…presented with any context necessary for understanding the case" (p. 450). Therefore, this chapter provides a narrative to provide a descriptive holistic picture of these teachers' experiences as they pertain to support received through their social networks.

Chapter IV includes a description of the school district, participant profiles including teaching experience, and interview data. The data from the participants are organized by their experience-level groupings. Group I data are data from teachers who completed zero to one year of teaching. Group II data were collected from the three participants who completed two to three years of teaching. Group III data were collected from the teachers who completed four or more years of teaching. This chapter also includes a discussion of themes within each participant group and themes across the participant groups.

Settings

A description of the community and the school district is necessary because it provides background information that better enables the researcher, and subsequently, the reader, to gain a sense of the overall school environment. The school district profile provides information about teachers' qualifications, teachers' education levels, and student test scores. Additionally, the profile provides information about the community. All of this information allows the reader to gain insight to the setting of the study. All personal names, school names, and place names are pseudonyms.

Community Characteristics

According to the 2013 district report, the Eugene School District had a population of 134,170 residents. Eugene has a low poverty rate of 9%, an unemployment rate of 4%, and the average annual household income is more than 30% higher than the state average. This community's average property valuation is $69,000 compared to the state average of $43,600.

Eugene is a college town. Of the community's population, 51% have college degrees compared to the state average of 23% having college degrees.

School District Characteristics

I purposefully selected the Eugene School District for this study because of its potential to provide "information–rich cases for study in depth" (Merriam, 2001, p. 61). Data retrieved from the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (2013) reported the Eugene School District served 22,470 students. The district's predominant ethnic group is Caucasian (74%); however, the district also includes Black (11%), Asian (5%), Hispanic (9%), and Native American (2%) populations. Eugene is comprised of fifteen elementary schools, five middle schools, and three high schools. The district employed 1,100 teachers. Of the teaching staff, 28% had advanced degrees compared to the state's average of 25% with advanced degrees. The dropout rate in this district was notably low. The district's dropout rate for 2013 was 2.5% compared to the state average of 9.6%. The district's "college-going rate" was also notably high. This district sent 63% of its students to college compared to the state's average of only 47%. The school district's test scores were higher than the state average in every subject area and every grade level.

Participants

The participants for this study were also purposefully selected. After gaining permission from the district superintendent and the site principals to conduct interviews, I forwarded a recruitment letter (Appendix B) to the middle school principals to be forwarded via email to all middle school teachers in the district. I selected the first three respondents within each experience-based group as participants for the study. The sample resulted in nine teachers with diverse backgrounds.

Although these nine participants were all selected from the same school district, they taught various subjects, were from four different middle schools, and were at varying stages in

their teaching careers. Three of the teachers had completed zero to one year of teaching, and three had completed two to three years of teaching; the remaining three teachers had more than four years of teaching experience. To create a description of the participants and their experiences, I constructed a table. Table 2 provides professional profiles of each of the participants: each teacher's school, the number of years of teaching completed by the teacher, the subject areas taught by each teacher throughout the teacher's career, and other pertinent information.

Table 2

Professional Profiles of Participants

Participant (pseudonym)	**Middle School**	**Experience**	**Subjects taught during career**	**Type of certification**
Dale Jordan	A	0 years completed; Master's degree; Military retiree; Military lead trainer	Pre-Algebra; Geography	Alternative
Shelby Gideon	B	1 year completed; Master's degree	8th English; Literacy	Traditional
Sue Rogers	C	1 year completed	Social Studies	Traditional
Britney Elgar	C	2 years completed	Science; Coaching duties	Alternative
Rhonda Vogt	B	2 years completed	Science; Reading Focus	Alternative
Carrie McAllen	A	3 years completed	Spanish	Traditional
Barbara Presley	C	5 years completed	Technology Literacy; Family Consumer Science	Alternative
Ashlynn Gatsby	B	12 years completed	Science; Alternative Education	Traditional
Trina Harrison	D	12 years completed	Instrumental Music	Traditional

I selected the participants in part based on their amount of experience in the classroom. The participants were divided into three groups based on their length of teaching experience. As

potential participants volunteered to participate, I assigned each person to the applicable experience-based group. I met with the participants individually to conduct interviews. These interviews took place throughout November and December of 2014. I conducted two interviews with each of the nine participants. Each of these interviews lasted no longer than 45 minutes; the shortest interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. In the following section, I present a brief background of each participant to assist readers in gaining a better understanding of the participants' perspectives.

Group I: Teachers Who Completed Zero to One Year of Teaching

This group was comprised of three teachers from three different middle schools. Ms. Rogers was a teacher at 'C' Middle School. Ms. Gideon was a teacher at 'B' Middle School. Finally, Mr. Jordan was a teacher at 'A' Middle School.

Ms. Rogers. Ms. Rogers was in her second year of teaching. Ms. Rogers was a very young teacher who grew up in a small rural community in the Oklahoma panhandle and completed her undergraduate studies within a few years of graduating high school. In addition to being influenced by a couple of her teachers, Ms. Rogers said she was also inspired to become a teacher by her mother, grandfather, and some other relatives who were teachers. Ms. Rogers chose to become a history teacher thanks to one of her very influential high school teachers who taught history. Ms. Rogers moved to central Oklahoma to attend a nearby university, and chose to stay in this community because she found a teaching job she liked. After completing her degree, Ms. Rogers served as a student teacher and as a long-term substitute teacher at 'C' Middle School. She attributed her student-teaching experience at this site and long-term substitute teaching at this school as the reason she was hired. Ms. Rogers said, "That's the only reason I got the job," teaching social studies at 'C' Middle School.

Ms. Rogers and I arranged to meet during her plan period. I arrived at her classroom as a group of students was leaving to go to their next class. A student was asking questions at Ms.

Rogers' desk. During their conversation, I looked at the students' work that decorated the walls. As her conversation with her student concluded, Ms. Rogers stood up and welcomed me to her classroom. I greeted her, gave her some cookies I had brought, and complimented her students' work. Ms. Rogers seemed nervous initially, but after some small talk, she appeared to relax. We arranged two student desks so they faced each other. We reviewed and signed the adult consent form, I started the recorder, and we began the interview.

Ms. Rogers began by recounting her childhood, describing influential family members and influential elementary and secondary teachers. She continued by describing her college experience in a teacher preparation program at a nearby university. Ms. Rogers explained she felt the 180 hours of field experiences required by her program were extremely beneficial to her. She explained many of her professors had experience teaching in elementary and secondary schools, so they had "real life experience." Ms. Rogers said she felt like the personal teaching experiences of her professors were valuable in her preparation of becoming a teacher.

When talking about her challenges as a teacher, Ms. Rogers explained she expected classroom management and gaining the respect of the students to be her most challenging issues. Ms. Rogers shared, "That's what I worried about coming in. Looking at me, I was young, and I'm a female, and that's hard to respect a lot of times for those boys." To address those concerns, Ms. Rogers said she read books, attended conferences, and she gained advice from family and friends who were teachers.

After she began teaching, Ms. Rogers' mentor helped a great deal even though the mentor was not compensated. Ms. Rogers's mentor was a social studies teacher who voluntarily reached out to Ms. Rogers to offer support. Because they taught the same subject, the mentor provided assistance in curriculum planning and implementation. Ms. Rogers said this support from her mentor "was just such a blessing." Ms. Rogers described her relationship with her mentor as "an awesome experience because I didn't stress out all the time like most first-year teachers would have normally."

When asked about continued support from her contacts from college, Ms. Rogers explained support from that source was minimal. Nobody from her university observed or visited her class after she began teaching, although Ms. Rogers said the university offered assistance to her on an as-needed basis. Ms. Rogers had not requested support from the university.

Ms. Rogers shared that she still talks with one of her peers from college. This peer is now a teacher at the high school that 'C' Middle School feeds into. Although the two teachers teach different subjects and different grade levels, they continued to talk and share ideas with each other.

Ms. Rogers also shared that she gains new ideas from online resources like Pinterest, conferences, books, and other teachers inside and outside her school. Her family includes several teachers she engaged for support. Of her mother, Ms Rogers said, "Even though she's older, she's always ready for new things, so we talk a lot to bounce ideas off." Within the school, Ms. Rogers discusses concerns with her mentor or with other teachers on her PLC. The teacher in the neighboring classroom is on Ms. Rogers' PLC. Ms. Rogers shared, "If I ever have any questions or we were having problems, I would talk to her [the teacher next door]." Because the neighboring teacher has 12 years of experience, Ms. Rogers said, "She can give me a lot of insight."

Ms. Rogers said she asked for input from others "pretty frequently." However, she also reported, "I don't like somebody to know that I'm struggling." Ms. Rogers said for that reason, she sometimes tries to find solutions on her own. She indicated she is able to save face by finding her own solutions. As we concluded the interview portion of our initial meeting, we made arrangements for the next meeting. We agreed to meet at her classroom at the same time ten days after the first interview.

In the second interview, Ms. Rogers was much more relaxed from the start. I brought muffins to share with her. We chatted for a couple of minutes, then we adjusted a couple of desks to face each other. At the onset of the interview, a student knocked on the window from the

outside to wave hello. After this exchange with the student, Ms. Rogers and I began the interview.

To start this interview, we began by discussing some of her informal supports. She provided a couple of recent examples. In one example, Ms. Rogers described a situation where she and some of her colleagues met for dinner and coffee. During this dinner, the teachers discussed principals' evaluations on teachers and various aspects of the teacher evaluation process. Ms. Rogers explained, "I gained a lot of insight because someone [a teacher] just had a very intense observation, and so it was really nice getting her input over just coffee instead of just having a direct meeting with the principal."

The second example Ms. Rogers provided had to do with student behavior. Ms. Rogers had a male student who was being "totally defiant and stuff." Ms. Rogers expressed she had a personal concern as a female teacher. This concern was about gaining respect from male students as a female teacher. Because of this concern, Ms. Rogers sought assistance from a male teacher because "they have a different aspect of teaching male students than I do, and a different relationship with them." Ms. Rogers explained gaining respect of some of her male students was an area she "needed a lot of help in," and having male teachers in the building that provided support was very helpful to her.

When discussing formal supports, Ms. Rogers listed Smart Start and her PLC. Smart Start is a district-mandated program designed for teachers who are new to the district. In this program, the teachers met once per month during their first year to learn about a variety of topics. Ms. Rogers said, "We learned just like basic ideas each month… like classroom management or differentiating curriculum."

Concerning her PLC, Ms. Rogers explained they met formally once per week. In those meetings, the teachers made plans months in advance. Ms. Rogers explained they collaborated on activities and curriculum planning, and they had "all-the-time open conversation" about sharing ideas and addressing concerns rather than saying, "You're on your own."

Ms. Rogers shared the downside of these formal supports is the limitations that were inherent due to the framework of the support. Rather than focusing on her troubles or concerns, Ms. Rogers said she felt like the focus of her formal supports was "Let's look at this paperwork. Let's check off what we talked about. Make sure we hit the lines. And we only have 30 minutes." Ms. Rogers also shared that she "felt like she was getting graded on it [her behaviors in these meetings]." Because of this pressure, Ms. Rogers expressed a preference for informal discussions with teachers because she could address her concerns directly and "It's more relatable, and I can just have more peace and calm with the other teachers who get it instead of maybe like [sic] in the formal settings they don't really quite understand."

After venting about these limitations, Ms. Rogers identified an area that she felt should be a useful formal support, but was not very effective at this point. Ms. Rogers shared that she would like the opportunity to discuss her personal professional development with her principal, but "Everybody's just running around all the time," and they were unable to have that discussion. Ms. Rogers said, "I just got evaluated a week before Thanksgiving [two weeks prior to this interview], and I still haven't had a conference yet because there's just no time to do that, and so I'm like… I would just love that feedback."

Ms. Rogers described informal supports within her school. Ms. Rogers said during her first year, teachers "would just pop in and act like they were asking for something, but it was just to see that I was okay." She said it was "really wonderful" having teachers who would come check on her.

Ms. Rogers spoke of informal exchanges with other teachers. She said these exchanges were helpful, although Ms. Rogers said she sought out help from others only when she felt like she was "out of options." Ms. Rogers said she liked to find solutions on her own, but she also explained if, "I'm just frustrated, or I just want to cry,… or I can't relate to a student, or it's beyond my experience,… I really did not hesitate to ask [for support]." She further explained, "I try more to figure it out on my own before I go and talk to the principal or something."

Another beneficial support described by Ms. Rogers was observing other teachers teach their classes. Ms. Rogers said she felt that she had a good idea of what teachers she wanted to model based on her experiences with those teachers and observations of those teachers' interactions with students and other adults. Based on those factors, Ms. Rogers selected teachers to observe. From these observations, Ms. Rogers gained many ideas to implement in her classroom. She asserted, "I love taking teachers' ideas because everybody is so creative, and I don't have all those ideas. They do." Ms. Rogers explained through observations of other teachers, she learned some effective ways to "engage the kids," she learned other teachers' expectations of students, and she learned classroom management techniques.

In closing, Ms. Rogers added that she gained a lot of knowledge from reading and through personal experience. She explained she tried some of the approaches other teachers used in their classrooms to see if those approaches would work in her classroom. She also stated that she read education-related journals so she could use current science-based information to inform her choices in how to teach her students.

Ms. Gideon. Ms. Gideon was also in her second year of teaching. Ms. Gideon grew up in Oklahoma with family that included several teachers. She started as a music theater major, and then changed her degree to English education, although she said she did not plan on teaching. Ms. Gideon continued her schooling and completed her Master's in literature in 2012. Her first profession after graduation was as a project manager for a publishing and editing company. She also spent some time as a missionary or "church planter." She said she spent some time "thinking about it and praying about it." While she was in college, Ms. Gideon said she perceived teaching as a, "perfect combination of things I might want to do in the future, and so it was always a thing I had in the back of my mind. I just wasn't sure that's what I needed to do." After a year of serving as a missionary and another year as a project manager in the publishing and editing field,

Ms. Gideon chose to gain alternative teacher certification. She became an English teacher, and accepted her first teaching job at 'B' Middle School.

For our initial meeting, Ms. Gideon and I agreed to meet after school at her classroom. I reported to the main office where I encountered the school principal. After I visited with school principal about some mutual friends, he escorted me to the general vicinity of Ms. Gideon's classroom, and I located her room. I brought cookies from a nearby restaurant to share with her with the hope of building rapport a little more quickly. With a smile, Ms. Gideon told me they were her favorite cookie from that particular store. We arranged two student desks to face each other for the interview. We sat down and discussed the adult consent form. During this discussion, students were being loud in the hall, so Ms. Gideon got up and closed the door. She returned to her desk, we signed the form and began the interview.

Ms. Gideon began by giving me a detailed description of her childhood. Her close-knit family is comprised of several educators who were very influential in her life to include her dad and three uncles. Ms. Gideon also told me about her college path and eventual decision to get an education degree. Ms Gideon began college studying musical theater, but then she chose to change majors to English education because teaching was something she "might want to do in the future."

When I asked Ms. Gideon about her college teacher preparation program, she described her program as moderately helpful. Ms. Gideon said, "I would say that the most helpful thing in college was the observations and the student-teaching." But then Ms. Gideon went on to say, "I don't remember a whole lot about my classes… I don't remember a whole lot being super, super helpful." Ms. Gideon said due to her insight gained from the teachers within her family, Ms. Gideon's approach to her education classes was to take what she could from the class, but she told herself, "I know it's mostly going to be sink-or-swim at some point."

Although her teacher preparation program was only moderately helpful, Ms. Gideon indicated she felt prepared to begin teaching. Part of her preparation is in thanks to the educators

in her family. Because of input from those educators within her family, Ms. Gideon said, "I knew last year was going to be the most difficult year of my life," and that "Whatever prepared me before didn't really prepare me." She knew she had a lot to learn, and Ms. Gideon explained that going into teaching, she expected classroom management to be her most challenging problem. Ms. Gideon said she worried about how she would be able to "deal with 150 different personalities a day."

Ms. Gideon addressed that concern and others by talking with "a lot of people right off the bat." These conversations were with educators in her school and with the educators in her family and other peers at other schools. She said she continued to reach out to those educators to discuss issues or concerns.

She explained she tried to be "very teachable" by communicating openly and honestly. Through asking questions of other teachers, Ms. Gideon unintentionally arranged her mentor assignment months before the school year even started. When another teacher learned Ms. Gideon was recently hired, that teacher suggested the two meet over coffee to discuss any concerns. Months before school started, Ms. Gideon met with this teacher who later became her mentor. The purpose of this meeting was to ask questions and address concerns in preparation for her first day of teaching. Even though Ms. Gideon was beyond her first year of teaching, she explained her mentor still provided support by sharing articles and offering support in other areas as needed.

In addition to the supportive mentor, Ms. Gideon also had a supportive principal. Ms. Gideon requested her principal to come observe her class and provide feedback early on. She indicated this helped her with some classroom management concerns and in providing encouragement stating, "You did everything you needed to. Go home and don't think about it." The principal also assisted with guiding Ms. Gideon to people who could assist on specific situations. One example was when the principal offered to arrange for Ms. Gideon to meet with another specific teacher to get classroom decorations.

When asked about formal supports, Ms. Gideon listed Smart Start, her PLC, and workshops. Additionally, she said her curriculum specialist sometimes shares new books with teachers. Ms. Gideon said her PLC was very supportive. Her PLC provided the curriculum to her "very quickly" so she could get as prepared as possible for the upcoming school year. Her PLC was also useful in addressing student issues. Her PLC met on a weekly basis, and they had a portion of the meeting set aside to address student concerns. Concerning workshops, Ms. Gideon explained she attended a first-year teacher workshop last year where she gained some useful ideas.

Ms. Gideon also indicated her formal supports, specifically the professional development meetings, were sometimes useful, but usually the meetings were "kind of a waste of time. Some of the things, I'm just sitting there thinking 'That's great. That would never work in my classroom.'" Ms. Gideon said she felt like she was being told, "'You have to do this. You have to do this.' But in reality, some of it's not very realistic… It makes me feel like I'm not doing enough."

However, some positive outcomes also stemmed from one workshop in particular. Ms. Gideon said she felt like they had "plenty of horizontal" curriculum planning, but vertical curriculum planning was lacking. At a district-wide workshop, Ms. Gideon reached out to the high school English teachers to discuss some curriculum concerns. The teachers were able to have an informal impromptu conference. The teachers discussed the students' weakest areas when the students reached high school. Through this informal conversation, the teachers identified some curriculum shortfalls, and the teachers presented potential solutions to the curriculum specialist. Ms. Gideon said the teachers and curriculum specialist were able to make improvements based on the informal conference.

As we began the second interview two days later, Ms. Gideon began by talking about support that she gained from others. When talking about supports inside the school, Ms. Gideon described "several people" checking on her daily to help where they could. One specific example

of others helping was when the assistant principal and counselor resolved a parent issue as much as they could prior to involving Ms. Gideon. Prior to including Ms. Gideon in the meeting with the angry parent, the assistant principal and the counselor explained to Ms. Gideon that they defended Ms. Gideon; they told her, "This is not a big deal. This is going to be okay. We're going to take care of this." Ms. Gideon felt this interaction provided a strong sense of support to her. Because of this level of support, Ms. Gideon frequently emailed the counselor and assistant principal to inquire about specific kids' situations.

Out of concern over the potential of her classes worsening like one of her classes did in the previous year, Ms. Gideon said she emailed her principal more frequently than she did the year before. Ms. Gideon explained she had what she called "first-year PTSD," and she was "a little jumpy." She recognized she was concerned for her class and wanted to make the situation improve immediately, but she was "still kind of coming off the fumes of last year."

In addition to talking with her assistant principal and counselor, Ms. Gideon said she also talked with other teachers about concerns "all the time." She said she tried to "deal with it first" to see if she could find a solution on her own. Then she would seek input from others. Ms. Gideon said she also talked with other teachers to see where her class was in comparison to other classes. She asked other teachers about curriculum and activity planning. Additionally, Ms. Gideon gained affirmation through these discussions. Ms. Gideon appreciated hearing someone else tell her what she was doing was acceptable and met expectations. Ms. Gideon explained she "just wanted to make sure that this is all good."

Ms. Gideon found another source of affirmation, too. Ms. Gideon said observations were useful. Ms. Gideon appreciated being able to watch other teachers and tell herself, "Okay, I did the exact same thing. I'm not doing it wrong." She was also able to take some new ideas and implement those in her class.

Mr. Jordan. A native of Tennessee, Mr. Jordan was in his first year of teaching. After earning a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, Mr. Jordan joined the Air Force. During his time as an officer in the Air Force, he and his family moved several times, and he went on several overseas deployments. However, during this time Mr. Jordan also found time to complete classes through a nearby university, and he eventually earned a master's degree in space aviation. His last duty assignment in the Air Force was as a lead flight instructor, and upon reaching retirement after a 20-year military career, Mr. Jordan chose to gain alternative teacher certification. He and his wife speculated becoming a school teacher would be a good career choice for Mr. Jordan as teaching would allow him to continue instructing people. Mr. Jordan received this certification through the military's Troops to Teachers program. He gained certification to teach middle school math, history, economics, and government. Through spending some time as a substitute teacher at various grade levels and at different school districts, Mr. Jordan determined he wanted to teach at the middle school level. Mr. Jordan is now in his first year of teaching at 'A' Middle School.

Mr. Jordan and I arranged to meet in his classroom after school. I arrived at the main office and informed the administrative assistant of the reason for my visit. She told me Mr. Jordan's room number and allowed me to find the room on my own. I went upstairs and located Mr. Jordan's classroom. When I arrived at his classroom, students were rushing through the hallways to leave. Mr. Jordan's classroom was open, but nobody was inside the classroom. I took this opportunity to look at his students' work and other items that decorated the walls. Mr. Jordan arrived a couple of minutes later and welcomed me. We shook hands and chatted briefly. I shared some cookies with Mr. Jordan. We adjusted a couple of student desks to face each other. We sat down and reviewed the adult consent form. After signing, Mr. Jordan and I began the interview.

Mr. Jordan began the interview by telling me about his background. He shared that he is originally from Tennessee and various aspects about his 20-year military career, and he described

his decision-making process in his choice to gain alternative teacher certification and become a teacher. Mr. Jordan explained that because he was a lead instructor in the military, he felt teaching in schools would be a natural progression for him. Mr. Jordan said many of his experiences in the military like lesson planning and training helped in his preparation to become a teacher. He stated, "I was preparing, but I didn't know it."

When talking about the supports found within the school, Mr. Jordan listed his PLC, his administrative staff, the professional development provided by the district to include Smart Start and other opportunities, a mentor teacher, the parent-teacher association, and other teachers. Mr. Jordan felt the Smart Start program was "really great for first-year teachers." In this program, new teachers learn about "instructional strategies, feedback, note taking, how to contact parents." Concerning the administrative staff, Mr. Jordan said they provided him more professional development opportunities than he could attend.

When talking about support from other teachers, Mr. Jordan said he got help from other teachers: "That happens every day." Mr. Jordan said the other teachers assisted him in developing lesson plans, structuring time wisely, assisting with familiarization of standards, and creating "viable teaching instruction." One of the teachers who helped Mr. Jordan was a math teacher on the other PLC in his grade. That teacher helped with curriculum and instruction. Mr. Jordan also said he bounced ideas off the math teacher and tried to match the math teacher's pacing of instruction. Mr. Jordan also said he was still in contact with some of his friends from high school who were teachers. He said they maintained their relationships primarily through online social media, specifically Facebook. On his Facebook contacts, Mr. Jordan stated they were "a good support piece."

In addition to supportive teachers, Mr. Jordan said he also discussed concerns with his principals. Mr. Jordan said, "They're always willing to listen to anything." Mr. Jordan asked for the administrators' opinions and suggestions, and he said the administrators helped by providing advice and guidance and other useful feedback.

Mr. Jordan and I arranged to meet again nine days later at the same time in his classroom. We arranged two student desks so they faced each other as we did in the initial meeting. At the onset of this meeting, we were interrupted by the custodian and again almost immediately by an assistant principal who wanted to visit with Mr. Jordan about professional sports. As soon as the assistant principal recognized he had interrupted, he apologized to both of us and said he would come back to talk with Mr. Jordan later. Other than that, we were able to talk without distractions.

