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MOTIVATIONS, BELIEFS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR MUSIC TEACHER
MENTOR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations, beliefs, and future directions for music teacher mentor development within the context of the Oklahoma Music Educators Association's Mentoring Program (OMP). Research questions included: (a) What motivates veteran music educators to participate in the OMP as mentors?; (b) What beliefs and assumptions do mentors hold about early-career music educators?; (c) How do mentors view their role and responsibilities within the OMP?; (d) How do formal training experiences influence mentors' perspectives and approaches to supporting early-career music educators?

This multiple case study examined the experiences of three first-time mentors and their perceptions of the mentoring role. Data collection involved interviews, observations, reflective drawings, and focus groups with music teacher mentors. Findings revealed that mentors were motivated by a desire to support the professional growth of novice teachers and to give back to the music education community. Mentors held diverse beliefs about the needs of early-career educators, including a focus on immediate survival strategies and long-term professional growth. Perceptions of the mentor role ranged from providing emotional and procedural support to fostering reflective and independent teaching practices. Formal training influenced mentors' approaches, offering them tools and strategies for communication, understanding mentee development, and adaptive mentoring.

This study reinforces the importance of tailored mentor training programs to address music-specific challenges and the dynamic nature of mentor development. Implications for practice include refining mentor preparation programs to integrate reflective practice and adult learning principles, fostering both mentor and mentee development.

Chapter 1

Introduction

I began my public-school teaching career as the assistant band director for grades 6-12 in a rural Oklahoma community. I was the third assistant band director in as many years. Like most new teachers I entered the year with intense excitement, which was tempered by an underlying uncertainty. I was excited to put my years of preparation into action, excited to meet and get to know my students, excited to work with new colleagues, excited to finally be a teacher. However, I was also uncertain—uncertain if I really knew what I was doing, uncertain if my students would accept me, uncertain how to work so closely with another more experienced colleague. I was fortunate to have the support of several formal and informal mentors throughout this first year, and in some cases for many years after. Unfortunately, not all of these mentoring relationships were as supportive as I had hoped they would be.

At that time, the Oklahoma State Department of Education required all new teachers to complete a probationary year under the supervision of a school district administrator. The assistant high school principal, Mr. Harris, was responsible for coordinating with a university supervisor, Dr. Thomas, as well as assigning a peer mentor, Mrs. Jones. Each of the members of this triad completed four teaching observations throughout the school year. Additionally, the district administrator led two formal meetings to discuss my work and progress as a professional educator. The purpose of this process was to support, monitor, and evaluate my effectiveness as an educator while also facilitating a process of professional induction. At the conclusion of the year the members of this group would make a recommendation for teacher

certification to the state department of education. Each member of this triad provided differing types of support, however not all experiences were positive.

Formal Induction and Mentoring Programs

School districts, county offices of education, and state departments of education have, for several decades, valued teacher induction programs as an important means of supporting beginning teachers (Strong, 2009). Moir, Barlin, Gless, and Miles (2009) described three features of *induction* as (a) a phase of teacher development, (b) a period of socialization and enculturation, and (c) a formal program for beginning teachers—cautioning that “the first two features of induction will occur whether or not a formal program is in place...whether those features positively influence their teaching effectiveness—or not” (p. 30). Formal induction programs may take many forms (e.g., a single orientation meeting, a handout detailing administrative policies, comprehensive multi-year programs with diverse support offerings) (Moir et al., 2009). While there are wide-ranging approaches to the planning and design of formal induction programs, comprehensive programs might include such activities as workshops, classes, orientations, seminars, and mentoring in an effort to support the beginning teacher’s transition (Ingersoll, 2009). Such an approach to induction reflects an effort that might continue to accrue benefits “throughout all the years of a teacher’s career” (Moir et al., 2009, p. 31).

Mentoring is an important element of a comprehensive *induction* program; however, some confusion comes from the fact that these terms are often, erroneously, used interchangeably. Wong (2005) defined induction as “a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a school district to

train, support, and retain new teachers, which then seamlessly guides them into a lifelong learning program” (p. 43). Mentoring is a specific means of providing support to new teachers through a relationship with a more experienced veteran teacher. Odell and Huling (2000) defined mentoring as a “professional practice that occurs in the context of teaching whenever an experienced teacher supports, challenges, and guides novice teachers in their teaching practice” (p. xii). Formal mentoring programs sponsored at the state or district level have been a popular approach to supporting beginning teachers for several decades (Odell & Huling, 2000).

There tends to be a lack of consistency in the design of, and purposes for, formal mentoring programs. Ingersoll (2009) asserted that programs

can vary from a single meeting between mentor and mentee at the beginning of a school year, to a highly structured program involving frequent meetings over a couple of years between mentors and mentees who are provided with release time from their normal teaching schedule. (p. x)

Several scholars have discussed the potential for multi-year mentoring programs, in an effort to provide long-term support for beginning teachers (Jacobs, 2008; Moir et al., 2009; Odell & Huling, 2000) by assisting them with “immediate concerns and also move them toward more sophisticated understandings and practices over time” (p. 1035).

Due to the complex nature of teachers’ work, mentoring programs may provide many different types of support (e.g., instructional, classroom management, orientation/socialization to the profession and school) (Ingersoll, 2009; Moir et al., 2009; Strong, 2009). Beginning teachers may benefit from procedural (Smith, 2010; Wang & Odell, 2002), instructional (Achinstein & Athanasis, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012;

Jonson, 2002; Moir et al., 2009), and psychological support (Ballantyne et al., 1995; Kershen, 2014; Smith, 2010). Reform-minded scholars argue that while procedural and psychological supports are useful toward supporting the day-to-day work and well-being of teachers, the primary goal of mentoring is to promote teacher development in an effort to impact student learning and achievement (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012).

Mr. Harris

Although Mr. Harris's role as district administrator did not explicitly require him to function as a mentor, he provided significant psychological support and encouragement throughout my first year as an educator. Mr. Harris took special care to help me grow into the role of teacher. A large portion of our very first conversation was related to the teacher I would become in 20 years. He dreamed out loud about what the band program would look like, where my students would be, and what they would say about their time with me.

The state department of education only required that Mr. Harris complete four observations throughout the year, however, he visited the band room quite often. On the first day of school he visited first hour high school band. I was teaching the concept of block notes. I provided aural and visual examples for the ideal, as well as some of the sounds that I heard from the ensemble. I had the ensemble play a whole note, and then had other students draw the shape of what they heard. This seemed like a fairly routine topic and was something that I had taught several times previously, however, Mr. Harris talked for days about that lesson. He pointed out details of what I did well and what HE learned from the lesson. This type of interaction became the norm with Mr. Harris.

Following his visits to the band room, we would talk about what he learned from my teaching, as well as the things he didn't understand. He would gently suggest that if he didn't understand then the students may not either, and I might need to think about how to approach that differently in the next class.

Perhaps the most impactful thing Mr. Harris did during that year was to take photos of me teaching throughout the year. At our final required meeting he gave me the pictures and I was able to reflect on all that I had learned and experienced in such a short time. Mr. Harris truly helped me become Mr. Meeks.

Psychological and Emotional Support

Mentors have the potential to provide valuable psychological and emotional support to beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1995; Huling-Austin, 1992). This type of support may have a positive impact on beginning teachers' motivation and overall well-being (Ballentyne et al., 1995). Mentors are positioned to encourage and empower beginning teachers by "giving shape to the dreams of the mentee, vague and unclear as those dreams may be at the outset" (Smith, 2010, p. 316). Kershen (2014) identified five attributes of social and emotional mentoring supports: (a) mentors are trustworthy, open, and available; (b) mentors help mentees balance personal life with teaching; (c) mentors and mentees share an understanding of the "stresses" of teaching; (d) mentoring relationships are "casual" relationships; and (e) mentors help build mentees' confidence (p. 115). Mentoring relationships that provide emotional support are often viewed as positive and helpful by the mentee (Kershen, 2014; Maynard, 2000).

Despite the documented need and value of psychological and emotional support for beginning teachers, some scholars argue that effective mentoring must provide a

broader scope of support with a focus on teacher learning (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Wang and Odell (2002) argued that mentoring should focus on improving instructional practices and teacher reflection in an effort to meet student needs. Similarly, Achinstein and Athanases (2006) set forth the notion that a focus on teacher orientation, technical support, local policies, and emotional support reflects a limited view of the work of teachers and schools—as opposed to a view of teachers as learners, with a focus on the potential for mentoring to impact instructional practices and teaching effectiveness. Nonetheless, Kershan (2014) emphasized the role of emotional support for beginning teachers and its central importance in the design of formal programs.

Dr. Thomas

Dr. Thomas was my undergraduate advisor and music education professor, as well as my student teaching supervisor. He played a significant role in my formal preparation as a music educator. Given the duration of our relationship as student and teacher, it was difficult for me to move beyond that dynamic as a beginning teacher. Early in my entry year, Dr. Thomas visited my school to complete his first observation as a state-assigned mentor. As I prepared for his visit, I found it difficult to separate this experience from that of student teaching. Although I was confident in my work, I approached the class very tentatively with the underlying expectation of evaluation. Much to my surprise, Dr. Thomas did not sit in the back of the room taking notes. He simply sat within the band set-up and observed. Occasionally, when appropriate, he would move around the room, offering suggestions or feedback to individual students. Our post-observation meeting was focused on the students and exploring what I could do

to provide the best possible experience for them. It was clear to me that this first-year mentoring relationship was going to be a different experience than student teaching observation. Dr. Thomas was now my colleague and it became evident that he was there to work with me to further facilitate my reflection and critical thought.

My observations and conversations with Dr. Thomas often left me with more questions than answers. Rather than telling me what to do and how to do it, he would ask what I thought about a certain aspect of the class. When I expressed concern over specific challenges, he would help me think through the intricacies of the issue until I had identified the problem that needed to be addressed to move the students forward. Furthermore, he would follow-up on this thinking to help me recognize student progress and identify why the students were (or were not) progressing. This process was frustrating at times, particularly when I just wanted someone to tell me exactly what to do to immediately make my band better. However, the developmentally-focused, reflective experiences that Dr. Thomas afforded me taught me how to think through the complexities of my work and solve my own problems. Dr. Thomas helped me to become my own teacher, rather than one who continued to rely on others for direct advice.

Educative Support

While it is important that mentors provide encouragement and support the beginning teacher's sense of confidence and self-esteem, some scholars have argued that effective mentorship should move beyond providing only the kind of emotional support I describe above (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). According to Feiman-Nemser (2012), mentors have a responsibility to teach teachers, or to be a *teacher educator*—a responsibility which is reflected by the concept of “educative”

mentoring. Educative mentoring “still responds to new teachers’ present needs while helping them interpret what their students say and do and figure out how to move their learning forward” (p. 278). This notion of educative mentoring is rooted in Dewey’s (1938) concept of educative experience, in which he suggested that genuine learning occurs through experience, but also warned that not all experiences lead to learning. Feiman-Nemser (2012) asserted that through the use of blended interactive approaches (e.g., showing and telling, asking and listening), this developmental approach to mentoring may lead to meaningful growth through experience for both the beginning teacher and their students. Regardless of this important (and arguably meaningful) aspect of effective mentorship, few music education researchers have investigated mentors’ views of this approach to mentoring practice, warranting further examination.

Mrs. Jones

Mrs. Jones, my assigned mentor, was the head band director. We worked very closely together as we team taught high school band, beginning band, and kindergarten music. We also shared an office. Most days we ate lunch together. The band room and our office were in a separate building isolated from the rest of the buildings on the school campus. Additionally, we were the only music teachers in the entire district.

As a new teacher I had many things to learn about the administrative and procedural tasks of being a band director. I had to learn about purchase orders, invoices, bid requests, fundraisers, and all of the other financial responsibilities. I had to learn about activity absences, bus requests, and travel forms. I had to learn about calendars, contest entries, concert logistics, and booster clubs. I had to learn to make locker assignments, instrument checkouts, and seating charts. These lists are just the beginning

of what I had to learn. Mrs. Jones provided extensive support in helping me learn what needed to be done when, and how to do it. She shared procedures and strategies for managing all of these day-to-day tasks and gradually shifted responsibilities as I gained knowledge and confidence. This procedural support was invaluable in helping me learn to function within the context of the school as well as the music education community.

While assigning Mrs. Jones as my mentor seems a logical decision given our common teaching discipline, this presented some challenges. Anytime two people work so closely together, they will encounter differences of opinion. The dynamic of Mrs. Jones being my close colleague and assigned mentor meant that, at times, I had to seek guidance from band directors outside of our district.

Procedural Support

While educative mentorship and providing emotional and psychological support are two dominant perspectives that guide the mentorship of beginning teachers, mentors may also serve as “local guides” (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) to provide support for the procedural, technical, and bureaucratic aspects of the job (Wang & Odell, 2002). In addition to planning and delivering instruction, beginning teachers must learn to navigate the highly complex social structures, procedural expectations, and site-specific policies of a school context. Smith (2010) suggested that mentors can provide a much-needed orientation to the school and the profession for the beginning teacher. Given the various types of support that a mentor may provide and the personal nature of the mentoring relationship, it is important that special care is taken to ensure a good match when assigning mentor pairings.

Mentor Selection and Pairing

Perhaps the most vital element in ensuring a successful mentorship relationship is the selection of the mentor. Supervisors of formal mentorship programs must identify and select talented mentors to work with beginning teachers (Baumgartner, 2020; Hellman, 2006; Moir et al., 2009). Given that working with beginning teachers (adults) requires different skills than working with students (Bartell, 2005), it is evident that outstanding classroom teaching skills do not necessarily ensure success as a mentor (Hellman, 2006). It is important for mentoring program administrators to identify those traits, skills, and experiences which are desirable in high-quality mentors. An understanding of these criteria may serve to guide the selection of the best possible mentor in any given situation.

In discussing the relevant experience necessary for a mentor, Pask and Joy (2007) suggested that

a mentor-coach who is working in a professional context...with substantial experience in the same professional field as the client, who also had sound experience of the skills and processes of helping others to think things through would be very useful. (p. 18)

Moir and colleagues (2009) provided a list of suggested criteria for the selection of high-quality mentors. These criteria include (a) evidence of outstanding teaching practice, (b) strong interpersonal skills, (c) experience with adult learners, (d) at least five years of teaching experience, (e) respect of peers, (f) current knowledge of curriculum and professional development, (g) history of advocacy leading to change, and (h) commitment to lifelong learning.