Mr. Jordan began the interview by explaining there were many very knowledgeable teachers in his building and he tried to glean as much information as possible from those teachers. Mr. Jordan said he picked up "tips and tricks" just by talking in the teachers' lounge with teachers. Mr. Jordan said these tips might be suggestions for classroom management, "how to pick up homework, every little thing."

Mr. Jordan talked more about his interactions with other teachers. He explained he was on a PLC. Mr. Jordan said his PLC was a good place for him to ask questions. Mr. Jordan said he also spoke with teachers informally to gain their input. During these discussions, Mr. Jordan gained ideas on seating arrangements, how to begin and end a class period, tone of voice, "or anything in between." He said the other more experienced teachers also helped him in understanding the culture of the school. When Mr. Jordan had a question about school dress code and students wearing Santa hats, Mr. Jordan gained input from a veteran teacher who had been in the school for a while.

Mr. Jordan shared that the teachers in his area collaborated quite a bit. Mr. Jordan said the teachers did simple things like make copies for each other. Mr. Jordan explained this was a simple time-saving measure. Mr. Jordan said they also shared ideas, discussed problems, and analyzed those situations to come up with solutions. Mr. Jordan said these conversations also gave him affirmation. Mr. Jordan said he is his "own worst critic." By having these ongoing

conversations with other teachers, Mr. Jordan was able to hear other teachers say, "You're going down the right path. You're doing a good job."

Mr. Jordan said he learned a good classroom management technique through informal conversation with a colleague. Mr. Jordan was complaining to another teacher about losing his voice. The colleague suggested the "Silence is golden" approach. When Mr. Jordan's students got loud, Mr. Jordan crossed his arms and waited silently. After a short time, the students "started policing themselves." He said that strategy was very effective for him.

Concerning his mentor, Mr. Jordan said she was very helpful. His mentor provided advice on time management. Mr. Jordan was concerned about staying late "all the time." The mentor asked Mr. Jordan to make a list of each thing Mr. Jordan did "from the time the bell rang, to the time he went home." When Mr. Jordan presented his list to the mentor, his mentor told him "You're working way too hard." She recommended that Mr. Jordan not grade papers every night explaining, "It will drive you crazy." So she recommended Mr. Jordan set aside two nights per week to grade papers. This shift of tasks allowed Mr. Jordan more time to prepare lessons.

When talking about supports in the school, Mr. Jordan went into more detail this time about the parent-teacher association. Mr. Jordan explained it took 19 minutes to print out papers on his printer for one class. That extensive time prompted Mr. Jordan to ask the parent-teacher association for a better printer. Mr. Jordan said within 48 hours, his classroom had a new printer that printed much faster.

Mr. Jordan also went into more detail about Smart Start. He explained the new teachers travelled to the district administrative office one Wednesday per month to learn about different topics. Some of those topics included classroom management, how to talk to parents, and instructional strategies.

Mr. Jordan closed by talking about his observations of other teachers teaching their classes. Because Mr. Jordan was alternatively certified, he did not have very much observation time. However, Mr. Jordan had an opportunity to observe others while working as a substitute

teacher during the previous school year. Mr. Jordan said he gained good insight on "how someone conducts a class, how the kids should behave… and the classroom setting." Mr. Jordan indicated he would like more opportunities to observe other teachers teach.

Group I: Initial Analysis. Each of the three middle school teachers in this group had completed zero to one year of teaching. Their experience was limited to teaching within the Eugene School District. In fact, each Group I teacher had experience only within the currently assigned school and teaching assignment. Ms. Rogers and Ms. Gideon went through the traditional education degree and traditional teacher certification. Mr. Jordan obtained alternative certification.

Formal supports. Although these participants were assigned to three different schools, these teachers shared numerous similarities as far as formal and informal supports. Concerning supports provided by the school or district, each participant in this group identified supports gained through having a mentor, having supportive professional learning communities, the availability of outside professional development opportunities, and a district-wide program called Smart Start. The district required all new teachers to attend monthly meetings as part of this program. Participants reported the Smart Start program was designed to assist new teachers in areas such as instructional strategies, providing student feedback, contacting parents, classroom management, and other topics. Ms. Rogers said the new teachers learned different, "basic ideas each month." Mr. Jordan described the Smart Start program as "a speed dating kind of thing" where the new teachers were able to meet with a content specialist for approximately five minutes each, and then the teachers rotated to another content area specialist.

Each participant seemed to collaborate well with other teachers, especially those teachers within their PLC. Ms. Gideon shared that her PLC provided curriculum and contact information shortly after being hired so that she would be able to contact her PLC colleagues with any of her questions. Ms. Gideon stated their PLC met on a weekly basis during their plan period. During

these meetings, teachers had an opportunity to ask questions such as, “This wasn’t that big of a deal, but what’s up with this?” Ms. Gideon’s PLC also provided “a lot of solid encouragement.” These meetings provided a formal setting for teachers to work together and support each other through discussion.

Sometimes the discussion among the PLC team members extended outside of their meetings. When asked about whom she turns to for advice and to discuss work, Ms. Rogers explained that she sought assistance from the teacher next door who was also in her PLC. Ms. Rogers shared, “We are on the same team, and so if I ever have any questions or we were having problems, I would talk to her [another teacher] about that.”

These three participants were active seekers of formal and informal supports. All three of these participants said they asked for support from peers and administrators when issues arose. However, Ms. Rogers also admitted she sometimes refrained from asking for support. She explained, “I don’t like somebody to know that I’m struggling, so I figured it out.” However, Ms. Rogers also indicated help came in some instances without her requesting or asking for help. Her mentor, who was not compensated, volunteered or simply, “stepped up to help” as described by Ms. Rogers.

Ms. Gideon had a similar experience in gaining a mentor. Almost as soon as Ms. Gideon was hired, another teacher emailed to invite her to meet for coffee and stated, “I know this is your first year. Let’s work this out.” This mentor explained that she “was left on her own during her first year,” and, the mentor shared, she “had nobody to answer questions. She was doing it on her own, and she was just like, I don’t want anybody to have to do this,” so the mentor promised herself that she would not let anybody else go through that alone, and she initiated contact with Ms. Gideon via email as soon as she learned of the hire.

Ms. Gideon said her mentor provided emotional support when needed. Her mentor also provided other resources. Her mentor forwarded articles to Ms. Gideon pertaining to Ms.

Gideon's issues or concerns. She also arranged for the school to purchase new books and other items that might assist Ms. Gideon.

The Group I participants all described their mentors as being very helpful. The mentors assisted with everything including classroom management concerns, curriculum planning, time management, seating arrangements, how to begin and end classes, tone of voice, whether teachers should share personal stories with students, and Mr. Jordan said his mentor helped with "anything in-between." One scenario that Mr. Jordan shared was his mentor's suggestion to only grade papers two nights per week. On that suggestion, he stated,

> Once I adopted that, because I could just let papers sit, they're gonna [sic] sit, and you can eventually give them to the kids. That has… significantly cut down my workload. That way I can take my mind off of grading papers, and put my mind back on to what are the lessons coming up for the next day, and I can actually look and see and identify the strengths and weaknesses of all these different kids, and try to build those up for the ones that are almost on the cusp of getting it.

Ms. Rogers stated her mentor was helpful with curriculum planning. Her mentor was a teacher of the same subject and grade level, but on a different PLC team. Ms. Rogers explained that they would map out a month of instruction at a time. Because the curriculum was already in place and her mentor shared lesson plans with her, Ms. Rogers "was able to focus on classroom management." She explained, "I could instead of going home and having to cram, I could focus on the kids and call parents and build that relationship with them… that was an awesome experience because I didn't stress out all the time like most first-year teachers would have normally."

Additionally, these participants had opportunities to attend workshops and conferences outside the school. Ms. Gideon attended a workshop for new teachers last year during her first year of teaching. She stated they broke up into small groups and the teachers were able to ask questions like, "Hey, I'm having trouble with this. What do we do?" Ms. Rogers attended two

conferences during the first semester this year. One conference Ms. Rogers attended was subject-specific, and the other conference was on PLCs. From the two conferences, Ms. Rogers, "gained so many new ideas… that we implemented in the classroom." Through this assortment of available supports, participants described numerous opportunities and examples of how they gained support.

As a retiree from a previous profession, Mr. Jordan was older than the other two participants and had extensive previous professional experience. As he put it, "I'm also an older guy, got a lot of salt in my hair." Because Mr. Jordan had much more life experience, he seemed more comfortable than the other two participants in asking for support, and more confident in what he was doing. He seemed not to need the same amount of frequent reassurance that was desired by the other two participants in this group. Ms. Gideon appreciated being told, "You're doing enough." But Mr. Jordan seemed comfortable in only asking for support when he identified a need. Within his first semester of teaching, he lobbied the parent-teacher association to purchase a new printer for his classroom, and he initiated coordination with teachers in his area of the building to accomplish shared tasks more efficiently. Additionally, because of his life experience, Mr. Jordan appeared to be more ready to consume information gained through formal supports. One example supporting this belief was that Mr. Jordan said he gained a great deal of useful support through the Smart Start program. He described the Smart Start program as "really great for first-year teachers" and "very beneficial" because it provided useful information on a variety of topics.

In contrast, Ms. Rogers and Ms. Gideon shared a degree of discontent with formal supports because some of the formal supports were "unrealistic" and "almost impossible to do." It appeared Ms. Rogers and Ms. Gideon were struggling to keep up. Ms. Rogers openly admitted she tried to conceal when she was struggling. Ms. Gideon half-jokingly referred to herself as having first-year PTSD, and she felt like administrator expectations were too high for her in some areas such as curriculum. Ms. Gideon expressed she felt the teachers were "over-curriculumed."

However, Mr. Jordan seemed content with the formal supports provided to him. It appeared he was able to compartmentalize that information and either implement it or store the information and save it for implementation later if needed or desired. Mr. Jordan stated multiple times that he gleaned as much information as possible from other teachers, and when I asked him about any potential gaps in his formal and informal supports, Mr. Jordan explained between the two types of supports, all of his needs are covered sufficiently.

Informal supports inside the school. While this group of participants made use of a variety of formal sources for support, they also relied heavily on their social networks inside their schools. Mr. Jordan said that he asks for others' input "anytime that I have a question mark in my head, and that happens a lot." Mr. Jordan tries to talk with teachers often so he can learn "the tips and tricks." He explained, "I'm always talking to everybody" in an effort to "try to glean a lot of knowledge from a lot of the veterans around here, as much as I can." Mr. Jordan found these interactions to help him in learning the school culture, instructional strategies, and other aspects of teaching.

Ms. Gideon explained that teachers, counselors, and administrators checked on her frequently. Ms. Gideon said, "several people checked up on me on like on a daily basis." One scenario she shared pertained to an angry parent situation. The counselor and administrator dealt with the situation as best they could without Ms. Gideon's awareness of the situation. When it was time to inform Ms. Gideon of the situation, the principal and counselor told her, "This is what's happening. This is not a big deal. This is going to be okay. We're gonna [sic] take care of this." Ms. Gideon said she gained a great deal of emotional support through interactions with her school principal and counselor because she knew that through this experience, the school leadership was really backing her.

Similar to Ms. Gideon, Ms. Rogers also had teachers check on her often. Ms. Rogers described teachers who would "just pop in and act like they were asking for something" or they

would drop something off. However, Ms. Rogers said, "it was just to see that I was okay." She said the teachers would "make sure" she's not having problems "because of students." Ms. Rogers welcomed this voluntary support. She said, "I had my door open to a lot of teachers coming in, which I love."

Ms. Gideon shared that administrators and counselors also provided support to her through constant email communication and ongoing collaboration. Ms. Gideon said she frequently emailed her counselors and grade-level principal asking for input. As an example, Ms Gideon offered, "Hey, I'm having a problem with this kid. Have you heard anything on him?" Through this kind of collaboration, Ms. Gideon said she gained greater insight to the problem, and addressed the problem in a more appropriate, more effective, and more timely manner.

Ms. Gideon said she went to her counselors and principal for assistance more frequently in her second year of teaching than she did in her first year of teaching. She said the reason for seeking input more frequently was due to her "first-year PTSD." She said she was "a little jumpy" because she was, "coming off the fumes of last year and all the crazy things that happened." In other words, Ms. Gideon was trying to be more pro-active because she was concerned that small issues might quickly evolve into large issues as they did in her first year of teaching. Ms. Gideon was attempting to manage issues early before they were given the opportunity to get out of hand.

The Group I participants cited informal discussions and interactions with other teachers as a useful support. Mr. Jordan shared a scenario about when he received assistance on developing his lesson plans. He stated that he was comfortable in creating lesson plans using terminology from his prior training experience in the military, but he had to learn how to put the information into a middle school educational setting. Mr. Jordan said the military uses "totally different terms" than school educators use, and the school lesson plans needed to meet the "Oklahoma Standards" or the Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills. To gain assistance on this, he worked with a teacher who taught the same subject and grade, but was on a different PLC

team. Mr. Jordan was able to "translate" his plans into "viable teaching instruction," and now he is able to develop his lessons on his own.

The other Group I participants also gained ideas and support from other teachers. Ms. Rogers quipped, "I love getting new ideas from teachers… I love trying it." Informal discussions with other teachers was a practice that these participants sometimes used multiple times per day, or, "I feel like all the time," as Ms. Gideon put it. Through these discussions, the participants received emotional support, new ideas, affirmation, and a variety of tips. The teachers shared they met to "bounce ideas off each other," and to ask "Well, did this work for you?" or "Hey, what are you guys doing with this?" Ms. Rogers said she sought others' input when she recognized a situation was "beyond my experience." The teachers were able to work together to figure out how to improve instruction to the greatest extent possible or to improve a situation.

Ms. Gideon pointed out that some supports unintentionally stemmed from her interactions with other teachers. Ms. Gideon described a scenario where she heard other teachers talking about a concern pertaining to one of her students they all had in their classes. When a different issue about the same student arose at a later time, Ms. Gideon knew to go to those teachers to gain input because they might be able to provide more useful information pertaining to this student. Ms. Gideon asked them, "Hey, I'm having problems with this kid too. I've heard you say something about him or her… What do you know?" This kind of collaboration and knowing who to go to provided more useful information in this case.

Mr. Jordan relayed that he met frequently with the other teacher of the same subject and grade level. In these informal meetings, they checked to make sure they were "sort of in the same timeline for the kids on what we're teaching." Ms. Rogers shared a similar ongoing exchange with a teacher on a different PLC team who teaches the same subject and grade level. Ms. Rogers stated she met frequently with "the other teacher on the other team… we always talk about what we're going to do… A lot of times, we plan every break." Ms. Rogers said they met approximately once per week during their plan period or before or after school. During these

meetings, they would "plan out our months." The two teachers had "all-the-time open conversation." They would discuss, "This is what I'm doing. What are you doing?" They would share ideas, and Ms. Rogers said she felt she was not just "on your own."

Ms. Gideon had a similar experience in discussions with teachers on different teams who taught the same subject. Ms. Gideon shared that she asked the other teachers, "Did you do this assignment? If so, how did you do it?" Ms. Gideon also appreciated the affirmation she received through these conversations. She stated that sometimes teachers told her, "Just do what you want. It's your class…If that's what you need to do, then that's what you need to do." Ms. Gideon indicated she appreciated this type of support. She found this support to be reaffirming because she "just wanted to make sure that this is all good."

Ms. Rogers and Ms. Gideon shared that they both learned from being around other teachers. Ms. Rogers talked frequently with a friend at the high school that her school feeds. The two teachers "bounced ideas off each other." Ms. Gideon learned a great deal simply from "hearing them (teachers) even talk to each other about things that they do without me having to go to them and ask." She picked up ideas through normal interactions with other teachers without seeking additional ideas. One example is the use of a timer. Ms. Gideon listened to one teacher explain to another teacher why and how she used the timer in her class. Ms. Gideon thought, "That's brilliant," and she incorporated the idea into her classroom management strategies. Ms. Gideon explained that she did not actively seek that idea. This support stemmed from "just naturally seeing them do something or hearing that they did something and incorporating it myself."

In another scenario, Ms. Rogers gained useful input from a colleague over dinner and coffee one evening at a restaurant. Ms. Rogers shared that she gained valuable information from a fellow teacher regarding evaluations. Ms. Rogers preferred the less formal and more relaxed input from a colleague over the more structured and more intimidating meeting with a principal.

Ms. Rogers stated, “It was really nice getting her input over just coffee instead of just having a direct meeting with the principal.”

Mr. Jordan also shared how he learned a classroom management strategy that was new to him. Through an informal discussion with a fellow teacher, Mr. Jordan shared that he was having trouble with students talking during class. The problem was so bad that Mr. Jordan lost his voice from speaking so loudly so frequently. The other teacher recommended to Mr. Jordan that instead of raising his voice to be heard over the students’ talking, Mr. Jordan should begin talking more quietly. Mr. Jordan crossed his arms and tried the “Silence is golden” approach, and “they started policing themselves.”

All three participants in Group I actively sought out support from other teachers. Although these teachers were new and inexperienced, they recognized who was most likely to be most helpful, and they networked strategically based on their observations. Ms. Gideon said who she sought support from “depends on the situation.” Ms. Rogers explained,

> I know from observing… that I knew which teachers were experienced and what type of teaching style I want… A lot of times, you can tell in the hall, like who’s griping, who’s classes are always out of control. I don’t ask them for help because I know the students don’t respect them, and they’re not doing as well. And there are some teachers that you can just see the students relate to them, and you can see that the principals like them, and they, they’re doing well. And so those are usually the teachers that I go to first… The students love them, so they must be doing something right.

Group I participants also described collaboration with other teachers on general tasks and other projects as being a helpful support. Mr. Jordan said one thing that teachers in his area of the building do is they offer to make copies for each other. Because the printer is at the “other side of the building,” Mr. Jordan said, “that saves a lot of minutes that I could attribute towards other lesson planning.”

Ms. Gideon actively sought out opportunities to initiate a discussion with high school teachers on vertical planning. She said, "I kind of have to seek them out myself." She explained that while the teachers in her district "have plenty of horizontal" planning opportunities, the teachers received very little opportunity to plan vertically. She stated, "I don't really know what's going on with the ninth grade…. They don't know what's going on down here." At a district professional development meeting, Ms. Gideon identified an opportunity to discuss this concern with the high school teachers. Through their informal conference, they were able to discuss the situation and collaborate on ways to improve the situation.

Ms. Rogers collaborated with male teachers in addressing some of her students' behavioral issues. In one scenario, Ms. Rogers had a male student who was behaving defiantly. She sought assistance and received help from a male teacher. Ms. Rogers explained male teachers "have a different aspect of teaching male students than I do, and a different relationship… Kind of a father figure." She went on to say, "A lot of the students don't have that father figure, so they don't respect me as much as the male teachers." She described this as, "one situation that I needed a lot of help in."

Another informal but useful support piece within the school is observations. On observing other classes, Ms. Rogers said, "It really helped greatly." Ms. Rogers said that she sometimes observed other teachers teaching while she was on her plan period. This was an activity she initiated on her own. Additionally, the principal supported Ms. Rogers by offering to make arrangements to allow Ms. Rogers to observe other teachers. Ms. Rogers explained, "Anytime I wanted to go observe, she would find somebody to cover my room." Ms. Rogers said her observations of one of her colleagues who was "amazing at classroom management" greatly influenced her discipline procedures, classroom management approach, "how to relate to the kids," and how to cope with the challenges of teaching in general. This colleague "doesn't let it bother her the next day," and "She's one of the main ones that just keeps me calm, and keeps loving the kids no matter what."

Ms. Gideon received assistance from others in making arrangements for observations too. Ms. Gideon explained that other staff members told her, "You know what. If you're having trouble with this, go watch this teacher." Ms. Gideon estimated that she observed three different teachers. From those observations, Ms. Gideon gained a lot of confidence because she was able to observe and say, "Okay, I did the exact same thing. I'm not doing it wrong."

Mr. Jordan observed one other teacher's full class period. Mr. Jordan stated that his observation experience allowed him to gain "good insight into how someone conducts a class, how the kids should behave, partially the classroom setting." He added, "I've been able to adopt some of those." He said at this point, he would like to observe others more, but he did not have time to do so. Mr. Jordan said he was limited to being able to observe other teachers for only ten to 15 minute blocks.

Ms. Gideon shared that she made arrangements for multiple principals to observe her classroom. She told them, "Please come view this class. I need help. What do I do with them?" Ms. Gideon felt like the class was "running her," and that the students were not putting in an acceptable level of effort. After the principals observed the class, the principals were able to make some suggestions and address some of her concerns. Ms. Gideon said the principals eventually told her, "Don't let this get you down. Just keep striving. Just keep doing what you're doing. If they're not giving the effort, then they'll end up with whatever grade that they end up with. This isn't your fault. You did everything you needed to do. Just let it go." Through this process, Ms. Gideon felt very supported, and she learned that her administrators felt like she was managing the situation appropriately.

Informal supports outside the school setting. The three participants from Group I conveyed use of outside sources of support including other acquaintances, books and internet resources. Social networking websites such as Facebook and Pinterest were used by these participants. Ms. Rogers said she "read a lot of books" and got "a lot of my great ideas from

Pinterest." Mr. Jordan said he visited with "some friends from high school that are now teachers" through Facebook. These friends provided emotional support and understanding.

Mr. Jordan also shared that he has "a few friends who teach in other districts." He expressed his view that those friendships provide emotional support. Mr. Jordan said, "You're going to have the same type of…ups and downs, so it is a good support piece."

Similarly, Ms. Rogers gained support from her mother who is also a teacher in addition to some of her other family members. Her mother's teacher friends also provided support to her. Ms. Rogers was able to gain a lot of advice from that network in preparation to begin teaching and after she entered the profession.

Ms. Gideon interacted frequently with teachers outside this school district too. One of her closest friends was a French teacher in a different nearby district. She said even though they got together to catch up, they always ended up "talking shop." She shared another example of when she recently attended an engagement party. One of the other attendees was a teacher of a different subject and different grade level. But they discussed their teaching experiences because, "You can't help but spark up that conversation and start talking about things." Through these conversations, Ms. Gideon said you get "feedback a little," and support.

Ms. Gideon stated she "grew up around teachers," because her dad was a teacher, and so are four of her aunts and uncles. She also had an uncle who was a superintendent. Ms. Gideon shared that she asked her teacher relatives numerous questions to "gain an outsider's perspective." She asked, "What am I doing wrong? How do I need to deal with this?" She said they discussed their teaching experiences at family events "all the time."

Ms. Rogers' situation is similar to Ms. Gideon's in that Ms. Rogers' mother was a teacher as well as several other family members. Ms. Rogers said she talked with her mother and other family members to, "bounce ideas." Between internet resources, formal professional development opportunities, books, and informal discussions with other teachers within her network, Ms. Rogers felt she was better able to, "keep up with new trends."

Other realities. Each of the Group I participants felt that both informal and formal supports were useful at least to some degree. Mr. Jordan stated "Between the formal and informal, you get it all covered," but Ms. Gideon felt like the formal supports were only partially useful. Ms. Gideon explained that she found herself thinking, "Some of the things are useful." But some of the supports caused her to think, "That's great. That would never work in my classroom," due to having "too much planned curriculum, not enough time to do it." She also stated, "It's not very realistic," and, "It makes me feel like I'm not doing enough." On their professional development workshops, Ms. Gideon said, "Usually they're kind of a waste of time…and maybe it's not realistic… How do we use what we're given to actually meet all these expectations? It's almost impossible to do… It's been really difficult to do that."

Ms. Rogers shared a similar sentiment on formal supports to that of Ms. Gideon. Ms. Rogers described some of the formal supports as not being "relatable" and the instructors "don't really quite understand" the new teachers' troubles. She described opportunity for discussion of teacher concerns as limited or not very "open."

Ms. Rogers explained that she felt that the formal supports were focused on a specific agenda. She felt like the leader would focus on "checking off" talking points and "hitting each line… and we only have 30 minutes" to get through the training. She explained she felt like, "everybody was just running around all the time" and there was not enough time for leaders to provide input, feedback, or support. As an example, Ms. Rogers shared that a principal observed her for an evaluation in mid-November, but she still had not received any feedback from the principal as of December 4th because "there's just no time" to have a meeting. Ms. Rogers said, "I would love that feedback" from the principal, but she stated there is little opportunity to make that happen.

Ms. Rogers also described these formal settings as limiting to discussion of teachers' challenges. Part of that was due to feeling that she was being evaluated during the training. Ms.

Rogers stated, “I feel like I can’t express myself or my troubles because I feel like I’m getting graded on it.”

As for the informal supports, Ms. Gideon said informal supports were better able to address “real problems.” Ms. Rogers shared a similar sentiment. Ms. Rogers said the people she went to for informal supports were “teachers who get it.” Ms. Gideon explained there was “a reality factor” in informal supports that you don’t receive in a lot of formal supports because formal supports were usually geared toward broader groups. But because informal support is usually for an individual teacher, she was able to ask, “What can we do about this specific problem?” Similarly, Ms. Rogers stated that she was able to address issues with others informally by saying, “Hey, this is what I need to talk about.”

Group I participants also shared that they received emotional support through their informal supports. Through informal supports, Ms. Gideon was told, “You’re doing enough. Maybe you just need to modify it in this way.” Ms. Rogers said, “If something was bothering me, I just went and talked about it instead of just keeping it in.” She felt a sense of “peace and calm with other teachers.”

Finally, the Group I participants attributed some of their growth as teachers to personal experience. Mr. Jordan explained, “I’m a first-year teacher, but I’m also an older guy, got a lot of salt in my hair,” and that he is able to incorporate his previous experiences into his classroom instruction. One example Mr. Jordan shared is that he is learning when to tell stories of his world travels to his Geography class.

Ms. Gideon shared that there were some things “you figured out on your own.” Ms. Rogers also expressed she tried to “figure it out on my own” before seeking assistance from others. On a classroom management strategy, Ms. Gideon said, “It’s just, I’m so frustrated that it kind of came out of desperation.” Ms. Gideon explained, “I kind of put two and two together” to improve the situation.

Ms. Rogers learned on her own, partially by choice. She stated she gained a lot from "discovering on my own." However, personal pride and a desire to save face with her colleagues also seemed to play a part in this decision. Ms. Rogers said that she asked for input from others frequently. But, she also explained that she sometimes avoided asking others for assistance because "a lot of times, I don't like somebody to know that I'm struggling, so I figured it out." So it appears this level of pride deterred her from asking others for support that may have been useful in her situation.

Group I Themes. Each of these participants **actively sought out assistance from others**. Whether this was from a formally assigned mentor or a family member, these teachers actively engaged others in seeking support when needed. Ms. Gideon begged to her principal, "Please come view this class. I need help. What do I do with them?" After discussing the problem of losing his voice with a colleague, Mr. Jordan learned a classroom management approach that would minimize strain on his voice. Ms. Rogers collaborated with another teacher of the same grade level and subject to plan out upcoming lessons months in advance.

Observing other teachers was extremely useful to these participants. Ms. Rogers felt being able to observe other classes "helped greatly." Ms. Gideon explained she gained greater confidence in her practice because she was able to observe other teachers, and she concluded, "Okay, I did the exact same thing. I'm not doing it wrong." Mr. Jordan explained through observing other classes, he gained, "good insight into how someone conducts a class," and "how the kids should behave."

Group I participants **made use of outside resources** to gain supports that included ideas for lessons, suggestions on classroom management, and emotional support. Some of those resources were family members. Two of these participants' parents were teachers who were able to provide support. Ms. Gideon said her family members were helpful in providing an "outsider's perspective." These teachers engaged with others through social media. Ms. Rogers said, "I got

a lot of my great ideas from Pinterest," and Mr. Jordan gained emotional support from Facebook friends.

Group I participants **felt formal supports were limited** in their usefulness. Ms. Gideon shared, "Usually they're kind of a waste of time… and maybe it's not realistic." Ms. Rogers said the trainers "don't quite understand" new teachers' challenges. Mr. Jordan was not as critical of the gaps in the formal supports as the other two participants were, but he admitted, "Between the informal and the formal, you get it all covered."

The final theme for this group is these teachers all felt like they **learned a lot through experience**. Ms. Gideon explained there were some things "you figured out on your own." Ms. Rogers said she learned a lot by "discovering on my own." Mr. Jordan explained, "I'm a first-year teacher, but I'm also an older guy, got a lot of salt in my hair." Yet, he also said, "I'm sure I'll learn something new every day."

Group II: Teachers Who Have Completed Two to Three Years of Teaching

This group had slightly more teaching experience than the participants in Group I. The three participants in Group II taught at different middle schools within the Eugene School District. Ms. Elgar taught at 'C' Middle School; Ms. Vogt taught at 'B' Middle School; Ms. McAllen taught at 'A' Middle School.

Ms. Elgar. Ms. Elgar was in her third year of teaching. She spent her early childhood in Mississippi, but moved to Eugene, Oklahoma, during her middle school years. As a student, she completed middle school and high school in this district. Although she attended a different middle school than of her teaching assignment, Ms. Elgar explained she shares those experiences of her move to Eugene, Oklahoma, with her students because it was a "very vivid memory," and the transition into the community is similar to that of many of the students at the age level she teaches. While attending college, Ms. Elgar assisted coaching at one of the high schools within the district for four years. As she was completing of her degree in biology, one of the coaches

contacted Ms. Elgar to ask her to apply for a teaching position with coaching responsibilities at 'C' Middle School. Ms. Elgar completed her alternative education certification so she could accept and retain that teaching position. She has taught science classes and coached at 'C' Middle School since she completed her degree.

I arrived at 'C' Middle School and waited at the front office for Ms. Elgar to meet me there. Ms. Elgar arrived at the office, greeted me, and shook my hand. Ms. Elgar asked if we could talk in the teachers' lounge. I suggested we go to a place where we would not be interrupted. So, Ms. Elgar took me to a nearby teachers' classroom where the other teacher continued to work while we talked. Fortunately, I brought an extra cookie, so I had enough for Ms. Elgar and the other host teacher. Ms. Elgar and I adjusted two student desks so they faced each other, and we sat down. We sat near a cage with a pet squirrel in it. The host teacher explained she caught it in her attic, so she brought it to school thinking it would be a great classroom pet. After chatting about the pet squirrel, Ms. Elgar and I reviewed the adult consent form, and we began our initial interview.

Ms. Elgar began by describing her childhood. She talked about her move from Mississippi to the Eugene School District when she was a middle school student. She also talked about her college experience, serving at the local high school as an assistant coach while attending graduate school, and her decision to obtain alternative teacher certification.

Ms. Elgar said she gained support from multiple teachers. When talking about support, Ms. Elgar expressed she learned about "teaching style and classroom management from other teachers. Ms. Elgar said she felt like she had a strong subject-area background, and therefore actively sought input from veteran teachers on classroom management and issues that were not subject-specific.

Ms. Elgar explained she also learned from personal experience gained by "being in the classroom." Ms. Elgar said "I tried to be strict and very stern,… and that kind of blew up in my face." Ms. Elgar said this approach created a "headache" for her, causing her to adjust her

approach. Ms. Elgar said, "I've still had to have the tough love approach, but, um [sic], it's not quite so authoritarian." Ms. Elgar attributed realizing this need for change to trial and error and realizing that she "was getting frustrated, and it wasn't changing anything."

Ms. Elgar spoke highly of the teachers who provided support during her first year. She said, "I cannot emphasize how much other teachers have gotten me through." During part of her first year of teaching, Ms. Elgar was pregnant. She explained, "I was a hormonal pregnant woman…having other teachers go, 'This might be an idea…'" was helpful to her. Based on her experiences, Ms. Elgar described her school staff as family that "looks out for each other pretty well." She cited "input from other educators" as very beneficial to her.

Ms. Elgar provided specific examples of how other teachers supported her. A veteran teacher observed Ms. Elgar teach a class. After the class, the other teacher provided input to Ms. Elgar on her strengths and some ideas to assist her in her weaker areas. Ms. Elgar said she did not request the observation, but she and the other teacher had already developed a strong rapport with each other. Ms. Elgar said she welcomed his input and she found his suggestions to be useful.

Ms. Elgar's other example of teacher support was the support from another science teacher. Ms. Elgar said this teacher shared her lesson plans and assisted in other planning concerns. Ms. Elgar explained this teacher had over twenty years of teaching experience and she had the "curriculum to a tee." Ms. Elgar said this teacher provided beneficial support by providing lessons, assignments, explaining how to teach certain lessons, identifying problematic areas, curriculum guidance, and other issues. Ms. Elgar said, "We're [the two teachers] planning almost every day."

Ms. Elgar expressed that most of her support came from other teachers in the building, but she said some of her new ideas came from online sources like Pinterest. Ms. Elgar did not provide a specific example in this interview, but Ms. Elgar listed "Pinterest, online, books, whatever I can find," as additional sources for support.

Ms. Elgar also explained she sometimes gains new ideas "out of necessity." Ms. Elgar said in situations when she realized at the last moment that a lesson was not going to work as planned, she had to get creative and adjust the lesson as she saw fitting. She said, "Every now and then, inspiration strikes…." Ms. Elgar indicated these experiences helped her to be better prepared for the next time she is in a similar situation.

Outside of school, Ms. Elgar explained she sometimes turned to other people for support. Ms. Elgar said she sometimes vented to her personal trainer. Ms. Elgar said the trainer provided good emotional support because they could "unload on each other…. That's part of the beauty of having a training partner." Additionally, Ms. Elgar discussed concerns with her husband, who was in a different profession. Ms. Elgar said he was a good listener. Ms. Elgar said she also engaged a coach that she used to coach with too. This person was a coach Ms. Elgar worked with at the high school. Ms. Elgar said this coach was able to give her the "friend perspective and the teacher perspective."

Ms. Elgar explained she sought help from others "nearly daily." She said, "The farther I got into it, the more I felt like I had no idea what I was doing." For that reason, she said she "was constantly going to others" for support. Ms. Elgar continued by explaining one of the more common reasons to seek others' input was because she identified her own "approaches were not going to work." When she identified her plans needed modification, she said she "let somebody else troubleshoot it because they had an outside perspective." By discussing her concerns with others, Ms. Elgar said she isolated "stuff that I wouldn't have considered." To gain support, and "keep it together," Ms. Elgar said she "pestered people all the time."

This concluded our interview. I thanked Ms. Elgar for her time and we rearranged the desks as they were arranged when we entered the classroom. We arranged to meet later in the week during her plan period.

Ms. Elgar and I met at her classroom two days after the initial interview. Another teacher showed me to Ms. Elgar's room. When I arrived, nobody was in the classroom and the classroom

door was locked. I took this opportunity to observe the students' posters that were hanging on the walls of the hallway. I was able to confirm the posters of the life cycle as the work of Ms. Elgar's students because they listed Ms. Elgar's name in the corner next to the students' names. Ms. Elgar arrived shortly and opened her door. We again arranged two student desks to face each other, and I shared the muffins I brought from a nearby shop. She apologized for how messy her "dungeon" was and explained the clutter was the main reason she did not want to meet in her classroom for the first interview; she was embarrassed. We sat down and began the interview.

Ms. Elgar began the interview by talking about support gained from other teachers. She provided the example of a teacher named Mr. Ramone. Ms. Elgar said, "I got input from him all the time… He was a sharp cookie." Ms. Elgar said she gained a very effective classroom management technique from Mr. Ramone. She learned she could settle the students by turning the lights off as students entered the classroom, and playing a YouTube video of ocean waves or another relaxing setting. By doing this activity, Ms. Elgar indicated she was able to settle and focus her students. She said this technique worked "amazingly well."

Ms. Elgar provided another example of gaining support from other teachers. Ms. Elgar sought assistance from other teachers who had a better rapport with a particular problematic student. Ms. Elgar said she talked with the principals about this student and Ms. Elgar had communication with the parents, but neither of those approaches seemed to work. Ms. Elgar said she requested support from other teachers, and those other teachers were able to help convince the student to improve his behaviors.

When talking about her formal supports as a novice teacher, Ms. Elgar listed only Smart Start. Ms. Elgar described the training from Smart Start as "very common sense" and the trainers "dumb it down too much." Ms. Elgar said she thought to herself, "Well, that didn't help me at all because it's stuff that I know already." Ms. Elgar said at other times she felt the training was not "do-able" and the training was beyond her level of development, and she thought to herself, "How on earth am I supposed to implement it with all this other stuff?"

Ms. Elgar explained she did not have a formal mentor. Ms. Elgar explained she had a teacher who functioned as a mentor, but that teacher was not compensated, and the teacher "did it out of the goodness of her heart and out of the desire to keep 'C' a strong educational environment."

In the first interview, Ms. Elgar briefly mentioned gaining ideas from Pinterest. In this second interview, Ms. Elgar elaborated that she has a drawer of bendable erasers that students can "bend and fold and twist and undo." She explained this is a technique she used to help settle excessively active students. She said, "That was an idea that I got from Pinterest-having fidgets."

Ms. Elgar spoke about her PLC. She did not list this earlier when I asked about formal supports, but she pointed out, "technically it's formal." Ms. Elgar explained she gained a lot of ideas from her PLC colleagues. She explained they planned together "all the time." One PLC team member shared "a ton of lessons." That colleague had a "flash drive that has folder after folder after folder of just more lesson on it than you could imagine." Ms. Elgar explained that same colleague was good about ensuring the PLC stayed focused and "honed in on what's important." Ms. Elgar said when somebody had an idea that a teacher thought was "a really awesome lesson," the other teacher reminded the PLC members they needed to stay on track to accomplish their teaching goals as planned by saying, "Why are you trying to reinvent the wheel?" and "It doesn't have to be more difficult." While this may sound like a teacher who is resistant to new ideas, Ms. Elgar appreciated her ability to keep the team on their already planned trajectory.

Ms. Elgar discussed observations. During her first year, Ms. Elgar observed other teachers teaching their classes. She indicated these observations helped her in gaining ideas for classroom management. Ms. Elgar also briefly mentioned again Mr. Ramone, the teacher who invited himself in to observe Ms. Elgar teach and to provide his feedback to her.

Ms. Elgar continued by explaining she prefers to solve her problems on her own because she is "very independent." She shared she liked to find solutions to her classroom problems on

her own. Ms. Elgar explained it took her some time to learn to ask for help because she was so independent. She said, "My pride gets in the way… I want to handle it myself. I don't want somebody else having to sep in for me. This is my classroom… and I'm going to be in control of it." But Ms. Elgar also shared there was value in seeking assistance from other teachers. She said, "There's a reason there's 75 of us in the building, and relying on each other is more effective." Ms. Elgar explained that when she identified she was not getting the desired results, she opted to ask for input from other teachers.

Ms. Elgar said now she talked with teachers "almost daily," even if it simply to "gripe" or to "check in." Ms. Elgar said she spent a significant amount of time with teachers on her PLC and with teachers on the other PLC in the same grade level. Ms. Elgar explained they addressed issues pertaining to "class plans and assignments," and "classroom management." She said the teachers also collaborate to address behavioral issues. Ms. Elgar explained the teachers on her PLC all share the same students. If a student caused problems in another teacher's class, Ms. Elgar said she might offer, "He's good for me!... I'll talk to him because he responds well to me, and I can talk to him about your class." Ms. Elgar said, "That's how we function together" in dealing with their PLC's students.

Ms. Elgar shared another example of collaboration with other teachers. She was a coach in previous years and explained she sometimes attended sports practices as a disciplinary measure. If a student did not behave appropriately in class, Ms. Elgar threatened the student by offering to attend practice. She said she told the students, "If you're not motivated by other consequences, I can always come to practice. Your coaches are happy to see me." Ms. Elgar said by this point, "Most of them [the student-athletes] have experienced or at least heard about a workout with me." She said this approach is effective and "nice to have in my back pocket."

Ms. Elgar continued the discussion by stating she was "constantly learning from other teachers," but she also recognized that she had to learn some things through personal experience. Ms. Elgar said she learned she "can't be any other teacher… I'm just a different personality."

She explained she had her "own style" and had to modify techniques that worked well for other teachers to suit her own personality.

In closing, Ms. Elgar provided her thoughts on her school's climate. Ms. Elgar explained her school had a new head principal this year, and Ms. Elgar felt the new principal's approach of limiting the number of faculty meetings also minimized teacher interactions and limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Ms. Elgar said, "We have not socialized as a staff like we have in the past, and it has created a very, very different climate… There are people who are just unsettled… And it's noticeable among the staff this year." Ms. Elgar suggested re-implementing monthly staff meetings. Ms. Elgar explained even though teachers would complain, meetings would be beneficial because the meetings would provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss issues with each other.

Ms. Vogt. Ms. Vogt was also in her third year of teaching. Ms. Vogt grew up in Oklahoma, and after graduation from high school, she attended a university where she was a cheerleader. She started college as an engineering major, changed her major to pharmacy, and eventually graduated with a degree in business finance. After graduation, Ms. Vogt married and began a career in a finance management position with a national retail chain store. After approximately two years with that company, Ms. Vogt left to accept a position as an internal auditor at a bank for four years. Due to downsizing, Ms. Vogt left her position at the bank and chose to spend the next 18 years as a stay-at-home mom to her three children. During this time, she chose to get her alternative teacher certification because she thought teaching was a "good mom job." When talking about her indirect path to teaching, she said, "I'm really happy with my decision" to teach, and "It's been really great." Ms. Vogt became a teacher at 'B' Middle School where she teaches science classes and a reading focus class.

Ms. Vogt and I arranged to meet at her classroom after she completed her after-school bus duty. I located her classroom, and found the door was open. Nobody was in the classroom,

so I waited in the hallway until Ms. Vogt arrived. She walked around the corner approaching her classroom and greeted me. She invited me into her classroom. As Ms. Vogt set some items on her teacher desk, I adjusted a couple of student desks to face each other for the interview. We sat down and reviewed the adult consent form. After signing, we began the interview.

Ms. Vogt started by telling me about herself. She said, "I'll just lay it all out there. I'm 48, and I'm a third-year teacher." Ms. Vogt spoke of her experiences in other careers, her family, her decision-making process in obtaining alternative teacher certification, and how she became a science teacher.

Ms. Vogt shared her thoughts on her alternative certification classes. Ms. Vogt said classroom management was a challenge because her classes did not prepare her to address those issues. However, Ms. Vogt also shared, "I really don't think any amount of education classes or even student-teaching can really prepare you for that." Ms Vogt explained other areas she felt unprepared for included lesson planning, the structure of the school day, varying delivery of instruction, and the "logistics of it all." Ms Vogt said, "I wasn't prepared at all for the meetings and all the extra stuff that teachers do that you just can't know until you're there."

To address those areas of concern, Ms. Vogt said she watched some YouTube videos and read some books. She explained the principal provided book recommendations to her. Ms. Vogt said she "took copious notes" and watched videos that came with the books.

Ms. Vogt talked about her formal supports provided by the school district. Ms. Vogt said she had a few additional days of training prior to the start of the school year, and she participated in Smart Start. Through Smart Start, Ms. Vogt learned about parent contact, parent-teacher conferences, parent phone calls, and other "good practical knowledge." Ms. Vogt said some of the approaches were "crazy time-consuming," but she said she still referenced some of those materials from Smart Start.

Additionally, Ms. Vogt had an assigned mentor teacher. Ms. Vogt said, "I would not have made it without her." Her mentor was another science teacher. Ms. Vogt explained the two

teachers met for PLC meetings, but they also met outside arranged meeting times. "She [the mentor] was available to me just about any time." Ms. Vogt described a collaborative and mutually beneficial relationship between the two teachers as they, "kinda [sic] complement each other in ways." She described her mentor as "just fantastic" and "greatly beneficial." Ms. Vogt said she and her mentor developed plans together, they collaborated extensively outside of PLC meetings, and they shared resources and bounced "ideas off each other."

Ms. Vogt said her school counselor provided useful emotional support. Ms. Vogt stated, "I had a lot of family drama going on at the time." Ms. Vogt said the counselor was a "really nice, caring, giving person" who provided emotional support during this period.

When talking about solutions to her challenges, Ms. Vogt said she used ideas she gained from the internet, professional development opportunities, and other teachers. She explained that after her principal realized she had never student-taught, the principal arranged for Ms. Vogt to observe other teachers teaching their classes. Ms. Vogt said she learned the "structure of how to run a class" and gained "ideas on classroom management." Ms. Vogt stated observing other teachers, "was like [sic] really one of the very best things I did, if not the best thing I did."

When talking about her PLC, Ms. Vogt said she gained useful support from one specific individual on her PLC team, but Ms. Vogt was not comfortable in discussing concerns with this team. Ms. Vogt said she felt some teachers on her PLC had "a little personality conflict." Ms. Vogt continued, "There's a big age difference…I don't feel comfortable. I feel kind of judged by it… It's silly, but there's [sic] other people that I feel more comfortable with talking to than them."

For the second meeting, we met two days later in her classroom after bus duty. I brought cookies from a nearby restaurant to share with her. Her middle-school-aged son was in the classroom during our interview. After I arranged the two student desks for the interview, we both sat down. Ms. Vogt pointed out my recorder was the same model as the model she used in her

classes. After Ms. Vogt educated me on some of the abilities of the recorder, we began our interview.

Ms. Vogt began by talking about some of the supports provided by other teachers. One example Ms. Vogt provided was when a teacher informed her, "You didn't have to grade everything." Although feedback is important, Ms. Vogt indicated other issues were sometimes a higher priority. In addition to prioritizing, Ms. Vogt said teachers provided input on, "how to handle meetings, the documentation, the things that you have to do besides teaching… like tricks for Gradebook," and other "huge time-savers." Ms. Vogt continued by stating she sometimes received advice from teachers concerning "challenging students" and how she can improve her classroom management. In addition to asking for suggestions from other teachers, Ms. Vogt shared she sometimes unintentionally gained ideas from teachers. Ms. Vogt stated, "You can be in the workroom and be talking about something and some teacher'll go, 'Oh, you can try this or that.'"

Ms. Vogt shared that her principal was supportive and significant in her professional development. Ms. Vogt explained her principal provided a list of recommended readings. The principal also arranged for Ms. Vogt to observe other teachers on four occasions. Ms. Vogt said she had a good rapport with her principal and she was comfortable in seeking assistance from the principal. She stated, "I'm quick to go get help and ask for advice."

Ms Vogt told me about a summer professional development workshop. Through this workshop, Ms. Vogt gained new knowledge, but she said she also met teachers from other schools whom she was comfortable in asking for input. Ms. Vogt said, "I could call and go, 'Oh my gosh! What would you do in this situation?'" Ms. Vogt said having that resource outside her school had "been nice."

Ms. Vogt said she also utilized internet resources like Google and YouTube. When she had a problem, Ms. Vogt said, "I Google it…I mean really,… There's so much out there." As an

example, Ms. Vogt said she used Google to find useful ideas on rewards for her class. She also used YouTube to find "science-specific classroom activities."

Ms. McAllen. Ms. McAllen was in her fourth year of teaching. She grew in Oklahoma in a family that included several school teachers, her mother being one of them. When describing her path to teaching, she said, "I figured out pretty young that I was wired to be a teacher" because her mother was a teacher and Ms. McAllen convinced her friends to play school when they came to her house to play. After high school graduation, Ms. McAllen attended the University where she earned a degree in Modern Language Education with an emphasis in Spanish. During college, she worked at a daycare. She said this was a valuable experience because "middle school is kind of an extension of little kid behavior… just more monkey business." Ms. McAllen is married to her "high school sweetheart," who is in dental school. On talking about her family, she said she and her husband have "no children yet, but I have a dog." After graduating from college, Ms. McAllen got her first teaching job at 'A' Middle School where she has taught Spanish classes at the 6th grade and 7th grade levels.

Ms. McAllen and I met at her classroom after school. When I entered her classroom, we greeted each other as a couple of students exited. Her classroom walls were covered with student work. Ms. McAllen led me toward her desk where she sat down, and I pulled a student desk closer to her seat for the interview. After visiting briefly, we reviewed the adult consent form. I set my recorder on a book on her desk, and we began the interview.