The pairing of music mentors with beginning teachers presents some unique challenges. Oftentimes there are few, if any, qualified options for music specialist mentors within a school building, or district (e.g., a new music teacher may be the only music educator in a given elementary school building). In this case it is important, and beneficial, to pair a beginning music teacher with a mentor from another building or district (Conway, 2003). When pairing beginning music teachers with mentors, it may be beneficial to consider personal temperament, professional experience, age range, and geographic location (Baumgartner, 2019; Smith, 2010). While Baumgartner discussed age range as a consideration for pairing, Berg (2018) suggested that retired teachers may be positioned to commit more time for observation and in-person meetings. Geographic proximity between mentors and mentees is another important consideration, however Vaughan-Marra (2017) suggested that virtual meetings and communication (e.g., text messages, video chat, email, shared cloud documents) can be utilized to enhance mentoring. While researchers and program facilitators have suggested many important contextual factors to consider when pairing mentors with beginning music teachers, there may be other important considerations. An understanding of the role perceptions of potential mentors may help to inform mentor selection and pairings.

Teacher Retention and Attrition

Music-specific challenges

While all new teachers face some degree of challenge in the first years, music educators often experience these common challenges in a different context and at a greater intensity (Conway, 2003). Beginning music educators experience unique challenges related to administrative responsibilities (Barnes, 2010; Conway, 2003;

DeLorenzo, 1992), classroom management and instruction (Conway, 2003; DeLorenzo, 1992; Hack, 2003; Krueger, 1996), public expectations for performance (Conway, 2001; Hack, 2003), and isolation (Conway, 2003; Conway & Zerman, 2004; Jacobs, 2007). Given these wide-ranging challenges, beginning music educators may benefit from a support network which includes experienced music teachers (Krueger, 2000). Beginning music teachers find value in mentoring programs that provide meaningful context specific support (Conway, 2001, 2004). Without specific support structures—including a relationship with an experienced mentor teacher—beginning teachers may be at risk for leaving the profession.

Attrition

One potential impact of the many challenges faced by music educators is an alarmingly high rate of teacher attrition (Hancock, 2009). Between the years 1998 and 2001, the annual music teacher migration rate was 10%, while the attrition rate was 6% (Hancock, 2009). Music educators may have varied motivations for leaving the field: (a) lack of support from administrators, colleagues, and parents, (b) work-life balance, (c) lack of musical fulfillment, (d) schoolwide concerns, and/or (e) other career interests (Hancock, 2008, 2009; Madsen & Hancock, 2002). Researchers have suggested that mentoring may be an important support structure with the potential to reduce teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, Strong, 2009).

Impact of mentorship

New teachers who were assigned a formal mentor were 15% more likely than those with no mentor assignment to remain in the career for at least 5 years (Gray & Taie, 2015). While having an assigned mentor may support teacher retention, it may be

important that the mentor is able to relate to the teaching context of the mentee. Music education researchers suggested that music teacher mentorship is a context-specific practice, and it is important that music teachers be assigned music mentors, who have professional experience in similar teaching assignments (Benson, 2008; Conway, 2003, 2006; Conway & Holcomb, 2008; Conway et al., 2002). However, Hancock (2008) found that mentoring support did not necessarily predict music teacher retention. Further, Koerner (2017) found that beginning teachers “with non-music mentors reported increases in reflective practice, teaching efficacy, and professional commitment” (p. iv). These inconsistencies may be explained by investigating mentors’ perceptions of their role.

OkMEA Mentorship Program

The Oklahoma Music Educators’ Association (OkMEA) Mentorship Program (OMP) began supporting new music educators (1–4 years of experience) by pairing them with veteran teacher mentors in the 2017–2018 school year. Through a variety of professional development offerings, program participants had the opportunity to develop new skills and knowledge as well as form new relationships in a supportive community of professional educators. Mentors were approached as teacher educators and encouraged to develop personal relationships, visit the beginning teacher in their classroom, and to be facilitative (OkMEA, 2018). The OMP was conceived with the purpose of preparing new music teachers for the realities of the profession, while also embracing their potential as agents of change. (Baumgartner, 2020).

Oklahoma Teacher Walkout

Oklahoma was one of four states (including West Virginia, Kentucky, and Arizona) to experience teacher strikes which garnered national attention in the spring of 2018. Tens of thousands of people gathered at the Oklahoma state capital for nine days in April, calling for an increase in teacher pay and educational funding (Reilly, 2018). Carlson (2018) reported that, prior to 2018, there had been no increase in K–12 educational funding for the previous 25 years, and that per-student spending had fallen by nearly 16% from 2008–2015. This lack of funding led to many schools in the state moving to a four-day week and a shortage of highly qualified teachers (Carlson, 2018). The strike was ended by the Oklahoma Education Association’s (OEA) decision to call off the walkout after the legislature refused to approve any further spending on public education (Andone et al., 2018). Although teachers did receive a partial increase in salary, which was approved in the days prior to the start of the walkout, many were disappointed in the outcome as there was a continued need for operational funds for building repairs and teaching materials (Andone et al., 2018).

The result of the Oklahoma teacher walkout yielded mixed feelings for teachers. While many were disappointed by the action of OEA, the general response to the walkout brought energy and hope to many teachers and education supporters. One teacher said, “I am...energized and motivated by the community of teachers, parents, and students who have vowed to keep fighting for a better education for our children. This is a long road to recovery...I look forward to the future” (Andone et al., 2018, para 20). Although the Oklahoma teacher walkout galvanized many in support of public education and the efforts of teachers, it created a uniquely challenging experience for beginning teachers.

On one hand “advocacy levels are at an all-time high” (Andone et al., 2018, para 26), and on the other teachers faced the overt reality of the issues that instigated the walkout. Mentor teachers are uniquely positioned to provide guidance and support in such uncertain circumstances.

Despite a renewed sense of hope and progress for Oklahoma educators, the events leading up to, during, and following the teacher walkout presented unique challenges for the education community. Educators and activists utilized social media to organize and publicize their message (Krutka et al., 2018). While online efforts have the “capacity to alter narratives, cause disruption, and effect some desired legislative change” (p. 380), they also contributed to a unique perspective and social climate. Teachers in Oklahoma had to make meaning from the intense juxtaposition of a unifying social movement with interspersed messages of negativity. Conflicting stories of positivity and support were countered by stories of the former state teacher of the year leaving the state (Eger, 2018) or others saying that “No one wants to be a teacher in Oklahoma. They all left already” (Rios, 2018, para 10). The context of being a teacher in Oklahoma presented unique needs and challenges for both mentors and beginning music teachers in addition to the content-specific challenges previously discussed.

Mentor Role

The ways in which a mentor teacher conceives of their role may significantly impact the practices and nature of their mentoring interactions. It cannot be assumed that mentors, program organizers, and mentees approach the mentoring relationship with the same perceptions of mentor roles and responsibilities. Conway and Holcomb (2008) found that mentors desired more “discussion of their roles in advance of their work” (p.

62). The need to support mentors through the clarification of program goals, mentor roles, and mentor responsibilities is supported by Hellman's (2006) suggestion that "one cannot simply pull veteran teachers out of the classroom, call them mentors, and expect them to have the skills needed to handle this complex work" (p. 81).

The mentoring of beginning teachers is a dynamic (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010) and context-specific activity (Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Cherin, 2007; Scalon, 2008), making it difficult to clearly define the mentor role. Situational and contextual factors may influence the roles adopted, and the ways in which they are enacted, by mentors (Cherin, 2007; Scalon, 2008; Stanulis & Ames, 2009). Scholars have identified a wide range of roles adopted by mentors of student teachers (e.g., Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Hopper, 2001; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005), beginning teachers (e.g., Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Crasborn et al., 2009; Stanulis & Ames, 2009), and student and beginning music teachers (e.g., Berg & Rickels, 2018; Smith, 2003, 2010). While these scholars distinguished between mentoring of pre-service and novice teachers, there are many commonalities in the type and nature of roles discussed. Wildman et al. (1992) asserted that, "Because mentoring involves highly personal interactions, conducted under different circumstances in different schools, the roles of mentoring cannot be rigidly specified...Mentoring, like good teaching should be defined by those who will carry it out" (p. 212).

Need for the Study

In recent decades, many educational researchers and practitioners have demonstrated the potential for meaningful mentoring relationships to serve as a vital support mechanism for beginning teachers (Conway, 2003; Conway et al., 2010; Moir et

al., 2009; Odell & Huling, 2000; Portner, 2005). Formal teacher mentoring programs are a common approach to providing beginning teachers with an opportunity to be paired with an experienced teacher as a mentor. While some of these programs are school-based support initiatives (Goldrick, 2016), oftentimes others are organized by state or national professional organizations (e.g., American Choral Directors' Association, National Bandmasters' Association, American String Teachers' Association) (Baumgartner et al., 2015; Koerner, 2017). These programs may provide much needed emotional, procedural, and educative support for beginning teachers (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Kershen, 2014; Moir et al., 2009). Other researchers (Berg & Conway, 2016; Conway & Holcomb, 2008) and authors (Daresh, 2003; Davis, 2006; Portner, 2005) have suggested the importance of mentor development/preparation as a factor that directly impacts the potential success of one-on-one mentoring. If true, veteran teachers must be afforded multiple opportunities to examine and interrogate their beliefs about students, teachers, and mentors through ongoing in-depth learning as an integral element of their preparation to serve as mentors (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Danielson, 1999; Moir et al., 2009).

Mentors' beliefs about beginning teachers and student learning may influence their conception of the mentor role (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006). Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) compared two mentoring programs and found that differences in the mentoring context (e.g., program structure, mentor training, and mentor selection processes) were reflected in mentors' concept of their mentoring role. A common view of beginning teachers places these novices in a position of survival (e.g., Fuller & Bown, 1975; Huberman, 1993; Veenman, 1984). As such, the design of mentoring programs is often reflective of this view, with a focus on providing socioemotional support, technical

support, and helping teachers adjust to a new environment (Wang & Odell, 2002). In contrast, reform-minded researchers have set forth an alternate view of teachers and mentors as learners (e.g., Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Paris, 1995; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wang & Odell, 2002). Such a view challenges the status quo with a call for mentors and teachers to be “change agents, reflective practitioners, collaborative colleagues, and lifelong learners—educators who are student-centered, equity-focused, and constructivist” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006, p. 8). It is evident that the views that mentors hold regarding the nature of teaching and teachers may directly influence the ways in which they perceive their work as mentors.

Researchers have examined formal mentoring programs specific to music (Baumgartner et al., 2015; Conway, 2003; Jacobs, 2008; Smith, 2003), various mentoring roles (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992; Lieberman et al., 2012; Johnson, 2002), and mentor approaches to interaction (Achinstein & Athenasis, 2006; Glickman, 1990). While considering these elements is important toward developing an understanding of how mentors approach their work with beginning teachers, it remains unclear how music teacher mentors view their role as participants in a formal music mentoring program. An examination of mentors’ beliefs and values regarding their role may reveal how they view teachers and their work. Additionally, this examination may lead to a better understanding of how to support and enhance the development of other music teacher mentors in similar mentorship settings. These understandings may serve to inform the work and decisions of music teacher educators—those often responsible for the design and administration of similar programs—as well as state music educators association policymakers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine music teacher mentors' beliefs regarding their role in the Oklahoma Music Educators' Association Mentoring Program.

Research Questions

1. What motivates veteran music educators to participate in the OMP as mentors?
2. What beliefs and assumptions do mentors hold about early-career music educators?
3. How do mentors view their role and responsibilities within the OMP?
4. How do formal training experiences influence mentors' perspectives and approaches to supporting early-career music educators?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Mentoring holds an important role in education—particularly within specialized fields such as music education, where novice teachers encounter challenges unique to their area of instruction. In this chapter, I review the literature on mentoring in music education, focusing on the motivations, beliefs, and assumptions that mentors bring to their work. I also explore various mentoring approaches, highlighting the adaptability required to meet the individual needs of mentees. In Chapter 1, I shared personal narratives that illustrated the influential roles mentors played during the early years of my own teaching career, portraying the supportive, guiding, and reflective functions they fulfilled. These narratives reinforced the significance of tailored mentorship in my professional development, highlighting how different mentors adopted various roles and approaches to address my evolving needs. In this chapter, I shift away from the narrative approach, instead offering a more direct engagement with the existing literature.

Mentor Motivation

Mentorship in music education plays a vital role in supporting novice teachers. Mentors often are drawn to their role by a desire to give back to the field (Conway & Hodgman, 2006; Greene et al., 2020). This desire often is rooted in their own first-hand experience of the complex challenges that early-career music teachers are likely to face (e.g., professional isolation, large and varied classes, administrative tasks) (Bell-Robertson, 2015; DeLorenzo, 1992). Through mentoring, experienced educators have an opportunity to support the growth of both individual teachers and the broader community of music education.

One particular aspect of mentors' motivation is the opportunity to assist novice teachers in building confidence and honing their skills within the unique context of the music classroom. This support is especially valuable in areas such as classroom management, repertoire selection, and preparing for public performances—all common but complex responsibilities in the field (Benson, 2008). Mentors' efforts to support novices in these areas often lead to thoughtful discussion about teaching practices, which have a potentially unexpected benefit for both parties and frequently lead to shared professional growth (Berg & Rickels, 2018). This shared growth may help to sustain mentors' ongoing motivation to continue the challenging work of mentoring, as they recognize personal development in their *own* instructional and reflective skills in addition to those of their mentees.

Veteran music educators may be particularly aware of the challenges that new teachers often face (e.g., professional isolation, complex classroom dynamics, logistical demands), given their own previous experiences as beginning professionals. Novice music teachers may experience isolation, due to frequently being the only (or one of few) music educators employed in their schools (Conway & Garlock, 2002; Conway & Zerman, 2014)). Meaningful mentorship by another music educator can help alleviate negative feelings that come from isolation (e.g., stress, exhaustion, burnout) by providing a direct connection to a professional who can offer support given their unique professional context (Bell-Robertson, 2015). Additionally, music mentors can offer guidance on adapting instruction to widely varied student abilities that often exist within large class sizes, equipping new teachers with strategies for effectively managing classroom dynamics (Conway, 2003; DeLorenzo, 1992) and achievement differences.