Ms. McAllen told me about her background; she talked about her childhood and why she wanted to become a teacher. "My mom is a teacher, so I kind of grew up around that, and always wanted to help her grade papers or something, or use her fancy new Post-It notes or whatever." Ms. McAllen also talked about her college experience. She said between her mother's input and her college preparation, she felt well-prepared to begin teaching.

Ms. McAllen said she asked several questions of teachers she knew, and she asked her mom, another teacher, "for a lot of advice." However, Ms. McAllen said she had to learn classroom management on her own. Ms. McAllen stated, "You have to learn that one [classroom management] by experience." Ms. McAllen said she knew classroom management would be a challenge based on her mother's input, so she "knew that one was going to be a trial-and-error thing."

After she began teaching, Ms. McAllen said she was disappointed to discover there was "not as much of a mentor teacher program" as she expected. Additionally, Ms. McAllen shared she "did not have administrative support" during her first year and she was "too embarrassed" to ask her principals about some of her concerns. For these reasons, Ms. McAllen said she identified colleagues who would provide support to her. She said, "You kind of figure out go-to people… You figure out pretty quickly who has answers that are helpful." Ms. McAllen said in addition to those helpful teachers within her school, Ms. McAllen continued to gain input from the two teachers she student-taught with outside the district, from one of her college professors, and from her mother. Ms. McAllen said she would call those people and vent or discuss behavior issues or other concerns.

Ms. McAllen said she gained some useful suggestions through her weekly PLC team meetings. Ms. McAllen indicated she did not ask questions in this setting in her first year, but she learned by listening to other teachers discuss issues. Ms. McAllen said teachers talked about what they did, and Ms. McAllen thought to herself, "I have never thought of trying that… I think I'll try it."

Ms. McAllen shared her experiences about a professional development workshop. Because she was the only foreign language teacher in her school, she said this workshop was one of her only sources for subject-specific professional development. Through this workshop, Ms. McAllen said she learned different methods and techniques.

Ms. McAllen shared that she maintained relationships with "a couple" of her classmates from college. The classmates were both Spanish teachers. She said they utilized Facebook to share ideas and resources.

When talking about solutions to her challenges, Ms. McAllen said she realized she did not "have the one best way to do anything." Ms. McAllen preferred to try "what other people have done." She asked other teachers how they approached certain concerns, and Ms. McAllen quipped, "I'll give it a shot because what I'm doing is not working." Ms. McAllen said she gained various useful teaching tools through this type of "trial-and-error."

Ms. McAllen shared that at this point in her career, she gained supportive input from her PLC. Ms. McAllen said in addition to the scheduled weekly meetings, her PLC ate lunch together and spent time together outside of school. They were a very close-knit group. Ms. McAllen said they "vent" a lot to each other. Ms. McAllen said, "We can gripe…and get it off our chests…and then we can go back to being happy teachers. It just gets it over with, and we can move on."

However, Ms. McAllen continued by explaining during her first year, her mother was her primary source of support. Ms. McAllen explained some of her PLC colleagues during her first year "were not very friendly" or supportive. Ms. McAllen said only one teacher on her PLC was somewhat supportive, but that teacher "was a little bit wacky." But Ms. McAllen said she gained emotional support from that teacher. Ms. McAllen explained, "I could just go into her room and talk to her. I didn't necessarily learn anything from her. I just kind of needed a place to get away and just not be overwhelmed for five minutes."

Ms. McAllen expounded on another challenge of her first year of teaching. Ms. McAllen said, "The administrative staff was out to get a lot of people." Ms. McAllen said this was another reason she avoided bothering the principals with her concerns. Ms. McAllen said she was not one of the targeted teachers. She explained the situation was frustrating, "But I just knew to just stay in my little cave and don't come out."

Because of those challenges as a beginner, Ms. McAllen said she called her mother at least twice per week to discuss school-related concerns. Ms. McAllen said even though her mother was an elementary teacher, Ms. McAllen gained useful suggestions from her mother. Ms. McAllen said she also gained much-needed emotional support. Ms. McAllen reported her mother talked Ms. McAllen "off the ledge."

Ms. McAllen gave details about her experiences in Smart Start. She said, "I can't say that I thought that [Smart Start] was extremely useful. I felt like the efficient use of time was not there." Ms. McAllen said, "I can't go back and tell you any one thing I learned at Smart Start." Ms. McAllen explained, "We were so overwhelmed with everything else that that [Smart Start] wasn't meeting any immediate need." Ms. McAllen further explained, "We looked at it as more of a waste of time which was unfortunate."

Ms. McAllen closed the interview by talking about monthly meetings for beginning teachers at her school. She explained her site did not have those meetings when she was a beginning teacher, but her school had monthly meetings for new teachers this year. Ms. McAllen indicated she believed those meetings were probably useful to new teachers, and she attributed the reason for the implementation of the meetings to the school's new administrative staff.

For the second interview, Ms. McAllen and I met ten days later at the same time and location. I arrived and greeted Ms. McAllen with cookies from a nearby restaurant. We sat down at the same approximate locations as in the initial interview. Barring a brief intercom announcement, we conducted the interview without any interruptions.

Ms. McAllen began the interview by talking about supports gained informally through discussion with other teachers who were on her PLC. Ms. McAllen described eating lunch with her PLC colleagues or meeting in the evening over dinner. She said they brainstormed, talked, and discussed problems. She said, "Sometimes it's griping, but sometimes it leads to a solution." She said, "A lot of things start as venting, and then they kind of work their way around," leading to suggestions. Ms. McAllen indicated these discussions also provided "validation" and

affirmation. Ms. McAllen said, “It’s validating when someone else just agrees with you… So I think that’s nice.”

Ms. McAllen provided more details on her formal supports. As for Smart Start, Ms. McAllen said seemed “prescribed” and “a waste of time.” Ms. McAllen said in addition to the Smart Start program, the district provided a content specialist to observe her teach one time during her first year. Ms. McAllen indicated she did not receive very much support through this observation.

Ms. McAllen said she could have engaged the principals to seek support, but she chose not to. She said, “They didn’t offer help. I would have to ask if I wanted it.” Ms. McAllen reported one principal told her, “almost every day, ‘You’re doing a good job!’” Ms. McAllen said her administrative support was limited to that “emotional support, I guess.”

As for her PLC, Ms. McAllen reiterated, “Team meetings were in place my first year, but I didn’t feel like it was a safe place to ask questions. I felt like I’d get thrown under the bus if I asked questions just because of some of the personalities that I worked with.” Ms. McAllen said during her first year, “I kind of sought out people on my own.” Ms. McAllen further explained she was now comfortable in talking with her administrators that were in place currently, and her current PLC was extremely supportive. Ms. McAllen described her interactions with her PLC colleagues as providing “timelier” supports. Ms. McAllen said the teachers on her PLC are “friends,” and because they share the same students, they share a lot of the same concerns.

Ms. McAllen shared that observing other teachers teach was helpful to her. Ms. McAllen said,

> Just watching them go through the motions with their kids was really interesting to me. And you just see them… deal with a behavior issue or how do you pass papers in this room, even if it’s just a simple procedure. That was really helpful to me. I found it really interesting… You can just look at what they have on their walls. You can see the little

signs they have by the turn-in basked, and you can just kinda [sic] get a little glimpse of what it's like in there.

Ms. McAllen said she learned a great deal through observing others teach, and she stated, "It was very interesting what I picked upon just watching them."

Group II: Initial analysis. These three teachers were still teaching in the same schools where they were first hired as teachers. Two of these teachers, Ms. Elgar and Ms. Vogt, gained alternative teaching certification. Ms. McAllen gained teacher certification through a traditional program.

Formal supports. Concerning the supports provided by the school and district, the Group II participants described a program that was fairly deficient on their formal supports, but they identified some positive areas in formal supports too. The Group II teachers all listed the district's Smart Start program as a support. Ms. Vogt shared that she learned some useful strategies such as how to contact parents and useful information on "parent-teacher conferences and parent phone calls." Ms. Vogt said she still referenced some of the materials from that training as a refresher on developing rapport with parents and making contact with parents, although she said actually doing all those steps is "crazy time-consuming."

Ms. Elgar said the Smart Start program was the only formal support she received as a new teacher. She stated, "That's really all that the district put in place" to support new teachers. Ms. Elgar felt that the program either "dumbed it down too much" causing her to think to herself, "Well, I know this stuff. What am I wasting my time here for?" or the training was beyond her teaching abilities at that stage in her career and she was not able to implement that type of program yet.

Ms. McAllen did not think highly of the Smart Start program either. Ms. McAllen shared that through the Smart Start program, she learned about an online resource called Poll Everywhere, and said the program, "probably was good to reflect on things." However, she

stated, “I can’t say that I thought that was extremely useful. I can’t go back and tell you any one thing I learned at Smart Start… We looked at it as more of a waste of time, but I don’t know if that was because we were so overwhelmed with everything else that that wasn’t meeting any immediate need.” Ms. McAllen further explained the training provided through Smart Start was not “always timely” and was not always in an area of significant concern for her.

In addition to the Smart Start program, Ms. Vogt said she also had a “few extra days [of training] before everyone else met.” The teachers who were new to the district were required to report a few days earlier than the other teachers. During this time, Ms. Vogt said she gained “training on some practical things there.” Some of those trainings included software training and training on some other processes.

Ms. McAllen was at a different school than Ms. Elgar, but the two teachers had similar outlooks on their formal supports. Ms. McAllen shared that she did not have a mentor, and “My first year, I did not have administrative support… They didn’t offer help. I would have to ask if I wanted it.” She went on to say, “The administration was out to get a lot of people. I luckily wasn’t one of them, but I just knew to just stay in my little cave and don’t come out and that was really frustrating.” Ms. McAllen said she was left to seek and find assistance when she desired assistance, and she had to find her own “go-to people.” Ms. McAllen said she did not have a mentor, and her PLC team was not a “safe place to ask questions,” and she felt like “I might get thrown under the bus if I asked questions because of some of the personalities.” Ms. McAllen said she felt like she was “left on her own.”

However, Ms. Elgar had a very different experience. Ms. Elgar felt like the only support other than Smart Start that she received at school was “just teachers here helping me out because I was new… That’s pretty much all that was.” Ms. Elgar said a mentor was never assigned to her, so she had to identify on her own whom to ask for help. Similarly, Ms. McAllen said, “There really is not as much of a mentor teacher program as I kind of expected there would be…. You kind of figure out go-to people, but I was not assigned a particular person that was my mentor.”

Ms. Elgar said she attended professional development opportunities like workshops and conferences. However, the information provided seemed either "very common sense" or just not feasible because they might "take a week to put together." She said she thought, "Well, that didn't help me at all because it's stuff that I know already," or "That sounds great, but how on earth am I supposed to implement it with all this other stuff?"

Ms. McAllen also attended workshops for her subject area provided by the Oklahoma Foreign Language Teachers Association. This association provided language-specific workshops throughout the year. Ms. McAllen said this conference was "the only place that I got stuff that is foreign language-geared." In her first year of teaching, Ms. McAllen felt like "this conference… was the only thing that was helpful, you know, at least directly."

Ms. Vogt also shared that she participated in various professional development workshops. One workshop in particular that she participated in was a Science-specific workshop held during the summer at a nearby university; the group met four Saturdays throughout the school year and for two weeks during the summer. Through these workshops, she gained valuable subject-specific information. She also shared, "I met people through that that I can talk to," and "feel like I could call" and ask those teachers, some who teach in other school districts, for input. She said, "I know that I have that resource now."

One of the Group II participants gained support through observations that were arranged by the principal. Because Ms. Vogt was alternatively certified, she had not observed other teachers before she became a teacher. When her principal realized Ms. Vogt had not seen other teachers teach, "He set up times that I could observe different teachers with different teaching styles." Through the observations, Ms. Vogt gained ideas on "just the structure of how to run a class" and "ideas on classroom management." On the observations, she said, "That was like really one of the very best things I did, if not the best thing I did…. Those experiences were really, really helpful--exponentially helpful."

As for being observed as a novice teacher, Mrs. McAllen said that a content specialist from the district observed her. Ms. McAllen said that her "content specialist came and watched me teach like once." She said the content specialist provided very little support, but that she could contact her content specialist on an "as-needed basis."

After her first year of teaching, the administration at Ms. McAllen's school encouraged the teachers to observe other teachers' classes. Ms. McAllen found the experience of observing other teachers was "very interesting—what I picked up on just watching them." The experience was "really interesting" and "really helpful to me." She shared that it was useful to see how other teachers "deal with a behavior issue" or "pass papers in" or just seeing "what they have on their walls. You pick up little tidbits here and there, even if it's just a catchphrase" or "a comeback to a kid's excuse."

Ms. McAllen also conveyed that these observations led to further dialogue with other teachers about how and why certain instructional practices work for some teachers. "It kind of makes me reflect a little bit." As an example, Ms McAllen observed a teacher who "never raises his voice." Ms. McAllen shared that she did not realize "It can be done like that. Who knew?" This is one of the ideas that she "stole," and she worked to include that quieter approach into her own instructional practice. Ms. McAllen shared that she would like to observe other teachers more often, but she did not think she had opportunities to do that. She said, "I wish I had time for that, but I don't feel that I have enough time for that."

Ms. Vogt expressed that she grew from the input that her principals provided to her following their classroom observations. She said her principals want her to get better, and "you want to get better scores." She said her philosophy is one that she adopted from Maya Angelou. That is to "Do the best you can do, and when you know better, do better." Therefore, Ms. Vogt recognized the improvement of her instructional practices as a continuous process that will be ongoing throughout her career.

As for mentorship programs, Ms. McAllen did not have a mentor. Ms. Elgar sought out a mentor of her own, and Ms. Vogt had a formally assigned mentor. The support gained from the rest of the faculty for these participants during the time they were novices is noteworthy too. Ms. McAllen described her professional learning community during her first year as an unsafe place to ask questions. Furthermore, she said the administrative staff was, "just out to get a lot of people." Ms. Vogt and Ms. Elgar shared that their administrative staffs were very supportive. Ms. Elgar described her self-selected mentor as being very valuable because Ms. Elgar was able to "pester" her mentor "all the time" to gain needed support. Ms. Vogt thought very highly of her mentor too. Ms. Elgar spoke highly of her professional learning community, but Ms. Vogt had some negative experiences. In her PLC, Ms. Vogt encountered some negative judgment aimed at her due to her being older, but less experienced in the profession than the other teachers.

In all three teachers' situations, each was able to find helpful supports within their school. Sometimes the participant strategically sought out this support. Other times the support was volunteered by another more experienced teacher who was trying to be helpful. Finally, sometimes these teachers picked up tips and ideas unintentionally through regular interactions with other people. Ms. McAllen explained her "venting" sometimes prompted discussion that led to helpful suggestions or solutions.

All three participants described gaining support from others outside their school setting. Sometimes support came from family members who were teachers, as in Ms. McAllen's case with her mother being a teacher. Ms. McAllen also consulted with the two teachers with whom she student taught. Ms. Elgar gained emotional support from her personal trainer and from other friends. Ms. Vogt did not specify other individuals outside her school that provided support to her, but she relied heavily on internet resources such as YouTube and other websites. Ms. Elgar and Ms. McAllen also made extensive use of online resources. Within Group II, I think it is important to note Ms. McAllen, who went through a traditional education program, maintained a relationship with the teachers she student-taught with and also with some of her university

professors. Because of their relationships, Ms. McAllen was able to reach out and gain support when needed. Ms. Elgar and Ms. Vogt, who were alternatively certified, did not have education degrees and did not student-teach, and, therefore, did not have those personal contact resources available to them.

Another formal support that the Group II teachers usually found useful were the PLC teams. Ms. Elgar said that she planned with other teachers on her PLC team when required, and even when it was not required. One area that developed through her interactions with teachers on her PLC team was her ability to maintain focus on their team's goals. One teacher in particular on her PLC team greatly influenced Ms. Elgar through "her approach to things and her perspective." This teacher would ask, "Do we really need to make this more difficult? What do they need to be able to do? Why are we trying to reinvent the wheel?" Ms. Elgar shared that she imagined "these great ideas," that may "sound like a really awesome lesson" and would be a lot of fun, but the influential teacher on her PLC team helped to guide Ms. Elgar by helping her "stay honed in on what's important and what's not."

In addition to sharing ideas on lessons, another benefit that came from working in PLC teams was that each PLC team shared the same group of students. Ms. McAllen said having the "same batch of kids" was helpful because it allowed the entire PLC team to address certain concerns as a team. Ms. Elgar shared that she collaborated with her other PLC team members to address and improve behavioral issues regarding students. She explained, "We all have some kids that drive us nuts that are good with the others." When one teacher reaches the point of "I don't know what to do with him. He's driving me insane," another teacher on the PLC team can say, "Well, I'll talk to him because he responds well to me." This collaboration helped the teachers in dealing with classroom management and behavioral issues more effectively.

Ms. McAllen also shared that she picked up some good ideas through discussion during PLC team meetings. She said during these meetings, teachers discussed what they did, and Ms.

McAllen found herself thinking, "I have never thought of trying that… I think I'll try it." She said she used a lot of "trial and error with things my peers are doing."

Although there was some tension among Ms. McAllen's PLC team in her first year of teaching, Ms. McAllen said her current team has become a very close-knit group of friends. She said, "We've gotten really close, and we are go-to's with everything whether it's professional, personal,… or kind of whatever." Ms. McAllen described their team as a group of "professional peers" and "best friends" and a "support system." Also, because they teach "the same batch of kids," some certain concerns were already "on all of our minds, so we talk about school and kids a lot."

In addition to instructional support, Ms. McAllen's PLC team seemed to provide a lot of emotional support. Ms. McAllen said,

> We all get tired of all the BS that goes along with… teaching in this day and age, and we can gripe and get off our chest and we're good. And then we can go back to being happy teachers. We don't have to solve it. We don't even have to find a solution all the time, but we just kind of vent effectively where it doesn't just drag us down. It just gets it over with, and we can move on.

In addition to their meeting during the required PLC team meetings times, Ms. McAllen shared that she and two of her PLC team members usually ate lunch together. Because they were close friends, sometimes they even get "together in the evenings." At these informal get-togethers, these teachers sometimes griped and discussed school issues, but Ms. McAllen relayed, "Sometimes it leads to a solution." Ms. McAllen said, "We kinda [sic] hashed out plans… We are three people out of a five-person team. I mean, we've got the majority there." Additionally, Ms. McAllen shared that she enjoyed having the validation and affirmation that came out of these conversations with her teacher-friends. She said it was "nice" when "someone else just agrees with you" and says, "Yeah, I think that is a pretty good idea. Let's do it."

PLC teams were usually supportive in the Group II participants' experiences, but aspects of working as part of a PLC team were not always supportive. Ms. Vogt shared that there were some "personality conflicts" among members of her PLC team. Ms. Vogt sensed that she was "being judged" due in part to her older age and lack of teaching experience. She said, "It's silly, but there's other people that I feel more comfortable with talking to than them."

Ms. McAllen also had some negative experiences with her PLC team. Ms. McAllen said, "The teachers that I taught with my very first year were not very friendly…or supportive." She described her PLC team as not being a "safe place to ask questions," and she felt like "I might get thrown under the bus if I asked questions because of some of the personalities." Ms. McAllen said she moved into a more positive work environment when she switched PLC teams after her first year of teaching.

Informal supports inside the school. Group II participants shared several examples of informal supports gained from their colleagues within the school. Group II teachers shared that they learned a great deal from other teachers. Ms. Vogt said other teachers brought up topics "that you were never really told formally," such as how to prioritize, tricks for gradebook software, various timesavers, and "how to handle meetings, the documentation, the things that you have to do besides teaching that, you know, we were never really told."

Ms. Vogt said some of the support from teachers comes through unstructured discussion. Ms. Vogt might say something like, "I'm trying to figure out what to do with this," and another teacher would, "have some great idea." She said sometimes, "You can be in the workroom and be talking about something, and some teacher'll go: *Oh, you can try this or that.*" This unstructured interaction with other teachers served as a good support for Ms. Vogt.

Ms. McAllen liked talking to other teachers about specific problems because this discussion allowed her to gain support from subject-matter experts on specific problems. She said, "I'd ask the person that best fit that thing (the problem)." She shared that she asked, "a

variety of people," throughout the year, and she did not approach "any one person all the time." This strategic networking approach of seeking help from other teachers on her own provided Ms. McAllen the ability to "get the help when I need it," and she said it was "timelier."

Ms. Elgar expressed that she "learned more about teaching style and classroom management from other teachers" than from other sources. Ms. McAllen said she relied greatly on input "from the veterans around me." Ms. McAllen reported, "I would turn to some of the other teachers if I was having management issues or just general problems." She went on to explain that she asked for other teachers' input "nearly daily" asking questions about plans, opinions, and potential problems and solutions. She says she "pestered people all the time." Ms. Elgar recognized that more experienced teachers with an outside perspective were able to offer input like, "Well, have you thought about it from this angle? Have you thought about this? This is going to be a problem." She gained insight from other teachers on "stuff I wouldn't have considered."

In her first year of teaching, Ms. Elgar was a self-described "hormonal pregnant woman." She said she was fortunate to have so many school staff helping her during that challenging time. When describing the school community, Ms. Elgar explained, "We have a family here. Everybody looks out for each other pretty well." Ms. Elgar said the teachers supported her throughout her first year by frequently offering their input through suggestions such as, "You know, this might be a better way to try this. If you're having problems, this is an idea. Here's something you can consider."

Another way support was provided to Group II teachers was through their interactions with other school staff. Ms. Vogt would frequently "just wander in," to another teacher's classroom to discuss her challenges and plans with another teacher. This other teacher taught the same grade level and the same subject. The two teachers shared lesson plans, Power Point presentations, and other resources. They would also "bounce ideas off each other" and discuss

plans by talking through "What're you covering today? How are you gonna [sic] do it? That's a good idea. Better than what I was gonna [sic] do."

Ms. McAllen shared a similar experience on her interactions with other teachers. Ms. McAllen said, "I know enough to know I don't have the one best way to do anything… I will go ask other people how they do it." Ms. McAllen indicated that when her practices were not working, she would try the "things that my peers are doing." She explained, "I'll give it a shot because what I'm doing is not working."

Ms. McAllen conveyed that sometimes her interactions with teachers unintentionally led to useful suggestions or solutions to her problems. She said, "A lot of things start as venting, and then they kind of work their way around." Their discussions sometimes led to input such as, "Well have you tried this? Because it really works for me." Ms. McAllen said this type of interaction was useful multiple times in situations involving a specific individual student. She said she arrived to the point of saying, "I'm about to go crazy on this kid," and the other teacher would share what worked in her personal experiences with that student.

Ms. Vogt picked up tips from other teachers, too. Ms. Vogt said a teacher told her that she did not have to grade everything. Evidently, the more experienced teacher felt other concerns held a higher priority than grading papers. Ms. Vogt said, "That seems so silly and small, but as a brand new teacher, I didn't know I didn't have to grade every single thing and hand it all back." She said knowing she did not have to grade and return every assignment was a significant "relief." Ms. Vogt believed that information was helpful because it was something "you just don't necessarily think of, and you don't know to ask."

Ms. Elgar gained a significant amount of support from another Science teacher who had more teaching experience. This other Science teacher was on a different PLC team, but they planned together often because they teach the same subject and grade level. Much of the provided support was based on curriculum, but some of the support was also emotional support.

Ms. Elgar said, "We spend most of our plan periods together whether we are really supposed to meet or not simply because, well, we like each other's company."

Another teacher also provided a lot of support to Ms. Elgar. This teacher, Mr. Ramone, shared ideas that primarily pertained to classroom management. Ms. Elgar described Mr. Ramone as "one smart cookie." One idea from Mr. Ramone that Ms. Elgar implemented in her classroom was classroom entrance procedures. She also adopted another idea from him that helped in calming students down. Ms. Elgar turned the lights off as students entered the room, and she projects a YouTube video for the students to see. The video is of a calming scenario such as ocean waves splashing onto the beach. She has the students lay their heads on their desks. Ms. Elgar later asks the students what they envisioned while listening to the wave sounds. Ms. Elgar said this activity "makes them all a little bit sleepy," and "takes the tone of the class way down." Ms. Elgar explained although this activity makes the students sleepier, it also makes them more focused overall as a group than they would have been otherwise, and the students are more manageable. She said she uses this activity, "all the time, and it works amazingly well."

Ms. Elgar also sought and gained input and support from her school principals. This year, she had a student who was being very difficult to work with. Ms. Elgar said she gained input from her grade level principal and the head principal in addition to some of the other teachers. At the time of the interviews, Ms. Elgar was in the process of working as a team with the school staff on improving this situation.

In addition to collaboration among teachers on the same PLC team, Group II teachers sometimes collaborated with teachers outside their PLC team on specific issues. For example, Ms. Elgar explained that she sometimes attended her students' school sports practices to lead the student of concern in a corrective workout as a deterrent to future negative behavior. She said most of her student-athletes have "experienced or at least heard about a workout with me." She told her student-athletes, "If you're not motivated by other consequences, I can always come to practice. Your coaches are happy to see me." When Ms. Elgar asked student-athletes if she

needed to come to practice, the response was, "No no no no no. I'm good. I'm good. I can get it." She said this technique had "actually been very effective."

The Group II teachers gained a great deal of support through informal observations. Ms. Elgar shared an experience where a fellow teacher, "just came in one day just to hang out with me… I didn't ask him to. He just decided to come on in, to hang out, and he just, he plopped down, and he made himself comfortable." After the observation, the fellow teacher provided input on her strengths and some suggestions to Ms. Elgar. Even though the observation was unplanned, Ms. Elgar appreciated the support, and she seemed to appreciate the informal and unplanned aspect of the experience. Because of the strong working relationship the two teachers had already developed, the spur-of-the-moment observation was a comfortable and welcome experience for both of the teachers.

As for the ability or opportunity to observe other teachers, Ms. Elgar shared that she never had the opportunity to go watch other teachers teach. She said, "There's no time built in for me to go do peer observations." Observing other classes sounds like something Ms. Elgar would like to do, but was not realistic or feasible at the time.

Ms. McAllen explained other teachers or the school psychiatrist or librarian "come in intermittently" during class. Those individuals sometimes provide input to Ms. McAllen and "point out something that they like that you're doing." Ms. McAllen appreciated their input, and said it is "just kinda [sic] nice to have that validation."

Group II participants gained a good deal of support through teachers who are on different PLC teams, but taught the same subject. Ms. Elgar shared that she worked a great deal with another science teacher on the other PLC team. Ms. Elgar said the other science teacher "has got the curriculum to a tee. She's got it down." This other science teacher shared assignments, lesson plans, and "how to teach it." The other teacher offered detailed curriculum guidance to Ms. Elgar and addressed issues like, "This is going to work well. Here's a problem." Ms. Elgar said she and the other science teacher complement each other well because they had opposite

strengths and weaknesses concerning the curriculum. Ms. Elgar said, "We're gonna [sic] flip-flop next semester because we're going into a unit that she loves and that I actually hate."

Some of the Group II teachers had a formal mentor teacher during their first year, and some did not. Ms. Elgar's experience was not paired with a mentor teacher; however, she identified a person she went to frequently for help. Ms. Elgar said this teacher "functioned as a mentor teacher. She did it out of the goodness of her heart and out of the desire to keep 'C' a strong education environment."

Ms. Vogt's principal assigned a mentor teacher to help her. Ms. Vogt said, "I would not have made it without her… She was available to me just about any time… and we work really well together." Of her mentor, Ms. Vogt said, "She was fantastic."

Informal supports outside the school setting. Ms. Elgar used resources outside of school to gain support and ideas. She said she gained "lots just from digging through resources, Pinterest, online, books, whatever I can find." Ms. Elgar had a situation where she had trouble with a student who was very hyperactive. She searched for ideas on the internet, and gained a very simple but effective solution from Pinterest. Ms. Elgar now has a drawer full of bendable pretzel-erasers and other "fidgets." Ms. Elgar explained when a child is acting up, she places a fidget item on the student's desk. This fidget diverts the student's over-activity enough to allow the class to continue the lesson. The fidget gets the student to "knock it off," and "he's good for the rest of the hour."

Ms. McAllen used a social networking website as a medium for support. Through Facebook, Ms. McAllen kept in touch with a college classmate. The two teachers "have Facebooked and shared resources back and forth." Ms. McAllen described this exchange as a mutually beneficial activity.

Ms. Vogt also made use of books and internet resources as sources of support. She said, "Google it… There's so much out there" on the internet. "They say, don't reinvent the wheel."

As an example, Ms. Vogt "wanted to get some ideas on how to handle" a classroom situation. She performed an internet search, and she found an appropriate solution. "Through that, I ended up offering a reward the next time I had a sub, which they (the students) were excellent. They did everything I asked them to."

Additionally, because Ms. Vogt's opportunities to observe other classes were limited, Ms. Vogt said she learned a lot from "watching videos like on YouTube… and kind of watch how people would, you know, run a class." She attributed watching videos to helping her in learning classroom management and different "vehicles of delivering instruction." "YouTube is a great place for Science-specific or classroom activities and stuff like that." On internet resources, Ms. Vogt said, "I mean, that's a great resource."

Ms. Elgar shared that she gained emotional support from her husband and also from her training partner. She said even though they were not educators, those two listened to her venting, and they acted as "sounding boards." This assisted her in getting her frustrations out and allowing her to think and talk through some of her ideas.

Ms. McAllen also gained support from people outside the school. Ms. McAllen maintained her relationships with the two teacher she student-taught with. Ms. McAllen said, "I continued to talk to the people I student-taught with. I kept close especially with" one of the teachers; Ms. McAllen would call her on the phone "and see what she would do."

Another person Ms. McAllen gained support from was one of her college teachers. This teacher guided Ms. McAllen to the Oklahoma Foreign Language Teachers Association where Ms. McAllen was able to gain ideas on subject-specific instructional practices. This college teacher was "definitely very formative in why I pick the types of practice activities I do… Her method of teaching foreign language class was very influential in how I teach… She's someone that I've kept in contact with, and now I've presented at that conference twice."

Ms. McAllen also shared that her mother was a teacher with over 25 years of teaching experience. Ms. McAllen said she "asked her mom for a lot of advice" and "I would call my

mom all the time because she was um, she was a great resource too." She said her mother was the person she would go to with issues that she was too embarrassed to ask her principal or somebody else about.

Ms. McAllen said she spoke with her mother about school experiences and concerns "two to three times a week." Ms. McAllen indicated a lot of the conversation was simply venting, sharing her challenges, and Ms. McAllen gaining emotional support. Her mother was, "just kind of talking me off the ledge sometimes… Sometimes I just needed to just tell somebody about the crazy stuff that happened." But Ms. McAllen's mother was also able to provide some practical tips too. As an example pertaining to grading assignments, her mother told Ms. McAllen, "You don't have to grade it all. You could pick two of those." Ms. McAllen indicated her mother's suggestions were not always helpful because they were from the perspective of an elementary teacher, but, as Ms. McAllen put it, "it was at least somebody to talk to."

Other realities. Group II participants appeared to find greater value in their informal supports much more than their formal supports. Ms. Elgar said she preferred the informal supports from teachers because "it's much more do-able." She explained that when she talked to teachers, she could address her immediate concerns, take that information, and apply it immediately. She said, it is "more timely" and "a lot more classroom friendly… and you can actually implement it that day." Ms. Elgar shared that when she has trouble with a lab activity, she seeks advice from another science teacher. She takes that teacher's advice and applies it to the next class. Ms. Elgar said, informal supports, such as informal interactions with teachers, are "more accessible" and "more usable."

This group also expressed that they had to learn some things on their own through personal experience. Ms. Elgar shared that she had to figure out on her own what approaches suit her personality. She said, "I can't be any other teacher," and "I have to figure out my own style."

Ms. Elgar realized that a technique that worked well for another teacher may not work well for her "because I'm just a different personality."

As an example, Ms. Elgar initially tried a "staunch this-is-how-it's-going-to-be approach," and that hard-lined approach to classroom management did not work well for her. She later tried a "not quite so authoritarian" approach. This new approach was triggered by her noticing "that I was doing way more work and getting way more frustrated and it wasn't changing anything." Ms. Elgar developed her approach through "trial and error," and she found this "not-quite-so-authoritarian" approach suits her style better, and she gets better results in the classroom. Ms. Elgar said she learned to "find the teachers whose teaching style is similar to mine, and use similar techniques" and to tailor ideas to match her personality and to better meet the needs of her classes.

Ms. Vogt also cited classroom management as one of those things that you had to experiment with and adopt what works. She stated, "You kind of have to figure out your style and everything once you're there." She explained, "I really don't think any amount of education classes or even student teaching can really prepare you for that." Ms. McAllen shared a similar sentiment on managing your classroom. She said, "It's a trial-and-error thing," and, "You have to learn that one [classroom management] by experience."

Because she did not have a mentor assigned to her, Ms. McAllen said she had to "figure out go-to people." She expected a formal mentorship program to be in place, but there was no mentorship program at the time. Ms. McAllen said she resorted to asking "whoever will answer my question," and she said, "You can figure out pretty quickly who has answers that are helpful and who just wants to talk your leg off and gripe about things."

Ms. Elgar explained that she had to learn on her own to "let somebody else troubleshoot" her instructional practice "because they had an outside perspective." She said she would get "so wrapped up in what my idea was and why it was going to work so beautifully." Once she learned

to accept advice from others, she was able to improve her instructional practice based on that input.

Ms. Elgar also shared that some of her ideas are pressure-prompted. She said, "every now and then inspiration strikes. I might have a brilliant idea." Ms. Elgar went on to say, "It struck today out of necessity" concerning today's lesson plans. She was saying to herself, "Oh my goodness! What am I gonna [sic] do next hour?" Then she quickly came up with some appropriate plans.

Another lesson that Ms. Elgar had to learn on her own was to ask for assistance. She said,

> "I'm very independent. I like to do it on my own… My pride gets in the way, and I want to handle it myself. I don't want somebody else having to step in for me. This is my classroom, and by golly, I'm going to be in control of it. I'm going to make sure that I've got a handle on things.

Ms. Elgar explained this is a lesson she learned in her first year of teaching, and she explained, "There's a reason there's 75 of us in the building… and relying on each other is more effective." After Ms. Elgar identifies that she is "not seeing any progress," she asks other teachers for their advice and what they think. Ms. Elgar said even at this point, she is "not always good about that, but I'm getting better."

Ms. Vogt had a similar perspective on explicitly asking for help. She said she would ask for assistance when she recognized what she was doing was not working. However, she shared, "I've been accused of running to experts too much, running to books to look for everything, like I don't trust my instincts. I'm very quick to go get help and ask for advice." Because of the accusation of "running to experts too much," Ms. Vogt limits her requests for support to teachers, counselors, and principals that she feels like she has a friendly relationship with and that can be "very objective and discreet."

Ms. Vogt said there are many things that teachers have to learn on the job. She said she was not ready for "the logistics of it all." On specific issues, she cited having to learn the "structure of the day… and just grading papers. I had never graded a paper before." Additionally, "I wasn't prepared at all for the meetings and all the extra stuff that teachers do that you just can't know until you're there."

Finally, Ms. Elgar shared some of her thoughts on her school's culture. She explained that due to changes at the school this year, her school has a "different philosophy," and her school now has fewer meetings, events, and opportunities in general to socialize with other school staff. Ms. Elgar would prefer to have faculty meetings because that would provide an opportunity to see friends. She said, "We were friends. We all had fun together, and a faculty meeting would be a time that I could see them." Ms. Elgar described the current school staff as being "unsettled" because they have not really had an opportunity to engage with each other. She said, "They're not unhappy... We're all drifting… When you don't spend time together, you drift." She said, "We're not working as a unit, and it's noticeable." According to Ms. Elgar, this change had a negative effect on teachers' accessibility to other people, support, and resources.

Group II Themes. These three teachers found their **formal supports lacking**. Although Ms. Vogt said she learned some useful strategies through her formal supports, implementing the training is "crazy time-consuming." Ms. Elgar said she felt the instructors "dumbed it down too much" at times. Other times, Ms. Elgar expressed the training was beyond her teaching ability or she was not advanced enough as a teacher to implement the techniques learned through the formal training. Ms. Elgar said she thought to herself, "That sounds great, but how on earth am I supposed to implement it with all this other stuff?" Ms. McAllen explained, "I can't say that I thought that [Smart Start] was extremely useful. I can't go back and tell you any one thing I learned at Smart Start…. We looked at it as more of a waste of time." Additionally, Ms. McAllen did not have a mentor, and she had the challenge of working in an

unsupportive school atmosphere. "My first year, I did not have administrative support… They didn't offer help. I would have to ask if I wanted it."

Another theme within Group II was that each participant **actively sought out and found useful supports**. Many of these supports were found inside their school; observing other teachers during classes benefitted these participants. Through observations, Ms. Vogt said she gained an understanding of "just the structure of how to run a class" and other "ideas on classroom management." Ms. McAllen said observing other classes was "very interesting – what I picked up on just watching them." Finally, Ms. Elgar learned classroom management techniques from observations of others. One example of what she picked up is to play a YouTube video as students enter the classroom to help get them focused for the upcoming class.

Other supports within the school setting came to these participants through other interactions. These supports were sometimes through formal collaborative activities such as professional learning community meetings. Ms. Elgar said the teachers collaborate extensively through professional learning communities. She explained when she reaches the point of, "I don't know what to do with him," another teacher can offer solutions. Ms. Vogt collaborated at length with another teacher to develop lesson plans.

Other times, Group II participants gained support through informal interactions with other teachers within the school. Ms. Vogt said she gained several ideas through informal discussion in the teacher workroom. Ms. Elgar stated she "learned more about teaching style and classroom management from other teachers" through unstructured discussions. Ms. McAllen also said she gained ideas from other teachers. She explained her "venting" to others sometimes resulted in useful suggestions from teachers. Additionally, Ms. McAllen said she did not feel safe during her first year in asking for help within her professional learning community, so she found her "go-to people" within the school.

Some of their supports were found outside their school setting. Workshops and conferences were an example. In her first year of teaching, Ms. McAllen described a professional

development workshop as being the "only thing that was helpful… at least directly." Other supports outside the school include supports through internet resources. All three participants cited internet resources as good places to find and share ideas and to gain emotional support. These three participants gained support through social media, and Pinterest and YouTube were mentioned specifically for lesson ideas and classroom management ideas.

A final theme for this group was that they **learned a great deal about teaching through personal experience on the job**. Ms. Vogt said, "I wasn't prepared at all for the meetings and all the extra stuff that teachers do that you just can't know until you're there." Ms. Elgar said she had to learn to ask for assistance when needed. All three participants explained a lot of their successes stemmed from "trial-and-error kind of thing," as described by Ms. McAllen.

Group III: Teachers Who Have Completed Four or More Years of Teaching

Group III was the most experienced teacher-participant group. Each of these teachers had completed four or more years of teaching. Ms. Presley taught at 'C' Middle School; Ms. Gatsby taught at 'A' Middle School; and Ms. Harrison taught at 'D' Middle School.

A native of Houston, TX, Ms. Presley was in her sixth year of teaching. Throughout her life, she had a passion for cooking or "chef-ing," as she called it. After working as a chef and other jobs while also attending college, Ms. Presley graduated with a degree in culinary arts with a hospitality management emphasis. After completing her degree, Ms. Presley worked in restaurant management for a few months; however, after experiencing the extensive work schedule of being a professional chef and a few stressful months in restaurant management, she chose to pursue a career in teaching. Ms. Presley explained,

> I was kinda [sic] stressed out, you know being a manager. And one of my friends had told me about alternative teacher's certification, so I - I literally went in… left managing on a Tuesday, went into a job fair on a Saturday, and got hired on the spot… Now I can't see myself doing anything else besides teaching.

Ms. Presley started as a long-term substitute as a family consumer science teacher at a school in the Houston area. She earned certification to teach family consumer science and technology literacy. Ms. Presley and her family later moved to Arkansas due to her husband's job, and eventually settled in Eugene where she now teaches Technology Literacy at 'C' Middle School.

Ms. Presley and I arranged to meet during her plan period. On the date of our meeting, I reported to the main office where Ms. Presley greeted me and then led me downstairs to her classroom. Ms. Presley's classroom had three long rows of tables with computers arranged for student use. Ms. Presley led me toward her desk. She sat down, and I sat in a nearby student chair. We reviewed and signed the adult consent form; then, we began the interview.

Ms. Presley began by talking about her college experience and her non-teaching jobs where she worked during college and after completion of her degree. She described her decision-making process to seek alternative teacher certification. Ms. Presley also spoke of her moves from two previous teaching positions from two other states.

When talking about her first year of teaching, Ms. Presley said she was not very well-prepared. She said her alternative certification classes addressed only "what you would do in a fantasy world with kids." Ms. Presley said teaching is "totally different" from what her classes presented. She stated, "They don't tell you that parents are going to be calling you for certain things. They're not gonna [sic] tell you about the way the system works." Ms. Presley provided the example of potentially getting "yelled at" for not passing "a kid that was on a sports team." Ms. Presley said another area where she was not prepared was in providing modifications for students with special needs. She explained the alternative certification program notified her that "You document everything." But, Ms. Presley said she was not prepared for working with students with special needs.

> They don't tell you that in one class you have to modify theirs [pointing] so that the letters are bigger, you have to modify theirs [pointing in a different area] where they can

only have two multiple choice instead of four. You have meetings to go to... to talk about these kids' modification even though you don't make any of these decisions.

When talking about what supports she used as a beginning teacher, Ms. Presley said she used "the internet a lot." Ms. Presley used Google and a website called Teachers4teachers.org. Ms. Presley said through this website, she learned about techniques that worked for other teachers. She said she also read a lot of books. Ms. Presley said she wrote notes to help her to be prepared. Ms. Presley said she kept in touch with a friend from college who was a teacher. Because that friend also taught family consumer science, Ms. Presley said her friend provided useful ideas and emotional support.

Ms. Presley said she had a paid mentor assigned by the district, but the "mentor did not help whatsoever." Ms. Presley said she "may have seen her [the mentor] once." Ms. Presley said the alternative certification agency also provided a mentor, but that mentor was not very helpful either. Ms. Presley said that mentor would "walk in and check on you… maybe three or four times" and the mentor gave her "a little feedback paper." She said those were her only interactions with that mentor.

Ms. Presley said reporting to school early as a new teacher a few days before the other teachers reported was useful. She said, "It was so helpful just because you had people here that were always willing to help you." Ms. Presley explained this experience assisted her in "getting to know the school."

Ms. Presley said during her first year, she turned to a teacher in a neighboring classroom for help. She said, "The teacher next door was pretty helpful." Ms. Presley gained help with lessons and learned "how to get things done within the school" from that teacher. Other than the help from the teacher next door, Ms. Presley said, "I'm telling you, my first year, I was just winging it."

Ms. Presley said she arranged to observe other teachers teach their classes. Ms. Presley explained she observed teachers during her plan period during her first month of teaching. Ms.

Presley said she gained ideas on classroom procedures and classroom management through these observations.

In closing, Ms. Presley shared she did not feel like her administrators supported the teachers. Ms. Presley said, "I think most of the time, teachers are kind of left on their own." Ms. Presley also shared she did not think her administrators distinguished differences in the needs of an alternatively certified teacher in contrast to the needs of a traditionally certified teacher. She said, "They don't care about that kind of stuff. They care about their numbers, and they care that you're having your class under control, and that you're doing what you need to be doing…that's it."

Ms. Presley and I decided to meet two weeks later during her plan again. When I entered the classroom, her students were leaving to go to the next class. I walked toward her desk where she was sitting and gave her a muffin that I brought for her. We sat, and we commenced our interview.

Ms. Presley began by talking about gaining useful support from other teachers through conversation. She explained sometimes the support was gained through a "random" interaction. As an example, Ms. Presley described a time when she was at an Oprah conference where Ms. Presley coincidentally sat next to a teacher. Ms. Presley said they talked with each other about school issues, and Ms. Presley said the teacher shared some great ideas on how to engage her students.

Ms. Presley talked again about the lack of supports provided by her first school district. She said she had "a mentor that was supposed to mentor… That was it…I don't think that they provide enough training." Ms. Presley compared that experience to her first year in the Eugene School District. Ms. Presley said in this district, the training was "extremely different" in a positive way. Ms. Presley said this district arranged planning meetings for teachers of the same subject. Additionally, Ms. Presley said this district provided a content-area specialist who visited frequently and provided subject-specific supports. Ms. Presley also explained the specialist was

easy to work with. She said the specialist told the teachers to "Teach however you want to teach, as long as you cover these basics… Here are the worksheets… Just use them as resources for what you want to do." Ms. Presley indicated she appreciated this flexibility.

Ms. Presley shared she was frustrated with a lack of consistency between policies and real expectations. As an example, Ms. Presley spoke of training that "kind of sugar-coated" the information being provided to teachers simply to cover mandated requirements. Then, Ms. Presley explained, "They're like 'Look, in the classroom, this is how it's actually gonna [sic] happen." As examples, Ms. Presley cited their school's chain of command and grades for student-athletes.

Ms. Presley described supports gained from other teachers while in her current position. Ms. Presley said she communicated frequently with another teacher who taught the same subject at a different middle school in the district. The two teachers emailed each other "once or twice a day." She said they share ideas and resources, and they make sure they are covering all the topics they need to cover. Ms. Presley said, "That's probably just been the biggest support because you have somebody where you can kinda [sic] feed off of them, and they can kind of feed off of you." Ms. Presley said she also gained support from a teacher on another PLC within her school. She said they share resources and discuss planning, but not as frequently.

In addition to gaining support from other teachers, Ms. Presley said she still found support through online sources. Ms. Presley said when she had a concern, "You have to just type it in. There's gonna [sic] be a YouTube video on how to fix a problem. So I'm on the internet a lot." Ms. Presley said two examples of ideas she gained from the internet are icebreakers and whole-brain teaching.

Ms. Presley spoke about her first principal. She said that although, "He was a micromanager," her principal taught her a great deal about professionalism. She explained his lessons on professionalism are something she carried on with her to her new positions. Ms. Presley stated,

That was probably the best tool that I could've received my first year, just knowing how I am supposed to be as a teacher, what are the expectations besides teaching that I need to uphold throughout my whole teaching career and, I mean in life, honestly.

Ms. Presley continued by explaining the majority of her professional development opportunities during her first year were not very useful. She said, "A lot of the professional developments that I end up going to, I do not utilize the information at all." Ms. Presley said her district was only interested in ensuring the teachers acquired the necessary number of professional development hours. Ms. Presley explained her administration's approach was, "As long as you got the hours, they're okay with."

Ms. Gatsby. Ms. Gatsby was in her twelfth year of teaching. Ms. Gatsby grew up in Wyoming. From an early age, Ms. Gatsby knew she wanted to be a teacher. She said, "I always knew I wanted to work with kids pretty much because I'm just a kid myself, and I really enjoy working with kids." After completing high school, Ms. Gatsby went to college in New Mexico. After graduating with her bachelor's in education, she moved with her husband to Colorado, then Illinois, New Mexico, and finally to Oklahoma in 2002. Ms. Gatsby began teaching in 2003 as a middle school alternative education teacher at the school district's alternative academy. After teaching alternative education for two years, she transitioned into teaching middle school science at 'A' Middle School and later transferred to 'B' Middle School. Ms. Gatsby has three grown children and is married to a middle school teacher who teaches at another school in the district.

Upon arrival at the school, the administrative assistant in the front office directed me to wait at a waiting area in the center of the building. Ms. Gatsby arrived a few minutes later, and we visited as we walked toward the back of the building to her classroom. As I walked across her classroom, we talked about her pet hamster that was in a cage near her desk. She invited me to sit anywhere I chose. I walked to the opposite side of a table and sat down. Ms. Gatsby joined me; we reviewed the adult consent form; and we conducted the interview.

Ms. Gatsby began her interview by telling me about her family of five, her childhood growing up in Wyoming. She also told me about her college experience in New Mexico and about experiences from other locations where she and her family lived prior to moving to Oklahoma. She also shared her reasons for wanting to become a teacher.