Mentors also provide support in managing equipment inventories, budgeting, and other administrative tasks, helping novices develop efficient systems that are specific to school music instruction/programs (Conway, 2001; Krueger, 1999). By addressing these logistical and instructional challenges, mentors may find personal fulfillment in sharing their expertise to support both the effectiveness and well-being of their mentee, which in turn may fuel motivation to continue mentoring.

Summary

Mentors in music education may be driven by both altruistic motivations and an awareness of the specific challenges that novice teachers often experience. Their commitment to giving back to the music education community is evident in their efforts to provide emotional support, practical guidance, and professional connection for new educators (Conway & Hodgman, 2006; Greene et al., 2020). These efforts may benefit both mentors and mentees by enhancing teaching practices and strengthening connections across the profession (Berg & Conway, 2016; Wiemer, 2017).

Mentor Beliefs and Assumptions

New music teacher mentors bring with them many years of professional experience and expertise as educators. These veteran teachers may hold various beliefs and assumptions about the nature of mentoring, potentially viewing their own teaching experience as a predictor of their potential effectiveness as a mentor. Zaffini (2015) discussed the tendency for mentors to rely on their personal experiences as music educators to guide their efforts in supporting new teachers, assuming that the strategies that worked for them will benefit novices in the same ways. However, without formal preparation, these mentors may overlook an essential characteristic of effective

mentoring—moving beyond a focus on survival skills, to foster reflective and flexible teaching practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). This reliance on past teaching experience often leads mentors to prioritize immediate practical support over efforts to facilitate long-term growth, fueling a personal belief that their primary role is simply to help novices survive their first years of teaching (Zaffini, 2015).

Mentors also bring specific assumptions about the nature of mentoring itself to the practice, often viewing it as an extension of their teaching role. Many may believe that their responsibility is to provide solutions and guidance based on their own teaching strategies (Berg & Conway, 2016; Zaffini, 2015). However, Feiman-Nemser and colleagues (1993) suggested that effective mentoring requires mentors function less as directive guides and more as facilitators, supporting novice teachers' critical reflection and helping them build the skills to ensure their own ongoing professional growth. Mentoring, then, could be defined as not only sharing practical knowledge or strategies, but also building a new teachers' capacity for self-directed learning and critical reflection. For mentors to fulfill this facilitative role, they must recognize that mentoring requires a different skillset than classroom teaching (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Feiman-Nemser et al., 1993). Such a view aligns with the concept of "educative mentoring"—responding to novices' immediate concerns, while also facilitating their continued professional and instructional growth (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). In this way, effective mentors help novice teachers to become self-guided, independent professionals with the necessary skills to direct their own learning and development across the entirety of their career.

Assumptions about the needs of beginning teachers also inform mentors' approaches to their work. Ginkel et al. (2016) observed that novice teachers were often seen primarily as needing assistance with immediate, practical challenges like lesson planning, classroom routines, and logistical tasks. Similarly, novice music teachers often were expected to encounter these same practical challenges, along with the additional demands related to large class size, public performance and critique, and administrative responsibilities (Haack, 2003). In contrast, Feiman-Nemser (2012) promoted educative mentoring—through a lens of teachers as learners and mentors as teacher educators—as an opportunity for mentors to address the day-to-day concerns of novice teachers, while supporting their continued growth and development. This developmental view of mentoring may be more beneficial than simply providing emotional and technical support to the mentee. According to Feiman-Nemser (2012), the educative mentor “blends showing and telling, asking and listening in ways that promote new teacher learning” (p. 279). With a holistic view of new teachers' immediate and ongoing developmental needs, mentors can tailor their support to promote growth and satisfaction (Raiber, 2015). Mentors' assumptions regarding the needs of beginning teachers may strongly impact the nature of their support and interaction. As such, it is essential for mentors to move beyond offering immediate practical support and implement practices to foster novices' emotional well-being and guide them toward ongoing, self-directed growth and effectiveness.

While many mentors may be drawn to their roles with a focus on supporting new teachers, some may recognize the potential for this process to spark their own growth and development as experienced educators. Weimer (2020) cautioned that “many exemplary

teachers experience their teaching practice as second nature” (p. 23) and may find it difficult to pinpoint specific elements or thought processes. As such, mentors often find it necessary to reflect on their own teaching practices and professional skills when providing support to mentees, leading to new understandings about teaching for both mentor and mentee (Berg & Rickels, 2018; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). Similarly, many mentors of student teachers enjoy the opportunity to learn new teaching strategies from their preservice mentees (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005). This potential for mentoring to lead to professional growth for the mentor in addition to the mentee challenges the assumption that mentoring is for the sole benefit of the novice teacher.

It is evident through empirical research findings that the mentoring process may benefit both mentor and mentee alike. However, mentors’ beliefs about themselves also may play an important role in guiding their approach and engagement to the mentoring process, potentially mitigating the possibility for growth for either party. Riggs (2000) examined mentor self-efficacy in the context of a mentor training program, finding that mentors with high self-efficacy demonstrated deeper and more consistent engagement in the mentoring process. Conversely, those who doubted their own potential for effectiveness exhibited limited engagement. Supporting this connection between self-efficacy and effective mentoring, Lejonberg and Christophersen (2015) found that mentors with a clear understanding of their roles reported higher levels of self-efficacy. Recognizing the positive relationship between self-efficacy and mentor engagement, Riggs (2000) suggested that targeted mentor training is important to support mentors’ confidence, and thus, the quality of their mentorship.

Summary

Music mentors may hold various beliefs about themselves, the mentoring process, and the needs of novice teachers. Many begin with an assumption that their teaching experience alone will prepare them for effective mentorship (Zaffini, 2015), but researchers and scholars have established that successful mentoring involves more than just passing on practical skills (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Raiber, 2016). Effective mentors recognize that mentoring is a multi-faceted process that requires adaptability, emotional support, and a commitment to facilitating independence and a sense of professional identity. By approaching mentorship as a collaborative process, mentors can more fully meet the comprehensive needs of new teachers, preparing them with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate a long and satisfying career (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Blair, 2008; Feiman-Nemser et al., 1993; Zaffini, 2015).

Mentoring Roles

Scholars have attempted to define or describe the roles that mentors fulfill through various investigations. Experts have provided a list of role titles or metaphors that mentors may adopt, such as guide, coach, friend, collaborator, advisor, counsellor, instructor, sharer, supporter, and encourager (e.g., Ballantyne & Hansford, 1995; Daresh, 2003; Smith, 2010). Many of the roles adopted by mentors can be grouped or categorized by their function. Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005) identified three clusters within their participants perceived roles—pragmatic (e.g., provider of feedback, observer, instructor), inter-personal (e.g., counselor, equal partner, critical friend), and managerial (e.g., assessor, quality controller). According to Hopper (2001), mentors achieve the primary

mentoring roles of equal partner and observer by adopting the characteristics of many other secondary roles (e.g., counselor, critical friend, role model, adviser, assessor). Other researchers have focused on the mentor's potential to facilitate teacher reflection by serving as a critical friend (Schon, 1987) or reflective practitioner (Braund, 2001). While these scholars have focused on general descriptions of mentor persona or function, others have given their attention to the dynamic nature of mentorship as the mentor responds to the contextual needs of the mentee.

Effective mentors utilize their knowledge, expertise, and experience to adapt their mentoring approach to meet the individual needs of their mentee (Crasborn et al., 2008; Crasborn et al., 2011; Ginkel et al., 2016; Glickman et al., 2001). Rather than adopting a fixed role, adaptive mentors engage in a responsive style, adjusting to the changing needs of their mentees. For instance, Ginkel et al. (2016) found that adaptive mentors “match mutual expectations, shift style, and help novices to reframe teaching” (p. 212). Similarly, Glickman et al. (2001) presented a developmental approach to mentoring that relied on a mentor's knowledge of teacher development to align their mentoring behaviors—directive, collaborative, and non-directive—with the developmental needs of the beginning teacher. This flexibility was further emphasized by Crasborn and colleagues (2011), who found that the roles mentors take with student teachers are “visible in the intentions, content, and approach of [their] dialogues” (p. 321), arguing that effective mentors must adapt their supervisory behaviors to match the mentee's needs. These conceptions of mentor role are defined by the behaviors of mentoring *styles* rather than the *persona* or *function*, reinforcing the idea that no single approach is effective in all contexts or with all mentees.

Mentoring Approaches

Effective mentoring includes a spectrum of approaches tailored to the diverse needs of each mentee. These mentoring approaches range from directive strategies to more collaborative and facilitative methods. Directive approaches—often characterized by explicit guidance and prescriptive suggestions—allow mentors to provide clear directions and concrete recommendations for novice teachers (Helman, 2006; Hennissen et al., 2008). Often termed as instructive, explicit, or prescriptive, a direct mentoring style involves the mentor defining tasks, offering solutions, and providing information. These strategies can be particularly helpful in the early stages of professional growth or when the mentee needs clear guidance for skill development (Raiber, 2015). This structured approach offers mentees a clear framework, supporting their development of foundational skills and habits (Glickman, 2002).

In contrast to directive mentoring approaches, collaborative and non-directive mentoring strategies emphasize the mentee's active involvement and reflective engagement—fostering a more balanced, two-way mentorship dynamic. This style (often referred to as *facilitative*) invites mutual exploration of ideas and encourages the mentee to actively participate in problem-solving and self-reflection (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Hawkey, 1998). Such a non-direct approach relies on collaboration between mentor and mentee. When applying a facilitative approach, the mentor asks clarifying questions, guides the mentee toward possible solutions, and fosters self-reflection; thus, the mentee takes a more active role in the mentorship process (Hawkey, 1998; Helman, 2006; Hennissen et al., 2008).

While mentoring styles can vary significantly from one mentor to the next, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Williams et al. (1998) found that mentors might use both directive and non-directive approaches in different contexts. For example, some mentors may provide extensive directives when dealing with classroom management and pacing (e.g., “have your kids sit this way,” “make your students arrange their cases neatly”), while others allow for more open-ended discussion and reflection (e.g., “why did that happen,” “what is next”). Similarly, Hawkey (1998) suggested that mentors might utilize two different mentoring styles for working with student teachers—one being highly directive, offering explicit advice and answers; the other more facilitative, encouraging input from the student teacher. Mentors also may shift their mentoring approach over time. Bullough (2005) found that mentors might start with a directive style and gradually move to a more collaborative approach as the mentee gains experience and confidence—an adaptive approach that van Ginkel et al. (2016) suggested is essential to address the evolving needs of the mentee.

To more effectively meet the varied and evolving needs of novice teachers, Glickman (2002) developed a model of teacher supervision that presents a continuum of mentoring strategies, from directive-control to non-directive approaches. At one end of the continuum, the directive-control approach involves the mentor exerting significant influence; while at the other end, the non-directive approach emphasizes the mentee’s autonomy. The intermediate stages include the directive-informational approach, where mentors provide guidance while allowing mentee choice. Conversely, the non-directive approach balances both mentor and mentee input in problem-solving and idea sharing. Approaches at any point on this continuum may include varied applications of listening,

clarifying, encouraging, reflecting, presenting, problem solving, negotiating, directing, standardizing, and reinforcing. The level of responsibility shared between the mentor and mentee varies accordingly—directive-control places more responsibility on the mentor, while non-directive places more on the mentee.

Drawing on Glickman's model of supervision in combination with Fuller and Bown's (1975) model of teacher concerns (i.e., self/survival, teaching task, student learning), Raiber (2015) recommended that effective mentors match their mentoring approach to the developmental needs of the teacher in each context. For example, a directive approach would be most suitable for teachers focused on self-concerns, where the mentor provides the mentee with immediate solutions and guides their attention toward teaching practices. As teachers' concerns shift to the tasks of teaching, mentors could transition to a more collaborative approach, encouraging joint problem-solving and focusing on student learning. When teachers become primarily concerned with student outcomes, a non-directive mentoring approach may allow them greater autonomy in decision-making. Despite this suggestion of matching mentoring approach with the evolution of a teacher's growth on a concerns continuum, Raiber cautioned that teacher development is not as straightforward and linear progression as it may seem; it is dynamic and context dependent, with frequent advances and regressions along the way. Thus, mentors must be adaptive in their approach to meeting their mentee's needs in relation to their stage of teacher development. According to Raiber, effective mentors assess the teacher's current needs and adjust their approach accordingly.

It seems evident that effective mentors possess an adaptability and flexibility that allows them to responsively adjust their approach to match the developmental needs of

novice teachers. Crasborn et al. (2008) emphasized this need for mentor versatility within their investigation of the impact of targeted training on mentors' adaptivity with student teachers. Before the training, mentors' primary function was that of advisor—focusing on task-oriented guidance. Following the training, mentors demonstrated a notable shift toward promoting self-reflection—a shift that helped mentees improve critical thinking skills and develop autonomy. In a later study, Crasborn et al. (2011) introduced the MERID model (which categorized mentor roles along two dimensions: input and directiveness) to further investigate the nature of this adaptive approach. The researchers found that the effectiveness of mentoring often relied on a mentor's ability to toggle between roles, utilizing an adaptive approach crucial for responsive mentoring. When mentors maintained an encouraging, non-directive stance, they enabled student teachers to actively engage in problem-solving and self-directed learning. These findings reiterate the importance of mentor flexibility and adaptability while also pointing to the valuable role that targeted training can play in enhancing mentoring practices.

Summary

Effective mentoring encompasses a range of approaches tailored to the evolving needs of mentees, blending directive guidance with collaborative and facilitative styles to support both immediate learning and long-term professional growth. By skillfully shifting across a continuum of approaches, mentors can create a responsive mentoring environment that offers tailored support, fostering independence and self-directed growth for their mentee. This adaptability reflects the dynamic nature of mentoring and reinforces the potential impact of targeted mentor training—an essential step to support mentor development and effectiveness.

Mentor Preparation and Development

Effective mentoring requires specific knowledge and skills that must be developed through deliberate and reflective practice (Evertson & Smithey, 2000).

Research findings indicate that mentors who receive structured preparation and ongoing development are more confident, satisfied, and effective in their roles (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Hobson et al., 2009). Effective mentoring of beginning teachers offers potentially significant benefits to all participants but also requires careful implementation to properly support both mentors and mentees (Hobson et al., 2009; Weimer, 2020).

Hobson et al. (2009) completed a comprehensive review of the literature related to mentoring beginning teachers, highlighting the numerous benefits that mentees may experience from mentoring (e.g., professional development, emotional and psychological support, development of teaching skills, improved retention). Additionally, the authors reported various challenges that novices may experience in relation to mentoring: inadequate emotional and psychological support, insufficient challenge, limited support for pedagogical issues, bullying or negative treatment. Beyond these benefits and limitations for beginning teachers, Hobson et al. (2009) also recognized the potential benefits (e.g., professional development, self-reflection, collaboration and connection, increased confidence) and challenges (e.g., increased workload, feelings of insecurity, isolation) that mentors may experience in educational contexts.

While mentoring has great potential for all stakeholders (i.e., mentors, mentees, students), its success depends on meeting specific conditions to maximize benefits and minimize drawbacks (Hobson et al., 2009; Weimer, 2020). Effective mentoring relies on adequate contextual support, careful mentor selection and pairing, appropriate mentoring

strategies, and robust mentor preparation and support. In the context of music education, Weimer (2020) emphasized the importance of identifying and pairing mentors based on explicit criteria such as teaching experience, professional competence, and interpersonal traits, to ensure alignment with mentoring goals. In addition to selection and pairing, Weimer stressed the significance of a structured approach to mentor preparation and ongoing professional development.

Formal Mentor Training

Mentor preparation programs must be comprehensive and flexible, considering mentors as adult learners who need opportunities to develop their pedagogical knowledge and capacity specific to mentoring. These programs should address content-specific instructional strategies, classroom observation techniques, data collection and analysis, and methods for leading reflective conversations about teaching and learning (Bartell, 2004; Berg & Conway, 2016). Additionally, mentors benefit from training in effective communication skills, including how to provide constructive feedback and build trusting relationships with their mentees (Moir et al., 2009).

Programs that include structured and intentional mentor preparation have the potential to increase mentors' self-efficacy and effectiveness. Riggs (2000) utilized the Mentor Efficacy Scale (MES) to investigate the impacts of participation in a structured training program, finding that trained mentors had significantly higher self-efficacy and were more effective in their role than those who did not have any formal mentor training. Similarly, Evertson and Smithey (2000) studied 46 mentor–protégé pairs to identify the effects of a formal mentoring program on the instructional practices of novice teachers, finding that those paired with prepared mentors were more effective in the classroom

compared to those who were assigned untrained mentors. While it is evident that a mentor can provide vital support for a novice teacher, Evertson and Smithey (2000) cautioned that for mentors to impact novice teachers' effectiveness, they must develop specific mentoring knowledge and skills (i.e., understanding of mentor role, understanding of beginning teachers, planning skills, communication strategies, reflection) through targeted training experiences. Structured mentor training appears essential for enhancing mentor effectiveness and improving novice teacher practices; however, to ensure this effectiveness, mentors may need continuous and ongoing support.

In addition to initial preparation, mentors require ongoing development opportunities to continue refining their mentoring skills and knowledge. Continued development could include opportunities for mentors to reflect on their mentoring experiences, engage with other mentors, and participate in professional learning communities (Berg & Conway, 2016; Hobson et al., 2009; Moir et al., 2009). Weimer (2020) suggested that such activities may improve mentors' awareness of the strengths and shortfalls in their own mentoring practices. Likewise, mentors may develop the flexibility to tailor their approach to better suit their individual strengths in response to the unique context of their mentee (Weimer, 2020). Stanulis and Ames (2009) examined how one experienced teacher learned to mentor novices over the course of a school year, highlighting the complex nature of learning to mentor effectively. The authors suggested that successful mentoring involves a continuous learning process where mentors must be adaptive and reflective. Through ongoing targeted learning opportunities, mentors can share ideas, resources, and strategies, while learning from each other's experiences and developing self-awareness and flexibility in their approach to mentoring.

Scholars note the value of initial and ongoing mentor training to provide opportunities for collaborative engagement among mentors and to facilitate reflection. The design of these experiences should reflect the complexities of mentor growth and development. Casey and Claunch (2005) offered a five-stage model of mentor development. Initially, individuals possess a strong *predisposition* towards professional growth, with a desire to assist and nurture others. As they enter the second stage, *disequilibrium*, they face self-doubt and unclear expectations while shifting their focus to teaching adults and often experiencing the “impostor phenomenon” (Clance, 1985). In the third stage, *transition*, mentors expand their knowledge and questioning skills, building trust and clarifying personal beliefs. Mentors refine strategies, separate their success from that of their proteges, and advocate for beginning teachers during the *confidence* stage. Finally, in the *efficacy* stage, mentors develop a personal mentoring style, continually adjust their strategies, and achieve a deep understanding of effective teaching practices, moving from intuitive to intentional practice. Designing training experiences that facilitate mentor reflection and collaborative engagement, while addressing the complexities of mentor growth (considering varied stages of development), seems crucial for developing effective and confident mentors.

Mentor Reflection

Reflection plays a critical role in the preparation of mentors to effectively support novice teachers. Researchers and scholars have emphasized that deliberate reflection is essential for mentors to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for mentoring (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Greene et al., 2020). According to Moir et al. (2009), teachers are not *inherently* effective mentors; rather, they must develop the requisite

skills through continuous reflection and growth on the subject. Reflective practice enables mentors to gain the necessary perspective and intuition to support their mentee's development through being responsive to their unique needs—a process distinct from that of working with students (Moir, 2003; Moir et al., 2009). While many teachers excel in their teaching practice with children and adolescents, engaging in deliberate reflection about their mentorship practices may help them to more effectively articulate their expertise in a way that better supports novice teachers' growth (Moir et al., 2009; Odell, 1990). Consequently, effective mentor preparation activities/programs should include ongoing reflective practice to move mentors beyond the ineffective, yet common strategy of merely conveying their own knowledge to mentees (Koballa et al., 2010; Moir et al., 2009) to facilitate their emerging independence.

Mentor education that integrates reflective practice with the principles of adult learning may be a particularly useful approach for effectively training mentors (English, 1999). English argued that mentorship should not only focus on the transfer of knowledge from mentor to mentee, but also must encourage both parties to engage in critical reflection about their experiences and assumptions regarding teaching and learning. Through the application of Knowles' (1968) principles of adult learning (e.g., involve participants from the outset, educate both mentors and mentees, honor the experiences of adult learners, relate new learning to participants professional practice, focus on continuous learning) facilitators can design mentor preparation to honor the unique contributions of both mentors and mentees as adult learners (English, 1999). This integration of adult learning principles with reflective practice may foster a culture of

continuous learning, enabling mentors to navigate challenges and enhance their ongoing growth and effectiveness.

In summary, the integration of reflective practice and adult learning principles provides a useful framework for mentor preparation, fostering mentors' ability to support novices with flexible guidance and adaptability (English, 1999; Knowles, 1968). By prioritizing self-directed reflection and engaging prior experiences, mentors are better positioned to move beyond simply transmitting knowledge toward practices that facilitate novices' pedagogical growth and independence (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Greene et al., 2020; Moir et al., 2009). This holistic approach promotes a dynamic mentoring process that is responsive to both mentors' and mentees' changing needs (Koballa et al., 2010; Odell, 1990).

Music-Specific Mentorship

Music teachers often face distinctive challenges which may not be fully addressed by general mentoring programs, leading to a call for more tailored approaches specific to the subject area (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Conway, 2015). These unique demands may include managing diverse classroom dynamics, navigating complex scheduling across multiple grade levels and school sites, and assuming administrative responsibilities related to public performance and budgeting (Conway, 2003; Bell-Robertson, 2011). Given these (and other) music-specific challenges, it is important that novice music educators have mentors who not only understand the complexities of music education, but also can provide guidance grounded in their own experience and specialized understanding of the field (Benson, 2008; Conway, 2001). Additionally, many music teachers function as the only content specialist in their schools, limiting their access to

meaningful professional support and a community of like-experienced peers (Conway, 2006; Krueger, 1999). Music-specific mentors are uniquely situated to provide support regarding the specialized context of a teacher's professional responsibilities (e.g., curriculum planning, repertoire selection, pedagogical strategies), while also serving as a bridge to the wider community of music education professionals (Conway & Zerman, 2004; Koerner, 2017). In recognition of these needs, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) advocated for structured, music-specific mentoring programs to support novice teachers and strengthen their retention in the field (Baumgartner et al., 2015; Greene et al., 2020; Vaughan-Marra & Baumgartner, 2023).

Models for Music Mentor Preparation

Project 2000 Mentoring Program. The *Project 2000 Mentoring Program*, a product of the 1984 Task Force on Music Teacher Education, was designed to promote professional development and offer structured support for novice music educators (Smith, 2003). The program connected first- and second-year music teachers with successful mentors. Monthly dinner meetings provided opportunities for informal networking, followed by structured sessions tailored to the specific needs indicated by participants. Program facilitators refined the structure in the second year to incorporate mentoring triads (i.e., mentor, second-year mentee, and first-year mentee) which enhanced peer collaboration and support. In addition to this change, facilitators also integrated the use of questionnaires designed to help mentors and mentees identify their mentoring preferences and improve the effectiveness of their interactions. This early program may serve as a useful model for those developing contemporary mentorship programs in music.

Music Mentor Plus Program. Music education scholars have reported on various music-specific mentoring programs in the US. The *Music Mentor Plus Program* (Berg & Rickels, 2018) was a year-long, mentor development program that featured live workshops and ongoing electronic communication between in-service music teachers and university music education professors. Program facilitators provided mentors with resources, materials, and opportunities for hands-on learning and collaborative reflection related to music-specific (and general) mentoring. Participants in the program reported that discussions with other mentors and hands-on learning opportunities were particularly beneficial, helping them to improve their mentoring strategies and deepen their understanding of their roles as music mentors. Despite the relative success of the program in supporting mentors' development and effectiveness, Berg & Rickels (2018) recommended that future iterations should increase the frequency of meetings, expand resource availability, include choral and general music teachers, and develop research-based strategies to more effectively assess outcomes. The *Music Mentor Plus Program* may serve as a model of a well-designed mentor education program that can meaningfully enhance mentors' knowledge and skills.

ASTA Mentor Program. The *American String Teachers Association* (ASTA) *Mentor Program* was designed to support early-career string teachers through targeted mentoring (Berg & Conway, 2016). This program incorporated a comprehensive Mentor Preparation Workshop at the 2016 ASTA National Conference, which included video observations, role-playing, and discussions on effective mentoring strategies. The program designers aimed to align this workshop with the New Teacher Center's (NTC) criteria for high-quality mentorship programs (New Teacher Center, 2007), emphasizing

rigorous mentor selection, initial training, ongoing professional development, and supportive mentor-mentee pairing (p. 2). Berg and Conway (2016) noted mentors' improved understanding of novice teachers, development of conferencing skills, and a focus on student achievement as particular benefits of the program. Despite the program's success, Berg and Conway (2016) discussed several challenges for program administrators, including supporting retired teacher mentors, designing effective processes and supports, and ensuring mentor effectiveness without imposing personal teaching values. With an eye toward continued success, the authors also discussed a need for ongoing mentor training, increased interactive workshop experiences, more accessible materials for mentors, improved documentation of effectiveness, and strategies for long-term sustainability. The *ASTA Mentoring Program* illustrates a useful framework for supporting mentor development and effectiveness in the context of a robust nation-wide formal music mentoring program.

NAfME Music Mentorship Program Facilitator & Mentor Support Project.

The National Association for Music Education's (NAfME) *Music Mentorship Program Facilitator and Mentor Support Project* (MMSP) was developed to offer direct support for state-level MEA mentoring program facilitators (those responsible for preparing mentors), addressing the unique requirements of music teacher mentors that general mentoring programs may overlook (Vaughan-Mara & Baumgartner, 2023). Through a series of synchronous, virtual sessions, the MMSP delivered a curriculum addressing effective mentoring techniques, administrative tasks, and content-specific challenges. One notable strength of the MMSP was its structure, which featured diverse session leaders who brought unique insights to the training, making the sessions both engaging

and practically relevant. Vaughan-Mara & Baumgartner (2023) recommended that future iterations include a coherent curriculum blending theoretical and practical content, with assessments focused on reflective practices like written reflections and participant-led projects for deeper learning. The researchers also emphasized the importance of follow-up sessions to foster ongoing professional development (for MEA mentoring program facilitators) and a flexible training format that incorporates both synchronous and asynchronous activities to accommodate practicing teachers' busy schedules.

Summary of Models of Music Mentor Preparation. Extant examples of music-specific mentoring programs highlight the importance of providing structured and flexible ongoing development opportunities that are tailored to the specific needs of mentors and those responsible for preparing them. For effective mentor preparation, MEAs and other organizations should consider developing structured, flexible, and mentor-centered programs. Examples such as the *Music Mentor Plus Program* (Berg & Rickels, 2018) and the *ASTA Mentor Program* (Berg & Conway, 2016) provide valuable models that can be adapted to local contexts. Continuous professional development opportunities, social interactions, and access to resources are critical for maintaining mentor effectiveness and satisfaction (Baumgartner, 2019; Conway & Holcomb, 2008).

Music Teacher Mentoring Programs in Oklahoma

Supporting beginning music teachers was viewed as an important focus of music education leaders in the state of Oklahoma in the early 2000s. Baumgartner (2020) provided a brief overview of recent efforts to develop music-specific mentoring programs in the Oklahoma, citing difficulty in establishing consistency of a state-wide program. Through a narrative account of his experiences designing the One-to-One Mentoring

Program for the Oklahoma Music Educators' Association (OkMEA), Baumgartner presented some of the motivations of state music education leaders, as well as the limitations of earlier attempts to establish music mentoring programs. Oklahoma music education leaders saw the potential for a mentorship program as a means to combat music teacher attrition and migration, develop a stronger professional community of new music educators, and support the professional and instructional development of new teachers. With a focus on the potential impact of an OkMEA-sponsored mentorship program, leaders explained that previous efforts in the state had been limited to a single music discipline (e.g., band only) or had experienced difficulties related to ineffective participant pairing strategies—difficulties which led to low participation and interest among new teachers.