In terms of how prepared Ms. Gatsby was to begin teaching, she said she "understood how the brain develops in children," but she "had different expectations of how things would be" in the classroom. Ms. Gatsby explained she had to learn some things as she "was working on the job." She said, "I would say the majority, I learned as I was working on the job." Ms. Gatsby stated she "planned everything out for several weeks at a time, then got into the classroom and realized this is not working." At that point, she said she "asked for help." Ms. Gatsby said she "did a lot of that."

Ms. Gatsby said her mentor and her principal were the two people she requested support form most often. She said her mentor was "just amazing," and she "learned so much from her on how to work with difficult kids… just by watching her." Of her principal, Ms. Gatsby said he "was so supportive of my program…He was seen in my classroom often. He would come in everyday and just come say 'hi' to the kids."

Ms. Gatsby also shared a time when her principal engaged with an angry parent on her behalf. Ms. Gatsby explained the parent had a history of giving the student an "out," and the parent blamed Ms. Gatsby for the child's poor decision. This escalated to a meeting between the parent, principal, and Ms. Gatsby. She explained the principal "just completely supported me in the meeting and did not bow down to the parent, and that was really really big to me." Ms. Gatsby further explained she felt supported by her principals throughout her career.

Ms. Gatsby said she lost contact with her peers and professors from college due to staying at home with her children after she completed her degree. She explained she received support from other teachers within her school and various professional development opportunities. Ms. Gatsby said she sought assistance from others on a daily basis. She said she

gained support from another science teacher. Ms. Gatsby said he "was a huge help my first year." She explained discipline and classroom management were her major concerns.

For the second interview, I met Ms. Gatsby at her classroom during her plan period a week after the initial interview. I entered her classroom as she concluded a conversation with two students. The students left the room, and we sat down at a table near her desk to begin the interview.

Ms. Gatsby began by talking about supports she had during her first year. She explained she had a phone in her classroom and was able to call her mentor during the workday. She said she called her mentor anytime she had a question. Ms. Gatsby explained, "I just really learned how to deal with some really difficult problems with kids pretty much on my own." But Ms. Gatsby said she gained others' input after an incident occurred.

Ms. Gatsby explained in her first year, she felt like her classroom was "an island." But in her current situation, "We're all a big family, and we all support each other." Ms. Gatsby said she reached out to teachers "all the time" and worked closely in collaboration with her PLC. Her PLC met weekly and emailed each other often. They collaborated to develop plans and address student issues. Ms. Gatsby stated, "I think PLCs are really important."

When talking about administrative support, Ms. Gatsby described another situation about a supportive principal. She said a student, who was also an athlete, accused Ms. Gatsby of being racist. This incident escalated to a meeting involving the principal, teacher, and parent. She said while she was only "holding him [the student] accountable," the parent was not satisfied; However, the principal supported Ms. Gatsby in her actions.

Ms. Gatsby explained Smart Start was not in place when she began teaching. Ms. Gatsby listed her mentor and her principal as her most significant formal supports. Ms. Gatsby relayed she also volunteered to serve on a committee for a program at a nearby university. Some university professors also served on the committee, and Ms. Gatsby said the professors provided some useful input to her. She said, "That was really great. I enjoyed that."

In talking about her mentor, Ms. Gatsby stated, "It was such grace and kindness and love toward the kids. And she always had a little endearing term for each of them." Ms. Gatsby explained she learned to share her life with her student because she is "a real person." She felt that by implementing this example set by her mentor enhanced her relationship with her students. Ms. Gatsby said, "I think that was a really big one [lesson]."

In discussing some her other formal supports, Ms. Gatsby indicated they were lacking. Ms. Gatsby said, "It seemed like there was a script that we had to basically fill… It was just boom, boom, boom." Ms. Gatsby said this "regimented" framework did not allow opportunities for new teachers to ask questions or to discuss their concerns.

Ms. Harrison. Ms. Harrison was in her thirteenth year of teaching. She grew up in Eugene and completed her elementary and secondary schooling in this district. After graduating from Sacramento High School, Ms. Harrison attended a nearby university in Oklahoma. She completed her degree in instrumental music education in 2002. With the goal of becoming a professional clarinetist, Ms. Harrison planned to continue her studies as a graduate student. However, a teaching position opened at 'D' Middle School where her husband was teaching. Ms. Harrison said she entered the teaching profession "sort of by default, but not really." She said this is the only teaching position that she would have considered accepting. She explained, "It's the only interview I ever took." After becoming a teacher, she continued to study clarinet with university professors in the area. Six years ago, Ms. Harrison earned a position playing clarinet professionally. In addition to her jobs as a teacher and as a clarinetist, Ms. Harrison has two young children; her husband also happens to be her co-teacher.

Ms. Harrison and I arranged to meet in the evening at her home. We greeted each other, and Ms. Harrison led me to her home office for the interview. Ms. Harrison had a computer set up in one corner and a music stand with sheet music on it nearby. She had other music-related equipment placed throughout the office. Ms. Harrison sat at her desk chair, and I sat in another

chair that was in the room. We reviewed the adult consent form and proceeded with the interview.

Ms. Harrison began by telling me about her background. Ms. Harrison explained how she came to be a professional clarinetist and teacher at 'D' Middle School. When talking about challenges of being a first-year teacher, she said she felt ready. Ms. Harrison quipped, "I wasn't scared about anything… I didn't feel unprepared… I had people to ask questions." Ms. Harrison had a co-teacher. Ms. Harrison stated she was "not doing it [teaching] alone." Ms. Harrison explained, because an effective system was already in place, Ms. Harrison was able to ask, "Ok, what do we do the first day of school? What should we do now? The rest of the first week? What do we do? Where do we go?" Ms. Harrison explained she "just kind of fell into the routine, the system that was in place."

Ms. Harrison said as a first-year teacher, she participated in Smart Start. She said "A few of those [meetings], very useful. Some of them, whatever." Ms. Harrison expressed the most valuable aspect of Smart Start was "just to meet people and talk to people." Ms. Harrison said she was assigned a formal mentor. Ms. Harrison said she met the mentor, and the mentor told her to ask her co-teacher if she had questions. So the mentor was not very supportive to Ms. Harrison.

Outside of her formal supports, Ms. Harrison spoke extensively of her network of band teachers. In her first year of teaching, Ms. Harrison said she requested another band teacher from one of the high schools to visit her class and provide feedback. She also said she had a retired band teacher come to her class to provide feedback. In addition to the classroom visits, Ms. Harrison made recordings of her students and had other band teachers listen and provide input. Ms. Harrison explained, "The smart band directors, we just ask each other for help. You know, just 'Listen to this. What do you do?' So just a number of mentors…" Ms. Harrison expounded, "There's a big network of just band directors, even just within Eugene. We just talk with each other, shoot ideas off each other."

Ms. Harrison also explained she attended workshops and other professional development opportunities. Ms. Harrison said she picked up ideas and "little things" at those workshops, and she implemented those into her classes. She said those ideas were useful.

Ms. Harrison explained that during her first year, she did not request assistance from principals or counselors. She said she collaborated with principals and counselors more in recent years than she did in her first year. However, she attributed her higher level of interaction with administrators and counselors to now having people in those positions who are helpful.

This concluded our initial interview. Ms. Harrison and I arranged to meet a week later at her home. I arrived at her house in the early evening, and we chatted as we walked through the house to her office. While her husband and two children played in a nearby room, Ms. Harrison and I conducted the second interview.

Ms. Harrison began by talking about her supports. Ms. Harrison said, "With band directors, we joke that we just have the constant PLC because we're all friends. So we get together and just talk shop all the time." Through these interactions, Ms. Harrison gained much valuable support. As an example of meeting with other band directors, Ms. Harrison described meeting "at the bar after the concert" during the evening of a music educator workshop. She said the band directors talked about what pieces their groups were playing and "just all kinds of stuff."

In addition to meeting outside of school, Ms. Harrison said she had some other band directors come to her class to work with her students. Ms. Harrison listed the two band directors that she mentioned in her first interview. Ms. Harrison said she requested their help, "just because I was kind of, oh, just green and kind of frustrated with how it was going and not sure. She said those two teachers provided a great deal of support.

Ms. Harrison spoke of the formal supports that were provided to her during her first year. Ms. Harrison mentioned Smart Start. She said generally speaking, the professional development provided by the district was not very supportive concerning her subject area. Ms. Harrison explained other subjects have a good amount of curriculum planning meetings and "all that stuff,"

but Ms. Harrison said, "I just made it all up as I went along." For those reasons, Ms. Harrison said her informal supports were "very useful," while she said her formal supports "were not even remotely useful." Ms. Harrison further explained most professional development opportunities were "designed for the core subject classroom teacher… Professional development is designed to increase math and reading proficiency and test scores… and it's not applicable to my classroom." Ms. Harrison qualified that statement with, "although good teaching is good teaching."

Ms. Harrison spoke of the value of observing other teachers teach. She said one of the more valuable experiences in her teacher preparation program was observing other teachers teach. She also explained her principal required each teacher in the school to go observe another class. Ms. Harrison explained,

> It would've been really useful to be given the opportunity to go observe other band directors… and get ideas for how they teach content and stuff, but I did go just observe people in my building that I thought were good teachers like this gal who's a reading and writing teacher, but just how she interacts with her class, it was good and helpful.

Ms. Harrison explained one of the teachers Ms. Harrison observed was very influential when she was a high school student in his class. Ms. Harrison stated, "I am my own version of what I got from him, if that makes any sense." She also explained, "I think the basic 'how you teach' is your personality, and how you are taught, and how you roll all that all together." Ms. Harrison indicated that teacher had a very positive influence on her through her high school and professional settings.

Ms. Harrison also spoke of observing teachers work with students at honor band rehearsals. Ms. Harrison said she watched a rehearsal and said to herself, "I'm going to take everything he's saying and do it with my band on Monday." She said she tried to remember as many things as possible, and they sometimes worked for her.

Ms. Harrison then talked more about her support from other administrators and teachers. When she began teaching, Ms. Harrison said she asked a particular band director "a ton about

stuff." But in regard to her principal, Ms. Harrison said, "I wouldn't go to her for anything. I just steered clear, just do my own thing." Ms. Harrison explained if she had an issue as a beginning teacher, she tried to "deal with it" herself or gain input from other teachers.

In closing, Ms. Harrison spoke briefly of supports she gained through workshops outside the district. She said she attended music-related workshops. From these workshops, she gained ideas, even if it was "just a little catchphrase or something."

Group III: Initial analysis. At the time of interviews, the Group III teachers were teaching at three different middle schools within the Eugene School District. Only one of these teachers, Ms. Presley, had teaching experience outside the Eugene School District. Prior to her move to Oklahoma, Ms. Presley taught at two different school districts. Ms. Presley is now teaching at 'C' Middle School. Ms. Gatsby started her teaching career at 'A' Middle School, but later switched to 'B' Middle School. Ms. Harrison is still in her original teaching assignment after twelve years of teaching.

These three teachers comprised what I believe is this study's most diverse group of participants. One of the most significant similarities of these participants is that they were very active in seeking assistance from appropriate people whether it was through formal arrangements or through informal interactions. Ms. Presley relied heavily on the teachers who taught in nearby classrooms or her "neighborhood teachers." Ms. Gatsby had tremendous support from her principal and from her formally assigned mentor. Finally, although she did not get much support from her formally assigned mentor, Ms. Harrison gained support from her co-teacher and from other contacts inside and outside the school.

Each of these teachers had a slightly different path into the field of teaching. Ms. Presley went through an alternative certification program. Although Ms. Gatsby went through a traditional teacher program, she did not enter the profession until a few years after graduating. Ms. Harrison entered teaching immediately after graduating from college, although her original

plan was to continue studying clarinet as a graduate student. Because of their paths to the teaching profession, it appeared that Ms. Harrison was the only participant from this group who was positioned to engage in seeking support from her university professors after she entered teaching. Because of the break in time between completion of her degree and her entrance to the profession, Ms. Gatsby had lost her university contacts. Ms. Presley did not have those contacts available to begin with due to her alternative certification route.

Formal supports. Only one participant from Group III participated in the Smart Start Program. Ms. Harrison, the only person from this group to participate in the program, commented on those Smart Start professional development opportunities, "A few of those were very useful. Some of them, whatever. But it was good just to meet people and talk to people."

Ms. Harrison was in a situation much different from that of most beginning teachers. From the beginning of her teaching career, Ms. Harrison has co-taught her Band classes with her informal mentor/ co-teacher. It just so happens that her co-teacher is also her husband. They were married prior to Ms. Harrison becoming a teacher.

As a result of stepping into a situation with a more experienced co-teacher and a process already in place, Ms. Harrison explained that while she felt "that having a plan is good," she also recognized, "I'm also not doing it alone." She said she "just kind of fell into the routine… the system that was in place," and she "wasn't having to like totally start from scratch or invent anything myself." Ms. Harrison was able to ask her more experienced co-teacher questions like, "Ok, what do we do the first day of school? What should we do now? The rest of the first week? Where do we go?"

Ms. Harrison was formally set up with a "buddy teacher" or a mentor. Ms. Harrison's assigned mentor was an electives teacher who taught a different subject. However, because Ms. Harrison and the other Band teacher were already married at the time Ms. Harrison began teaching, the assigned mentor told Ms. Harrison early on, "Oh, I know Mr. Harrison will be your

helper… I'm your buddy teacher, so if you need anything that your husband can't help you with, just come ask me." As a result, Ms. Harrison relied on the support of her co-teacher/husband and her assigned mentor did not provide very much, if any, useful support.

Ms. Presley had two assigned mentors, although neither of them was very supportive of her. Ms. Presley's alternative certification program in Texas provided a mentor who "came in maybe three or four times to come and walk in and check on you and watch you teach and give you like a little feedback paper." Ms. Presley indicated this resulted in very scripted, vague, non-individualized feedback that was not very useful.

Ms. Presley's other mentor was provided by the school district where she was teaching in Texas. Ms. Presley said, "The district just provides the mentor for the first year, but they don't check to see if the mentor is doing anything… The mentor did not help whatsoever… I may have seen her once." Obviously, this was not a positive mentorship either.

Ms. Gatsby had a very supportive mentor teacher. She stated, "She was just amazing… I learned so much from her on how to work with difficult kids, kids who were hurting, kids who were defiant, just by watching her." Ms. Gatsby shared that their classrooms had phones, and she was able to call her mentor anytime she needed to do so.

Ms. Harrison said her administration made arrangements this year for the teachers to go observe other teachers in the school teach. Ms. Harrison said, "what would've been really useful would be the opportunity to go observe other band directors." But she said she went and watched some teachers in her school who she "thought were good teachers," and this experience "was good and helpful" to see how they interacted with their classes.

During her first year, Ms. Gatsby also observed others teaching. On watching her mentor teacher teach, Ms. Gatsby said, "It was such grace and kindness and love toward the kids. And she always had a little endearing term for each of them." Ms. Gatsby applied those lessons to her own classroom and explained, "Every kid knows that I actually really have a heart for them, that I do love them, and I mean that when I say that."

The Group III participants shared that they attended additional professional development opportunities. Ms. Harrison said she attends a significant amount of self-selected professional development workshops. She listed the Midwest Band Clinic in Chicago, the Oklahoma Music Educators Association Convention, the Texas Music Educators Association Convention, and other Band-specific professional development opportunities. At these workshops, Ms. Harrison indicated she picks up a variety of ideas such as "what to do with your beginner flute" players with a specific challenge, or a specific exercise to do with clarinet students. She said she always returns to her classes with new ideas that she will try, "even if it's just a little catchphrase or something." She said through these professional development opportunities, she sometimes observes rehearsals and thinks, "I'm going to take everything he's saying and do it with my band on Monday." She also talks with other teachers and said she "tries to pick up and steal good things that I hear other people do."

Ms. Presley did not have a good opinion of the majority of her professional development experiences. Ms. Presley shared that "a lot of the professional developments that I end up going to, I do not utilize the information at all." Ms. Presley explained that when she was teaching in Texas, her district was more interested in having the required number of professional development hours rather ensuring professional development was serving a need. As an example, Ms. Presley described a professional development workshop she was required to attend where she learned "how to make a penguin booklet." She said that even though this workshop was not applicable to her classroom instruction, her district's outlook was, "As long as you got the hours, they're okay with it."

Ms. Presley explained that she found some useful support during the additional days that were required of new teachers prior to the report date for the career teachers. Ms. Presley said, "It was so helpful just because you had people here that, they were always willing to help you… They were always willing to, you know, assist you." She said this was a good time to learn school procedures, learn about the school culture, and "get to know the school."

Ms. Presley expressed that she welcomed the approach that her current school district takes concerning professional development. This school district groups teachers of the same subject together during their professional development programs. Ms. Presley explained, "I was able to meet new teachers who were teaching Tech. Lit. as well as old teachers and get their input which was great."

Ms. Gatsby said she takes advantage of numerous professional development opportunities. She said "I do lots of professional development." These are mostly subject-specific. As an example, Ms. Gatsby has attended a workshop at a nearby university for two weeks over the summer for the previous four summers. Ms. Gatsby said she incorporates some of those ideas into her instructional practice.

Ms. Presley shared that her current school district has a content specialist who supports each of the Technology Literacy teachers throughout the district. This was a helpful support. Ms. Presley said the content specialist would "just give you advice." She said this is great because the content specialist would say, "Take it or leave it. I'm gonna [sic] give you this information, but you teach however you want to teach as long as you cover these basics… Just use them as resources for what you want to do."

As for support from administrators, the Group III participants had an array of outlooks. Unfortunately, Ms. Harrison said she did not feel like she had very much support from her administrators during the early years of her career. Ms. Harrison said, "When I was first starting out, the principal was very, uh, I don't know how to describe her. I wouldn't go to her for anything. I just steered clear, just do my own thing… I just kind of do what I'm supposed to do" and just "deal with it myself."

Ms. Presley felt isolated, and she was "just winging it," as she described her situation during her first year. While Ms. Presley did not feel like she received very much support from her administration, she admits that she learned a good amount about professionalism from her

principal. Ms. Presley's principal was a "micro-manager" who was very "strict." But Ms. Presley said she learned his expectations:

> how you should come to class, how you go to meetings and sit at the front of the room. You never sit at the back, how someone's always watching you, how you're supposed to dress, how you're supposed to act, what ways you do not step over boundaries with students… It's something I carried on with no matter what district I was at… That was probably the best tool that I could've received my first year, just knowing how I am supposed to be as a teacher, what are the expectations besides teaching that I need to uphold throughout my whole teaching career, and I mean in life, honestly.

Ms. Gatsby's experience with her administrators was on the more positive end of the spectrum. As a beginning teacher, Ms. Gatsby found a significant amount of support from her principal who was "just amazing." The principal "was so supportive of my program." Being an alternative education teacher, Ms. Gatsby felt like her classroom "was really an island" and that "A lot of people didn't understand what the program was and didn't really want to deal with my kids." However, Ms. Gatsby's principal visited her classroom almost daily to "come say hi to the kids." He also supported her through difficult conversations with students' parents. In one example, the parents and student would not take responsibility for the student's bad decision. Ms. Gatsby described the meeting with the principal and parents, saying the principal, "just completely supported me in the meeting and did not bow down to the parents, and that was really big to me." She thought, "Wow! He really supports me!" Ms. Gatsby said she felt like, "Anything I ever needed, he would help me…. It was just an open-door policy with him." Ms. Gatsby said she has felt supported by her principals "the entire time I've taught here" and that, "They've been just wonderful. I couldn't ask for better support."

Ms. Harrison said until this year, she did not seek support from the school counselor. Currently, Ms. Harrison collaborates with her current counselor on some of the "bigger problems" because the counselor is "easy to work with." Ms. Harrison explained,

> This year is probably the most I've ever turned to a school counselor for help. I've had some challenging students before, but I have a school counselor this year who is super helpful… She's just good to work with, so I don't feel alone with those things, so I just go knock on her door and say, "Let me tell ya what's up." And then she's like, "Ok, I'm gonna [sic] help you deal with that."

If this type of counselor support was available from the beginning of her career, Ms. Harrison indicated this is a resource Ms. Harrison would have made use of more frequently.

Ms. Gatsby is the only participant in Group III who identified her PLC team as a support. Ms. Gatsby described her PLC team as a group made up of a variety of different personalities, but they "work really, really well together." She said her team is "always willing to try new concepts together or new ideas."

Informal supports inside the school. Ms. Harrison gained lots of support from her husband/co-teacher. In addition to him, Ms. Harrison also gained significant support from other Band teachers within the school district. Ms. Harrison actively sought out help "just because I was kind of, oh, just green and kind of frustrated with how it was going and not sure." She said she would have "someone listening to the band," or "come work with that group," or "listen to some tapes." Ms. Harrison said she felt like she had "just a number of mentors." She explained, "So I think with band directing, the smart band directors, we just ask each other for help… I mean, there's a big network of just band directors, even just within Eugene, we just talk with each other, shoot ideas off each other."

Ms. Harrison gained support from many different band teachers inside and even outside her school district. Ms. Harrison explained, "I would say with band directors, we joke that we just have the constant PLC because we just always… we're all friends, so we get together and just talk shop all the time." As an example, Ms. Harrison described a time at a conference in another

city when the band teachers met at a bar after the program's concerts, and they were "just talking about pieces they're going to play that spring and just all kinds of stuff."

During her first year, Ms. Presley gained support from her "neighborhood teachers" and specifically, "the teacher next door." Even though the neighboring teacher taught a different subject, the two "got along really great." This teacher was helpful to Ms. Presley in providing guidance on "how to get things done within the school." Aside from the help from those neighborhood teachers, Ms. Presley said, "My first year, I was just winging it. I was literally just…(laugh) you know."

At this point in her career, Ms. Presley still engaged with other teachers to gain and provide support. Ms. Presley explained that she and another Technology Literacy teacher at a different middle school emailed each other once or twice a day. She said they planned a lot together. She said that mutual support is helpful because "you have somebody where you can kinda [sic] feed off of them, and they can kind of feed off of you as far as what's working and what's not working for all of our kids."

Ms. Presley also engaged with a colleague who taught the same subject but was on a different PLC. Ms. Presley consulted with that teacher to determine how long she should plan to spend a certain topics and other similar details. They worked together to make sure enough time was planned for each required lesson.

Ms. Presley said she recognized in her first year of teaching that observing other teachers teaching would benefit her, so she took it upon herself to "go in and find teachers that I knew had good classroom management just to see what their techniques were." She said, "I was like grabbing and pulling stuff from everybody." Ms. Presley shared that through those observations, she learned various classroom procedures including how to prompt students to get quiet, classroom entrance and exit procedures, and ideas on how to develop classroom rules with the students' input.

Ms. Gatsby recognized early in her career that no matter how much she prepared, she came to the realization, "I really don't know what I'm doing. I'm just gonna [sic] have to ask for help." Ms. Gatsby explained she would ask for help if she encountered a situation "that made me very uncomfortable and I didn't know how to handle it… I would go seek the help of some other individual who had much more experience so I didn't just step off a cliff and stick my foot in my mouth, and figure out how can I best handle this."

Teaching alternative education, Ms. Gatsby was in a situation where "I had kids throwing chairs at me, kids lying constantly, or just a lot of really rough situations, not something a first-year teacher probably want to be thrown into." Because of that need for support, Ms. Gatsby explained she asked a lot of people for help. She said, "I did a lot of that." Ms. Gatsby explained that she would ask for input from others at least a few times a week by asking questions like "Hey, what do you think about this situation? Or I tried this, and this seemed to work. Do you have another idea?" She explained, "I never ever felt that I had the answers."

Early in her career, Ms. Gatsby was able to use the phone in her classroom to gain input from other teachers. Ms. Gatsby said, "If I ever had a question about it, I would pick up the phone and call my mentor." Ms. Gatsby explained that the phone in the classroom gave them the ability to communicate during their classes, so Ms. Gatsby could call and ask her mentor questions. At this point in her career, Ms. Gatsby said, "I feel like we all need to be communicating," so she emails other teachers "as needed."

Ms. Gatsby said she still talks to teachers to gain new ideas. She explained, "We're all a big family, and we all support each other." Even at this point in her career, she reaches out to younger teachers. She does this because, "I love their ideas…I want that new blood. I don't want to get stuck in my ways… I try really hard not to be." As an example, Ms. Gatsby recently picked up a strategy from a teacher who has only three years of teaching experience. This teacher has a form that the student has to complete during lunch detention explaining "why they got lunch detention and what kind of choices they could make that would make a difference next time."