With an understanding of previous program development efforts and a consideration of research-informed practices for formal mentoring programs, Baumgartner (2020) outlined the strategies, challenges, and lessons learned through the development of the OkMEA mentorship program. Acknowledging the potential issues related to participant pairing, Baumgartner detailed strategies to mitigate these challenges (e.g., personality considerations, teaching philosophy, geographical location) and reported that he found these strategies to provide inconsistent results in application. Additionally, Baumgartner described challenges related to providing guidance for mentors. Although the OkMEA program facilitators provided extensive resources online and through email, and offered mentor-specific workshops and conference sessions, they still identified a need to better support the work of their music mentors. Many of the challenges faced by mentors in the program were related to communication, or simply a

lack of time and energy to remember to deal with this “extra role” (p. 19). Given Baumgartner’s account of the challenges and reflections related to mentor-mentee pairing strategies, as well as mentor guidance and support, it seems that an increased understanding of how mentors view their role in this position may provide valuable insight to inform the design of similar music mentorship programs—particularly, efforts to effectively train mentors.

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I provided a review of the literature surrounding music education mentoring, specifically addressing mentor motivations, beliefs, roles, approaches, and the impact of formal preparation. In Chapter 3, I present the methods and analysis for this study. Chapter 4 includes narrative descriptions for each of three mentors/participants, illustrating their professional growth throughout the mentoring process. Chapter 5 features the cross-case findings associated with my research questions, as well as implications for formal mentor training programs and future research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Qualitative researchers investigate people, organizations, and phenomena in their everyday settings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Using words as data, the qualitative researcher aims to understand how people interpret and make meaning from their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A common approach to qualitative inquiry in educational settings is the case study, or multiple case study (Barrett, 2014). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined case study as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection” (p. 96). Like other qualitative methodologies, the design of multiple case studies relies on the researcher as the primary research instrument in an aim to discover meaning and understanding through an inductive process of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and rich description (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the multiple case study design afforded me the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of how music teacher mentors interpreted and made meaning from their experience as both music teacher and teacher mentor.

In this chapter I will provide a description of my theoretical framework, my background and assumptions related to the research topic, the multiple case study approach, the mentoring program, and the pilot study. Additionally, I will provide an overview of data collection procedures, analytical strategies, and research trustworthiness.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers hold their own, unique, philosophical perspectives regarding the nature of knowledge. These perspectives guide and inform the way the researcher carries out their work. As a researcher, I identify with the constructionist epistemological stance. According to Crotty, (1998) constructionism “is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). My belief that, as humans, we construct meaning through interaction with the world around us, is congruent with this description of constructionism. More specifically, I believe that meaning is constructed by communities. Crotty (1998) stated that “All reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed. There is no exception” (p. 54). Our making of meaning is intertwined with historical and cultural contexts, which define our interpretation of objects and experiences. Our understanding of the world is informed and influenced by our interactions with others. Crotty would further define this perspective as “social constructionism” (p. 54). This is not to say that I believe there is no power of meaning making within the individual—after all, each individual has their own unique lived experience. As such, every individual’s understanding of the world is unique and continually evolving but does so in relation to his or her own social and cultural contexts.

My constructionist epistemological stance influences my symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective. Crotty (1998) stated that “symbolic interactionism explores the understandings abroad in culture as the meaningful matrix that guides our lives” (p. 71). Blumer (1969) set forth three basic assumptions for interactionist research: (1) “that

human beings act toward things on the basis of meaning;" (2) "that the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows;" and (3) "that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process" (p. 2). These interactionist assumptions fall in line with my epistemological position. Every person is a social construction. In other words, we become who we are through our interaction with society. Such a theoretical perspective had significant influence on how I approached my research topic. I sought to understand the values and beliefs of mentor participants in a state music educators' association mentoring program regarding the role of mentor in such a program.

The framework of symbolic interactionism informed my assumptions regarding the role and value of the unique social and cultural life experiences of the participants. These assumptions informed how I viewed the participants in relation to their lived experiences. The participants' perceptions of being mentors in a formal program were influenced by a lifetime of experiences. The ways in which they viewed and described their professional experiences were informed by their interaction with their environment and culture. It was important that I approached the research process with this in mind. This theoretical framework also directly informed my research questions. I wanted to understand how the participants perceived their role as mentor. The meaning and value of mentor role is a social construct, and thus continues to evolve with time and experience. Through the process of research, the participants and I co-created meaning through our joint interpretation of their lived experiences.

Researcher Background

My interest in this topic began during my early experiences as a teacher educator. Upon completion of my master's degree in music performance, I was fortunate to earn a position as the director of bands at a small, private liberal arts university. Given the nature of this type of institution, my responsibilities included (among other things) supervising and advising of all instrumental music education majors. While this experience was overwhelmingly fulfilling and educative, I was forced to “figure things out” about my role in supporting preservice teachers along the way. My previous professional experience was as a secondary-level instrumental music teacher. I had much to learn about working with college students and adults, particularly related to supporting the development of preservice teachers as they progress from student to student-teacher to full-time educator—I needed a mentor.

Throughout my early experiences as a music teacher educator, I learned to adapt the manner in which I interacted with students and teachers, including the type of feedback and responses that I provided. I began to codify my beliefs and values regarding my role in supporting young teachers as they transitioned into the first years of their careers. This personal codification of beliefs and values continued as I transitioned into a role as graduate teaching assistant in my doctoral program. In this context, I was afforded many opportunities to learn effective means of supporting and mentoring young teachers from colleagues and more experienced teacher educators by serving as university supervisor for student teachers, assisting with instruction of music education courses (e.g., student teaching seminar, instrumental methods courses, introduction to music education), and informal discussions with music education faculty members. As a student

teaching supervisor, I was able to refine my perspective as a teacher mentor, as well as observe varied mentoring approaches of numerous cooperating teachers. Additionally, I served as a mentor during the first year of the OkMEA (Oklahoma Music Educators Association) Mentoring Program. Through that experience, I further continued to refine my values and beliefs regarding the mentor role.

My personal experiences as a mentor (in multiple contexts), in combination with my interactions with other teacher mentors in the OMP, served as a lens to frame my understanding of the perceptions of the mentor teachers in this study. As I explored the body of research related to supporting beginning teachers, I recognized that much of what is known is approached from the perspective of beginning teachers—their needs, their own perceptions, etc. While this viewpoint is certainly important when informing the development of policies and best practices that support beginning music teachers, I began to wonder about the mentors' perspectives. What do mentors believe and value about their role as mentor? How did they form these beliefs and values? What are their concerns? What are their challenges? What are their needs?

As an experienced music teacher educator and mentor, I possess personal beliefs and values about the role of a mentor. While my own experiences and status as a participant in the Oklahoma Mentorship Program (OMP) may be viewed as a source of potential bias, they also served as a means of access to the OMP, as well as its leadership and participants. Throughout the research process, I tracked my procedures, perceptions, interpretations, potential categories and themes, and any potential bias through memos and jottings (Ezzy, 2002). Ezzy's writing reminded that "keeping a journal and regularly writing memos encourages researchers to reflect routinely on their emerging

understanding of the data” (p. 71–72). While these procedures are integral elements of analysis and interpretation, they also served as a means to check any potential bias.

Multiple Case Study

The contextual nature of case studies makes this approach valuable to investigate the intricacies and complexities of educational settings (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Despite this common understanding, there are some discrepancies in the way that scholars have defined case study research (Barrett, 2014). Stake (1995) defined case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (xi). In contrast, Yin (2018) presented a twofold definition of case study, which emphasized a meticulous research design with a focus on the process of research. While Stake placed the emphasis on the bounded system itself, Yin focused on the methodological process of case study research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) acknowledged the value of each of these approaches to contribute to the general understanding of case study design, however, they reinforced that “the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study: the case” (p. 38). To this point, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) presented a graphic representation of the case study as a heart within a circle. While the circle defines the fringes of the case, which will not be studied, the heart represents the unit of analysis. The conceptions of Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Miles et al. (2014) served as a basis for the design of this study.

Through the process of creating a bounded system, the researcher delimits and defines exactly what will be the focus of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña 2014). A case may be an individual, group, community,

phenomenon, policy, or program (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The cases in this study were bound by (a) the mentoring program, (b) activity (2nd year OMP participation), (c) role (mentor), and (d) time, as this study was conducted over a six-month period during the second year of the OMP. While the program served as the contextual boundary of the cases, the individual mentors' perceptions of the mentoring role were the unit of study.

The multiple case study approach—also referred to as multicase study, multiple site case study, or comparative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)—involves collecting data related to more than a single case. Yin (2018) considered single and multiple case studies to be “variants within the same methodological framework” (p. 54). Additionally, by studying an issue in the context of multiple cases, the researcher may gain a more compelling understanding of a “single-case finding, grounding it by specifying *how* and *where* and, if possible, *why* [**emphasis in**] it carries on as it does” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, emphasis in). Thus, the multiple case study design was chosen to facilitate an in-depth investigation of mentors in the real-world context (Yin, 2018) of the OMP.

Furthermore, I determined a multiple case study design was a good fit for this research because it facilitated a deep understanding of the perceptions, beliefs, challenges, values, and practices of individuals regarding their role and work as mentors in a formal mentoring program. The understanding of these concepts were co-constructed by myself and the participants—their realities are a product of their lived experience and interaction with people (including me) and their environment. Given my personal

experiences as a mentor, such an interaction seemed the most appropriate for examining participants' experiences in a similar setting.

Program Description

The OkMEA Mentoring Program (OMP) was launched by the state music educators' association (MEA) in August 2017. The OMP was a research-based initiative designed to support beginning music educators across the state by facilitating a paired mentoring relationship between a beginning and a veteran teacher (i.e., one-to-one initiative). Program participation was completely voluntary and included a year-round open enrollment for both beginning (mentee) and veteran (mentor) teachers. Individuals communicated their interest in program participation through an online portal on the MEA website (OkMEA, 2018). In its first year, the OMP consisted of 58 mentor/mentee pairs. Program participants were paired based on a number of factors including area of specialization, geographic location, and personality (Baumgartner, 2020). While pairings were often in close geographic proximity—and sometimes included teachers from the same school district—no mentor/mentee pairs taught at the same school site.

OMP participants were provided with support and informational resources through various avenues. In the first year, all program participants were encouraged to attend several optional professional development (PD) opportunities and informal social gatherings. PD opportunities included (a) the Beginning Teacher Workshop (BTW), which was held in conjunction with the OkMEA Fall Conference in October; and (b) mentor/beginning teacher-specific sessions at the OkMEA Winter Conference in January (OkMEA, 2018). Social gatherings were organized in a central part of the state and took place on weekends in order to facilitate informal interaction and support. The official

OkMEA Mentorship Program webpage (OkMEA, 2018) included a brief description of mentor and mentee, keys to success, suggestions for communication, and external links to online and print resources. Mentors had the option to claim a complimentary copy of *Handbook for the Music Mentor* (Conway, Smith, & Hodgman, 2010) by attending mentor-specific sessions at the annual state conference, and mentees received a variety of print sources at each of the developmental workshops. Additionally, the program directors sent periodic “check-in” emails with suggestions for mentoring practice (Baumgartner, 2020).

The OMP began its second year in August 2018. While the program objectives and design effectively remained the same, the BTW was moved to early September as a stand-alone event. This move was made in an effort to better fit the traditionally busy October weekend schedules of music teachers, and to occur earlier in the fall when the individual needs of many first-year teachers are more prevalent. Additionally, the workshop offerings at the BTW were expanded to provide support for mentors as well as the beginning teachers. Many of the mentoring pairs were continued from year one; however, some mentees and mentors chose not to continue in the program for various reasons (e.g., moved out of state, found informal mentoring “in-house” at their school, busy schedules). Those participants who wished to continue in the program, but no longer had a counterpart, were assigned to a new mentor or mentee for the second year.

Pilot Study

I conducted an exploratory pilot study with three mentors in January and February 2018. With this multiple-case study (Stake, 2006) I aimed to understand the experiences of three mentor teachers in the OMP. I focused on the participant’s perceptions of the

nature of mentorship and their participation in the program. All the participants in this study seemed to value participation in the OMP as a way to “give back” to the profession. Each mentor discussed the role of informal mentors in their own development as a young teacher and expressed a desire to provide that same kind of support themselves. Program participation also seemed to provide a source of professional growth for mentors, as they were forced to acknowledge their potential for leadership and examine their own practices as part of the process of mentoring.

Given that the study took place during what was the first year of the OMP, formally mentoring beginning teachers was a new endeavor for each of the three participants. As may be expected, the mentors faced several challenges, including (a) time constraints, (b) establishing communication, (c) being paired with someone in the same district, (d) mentee context, and (e) navigating a new role. Although each responded differently, all three participants discussed the challenge associated with navigating and adopting the role of mentor. They were all uncertain of how exactly to interact with their mentee; one mentor never actually connected with her mentee. Despite recounting meaningful and innovative interactions with their mentees, two participants were uncertain the impact of their efforts.

The understandings gained from this pilot study served to inform the purpose and research questions of the present study. It seemed that these mentors struggled with a conflict between their perceptions of (a) the *role* of a mentor, and (b) their actual *practice* as mentors. As such, the present study aims to understand mentors’ self-defined role and perceived effectiveness as a mentor.

Participants

Stake (2006) suggested that a primary reason for conducting a multiple case study is to understand the unit of study in different settings. The focus of this study was second-year mentor participants in the OMP. I employed purposeful multiple-case sampling (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to select a “range of similar and contrasting cases” (p. 33). The program director provided a list of potential mentor participants, divided into two categories: (1) continuing mentors with a highly successful mentor/mentee relationship, and (2) continuing mentors who had been reassigned to a new mentor/mentee pairing. I sent an email invitation to program participants from this list (see Appendix A). Participants were selected from each of these contrasting categories to provide a range of similar and contrasting cases yielding a more robust understanding of the mentors’ perceptions (Miles et al., 2014). The criterion for final participant selection was based on the recommendation of the program director (based on program involvement, workshop attendance, and mentor/mentee interaction) and his perceived willingness of both the mentor and their mentee to participate in the study. Additional participants included (a) one of the two mentoring program directors (the primary director), and (b) two novice music teachers who were individually paired with one of the selected mentor teacher participants—while the remaining novice teacher initially agreed to participate, they were unable to fulfill the requirements for participation. See Table 3.1 for an overview of study participants. Detailed descriptions of mentor participants’ background and context are presented in Chapter 4.

Table 3.1*Study Participants*

	Mentor #1	Mentee #1	Mentor #2	Mentee #2	Mentor #3	Program Director
Pseudonym	Brad	Madison	Elizabeth	Megan	Amanda	*no pseudonym

Data Collection

A primary characteristic of case study research is the collection of “multiple sources of evidence” (Yin, 2018, p. 126). Creswell and Poth (2018) echoed that concept, suggesting that case study researchers rely on many forms of data to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Sources of case study data may include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (Yin, 2018). In order to gain an understanding of the perceptions of mentor teachers, I completed in-depth data collection for a four-month period during the 2018–2019 school year that included (a) multiple individual interviews with all participants, (b) video observation of mentoring interactions, (c) reflective drawings of mentor characteristics and traits, and (d) a summative focus group interview with mentor participants. The interview with the program director only served to inform a detailed understanding of program design, materials and resources, and expectations of mentors.

Data collection schedule

Data collection was organized in alignment with the OMP schedule. The program offered two PD workshops during the school year. The Beginning Teacher Workshop (BTW) was offered as a standalone event in September that included specialized sessions for both mentors and mentees. The BTW also provided opportunities for social

interaction amongst the community of program participants. OkMEA hosted a winter conference in January, which included several workshop sessions for both mentors and beginning teachers. Because of the potential impact that PD offerings may have on mentors' role perceptions, it was important to examine participants' perceptions in relation to their attendance at such events. Given the timeline of these offerings, I developed a schedule for data collection which is listed below in Table 3.1. This timeline allowed me to explore participant perceptions following each of the program's PD offerings, while also leaving enough time for the mentors to reflect on and codify their learning.

Table 3.2

Data collection schedule

	Mentor Interviews	Mentor/Mentee Observation	Program Director Interview	Reflective Drawing	Focus Group Interview
November-December	3 interviews	2 video observations	1 interview	1 ideal mentor, 1 self as mentor	
February-March	3 interviews				1 interview

Interviews

The primary tool for data collection was individual interviews. Interviewing is an important mode of data collection, which “is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). The purpose of the individual interviews in this study were to view the experience of mentors through their perspective. Seidman (2006) suggested that if one wishes to understand a participant's experience and the “meaning they make out of that experience...interviewing, in most cases, may be the best avenue of inquiry” (p. 11). I

completed two semi-structured interviews with each participant. Initial interview protocols were designed in alignment with the research questions in order to illuminate participants' beliefs about their work as a mentor (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Moir 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2012) and effective approaches to interaction with beginning teachers (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Johnson, 2002; Portner, 2008). Subsequent interview protocols were informed by ongoing data analysis as part of the emergent design approach. See Appendix B for the complete interview protocols.

Observation

While interviews provide a secondhand account of the phenomenon, observations offer a firsthand account in an authentic setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the time between the initial and follow-up mentor interview, I asked mentor participants to video record a mentoring interaction with their assigned mentee. I analyzed these videos using an observation protocol to interpret each mentor's interaction with his/her mentee. This method of data collection allowed me to observe the mentors' enactment of the mentoring role, rather than relying solely on secondhand accounts from interviews. Additionally, comparing observed behaviors with self-reported data allowed for the corroboration of participant responses, thus enhancing the credibility of the study (Patton, 2015). Observation protocols were designed to document the initial roles adopted by mentors and the ways in which they might interact with their mentee. See Appendix C for the observation protocol.

Reflective drawing

While personal interviews provided a means for the mentors to verbalize their perceptions and video observations allowed the researcher to view the enactment of those

perceptions, reflective drawing of mentors helped to uncover the nuances of their “personal beliefs and images” (Dolloff, 1999, p. 198) about mentors. In their music education textbook, Raiber and Teachout (2014) included a reflective drawing activity to facilitate the exploration of pre-service teachers’ beliefs about learning environments. According to Weber and Mitchell (1995), “An analysis of drawings can thus reveal aspects of our personal and social knowledge—how we see the world, how we feel, and what we can imagine—that have largely been ignored” (p. 19). Mentor participants were asked to draw two pictures prior to their initial interview—one of an ideal teacher mentor, and one of them currently as a teacher mentor. This process of drawing an imagined ideal was described by Dolloff (1999) in reference to pre-service teachers’ beliefs about teachers and teaching. Dolloff (1999) explained that “drawing the imagined ideal teacher opens a window on the hopes and beliefs about what a teacher can be, expresses theories of the ideal teacher, and explores how the individual sees themselves in relation to that ideal image of “Teacher” (p. 206–207). Much in this way, mentors’ drawings provided an opportunity for interrogating and interpreting their own unexamined beliefs about mentors and mentoring.

Focus group

The final element of data collection for this study was a summative focus group interview following the completion of the final individual interview and involving all three mentor teachers. Individual interviews, observation, and focus group interviews are useful as complementary techniques (Morgan, 1997). A focus group interview employed as a follow-up for individual interviews allows the researcher to “explore issues that came up only during the analysis of the interviews” (p. 23). The development of the focus

group protocol (see Appendix C) was informed by ongoing data analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis

Shank (2002) described an approach to thematic analysis that involves a sequence of analytical processes including coding, comparing, finding patterns, and making meaning. I employed this analytical sequence to examine the data in this study, including ongoing data analysis concurrent with data collection—an approach that allowed me to “cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new...data” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 70). At the conclusion of data collection, I continued with a comprehensive analysis of all collected data.

Interview data were divided into units related to the research questions. Once data were segmented, I completed a general open coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), or first cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013), that included the use of several types of codes (e.g., descriptive, in-vivo, process, values) to better understand the participants’ perceptions of being a mentor. Following the open coding process, I compiled the handwritten codes into an electronic spreadsheet. I then completed a second cycle coding process (Saldaña, 2013) to explore any underlying categorical organization within the codes (i.e., pattern codes) that might explain how or why things were happening in a particular manner—a process that involved comparing and contrasting patterns within the data. Within the processes of first and second cycle coding, I completed analytic jottings and memos (Miles et al., 2014) to track my analytical thinking about, reactions to, and reflection on the data. I also completed within-case and cross-case analyses to develop a holistic

understanding of individual cases, while understanding commonalities among the different cases.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers may employ varied strategies to ensure the rigor of their work. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested three areas of consideration for evaluating the trustworthiness of a qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) dependability, and (c) transferability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the connection between the findings and the actual data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that “what is being investigated” by the qualitative researcher “is people’s construction of reality—how they understand the world” (p. 243). I utilized a variety of strategies (e.g., triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing) to establish credibility. Triangulation was achieved through my use of multiple *methods* of data collection (i.e., interviews, observations, reflective drawings, and a focus group interview). Using multiple methods of data collection allowed for the corroboration of participant responses. Patton (2015) conveyed the value of triangulation as a means to increase “credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (p. 674). Member checks are another useful strategy to establish credibility and serve as a valuable way to rule out researcher misinterpretation (Maxwell, 2013). I utilized member checks to afford participants opportunities to provide feedback on my preliminary interpretations of their experiences and perceptions. The final strategy I used to establish credibility was peer debriefing. Allowing a colleague to examine some

of the raw data and weigh the plausibility of my findings against the participants' actual responses served to strengthen the credibility of interpretation.

Dependability

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that qualitative researchers must ask “whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (p. 251). The focus for the qualitative researcher is not on replication, but instead on the consistency and dependability of the findings, or that “given the data collected, the results make sense” (p. 251). While the use of triangulation and peer debriefing strengthened the credibility of this study, they also served as strategies for ensuring dependability.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be transferred and applied to other settings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the researcher may facilitate transferability by providing “sufficient descriptive data” (p. 298). Rich description of the mentoring program and each participants' teaching background, expertise, and setting are provided to enable the reader to potentially extrapolate findings and consider other applications (Patton, 2015). Scholars agree that the responsibility of transferability lies with the reader, who must determine any meaningful application to his or her own setting (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Chapter 4

Individual Case Narratives

In this chapter, I will delve into the personal mentoring experiences of each participant. Following the narrative structure suggested by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002)—character, setting, problem, action, resolution—I will introduce each participant’s character and setting, detail the problems they faced, the actions they took, and the resolution (or lack thereof) to their mentoring journey. Through this structure, the experiences and insights gained by each mentor are explored, providing a glimpse into the multifaceted nature of mentoring for these participants within the context of the OMP.

Amanda

Amanda was an elementary general music specialist at Independence Elementary School, in the Pine Grove Public School District. Like most other elementary schools in the state, Independence housed students from grades PreK–5. Amanda was in her 13th year teaching and her second year at Independence when I completed this study. Although she primarily identified as an elementary general music teacher, she spent two years at the beginning of her career teaching high school choir.

“I was hesitant at first”

Amanda was married to a friend and colleague of mine, and she had participated in the pilot study for this project. Prior to her participation in both stages of this research, I had known Amanda through some limited social interactions but had not seen her work in the classroom. Through conversations with her husband, I knew that she had recently moved to a teaching position in a new school district and was navigating the typical challenges associated with that type of professional transition. Given Amanda's

uncertainty about participation in this project, it was no surprise that I initially experienced some difficulty establishing rapport with her. During the pilot study, she approached our first interview with caution and constraint—sitting with her legs crossed, arms folded over a notebook on her lap, and shoulders slumped around her. She had even positioned a large binder on the table as a barrier directly between us. Amanda’s cautious approach extended to our conversation that followed. Her responses to both initial and follow-up questions were limited to short statements with sparse elaboration or explanation.

Amanda did not have any experience working with young music teachers prior to her participation in the OMP. However, in the first year of the OMP, the program coordinators asked Amanda to serve as a mentor for a first-year teacher at another school in her district. Although she was unsure about her potential as a mentor, Amanda reluctantly agreed. In addition, she provided some insight into this decision.

I was hesitant at first, but was encouraged just based on my experience that I would be of some use...accepting that I have been teaching for 12 years, which doesn't seem possible, and that I have had many experiences...I have worked in several districts, so I have seen a lot of different aspects of teaching and how different districts do it, so I do, I do have knowledge, and I can share that. I tend to not.

As Amanda told me about this decision, I felt that she was still questioning her potential as a mentor. She later shared that she hoped to gain “leadership skills and hone into the fact that you do have potential to be useful.” Through this conversation, she seemed to be

attempting to reassure herself and maybe even convince me that she did, in fact, have valuable expertise to offer in support of an early-career music teacher.

Amanda's continued uncertainty about her own potential as a mentor seemed to also play a role in her difficulty establishing a connection with her first mentee, who had worked with several highly accomplished co-teachers. Given Amanda's uncertainties, she assumed that her mentee would get most of her needed mentorship from her co-teachers. She described how her first mentee's teaching context presented some barriers to establishing a mentoring relationship:

She is very talented. She student taught with...I think this is her second year of teaching. She student taught with two of the most well-known elementary music teachers in the district, and then she took over for one of them her first year of teaching, and so she worked alongside the other one for her first year. That one recently retired, and now she's working with another amazing elementary music teacher...So she has around her a lot of mentors.

While Amanda exhibited some difficulty recognizing and acknowledging the value of her own experience and expertise, she described her mentee's co-teachers as "amazing" and "the most well-known." By creating this mental juxtaposition between herself and others, Amanda also seemed to convince herself that her mentee did not need her because they had support from other mentors.

Amanda and her mentee both taught in the Pinegrove district and had some informal interactions at district-wide professional development events and music department meetings. However, despite these informal interactions, they were unable to establish a mentoring relationship:

We've touched on the fact that she's been busy, and I have been busy, and she feels bad from, on her point that she hasn't made more of an effort to get together, and I too on my side. So, we want to get together; we just haven't made it happen yet.

Although Amanda attributed this missed connection to busy schedules and lack of effort, given our prior discussion of her lack of confidence and perception of her mentee's co-teachers, I wondered if her actions may have been guided by an attempt to avoid rejection.

While Amanda may have struggled to establish a connection with her initial mentee and never found time to meet with her, she still chose to take advantage of a professional development opportunity for mentors at the OkMEA Winter Conference. This experience seemed to provide valuable insight into the developmental needs of a beginning music teacher. Amanda particularly valued this opportunity to better understand the needs of early-career educators and develop strategies to provide support, stating, "I think just putting us in their head. Letting us know developmentally where they are... I didn't take the time to think about where she was in her space and in her timing." Although Amanda never formally met with her mentee, this new-found perspective seemed to help her begin to shift from a focus on herself to a focus on the needs of her colleague—a direction that would eventually allow her to set aside her concerns and enact her own potential as a mentor.

“I do have knowledge and can share that”

Despite the challenges of establishing a connection with her first mentee, Amanda found success in her teaching role at a new school. Following a rewarding year of

teaching, she completed Level III of Kodály training during the summer break at a nearby university. In addition to her pursuit of continued personal growth, she was invited to lead a professional development workshop in the fall for beginning elementary music teachers from across the state. Finding a new sense of professional confidence, and hoping for “that true mentorship experience,” Amanda volunteered to work with a new mentee the year that I completed this study.

Like many music educators who complete any level of Kodály training, Amanda described this experience as “life-changing.” She had completed Levels I and II in each of the previous summers and credited this training with transforming her entire approach to teaching:

I felt like I was doing a good job before, but this totally aligned everything I was doing conceptually, and it just made me feel more organized...I saw different goals and I just felt like I had a better idea of what I was doing once I was done.