Ms. Gatsby explained she tries to incorporate these new ideas into her classroom. Ms. Gatsby expounded, "I work with some amazing educators… If I didn't have the support that I have throughout the building with colleagues, I think it would be a much tougher job."

Informal supports outside the school setting. Ms. Harrison stated she had "a number of mentors." One of the people Ms. Harrison reached out to for support was Mr. Ahab. She said, "I had Mr. Ahab come work with the group." Although Ms. Harrison and Mr. Ahab developed their professional relationship while Mr. Ahab was still teaching, Mr. Ahab had retired by the time Ms. Harrison began teaching. So any support provided to Ms. Harrison by Mr. Ahab would have been arranged informally between the two of them.

Ms. Presley made significant use of books and online resources to find ideas to improve her instructional practice. She said she was "on the internet a lot" because "there's so many different things that you can find online now to help you with any kind of problem. You have to just type it in. There's gonna [sic] be a YouTube video on how to fix a problem." Specifically, she made extensive use of YouTube, Pinterest, and Google, and www.4teachers.org "had a lot of helpful hints." These sources helped Ms. Presley in "finding out what worked for other teachers," and applying those ideas to her own practice where appropriate. An example of an idea she gained from online resources is "whole brain teaching." Ms. Presley described this as a great way to keep all students engaged and "to make sure that the kids are doing what they're supposed to do at all times."

Ms. Presley also kept in touch with one of her classmates from college. The two teachers taught the same subject. They were teaching different grade levels, but the two were able to provide support to each other. Because Ms. Presley was the only Technology Literacy teacher in her school, this peer was able to assist in developing lesson plans and other subject-specific concerns.

Ms. Presley gained support from other teachers that she met through non-school activities. She met a teacher at an Oprah life class/conference in Dallas. Through their discussion, Ms. Presley gained some ideas. One topic of their discussion was the fact that Ms. Presley was taught, "you're not supposed to sit down while you're teaching. You're supposed to be moving around the whole time." This teacher that Ms. Presley met suggested, "You can sit down, but just make sure you're sitting down next to the kids so you're still engaging in some kind of conversation." Thanks to this exchange, Ms. Presley experimented and adapted this strategy to her own classroom.

Ms. Gatsby found additional support through serving on a committee. She served on an education committee at a local university. The committee had some education professors who served on the committee too. Out of curiosity, the professors asked several questions about Ms. Gatsby's program. Ms. Gatsby said, "They just wanted to know about the program, and they would just provide me support wherever I needed help, and that was really great."

Other realities. Ms. Harrison shared that the formal supports that were provided to her were only somewhat useful. Even though she said her "informal supports were very useful to what I was doing, and my formal supports were not even remotely useful," she also indicated some of the Smart Start supports were "very useful." Ms. Harrison felt like most of the supports provided through the district were usually focused on tested subject areas. Ms. Harrison said, "Anything formal through the district is designed for a core subject classroom teacher, and…professional development is designed to increase math and reading proficiency and test scores and it's hard to make it applicable to my classroom…."

Ms. Gatsby expressed an opinion similar to Ms. Harrison's on her formal supports. Ms. Gatsby explained, "It seemed like there was a script that we had to basically fill…., and it was just boom, boom, boom, as opposed to tell me what's going on in your classroom, or what are you learning about?" This "script" did not allow for dialogue or provide the opportunity to focus on Ms. Gatsby's challenges at the time.

Ms. Gatsby and Ms. Presley both expressed that they learned quite a bit through experience after they began teaching. Ms. Gatsby said, "I had to learn things as I was working on the job. I would say the majority I learned as I was working on the job." As an example, Ms. Gatsby learned, "If I showed mutual respect to my students, they would respect me as well." This is an approach she learned through trial and error.

Classroom management is another area Ms. Gatsby learned through trial and error. Ms. Gatsby explained that as an alternative education teacher, she had the same fifteen to eighteen students in the same classroom for every subject every day. Ms. Gatsby said, "I was on my own in a classroom by myself… It was a self-contained classroom all day." She explained, "I just really learned how to deal with some really difficult problems with kids pretty much on my own."

Ms. Presley shared that she had to learn certain organizational culture lessons for herself after she began teaching. Ms. Presley said she felt like her teacher preparation program prepared her for a "fantasy world with kids" and that "some things formally are kind of sugar-coated." She explained,

> You take this test to pass the certification test, but it has nothing to do with, I mean, the kids. It's a totally different, just being thrown in there. They don't tell you that parents are going to be calling you for certain things. They're not gonna [sic] tell you about the way the system works. I mean, I remember how seeing it was high school, sports was big. If you didn't pass a kid that was on a sports team, you got yelled at.

Ms. Presley indicated that she did not get very much support from her school as a beginning teacher and that much of her own learning came through "trial and error." Ms. Presley shared, "I think most of the time, teachers are kind of left on their own… You have to want to get it in order to, you know,… get to the next steps in life." She was disappointed that nobody recognized that a person who went through an alternative certification program would need additional supports that a person who went through a college preparation and traditional certification program would not need. Ms. Presley stated

> So they don't really distinguish "oh, well they went through alternative teacher certification. They may need a little bit more help." They don't care about that kind of stuff. They care about their numbers, and they care that you're having your class under control and that you're doing what you need to be doing to get your kids to the next spot in life. That's it [she laughed].

Group III Themes. These three participants have very different backgrounds, but one theme that arose is they **appreciated the ability to have some say in their professional development options**. Ms. Presley said she did not have any say in what professional development training she attended in her first year of teaching, and as a result, she said, "I do not utilize that information at all." But in her current situation, Ms. Presley is able to engage in professional development programs alongside her counterparts who teach the same subject. She said she is now able to "get their input, which was great." Ms. Harrison described attending useful music-specific professional development workshops, and Ms. Gatsby spoke of attending science workshops over the summer where she gains ideas that she incorporates into her teaching practice.

All three Group III participants talked about the **value of observing other teachers teach**. Ms. Presley said during her first year, she would "go in and find teacher that I knew had good classroom management just to see what their techniques were." Ms. Harrison spoke of observing band classes prior to entering the teaching profession, and not observing again until her thirteenth year of teaching. Ms. Harrison stated, "What would've been really useful would be the opportunity to go observe other band directors." Ms. Gatsby also noted the value of observing her mentor teacher.

Another theme within this group is they **sought out help as first year teachers**. Ms. Presley gained help from her "neighborhood teachers." Ms. Harrison said she had "a number of mentors" informally. Ms. Harrison gained support from her colleagues and other teachers within

her network. Ms. Gatsby actively engaged her mentor teacher and her principal in gaining needed support.

Additionally, these teachers expressed they felt like **they learned a significant amount of their job on their own**. Ms. Presley said she was "just wingin' it." On working with kids in difficult life situations, Ms. Gatsby stated, "I was on my own…. I just really learned how to deal with some really difficult problems with kids pretty much on my own."

Finally, the Group III participants **recognized the network within the school and engaged the network for support**. As Ms. Gatsby put it, "We're all a big family, and we all support each other." Ms. Presley and Ms. Harrison both said their formally-assigned mentors were of little assistance, but they both sought help and gained informal mentorship from others. In Ms. Harrison's case she gained a great deal of support from teachers in her school and teachers in other schools within the district.

Similarities Among Groups I, II, and III

Across the three groups, similarities in three areas emerged. The first similarity found in each group is that these participants actively sought assistance. Participants identified and strategically networked with their "go-to people," as Ms. McAllen described it. In Ms. Harrison's case, she used her knowledgeable network to provide various types of support to her as when she had other people listen to her recordings or come work with her and her students during class. Ms. Vogt and others made use of online resources and other available resources to gain ideas and suggestions to improve their practice.

A second similarity is the participants identified limitations in their formal supports. The formal supports were sometimes "unrealistic" or too "dumbed down" or "not relatable" or not useful at all. When speaking about some of her professional development during her beginning years, Ms. Presley said, "a lot of the professional developments that I end up going to, I do not utilize the information at all." Some of the participants explained their formal mentors were not

very helpful. Ms. Gatsby described formal supports as very "scripted" and she explained this approach did not foster open dialogue or addressing teachers' issues. Ms. Rogers also explained the instructors "don't really quite understand" the new teachers' troubles.

The final across-group similarity is each of these participants learned a great deal through experience. Ms. Elgar explained she had to figure out through "trial and error" what teaching style would suit her and her personality stating, "I have to figure out my own style." Ms. Vogt said there are some things "you just can't know until you're there." Ms. Gatsby explained, "I had to learn things as I was working on the job. I would say the majority I learned as I was working on the job."

Table 3

Similarities Among Groups I, II, and III

Areas	Similarities Among Groups I, II, and III
1.	Teachers actively sought assistance from others within their network.
2.	Participants identified limitations in their formal supports.
3.	Teachers learned a great deal through personal experience.

Differences Among Groups I, II, and III

One difference among the groups stemmed from the progressive development of support programs such as the Smart Start program and professional learning communities. Specifically addressing the Smart Start program, some of the less experienced teachers cited gaining some useful supports through the program. Mr. Jordan, a Group I participant in his first year of teaching said, "It's really great for first-year teachers." Ms. Vogt, a Group II participant in her third year of teaching explained she still references some of her materials she was given through the Smart Start program. However, the more experienced teachers either did not participate in Smart Start, as in Ms. Gatsby's case even though she was teaching in the same district, or they

did not think highly of the program itself. Ms. Harrison, who completed twelve years of teaching, seemed ambivalent toward the program, but still recognized value in the program simply because it provided an opportunity to meet other teachers and discuss issues with other teachers in similar situations.

Differences were found pertaining to professional learning communities too. The more experienced teachers did not have formal professional learning communities when they were in their first year of teaching. The PLC program progressively developed from being non-existent when the Group III participants entered the profession. Now, for the most part, the PLCs are highly supportive teacher groups. The younger teachers gained significant support through their professional learning communities. All three Group I participants, the least experienced group of teachers, remarked on the significant supports they gained through their professional learning communities.

A final difference among these groups was the resources that were available when they entered the teaching profession. This was mostly due to the development of technology. Whereas the Group III participants did not have access to online resources, the Group I and II teachers made extensive use of online resources such as YouTube and social media and other online resources.

Table 4

Differences Among Groups I, II, and III

Areas	Differences Among Groups I, II, and III
1.	As novice teachers, some participants gained useful support through formal programs; others did not.
2.	As novice teachers, some participants gained significant support through their professional learning communities; others did not.
3.	As technology has progressed, new teachers have access to and make more effective use of online resources for support. Online supports were not available to the more experienced teachers when they were beginning their careers.

Summary

Chapter IV provided a narrative of the participants' stories. This chapter also provided a categorization of themes and differences within the experience-based participant groups and across the participant groups. The participants' stories specifically addressed the perceived supports of the participants. Through their stories, participants identified several supports to include formal supports like in-district professional development programs, mentorship programs, and the teacher evaluation process. These stories also identified informal supports such as informal discussions with other teachers or other family members. Additionally, participants spoke of supportive internet resources. Through their stories, the participants discussed the usefulness of the various sources of support.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. The findings of this study add to the body of research on social capital that may be embedded in teachers' networks. These findings may be useful to educational leaders, and may be used to improve the developmental processes of teachers and also positively influencing student learning.

I conducted two face-to-face interviews with each of the nine participants. These participants with varied levels of teaching experience were from three different middle schools all within the same school district. Although teachers have a built-in network of colleagues within a school, a novice teacher may or may not reach out to seek support when needed.

For this study, I used Lin's *Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action*. This theory "describes the process by which capital is captured and reproduced for returns" (Lin, 2001, p. 3). Lin's theory identifies "structural positions, network locations, and the purpose" as primary sources within a social network that may provide support. As novice teachers, these teachers were positioned as new additions to an already intact network. The network location was the assigned school. The purpose of the exchange of social capital was to provide further support to novice teachers. Using this lens, I organized the data from each group into three categories. Structural positions that are arranged by the school or district are categorized under the "formal

supports" category. Network locations and other structural positions are discussed in the categories labeled "informal supports inside the school" and "informal supports outside the school" as applicable. The purpose of interaction is the final key element to social capital returns. The focus of this study was the exchange of social capital for the purpose of novice teacher support. The findings discussed in Chapter 5 may serve as useful information to educational leaders. Chapter 5 also provides discussion and recommendations for future research.

Research Questions

Through these interviews, I collected information from a varied sample within a bounded system for this case study. The 18 interviews yielded a good amount of information. After I coded, organized, and analyzed the data, I applied the data to answer the three research questions of this study.

The first research question was, *How do novice teachers use social networks to develop as teaching professionals?* This question addresses with whom teachers interact to gain support and how they interact. Considering each of the three groups of participants, one notes a wide range of experiences and a variety of personal preferences in how teachers engage with others. Teachers frequently reported interacting with other teachers within the same school for support. Sometimes these interactions were arranged through a formal setting such as PLC team meetings or a formal mentorship. However, these interactions were sometimes informal interactions between teachers. In some instances, these teachers taught the same subject and grade level as the teacher being supported, but in others they taught other subjects and grade levels.

Participants also reported gaining support from social networks outside the school. Those supports were sometimes from relatives, friends, or other acquaintances. The teachers engaged with people who provided support through face-to-face conversation, phone or email conversations, or even social media. In almost all the reported cases, these acquaintances providing support were also teachers.

Research question two was, *How does the Social Capital Theory of Social Structure and Action explain the support and development of novice teachers?* To answer this question, one needs to keep in mind that the two important concepts of social capital according to Lin (2001) are "(1) it represents resources embedded in social relations rather than individuals, and (2) access and use of such resources reside with actors" (p. 25). The participants involved in this study provided examples of relationships that were positive and allowed free flow of information and support to novice teachers. The participants also provided examples of negative environments where information did not flow freely and where the novice teachers were not comfortable asking questions in certain groups of colleagues. The relationships between the novice teacher and the other educators appeared to be a decisive factor in whether the novice teacher gained support from that potential resource. When a novice teacher was in a group where he or she was not comfortable asking for support, then that teacher in this study resorted to alternative resources as in Ms. McAllen's situation. Ms. McAllen explained she felt like she might be "thrown under the bus" in her professional learning community if she asked the wrong questions, so she found other "go-to" people within her school and she gained additional support from her mother who was also a teacher. By seeking support and adjusting her search as needed, participants eventually identified and utilized useful sources of support.

The second concept of social capital is that the exchange of social capital resides with the actors. In all participants' cases, the novice teachers had formal arrangements for supports, normally in the form of a formal mentorship or PLC team that provided a framework for the exchange of capital. The participants' perceived usefulness of these formal supports was mixed. In cases such as Ms. Gatsby's, these formal arrangements were very positive. Ms. Gatsby had a mentor who was readily available and provided input on lessons and activities. Ms. Gatsby explained she called her mentor on the phone during school when needed, even during the school day. However, other participants reported gaining little from their formally arranged supports. Ms. Harrison and Ms. Presley shared they gained little input from their formal mentors. In all

cases, the exchange of capital was ultimately up to the actors. If the novice teacher did not feel positive about the formal arrangements, he or she had the ability to actively seek and engage others to gain support. The participants reported seeking assistance from other teachers, counselors, and administrators in the school. The participants also reported gaining support from other acquaintances outside the school. Ms. Harrison is an example of this. Her formally assigned mentor provided little support to her as a novice teacher, so Ms. Harrison relied on her co-teacher, band teachers from other schools, and others within her social network.

The third and final research question was, *What other realities are revealed in this study?* I think this study found three additional realities that may be useful for education practitioners to note. The first is that participants from each group of participants felt they had to learn some things on their own through their personal experience. Participants from each of the three groups cited classroom management and classroom procedures as areas that teachers developed through their personal experience. If educational leaders are aware of these participants' experiences and the gaps left by formal and informal supports, then educational leaders may be able to address this area more effectively. Based on the data in this study, this situation is especially true in the cases of participants who went through an alternative certification program rather than a traditional certification program. Participants who certified through an alternative certification program expressed that they felt they may have benefitted from additional training related to classroom procedures and classroom management. Ms. Vogt, an alternatively certified teacher, expressed concerns over the documentation, prioritizing, and "the things that you have to do besides teaching that you were never told formally." The traditionally certified teachers did not appear to need this additional training.

A second important reality is the importance of trust among school faculty. The participant's trust levels within their school settings were mixed. Ms. Elgar had a high level of respect and trust for those on her PLC team, and Ms. Gideon had a very open and supportive dialogue with her mentor and with her principal; however other participants expressed that they

did not feel comfortable asking questions in certain settings. In her first year, Ms. McAllen did not trust her PLC team enough to ask questions because she felt like she would be "thrown under the bus." In Ms. Presley's case, she had very little dialogue with her formal mentors and principal. In those instances, the teachers took a pro-active approach and sought supports elsewhere. However, not all teachers may be so agentic in finding needed support. In cases where participants felt it was safe to ask questions and request support, those participants greatly valued those relationships and attributed a great deal of their growth as teachers to those trusted relationships.

Finally, the data from the participants indicate that the professional development provided—specifically that provided to new teachers—usually was not very useful. The formal programs appeared to improve over time, but participants described these professional development opportunities as being overly scripted and not always applicable or meeting an immediate need. Participants reported the training was "scripted" and "not relatable," as described by Ms. Rogers. Perhaps some of this time could be better used to meet the immediate needs of the teachers. This may be accomplished through facilitated discussions or observations or other semi-structured meetings.

Conclusions

One conclusion of this study is that *novice teachers, as represented by those in this study, garner support from formal and informal sources*. Each participant discussed supports gained through both, formal and informal supports. Participants described engaging with teachers, counselors, and principals to gain support. These teachers reported that they gained support through formal interactions such as arranged observations, professional development programs, PLC team meetings, and formal mentorships. Other times, support was gained through informal interactions such as casual conversation and "venting," among other avenues.

Novice teachers sometimes gained support through their colleagues, but other times, they sought support from outside sources. The participants attributed their seeking outside support to an unfriendly work environment, lack of trust, or personal embarrassment or discomfort. Some participants had relatives and close friends that they interacted with to gain support. Additionally, some of the participants made extensive use of online resources. In the end, the decision of whether or not to seek needed support was ultimately up to the participant.

Each of these participants took an active approach to facilitate learning. They were agentic in their development as teachers. These teachers self-identified areas that needed to be addressed, and they actively sought out support within their networks. If the participant's mentor was not providing effective mentorship, the participant found assistance elsewhere as in Ms. Harrison's and Ms. Presley's cases. The participants gained this support by reaching out to other teachers or people within their network with the purpose of improving their teaching practice. The decision to be agentic in gaining needed support and the decision to strategically network can only be made by the individual teacher, but site leaders may provide encouragement and guidance in doing this.

The participants provided many examples of asking for and receiving help from teachers and other colleagues within the school such as classroom management ideas and how to lesson plans and activities. Sometimes these discussions were through formal exchanges, such as through PLC team meetings and mentorships. Other times, participants gained support through informal exchanges such as simply visiting with other colleagues. However, some of the participants also shared that they felt uncomfortable in some settings and they felt like requesting support was inappropriate, or that requesting support may result in a negative outcome. Participants explained this was sometimes the case in the PLC team meetings. Another example provided by participants was that novice teachers were sometimes reluctant to ask their own principals for input or advice. This lack of trust and collegiality resulted in questions going

unasked, and novice teachers were left to either find support elsewhere or deal with the situations on their own.

Another conclusion of this study is that *novice teachers have differing needs depending on their teacher certification programs.* Participants who went through an alternative certification program had different needs than those who went through the traditional certification process. Identification of needs of teachers who went through alternative certification programs is an aspect that one participant expressed she felt is a distinction that is rarely identified and addressed by school leaders. While each group of participants expressed a need to learn some things through personal experience, the teachers who went through an alternative certification program felt like they had a significant amount of catching up to do in comparison to those who went through traditional certification programs. In addition to the need to develop classroom procedures and improve their classroom management skills as with the traditionally certified teachers, the alternatively certified teachers also needed to learn the normal school procedures, acronyms and lingo, and other distinctions of working in a school setting.

Finally, the participants' opinions on professional development for novice teachers indicate that *support for novice teachers, including professional development and mentoring, has room for improvement.* Most participants shared that their opinion of most of their professional development was scripted, was not a good place to ask questions, and also did not meet any immediate need. One participant said she felt like she would be "thrown under the bus" for asking questions. The participants felt like their time could have been used better through semi-structured meetings that allowed for greater interaction with other educators, and that allowed the novice teachers to ask questions pertaining to their specific and immediate needs. Furthermore, choices offered to teachers on topics of professional development may serve to provide opportunities to focus on what the teacher feels is a priority and may also build trust by showing that the district trusts new teachers to make wise choices.

Implications and Recommendations

This study identified a need for improvement in the formal supports provided for novice teachers. Based on the data collected through this study, I would make the following recommendations to educators. These recommendations would apply specifically to the middle schools within this school district. However, some of these recommendations may be transferable to other sites and organizations too.

Recommendations for district leaders. Many participants in this study expressed that they felt there was a shortage of opportunities to ask questions in the professional development provided to novice teachers. Participants felt like the training was excessively scripted, and the instructors were "just checking the box." Some participants reported they felt like they were being judged by the trainers rather than being helped, and the trainings were rushed, and the trainings did not address an immediate need. I interpret this input as a desire for more personable training that is more individualized to meet the immediate needs of the novice teachers. While I am certain the Smart Start program provides valuable information, I would recommend the district consider creating opportunities for novice teachers to gain mentorship or other supports in a less formal setting that allows the novice teacher to tailor the training to himself or herself. As an example, one participant explained that because she was the only teacher of her subject at her school, she would have preferred to observe other teachers of the same subject at other sites within the district. I also recommend providing some degree of choice on behalf of the novice teacher. By allowing the teacher to take ownership by selecting the topic of professional development attended, the novice teacher would be more likely to address his or her priority challenges.

Recommendations for site leaders. School principals are in a position to make decisions that may positively affect the development of new teachers. Principals should not

assume novice teachers recognize expert teachers and seek their support (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2011). Principals are in a position to encourage novice teachers to seek assistance, and principals should ensure their novice teachers are aware of available resources. Some participants reported extensive support provided by site principals. Specific examples of useful support reported by the participants include making arrangements for a quality mentor or "buddy teacher" to assist the novice teacher, providing support through challenging situations, and simply "checking in" with the new teachers to ask what the new teachers need.

I recommend that site principals take steps to build rapport and develop a level of trust with novice teachers as expediently as possible. Some novice teachers will need more encouragement to seek assistance than others (Fox, et al, 2010). Through developing this relationship, the principal can take inventory of the needs of the new teacher and take steps to assist the new teacher's development. Some teachers reported a reluctance to bother their principals with some concerns due to not having a good enough rapport with the principal. These interactions between the principal and teacher may serve to enhance rapport and may make the exchange of information between the two more free flowing.

I also recommend that site leaders conduct a needs assessment based on each novice teacher's background—specifically, the teacher's certification path—and address those needs. Based on the data collected through this study, the developmental needs of traditionally certified teachers compared to the needs of alternatively certified teachers are very different. Traditionally certified teachers spoke of classroom management as their most significant challenge; alternatively certified teachers indicated they also needed support in the areas of student modifications and the normal operating procedures and processes of a school. Through identification of these disparities, site leaders may modify professional development opportunities to better accommodate the development of alternatively certified teachers.

Recommendations for experienced teachers. Teachers in this study reported high levels of support gained through interactions with more experienced teachers. Some of the more experienced teachers voluntarily served as a mentor teacher. Others simply provided assistance and guidance as needed. Based on the data collected through this study, I would recommend that experienced teachers assist newer teachers when possible. This may be accomplished through discussion with the novice teacher to identify the novice teacher's needs, and to identify where and how the more experienced teacher may be able to contribute.

Recommendations for novice teachers. I recommend that novice teachers reach out to their principals and colleagues and others knowledgeable people in their social networks to ask for help and suggestions. Some participants in this study described situations where the teacher dealt with the problem by himself or herself because they were not comfortable asking questions. Even if a teacher is uncomfortable asking questions of a principal or members of the PLC, novice teachers need to be agentic in their personal growth and find people who can help.