While this experience positively impacted Amanda’s teaching practices and confidence in her role as *teacher*, it also seemed to reinforce insecurities related to her role as *mentor*. In addition to being some of the most highly respected music educators in the state, her initial mentee’s “amazing” and “well-known” co-teachers were also the instructors for the Kodály program. For Amanda, it seemed that this context placed her in the same professional position as her mentee. She questioned how she could provide any kind of mentorship in this situation, stating that “I just felt like we were more on the same [plane], rather than me mentoring her.” This professional development experience seemed to simultaneously propel Amanda toward a new perception of herself as *teacher*, while also reinforcing her own limiting assumptions about her potential as *mentor*.

Given Amanda's insecurities and the challenges that she experienced during her first year as a mentor in the OMP, I wondered what motivated her to take on a new mentee in the following school year. She reflected on the decision stating that, "I wanted to get that true mentorship experience, I did it again because...I just was hoping for a different situation." She also recalled her own experience as a beginning teacher, remembering that her principal was her official mentor.

They had no idea, you know, and I just really feel like maybe out of the gate I would've gained more confidence in the beginning than taking so long to finally get there...or to feel like I was being successful? Maybe that would've started sooner. I don't know.

It seemed that Amanda saw value in the potential for a mentor to provide vital support for a beginning teacher, but perhaps her insecurities regarding her expertise and effectiveness as a teacher had inhibited her ability to establish a personal connection with her first mentee.

Amanda credited her Kodály training for transforming her confidence and effectiveness in the classroom. Similarly, she found value in mentor-specific professional development to transform her perspective of mentoring and her role as a mentor. She recalled a specific workshop that she attended at a state-wide music education conference:

Oh my gosh. I feel like she opened my eyes up on what I needed to do. It wasn't just "getting together," but it was like specific stuff. She would mention like, knowing how to communicate with that person, just like setting that up at the beginning. "How do you want to communicate?" "How often do you feel like we

need to meet?” “What things can we work on?”...I just really felt like I needed that outline, and the specifics on what my job was [as a mentor].

Following what she described as an unsuccessful mentoring attempt in the first year of the OMP, Amanda found great value in the practical and precise recommendations that this presenter provided in the workshop. It seemed that having first-hand experience in the program allowed her to more intentionally engage with these fundamental questions about her “job” as a mentor and how to fulfill that role.

“Better teachers. Better students”

To better understand how Amanda viewed her own role as an individual mentor, I wanted to uncover how she viewed the value and benefit of the OMP as a program.

Amanda discussed wide-ranging possibilities, including benefits for various stakeholders (beginning teachers, mentors, the state-wide community of music education, and music students) in Oklahoma:

I imagine more confident beginning teachers. I even see collaboration growing within our teachers...I imagine the person I’m mentoring now, I’m not gonna stop with her just because the mentorship program stops. Like, I see that as a relationship that’s gonna keep going. So, I just feel like there’s all this collaboration that’s gonna trickle and all these relationships are gonna be there, maybe more than we have now.

She framed this with a focus on students as the ultimate beneficiaries of the OMP, stating “Better teachers. Better students. I mean, I think it trickles to the students.” Given this view of the potential impact of the OMP and its participants, it is no surprise that Amanda felt uncertainty about her value and effectiveness as a mentor. While Amanda

saw an opportunity to provide the support she wanted and needed in the early years of her own career, she also seemed to (at least subconsciously) internalize a responsibility for improving the experiences of music students across the state through her relationship with a single beginning teacher. However, her motivations were not entirely focused on the benefits for others.

“I’m still trying to figure out who I am”

Given Amanda’s vision for the possible impact of the OMP, and her own lack of confidence in her potential as a mentor, it came as no surprise to me that she would view participation in the program as an opportunity for personal growth—one which would allow her to move out of the role of mentee and into the role of mentor. She referred to this as her “selfish” motivation:

I think, selfishly...gaining confidence in the area of being a mentor. I mean, I was 12 years in. I *should* be to that point, and I just hadn’t given myself the opportunity, or been really given that opportunity. So, selfishly, I was just hoping that I could develop the confidence to be a mentor, and that I could see myself in that kind of role, instead of always the one listening and taking ideas from people.

I wanted to be the one giving and sharing.

Amanda hoped that by taking on the “job” of mentor, she (and perhaps others) would begin to *see* herself as a mentor—as someone who was worthy of that title. Her creation of this distinction between herself and a true mentor was a recurring aspect of our conversations.

In an effort to better understand how Amanda distinguished between these two concepts, I asked her to draw two pictures: (1) a picture that represents the ideal mentor (see Figure 4.1), and (2) a picture that represents herself as a mentor (see Figure 4.2).

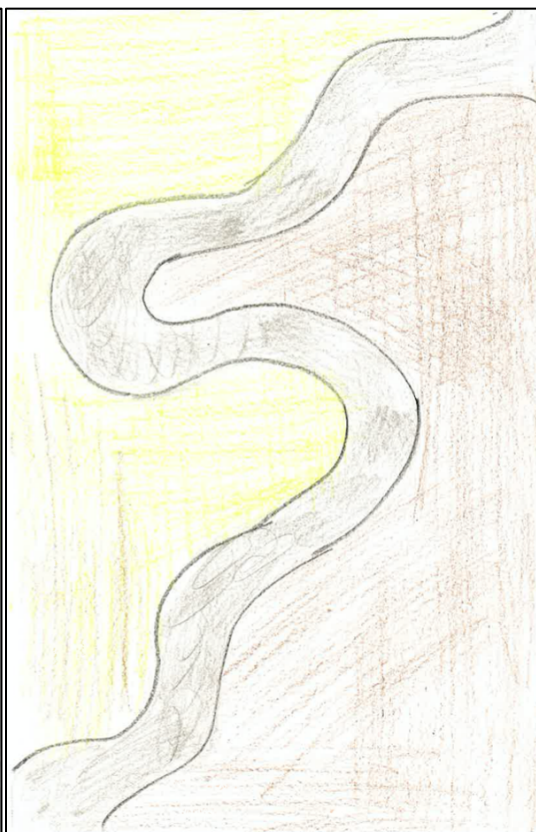
Figure 4.1

Amanda's Drawing of an Ideal Mentor



Figure 4.2

Amanda's Drawing of Herself as a Mentor



Amanda described her drawing of the ideal mentor:

I started thinking of a runner and like where they're going, and then I just thought of pathways, so my first one is like they know where they're going. It's a beautifully paved road with beautiful grass surrounding it. She's organized, methodical, focused, consistent, disciplined, and compassionate. They have an

end goal...They're just like straight and narrow; they know what they're doing, they've got it all figured out.

She then described her drawing of herself as a mentor:

My path is really winding. Have you seen the movie Up? "Squirrel, squirrel, squirrel!" That is me. I want to be this, and I want to have my finish line, but I'm still trying to figure out who I am. And maybe, I don't know, like, not as pretty green grass and then I've got some dirt around me.

Amanda had a clear vision for what she thought a mentor should be—intensely focused, with a clear path forward toward a specific goal—but she still felt a need to uniquely define that for her own work. In her words, she still had too much "dirt around her" and was "still trying to figure out" who she was.

"It hasn't been so methodical"

Having a clear view of an ideal mentor as "intensely focused, with a clear path forward toward a specific goal," Amanda approached her relationship with her new mentee, Leslie, expecting to provide direct support related to music instruction and curriculum. However, Amanda found that Leslie seemed to need support of a different nature.

(I'm) trying to be understanding and, I don't know, embrace her in a different way. So far it hasn't been so methodical...Concept-wise, we haven't quite gotten there. We're more in just like socially and emotionally. Because first year is hard aside from what you're doing in the classroom. It's hard on you and so, so far I think, I guess I've kind of been her counselor.

Amanda was confident in Leslie's ability to plan and deliver instruction, but was concerned about her happiness and longevity in the classroom.

She's in a hard situation. I don't know how I would deal with it, honestly. I don't for sure know if I could stay in that situation...but she's so valuable to the teaching career, I don't want her to quit that...my main goal is, I don't know if she'll stay at that school, but just don't give up with what you're doing, because I think she's great

Leslie's specific challenges stemmed from her teaching context and a lack of support from colleagues and administrators. With this unexpected concern, Amanda shifted her focus to providing emotional support by validating Leslie's emotions and actions, coaching her through potential scenarios, and encouraging her to be persistent.

It seemed that Amanda's initial assumptions about Leslie's needs may have been guided by her own experiences early in her career. Given the expectation that Leslie would need to focus on planning, instruction, and curriculum, it is no surprise that these were the same challenges that Amanda spoke about in relation to her own experiences as a beginning teacher:

Just lesson planning. Just me finding out what I was doing, really, was my challenge. It wasn't my schedule. It wasn't the kids. It wasn't admin. The teachers were wonderful. Just doing programs for the first time and managing time.

Luckily, I was single. I didn't have to worry about anything but my job.

In addition to this reflection on her experiences early in her career, she also acknowledged that she continued to face challenges even as an experienced teacher. Whether learning new technology, adapting to new standards, or just reflecting on

practice and making adaptations, Amanda acknowledged that “There’s always new things, or trying things different ways...it’s just a way of life. It’s just what you do [as an educator].”

Amanda’s initial image of a methodical and focused mentor with specific goals and a clear path to achieve them seemed to be superseded by her natural intuition to validate and encourage—particularly in response to Leslie’s lived experiences and challenges. It seemed that, although Amanda thought that she was supposed to focus on helping Leslie to improve her teaching effectiveness, she had developed a personal relationship which facilitated an awareness and responsiveness to her mentee’s needs outside the classroom:

It seems human nature to me. Why would I not want to encourage her? That’s what I would want, and I would want validation a hundred percent, and affirmation, and to be told those things. I think she was searching for that. I don’t know. I just felt like that’s...why I felt, I mean, she’s talking to me about it, she’s opening up about it, she’s being personal about it. So, I guess that’s just what I would need.

Although Amanda described herself as having some “dirt around me” and wanting to be more like her “methodical” ideal, she seemed to be finding her own identity as a mentor through a focus on building a relationship and supporting her colleague and mentee by intuitively adapting to her actual needs.

“Non-judgement zone”

Having 13 years of teaching experience, Amanda seemed to be comfortable and confident navigating both the day-to-day challenges of the job, as well as larger shifts in

the profession. While she had previously spoken with me about the limited scope of mentorship that she received as a beginning teacher, I wondered where she turned for support now. Amanda referred to new teacher evaluation standards “changing everything” about the way she engaged with her work, saying that “I’m used to it and not afraid to do it...sometimes I just internalize that and deal with it myself.” Although she was able to “deal with it” and persist in the face of changing expectations and new challenges, she also turned to trusted colleagues for support:

Fellow teachers in the district is usually where I go. How they are meeting that, you know, standard on the evaluation. How are they scoring on that, and what are they doing to get that rating that I would like to get—all perfect fours? That is where I wanna be, so if I’m not, then I’m gonna figure out how to do that, and so I usually go to colleagues...people I trust.

It seemed that Amanda preferred to take an independent approach to navigating new challenges and changing expectations. However, when faced with challenges that she was unable to overcome on her own, she would turn to trusted colleagues for guidance and support.

Trust and safety seemed to be important aspects for Amanda both in terms of receiving support herself and in providing support to others. She described what she believed is the most important aspect of effective mentoring:

A non-judgement zone. A safe place to say, “I don’t know.” Because some experienced teachers can be kind of, “why don’t you know how to do that?” I really feel like in order for them to open up and communicate, it needs to be a non-judgement zone. A comfortable place to be, a safe place to be, and I, you

know...That first. And then I think that rapport builds, and then you can share the lesson plans and the concept plans and the yearly plans. But I don't know if they can really get anything from you if you don't have that positive vibe. I think they would—I mean, I would—be hesitant. For someone (who) that wasn't there for. Yeah. Safe place.

I found it interesting that Amanda returned our conversation to elements of curriculum and instruction. There seemed to be this tension between what she thought she was “supposed” to do as a mentor and what she wanted from a mentor in her own experience as a beginning teacher. Despite this tension, it seemed that when it came to her actual mentoring Amanda had intuitively decided that building a trusting relationship and addressing the emotional challenges of Leslie's work was a prerequisite to a focus on instructional growth. Rather than this being an abandonment of her efforts to provide instructional support, it seemed that Amanda had accepted that the immediate need was to deal with Leslie's emotional distress and lack of professional satisfaction.

“It's not about us”

It was clear to me that Amanda's conception of herself had evolved and refined over the course of the year and a half that I met with her. The person who had responded to my initial email invitation with “I would be happy to help you if I can, but I'm not a very good mentor” was now engaged in a meaningful, trusting relationship in which she was encouraging and validating the experiences and expertise of a promising young teacher. While Amanda entered the OMP unsure about her own abilities and potential as either teacher or mentor, she seemed to be validated through her experiences in Kodály certification and mentor-specific professional development offerings. This validation

appeared to provide her with the confidence to focus her efforts on building a trusting relationship in support of her mentee. To close our final conversation, I asked Amanda what she thought was the single most important thing for a new mentor to know. She responded, “It’s not about us...I was prepared to share lesson plans and share all my stuff and it’s not what she needs. So maybe just make it about that person and what they need.”

Brad

Brad was the band director at Plymouth Junior High School in the Greenbriar School District— a large, suburban district with over 24,000 students Pk–12. Plymouth Junior High School—one of six junior high schools—served students in grades 7–8. Brad had been teaching at Plymouth for the duration of his 13-year career. In addition to his responsibilities at Plymouth, Brad also served as one of three assistant directors at Oakridge High School.

I first met Brad when we were in the sixth grade. We were both in band, but our paths did not often cross in the context of beginning band, as he played the saxophone and I played the trumpet. My first memory of Brad was working together to build a bridge out of toothpicks in our 6th grade gifted and talented class. We soon realized that both of us played guitar and loved music, so naturally, we had to be friends. Although we remained close friends through junior high and high school, Brad and I attended different universities and settled down in different parts of the state. We had primarily seen each other at weddings and state music events over the last 15 years. It was great to have the opportunity to reconnect with Brad and see an old friend working with students and young music teachers.