Recommendations for professional organizations. I recommend that professional organizations take a pro-active approach in the development of novice teachers. Professional organizations may have more flexibility in available support. This may come in the form of professional development workshops, through ongoing mentorship, or through semi-formal interactions among professional organization members in support of a new teacher who may be a member of the organization.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. One is the small sample size; the total of nine teacher participants limits generalizability and transferability. Another limitation is the use of interviews as the method of data collection. This methodology is a limitation for two reasons; it may influence the actions of the participants, and it considers only the perspectives provided by the

participants. Use of the a priori approach could be a limitation of the study because the approach limits the scope of visibility to what is being observed. Because of the use of this theoretical framework, the study provided a narrow focus. Another limitation is in regard to the participants of the study. These participants volunteered.; therefore, it is possible that these volunteers are more social and may not be a representative sample. Finally, sense perception could be a limitation of this study. Sense perception could have affected what participants reported. Sense perception also affected my interpretation of what participants reported during their interviews. I reported the data as I personally understood the data.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to examine the support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. Education leaders may use the information gained from this study to improve teacher development and teacher instruction. Further research may be useful in the following areas:

1. Exchange of social capital within a school setting. Research in this area may serve education leaders in facilitating strategic networking for the purposes of novice teacher support.

2. Differing needs of traditionally and non-traditionally certified educators. Research in this area may assist in identification of predictable needs of novice teachers based on a teacher's certification path.

3. How trust affects the flow of information. Participants in this study expressed a lack of desire to ask questions or to request support in certain settings due to poor rapport and lack of trust. Research in this area may provide information on how trust influences access to social capital.

4. A longitudinal study of how social capital is exchanged. Networks are dynamic and change over time (Daly, et al., 2010). Longitudinal studies may provide insight on potential

delays or development of access to social capital due to trust issues, cyclical patterns, or other factors.

This study explored support provided to novice teachers through their social networks. In this study, I gained data from teachers at different experience levels. The data identified supports that educational leaders may ensure are implemented and used appropriately. The data also provided examples of what teachers of various levels may do to contribute to the development of novice teachers. Although this study does not provide conclusive evidence, the findings may serve to improve supports provided to novice teachers and have a positive effect on students.

REFERENCES

Amin, A., & Roberts, J. (2008). Knowing in action: Beyond communities of practice. *37*(2), 353-369.

Antoniou, P. & Kyriakides, L. (2013). A dynamic integrated approach to teacher professional development: Impact and sustainability of the effect on improving teacher behaviour and student outcomes. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 29,* 1-12.

Avalos, B. (2011). Teacher professional development in *Teaching and Teacher Education* over ten years.*Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(1), 10-20.

Baker-Doyle, K. J., & Yoon, S. A. (2011). In search of practitioner-based social capital: A social network analysis tool for understanding and facilitating teacher collaboration in a us-based stem professional development program. *Professional Development in Education, 37*(1), 75-93

Barrera, A., Braley, R. T., & Slate, J. R. (2010). Beginning teacher success: An investigation into the feedback from mentors of formal mentoring programs. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, *18*(1), 61.74.

Berry, A. B. (2012). The relationship of perceived support to satisfaction and commitment for special education teachers in rural areas. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *31*(1), 3-14.

Biesta, G. (2008) *Learning Lives: learning, identity and agency in the life course.* Available online at: http://www.learninglives.org/ (accessed September 2014).

Borko, H., Jacobs, J., & Koellner, K. (2010). Contemporary approaches to teacher professional development: processes and content. P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGaw (Eds.). *International encyclopedia of education, Vol. 7* (pp. 548-556). Oxford: Elsevier.

Britzman, D.P. (2007). Teacher education as uneven development: Toward a psychology of uncertainty. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 10*(1), 1-12.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2005). Who teaches whom? Race and the distribution of novice teachers. *Economics of Education Review, 24,* 377-392.

Clotfelter, C. T., Ladd, H. F., & Vigdor, J. L. (2007). Teacher credentials and student achievement: Longitudinal analysis with student fixed effects. *Economics of Education Review, 26*(6), 673-682.

Cobb, P., Zhao, Q., & Dean, C. (2009). Conducting design experiments to support teachers' learning: A reflection from the field. *Journal of the Learning Sciences, 18*(2), 165-199.

Coburn, C. E., & Russell, J. L. (2008). District policy and teachers' social networks. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 30,* 203-235.

Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, M. K. (2005). *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education.* AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education. Routledge.

Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). Schhool climate and social-emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy, *Journal of Education Psychology, 104,* 1189-1204.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* London: Sage Publications, Inc.

Daly, A. J. (2010). *Social network theory and educational change.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Daly, A. J., & Finnigan, K. S. (2012). Exploring the space between: Social networks, trust, and urban school district leaders. *Journal of School Leadership*, *22*(3), 493-530.

Daly, A. J., Moolenaar, N., Bolivar, J., & Burke, P. (2010). Relationships in reform: The role of teachers' social networks. *Journal of Educational Administration, 48*(3), 20-49.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-century teacher education. *Journal of teacher education, 57*(3), 300-314.

Denzin, N. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods.* 2d ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

De Vries, S., Van de Grift, W. J., & Jansen, E. P. (2013). Teachers' beliefs and continuing professional development. *Journal of Educational Administration, 51*(2), 213-231.

Eraut, M. (2004). Transfer of knowledge between education and workplace settings. *Human Resource Management Journal, 14*(4), 89-93.

Eraut, M. (2007). Learning from other people in the workplace. *Oxford Review of Education, 33,* 403-422.

Erlandson, D., Harris, E., Skipper, B., & Allen, S. (2004). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (2010). Multiple means of new teacher induction. *Past, present, and future research on teacher induction: An anthology for researchers, policy makers, and practitioners* (pp. 15-30). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Eduction.

Figg, C., Wenrick, M., Youker, C., Heilman, J., & Schneider, C. (2010). Implications and benefits of a long-term peer debriefing experience on teacher researchers. *Brock Education, 19*(1), 20-35.

Fox, A., & Wilson, E. (2009). Support our networking and help us belong!: Listening to beginning secondary school science teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 15*(6), 701-718.

Fox, A., Wilson, E., & Deaney, R. (2010). Beginning teachers' workplace experiences: Perceptions of and use of support. *Vocations and Learning*, *4*(1), 1-24.

Gavish, B., & Friedman, I. (2010), Novice teachers' experience of teaching: A dynamic aspect of burnout. *Social Psychology of Education* 13(2): 141-67.

Glazerman, S., Isenberg, E., Dolfin, S., Bleeker, M., Johnson, A., Grider, M., & Jacobus, M. (2010). *Impacts of comprehensive teacher induction: Final results from a randomized controlled study* (NCEE 2010-4027). Washingotn, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Glazerman, S., Senesky, S., Seftor, N., & Johnson, A. (2006). *Design of an impact evaluation of teacher induction programs.* Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, January 2006.

Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, *78*(6), 1360-1380.

Granovetter, M. S. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory, 1*(1), 201-233.

Hanushek, E. A. (2011). The economic value of higher teacher quality. *Economics of Education Review*, *30*(3), 466-479.

Hargreaves, A. & Fullan, M. (1992). *Understanding Teacher Development.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Harris, D. N., & Sass, T. R. (2011). Teacher training, teacher quality and student achievement. *Journal of Public Economics*, *95*(7), 798-812.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hill, H. C. (2009). Fixing teacher professional development. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, *90*(7), 470-476.

Hodges, D. C. (1998). Participation as disidentification within a community of practice. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 5,* 272-290.

Hoekstra, A., Brekelmans, D., Beijard, D., & Korthagen, F. (2009). Experienced teachers' informal learning: Learning activities and changes in behavior and cognition. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(5), 663-673.

Hogan, B., Carrasco, J. A., & Wellman, B. (2007). Visualizing personal networks: Working with participant-aided sociograms. *Field Methods, 19*(116), 116-144. doi: 10.1177/1525822X06298589.

Ingall, C.K. (2006). *Down the up staircase: Tales of teaching in Jewish day schools.* New York, NY: Jewish Theological Seminary Press.

Ingersoll, R., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 81,* 201-233.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2012). Beginning teacher induction: What the data tell us. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(8), 47-51.

Jack, S. L. (2005). The role, use and activation of strong and weak ties: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Management Studies, 42*(6), 1233-1259.

Johnson, L. S., Goldrick, L., & Lasagna, M. (2010). *New teacher excellence: The impact of state policy on induction program implementation.* Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.

Jones, C. (2004). Networks and learning: communities, practices and the metaphor of networks. *Research in Learning Technology, 12*(1), 81-93.

Karagiorgi, Y., Symeou, L., (2006). Teacher professional development in Cyprus: Reflections on current trends and challenges in policy and practices. *Journal of In-Service Education 32*(1), 47-61.

Kardos, S., & Moore Johnson, S. (2007). On their own and presumed expert: New teachers' experience with their colleagues. *The Teachers College Record, 109,* 2083–2106.

Kavanaugh, A. L., Reese, D. D., Carroll, J. M., & Rosson, M. B. (2005). Weak ties in networked communities. *The Information Society, 21*(2), 119-131.

Kennedy, M. M. (2005*). Inside teaching: How classroom life undermines reform.* Boston: Harvard University Press.

Kvale, Steinar. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, INC.

Langford, P. (2005). *Vygotsky's developmental and educational psychology*. (1st ed.). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group.

Lin, Nan (2001). *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage publications.

Lom, E., & Sullenger, K. (2010). Informal spaces in collaborations: exploring the edges/boundaries of professional development. *Professional Development in Education*, *37*(1), 55-74.

Long, F., Hall, K., Conway, P., & Murhpy, R. (2012). Novice teachers as 'invisible' learners. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 18*(6), 619-636.

Mansvelder-Longayroux, D. D., Beijaard, D., & Verloop, N. (2007). The portfolio as a tool for stimulating reflection by student teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23*(1), 47-62.

Markowitsch, J., & Messerer, K. (2006). Practice-oriented methods in teaching and learning in higher education–Theory and empirical evidences. *Higher Education and Working Life. Collaborations, Confrontations and Challenges. Advances in Learning and Instruction Series. Oxford: Elsevier*, 177-194.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Meiers, M., & Ingvarson, L. (2005). *Investigating the links between teacher professional development and student learning outcomes, Vol. 1.* Australia: Australian Council for Educational Research, Department of Education, Australian Government.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mohrman, S. A., Tenkasi, R. V., & Mohrman, A. M. (2003). The role of networks in fundamental organizational change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *39*(3), 301-323.

Moir, E. (2009). Accelerating teacher effectiveness: Lessons learned from two decades of new teacher induction. *Phi Delta Kappa*, *91*(2), 14-21.

Moolenaar, N. M. (2012). A social network perspective on teacher collaboration in schools: Theory, methodology, and applications. *American Journal of Education*, *119*(1), 7-39.

Moolenaar, N. M., Sleegers, P. J. C., Karsten, S., & Daly, A. J. (2012). The social fabric of elementary schools: A network typology of social interaction among teachers. *Education Studies*, *38*(4), 355-371.

Murphy, P., & Hall, K. (2008). *Learning and practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). *Teacher Preparation and Professional Development: 2000.* NCES 2001-088. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2001.

Office of Educational Quality & Accountability. (2013). Profiles 013 district report [Data file]. Retrieved from http://www.schoolreportcard.org/doc/profiles/2013/reports/drc/201355i012.pdf.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Penuel, W., Fishman, B., Yamaguchi, R., & Gallagher, L. (2007). What makes professional development effective? Strategies that foster curriculum implementation. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(4), 921-958.

Penuel, W. R., Riel, M., Krause, A. E., Frank, K. A., (2009). Analyzing teachers' professional interactions in a school as social capital: A social network approach. *Teachers College Record, 111*(1), 124-163.

Penuel, W. R., Riel, M., Joshi, A., Pearlman, L., Kim, C. M., & Frank, K. A. (2010). The alignment of the informal and formal organizational supports for reform: Implications for improving teaching in school. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46.* 57-95.

Pogodzinski, B. (2012). Socialization of novice teachers. *Journal of School Leadership, 22*(5), 982-1023.

Pogodzinski, B. (2013). Collegial support and novice teachers' perceptions of working conditions. *Journal of Educational Change*, doi: 10.1007/s10833-013-9221-x.

Portner, H. (2008). *Mentoring new teachers* (3rd ed.). New York: Corwin.

Powell, W. W., & Colyvas, J. A. (2007). Microfoundations of institutional theory. *The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism* (pp. 276-298). New York: Sage.

Rice, J. K. (2003). *Teacher quality: Understanding the effectiveness of teacher attributes.* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Rivkin, S.G., Hanushek, E.A., & Kain, J.F. (2005). Teachers, schools and academic achievement. *Econometrica, 73*(2) 417-458.

Ryberg, T., & Larsen, M. C. (2008). Networked identities: Understanding relationships between strong and weak ties in networked invironments. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning 24*, 103-115.

Seidman, Irving. (2006). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A guide for researchers in education and social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Stanulis, R.N., & Floden, R.E. (2009). Intensive mentoring as a way to help beginning teachers develop balanced instruction. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(2), 112-122.

Staudt, D., St. Clair, N., & Martinez, E. E. (2013). Using Facebook to support novice teachers. *The New Educator, 9*(2), 152-163.

Stempien, L., & Loeb, R. (2002). Differences in job satisfaction between general education and special education teachers: Implications for retention. *Remedial and Special Education, 23,* 258-267.

Stenstrom, M. L., & Laine, K. (2006). Towards good practices for practice-oriented assessment in european vocational eduation. *Jyvaskyla: University of Jyvaskyla. Institute for Education Research. Occasional Papers 30.*

Texas Center for Educational Research (2000). *The cost of teacher turnover.* Retrieved from http://www.tcer.org/research/index.aspx.

Timperley, H. (2006). Learning challenges involved in developming leading for learning. *Education Management Administration & Leadership, 34*(4), 546-563.

Timperley, H. S., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration.* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Tynjala, P. (2008). Perspectives into learning at the workplace. *Educational Research Review, 3*(2), 130-154.

Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice andstudent learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(1), 80-91.

Villar, A., & Strong, M. (2007). Is mentoring worth the money: A benefit-cost analysis and five-year rate of return of a comprehensive mentoring program for beginning teachers. *ERS Spectrum, 25*(3), 1-17.

Wasserman, S. &Faust, K. B. (1994). *Social network analysis: Methods and applications.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wechsler, M. E., Caspary, K., Humphrey, D. C. (2012). Examining the effects of new teacher induction. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 111*(2), 387-416.

Wei, R.C., Darling-Hammond, L., & Adamson, F. (2010). *Professional Development in the United States: Trends and Challenges.* National Staff Development Council: Dallas, TX.

Westling, D. L., Cooper-Duffy, K., Prohn, K., Ray, M., & Herzog, M. J. (2005). Building a teacher support program. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 37*(5), 8-13.

Wiebke, K., & Bardin, J. (2009). New teacher support. *National Staff Development Council Journal of Staff, 30*(1), 34-36.

Wilson, E., & Demetriou, H. (2007). New teacher learning: Substantive knowledge and contextual features. *Curriculum Journal, 18*(3), 213-229.

Yuen, L. H. (2012). The impact of continuing professional development on a novice teacher. *Teacher Development*, *16*(3), 387-398.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Superintendent Approval Letter

Sean Feroli
999 Tahoe Drive
Eugene, OK 99999
November 3rd, 2014

Dr. Dan Gilbert
Superintendent
Eugene Public Schools
999 N. Broadway
Eugene, OK 99999

Dear Dr. Gilbert:

In fulfillment of the research component required of students in Oklahoma State University's Doctorate of Education, I am seeking your permission to conduct a research study in Eugene Public Schools. The purpose of my research is to examine the social networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to novice teachers through their social networks. I would like to interview nine to twelve teachers from Eugene Schools.

Upon receiving approval of the Institutional Review Board, I will begin my study in October of 2014. The primary method of data collection will be audio-recorded interviews. A copy of my Institutional Review Board application packet is attached. If you desire, I can also provide a copy of the research proposal.

Data collection should conclude by May 2015. However, follow-ups may be conducted to ensure credibility, and member checks of the transcribed interviews will ensure accurate representation of the participants' words and ideas.

There are no anticipated risks involved in the participation of this research.

If you are willing to allow me to proceed with this research, please indicate so with your signature below.

Most Respectfully,

Sean Feroli

_____ _____

Dr. Dan Gilbert, Superintendent Date

APPENDIX B

Participant Recruitment Letter

Sean Feroli
999 Tahoe Drive
Eugene, OK 99999
November 13th, 2014

Dear Eugene Public School Teacher:

This letter is to introduce myself and my research. I am a doctoral candidate at Oklahoma State University, pursuing a Doctorate in Education Administration. I am currently serving as the Education Guidance Counselor for the Oklahoma National Guard. Prior to my current post, I taught for ten years in Oklahoma public schools. During those ten years, I taught Band to students in grades six through twelve.

I am conducting a case study to examine the social networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to novice teachers through their strong and weak ties. I have been granted access to conduct this research by District Superintendent Dr. Gilbert.

I am seeking the assistance of teachers from the Eugene School District with one to three years of teaching experience to participate in a total of three audio-recorded interviews lasting approximately one hour each. The data collected from interviews will be kept strictly confidential. If you decide to participate in this research, your identity will not be revealed at any point.

Benefits of participation include personal reflection on the key issue of the use of social networks. Your participation also serves to build the body of research available to educational leaders.

As an incentive, I will provide $30 in the form of a check to each participant. The check will be presented to each participant at the conclusion of the third and final interview.

If you are amenable to the participating in this study, would you please contact me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss the details further? I will make every effort to accommodate your schedule and preferences for date and time. Please email me at sean.feroli@okstate.edu or call (405) 999-9999.

Most Respectfully,

Sean Feroli

APPENDIX C

ADULT CONSENT FORM

PROJECT: Support of novice teachers through social networks

INVESTIGATOR: Sean Feroli, Doctoral Candidate, Oklahoma State University; Bernita Krumm, Ph.D., Advisor, Oklahoma State University

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this study is to examine the social networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to novice teachers through their social networks. Specifically, I will examine the social networks of teachers, and I will examine the perceived influence of these networks. This research will be conducted under the lens of social constructivist epistemology. Participants are being asked to share their experiences to assist in this research.

PROCEDURES:
This study is designed to include two interviews per participant. Each interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:
There are no known risks associated with this project. Results of the interviews will be used solely for purpose of this study.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:
Benefits of participation include contributions to the development of the education profession by supporting research on strengthening supports for novice teachers, personal reflection on the key issue of the use of social netwoks, and serving to build the body of research available to education leaders.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY
According to Moolenaar (2012), social network research can be used to shed light on leadership, professional learning communities, teacher collaboration, reform implementation, and teacher induction among other things. This research project may yield information that educators, administrators, professional development planners, and other people in the education field find useful in guiding decisions regarding supports of novice teachers.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Careful consideration has gone into protecting your confidentiality throughout the research process. This consent form, for example, will be secured in my home office, locked in a safe away from other records. In addition, all data collected during this study will be kept private. Hard copies of data with potentially identifiable information, from artifacts to transcriptions of interviews, will be locked in a file cabinet in my home office, restricting access to only me. Field notes and transcriptions will use pseudonyms. All audio recordings will be deleted as soon as the dissertation is approved. Electronic copies of data will be encrypted with password protections. Any written results will not include information that will identify you. Finally, all data will be destroyed one year after the study is completed.

Confidentiality will be maintained except under specified conditions required by law. For example, current Oklahoma law requires that any ongoing child abuse (including sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect) of a minor must be reported to state officials.

COMPENSATION:
As an incentive, I will provide a check in the amount of $30 to each participant. The check will be presented to each participant at the conclusion of the second and final interview.

CONTACTS :
You may contact me at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Sean Feroli, M.Ed., Doctoral Candidate, School Administration, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 919-9779. My advisor, Bernita Krumm, Ph.D. can be reached at (816) 719-7832. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:
Your participation is voluntary, and there is no penalty for refusal to participate. You are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~CONSENT DOCUMENTATION~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I also understand and agree with the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

APPENDIX D

Institutional Review Board Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Wednesday, October 15, 2014
IRB Application No	ED14147
Proposal Title:	Social Networks and Novice Teachers: An Examination of Supports Provided through Social Networks
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 10/14/2017

Principal Investigator(s):

Sean Feroli
12408 Hunter Dr
Edmond, OK 73013

Bernita Krumm
310 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1.Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2.Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3.Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4.Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX E

Principal Permission Letter

Sean Feroli
999 Tahoe Drive
Eugene, OK 99999

Mr./Ms. Principal's Name
Principal
Name of School
Address
Eugene, OK ZIP

November 13th, 2014

Dear Mr./Ms. Principal:

In fulfillment of the research component required of students in Oklahoma State University's Doctorate of Education, I am seeking your permission to conduct a research study in Eugene Public Schools. The purpose of my research is to examine the social networks of novice teachers and the supports provided to novice teachers through their strong and weak ties. I would like to interview nine to twelve teachers from Eugene Schools.

I will begin my study in the Fall semester of 2014. The primary method of data collection will be audio-recorded interviews. A copy of my Institutional Review Board application packet is attached. If you desire, I can also provide a copy of the research proposal.

Data collection should conclude by the end of July 2015. However, follow-ups may be conducted to ensure credibility, and member checks of the transcribed interviews will ensure accurate representation of the participants' words and ideas.

There are no anticipated risks involved in the participation of this research.

If you have questions, please call me at 405-XXX-XXXX or email me at sean.feroli@okstate.edu If you are willing to allow me to proceed with this research, please indicate so with your signature below.

Most Respectfully,

Sean Feroli

_____ _____

Principal Signature Date

APPENDIX F

Interview 1

(Interview 1; Life History)

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____ Time _____
Location: _____

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. How did you decide to enter the teaching profession?
3. Tell me about your professional background.
4. Tell me about your pre-teaching/college experience.
5. How well did your college education and experiences prepare you for teaching?
6. Prior to entering the profession, what did you expect would be most challenging to you?
7. How did you prepare and work through those challenges leading up to your first day of teaching?
8. What formal supports are (or were) provided to you as a novice teacher?
9. Tell me about a time when someone helped you during your first year of teaching.
10. As a novice teacher, what is (or was) your relationship like currently with your contacts from college?
    -Peers?
    -Instructors?
    -Others?
11. Where do (or did) you get your new ideas or solutions to challenges?
12. Who do (or did) you spend time with?
    -Breaks?
    -Outside of work?
    -Friendships?
13. As a novice teacher, to whom do (or did) you turn for advice or to discuss work?
    -teaching in general?
    -subject specific advice?
14. How frequently do (or did) you seek input from others?
    -With whom?
    -Topics?
15. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX G

Interview 2

(Interview 2; Experience and Meaning)

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____ Time _____
Location: _____

1. Describe a time when you gained useful input from somebody in an informal setting.
2. Can you describe a time when you faced a challenge and needed input from someone else?
3. What supports does/did the school district provide?
4. Would you compare/contrast your formal and informal supports?
   -Gaps in formal supports?
5. Describe informal actions of teachers that have helped you to develop.
   -Planning
   -Share lessons
   -Feedback
   -Peer observation
6. How do you determine when to talk to someone about an issue or concern?
7. How frequently do you talk to others about concerns?
8. How do you determine who to talk to?
   -To whom?
   -In/Outside of work?
9. What strategies have you found to be helpful when faced with a challenge?
10. How have others influenced your teaching?
11. Is there anything you would like to add?

VITA

Sean Patrick Feroli

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND NOVICE TEACHERS: AN EXAMINATION OF SUPPORTS PROVIDED THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

Major Field: School Administration

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in School Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Educational Administration at The University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK in May, 2007.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Music Education in your Instrumental Music at The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK in May, 2000.

Experience:

Oklahoma Army National Guard, Education Guidance Counselor, 2010-2015
Jefferson Middle School, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Teacher, 2009-2010
Nicoma Park Junior High/Choctaw Junior High/Choctaw High School, Choctaw-Nicoma Park Schools, Teacher, 2002-2009
Chandler Middle School/Chandler High School, Chandler Schools, Teacher, 2000-2002