“We’ve had a lot of student teachers”

During Brad’s tenure as an assistant director at Oakridge High School, the program had hosted 24 student teachers, 17 of which had been assigned to work directly with him at Plymouth for their junior high placement. Brad also regularly hosted field-experience students from a large university located approximately 12 miles from Plymouth. His relationships with many of his student teachers continued through informal interactions and personal friendships into the early stages of their careers and beyond. Given his extensive work with preservice teachers, Brad had recently been invited to serve as the band clinician at a state-wide workshop for beginning teachers. Recognizing the high rate of attrition and migration among Oklahoma teachers, as well as the unique challenges faced by band directors, Brad felt a sense of responsibility to help beginning teachers to not only navigate those challenges, but also to enjoy their jobs.

“I have sort of a framework”

Prior to his participation in the OMP, Brad did not have any formal experience working as a mentor to early-career teachers. However, he had extensive experience working with student teachers as part of a team of mentors, as well as in a one-on-one setting in the context of his junior high band program. It is no surprise that he had learned, developed, and refined many strategies for working with these young professionals through these experiences. He described his general approach to working with student teachers:

I don’t have it written down, but I have sort of a framework of what I do with them through[out] the semester and it varies by each person...and I kind of let them make what they want out of it...I mean, everybody gets on the podium and

does teach. Some of them really want to teach...some kind of wanna watch more and teach later, and I sort of let them self-guide...I just sort of observe them.

While he had a general idea of the sequence of experiences that he wanted to provide for each student teacher, he also realized that they came to him with differing backgrounds, personality traits, and levels of comfort “on the podium.” Acknowledging these differences, he had developed a scaffolded approach to integrating a new student teacher into his classes but was flexible and responsive regarding the timeline in which this took place. He was clear that he wanted to provide every student teacher with the same scope of experiences, while also allowing enough flexibility to accommodate individuals’ unique needs.

In his work with young teachers (both pre-service and early-career), Brad seemed to be motivated by a desire to improve instrumental music education at-large, as well as a desire to help people be better and more confident in their own work. Recognizing that some band directors may have different motivations than his, Brad reiterated his goals.

My goal is to not scare people off because I know lots of people that get student teachers and they have the “throw them to the wolves” approach, but I mean we don’t have enough teachers in the state as it is, let alone quality band directors. I feel like it’s not my job to show them how hard the job is, ‘cause they’re gonna figure that out. I mean it is, but it’s not my job to give them a poor experience, so I don’t like to hang them out to dry. I incorporate them like they’re a band director...“This is, Mr. So-and-So and he’s gonna be working with us this year”...and then I just say [to myself], you know, “here we go.”

Utilizing this guiding philosophy in combination with his sequential approach to providing teaching experiences and adoption of responsibility, Brad had established himself as a highly effective and trusted student teacher mentor. As he described it, “The whole goal for me is [student teachers] should, by the end of [the internship], be like an assistant band director type role...they can just step in, and that’s usually the case.” By approaching his student teachers as professional colleagues, he was able to successfully facilitate their transformation from student teacher to teacher. While he may have experienced great success through mentoring student teachers, he did not necessarily experience such success as a mentor in the OMP—at least not initially.

“That intimidation factor”

Brad seemed to have a natural desire to interact with other band directors through social settings, professional collaboration, and mentoring young teachers. From our earliest conversations he discussed the uniqueness of professional “networking” in the band director community. He recalled some of his own misconceptions as a young band director.

Everybody gets told to ask people that are older that have done it...as a young teacher, I was reluctant to call...and go, “Hey, how come my trumpets can’t play anything above the G?”...You kind of put people on a pedestal... “He’s going to think I’m a dummy.” Like no, he’s not. He’s gonna think you’re a second-year band director and he’s gonna go, “Well, I remember when I used to tell my bass clarinets, put the right hand on top,” or whatever. But, you get that intimidation factor I think from these people and then you meet them and it’s like, it’s not like that.

As a young teacher, Brad quickly realized that the older band directors who he had looked up to had also experienced many of the same challenges and uncertainties that he was experiencing. Looking back at his experiences he said, “I kind of know everybody now and there is not the status symbol part...band directors are just like other people.” As a young teacher with this understanding, he was able to move past the intimidation of asking for help and view other, more experienced directors as colleagues and friends who were willing to provide guidance and support.

Acknowledging his own misguided assumptions, and recognizing the value of the help that he had received throughout his own career, Brad declared that he liked “to be helpful.” He remembered feeling intimidated and worrying that other people might look down on him, and he wanted to provide young teachers with the same kind of welcoming support and validation that he had received himself.

I like to help the younger teachers, and I like being able to be somebody that people are comfortable going like, “Hey man...” And I think through student teaching—and hopefully through the mentor [program]—I think I’ve had more people that I don’t really know that have kind of come up to me, you know, like OkMEA, you get that, a lot. I had someone email me yesterday, in fact, that I judged at All-State with.

This desire to help was clearly rooted in a genuine care for other people, rather than any sort of self-serving motivation. During a discussion about how students respond to him as a guest clinician, he said, “You know...being an expert means you need to live 50 miles away. But I like being able just to be involved with other teachers.”

“I didn’t do a great job last year”

Like Amanda, Brad did not describe his first year as a mentor in the OMP as successful. He was paired with a young band director named Thomas, whom he had recently mentored as a student teacher. While this initially seemed like a great match, Brad acknowledged that their existing relationship made it difficult to take an intentional approach to his work as a mentor. In addition to this limitation, Brad also referred to some “circumstantial stuff” that he perceived to limit his effectiveness as a mentor.

I’ve done a better job this year...I didn’t do a great job last year due to some circumstantial stuff and partly because, I’d already kind of known Thomas, and I think he’s great, he’s a great band director. He did a great job with us student teaching. But we were a little more like, “Yeah dude, if you need something, holler.

Brad was unwilling to discuss the exact nature of the “circumstantial stuff,” but it was evident that both his existing relationship with Thomas and some other aspect of his work or personal life were barriers to his effectiveness as a mentor.

“One and the same”

Brad seemed to particularly value situating himself as a more experienced peer, who was on an equal ground with the young teachers. On several occasions he reiterated to me that he wanted to be “approachable” or that he wanted “people to be comfortable” with him. While in previous conversations he placed other band directors on a pedestal of expertise, he acknowledged that he himself was “pretty good” at some things (e.g., “classroom management” and “running a program”) and “OK” at others (e.g., “band director skills”), but only because he had “done it long enough.” However, he also

reiterated his expertise with classroom management, saying “That’s something that I feel like I can really help people with. I wish I got more opportunity to be in other peoples’ rooms.” This desire for connection and collaborative effort seemed to lie at the root of all his work, whether with other teachers or with his own students. On several occasions, I observed him coaching students and colleagues through various situations (musical or otherwise), essentially saying, “it’s no big deal, this is what is wrong, try it this way.” He was very adept at identifying a problem and prescribing a solution in a casual and reassuring manner.

Throughout Brad’s descriptions of working with student teachers, he described a process of creating a “safety net” that matched where they were in their own development. His descriptions of mentoring interactions with these student teachers almost always involved the student teacher experiencing some sort of challenge in their instruction (e.g., classroom management, unclear instructions, incongruous procedures) and Brad following up (in real-time or afterward) by pointing out the source of the problem and making a recommendation for what to do differently.

I have student teachers that will get up and they’ll start the kids like, “alright, concert F” and the beginners are used to starting on B-flat so they all, you know, then you get the fifth and everybody is confused. And I’m like, “Hey we just start on B-flat, that’s why they’re confused.”

With a clearly defined approach to working with student teachers, Brad described his work with early-career teachers in a very similar way, telling me that he may “kind of watch somebody and go like, ‘Hey, your kids are talking here...if you stand behind those

kids while you're teaching, they're probably not gonna talk.'" He further explained how he may work with a young teacher on similar types of classroom management issues.

Some of the stuff is not rocket science, it's just, you know, get off the podium.

You don't have to have the score in front of you, keep the *Digimet* remote in your pocket, you know, those types of things...you know, make your kids sit a certain way, hold their horns a certain way, 'cause a lot of times when I am able to go see people in their classroom or whatever, I can tick off half a dozen things. I'm like, "This is a super easy fix." Like, "Hey, you got cases scattered all about the room..." So I like the fact that I feel like I have a good eye to walk in and go,

"Here is a few things you can fix and this will make life a lot easier for you."

To further reinforce these similarities in how he approached student teachers and early-career teachers, Brad explained that "I've had a lot of student teachers, so I think I've had a lot of opportunities to watch young people teach, whether they're student teaching or first-second-year type of situations it's kind of one and the same." Through our discussions about these similarities, I began to better understand some of the issues that may have served as barriers to a successful mentoring relationship between Brad and his first mentee, Thomas. If early-career teachers were "one and the same" with student teachers, then in some sense, Thomas may have already received the help that Brad had to offer.

Recognizing the many similarities between working with student teachers and early-career teachers, I wondered if Brad distinguished between these two contexts in any way. For him, it seemed that the difference primarily existed in the timing of feedback and his role as an observer. With a student teacher, he would interject feedback or

suggestions (or even direct instructions to the students) in the moment. However, with a mentee, he would wait and discuss the issue with them after the fact. He described this as being similar to the approach of a University Supervisor for student teaching:

I look at it more like a university supervisor...it's not really my place to run the room. It's my place to watch the teacher run the room and then afterwards [say], "Hey, your kids were doing this or that, so try this next time."...It's not my role to run the ship. It's my role to let them run it and then help them after they've finished the class. With a student teacher...I'll bail 'em if I need to.

Brad felt a responsibility to "captain the ship" with a student teacher, while with a mentee he was simply there to observe and report. In this sense, Brad's assertion that they are "one and the same" seemed to apply primarily to the content and type of feedback.

"You can tell them, and they can do it"

Given his extensive experience working with student teachers and his well-developed "framework" for that process, Brad naturally transferred that expertise to his work with early-career teachers. In both contexts, his primary strategy for support seemed to be the use of a directive approach. He consistently described situations where he would identify a specific issue with the ensemble or students, tell the mentee what to do, and then allow space for the mentee to implement the direction. In an effort to better understand the underlying values and beliefs guiding this perspective, I asked Brad to draw two pictures of mentors: (1) the ideal mentor, and (2) him as a mentor currently (see figures 4.3 and 4.4)

Figure 4.3

Brad's Drawing of an Ideal Mentor

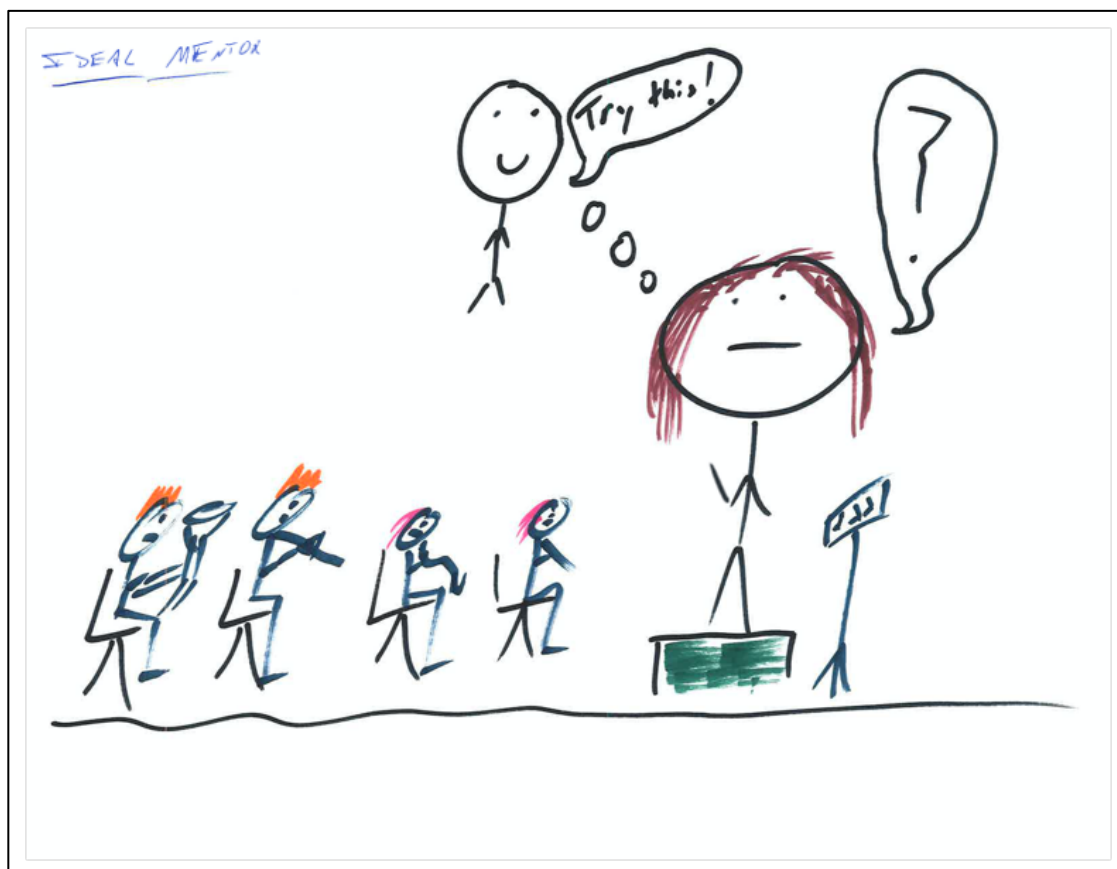


Figure 4.4*Brad's Drawing of Himself as a Mentor*

I asked Brad to describe his drawings to me, and he said, “I think really they’re sort of both the ideal mentor.” For him, the ideal was related to the outcome rather than the actions or strategies taken by the mentor: “are they able to successfully do it after you told them? If so, then that’s the ideal situation.” He explained this in more detail.

I think ideally you tell people, “Hey, try this.”...and I guess the ideal would be for them to get unlost once you told them...you can tell them, and they can do it.

Then you know, not cut ties per se, but you know, take off the training wheels I guess...like, “Hey, you’re doing it fine. What you’re doing is right. Don’t let your

kids sit their clarinets on the bells...Your kids are progressing fine...They're not lost, and you're not lost either."

This process of interjecting when he saw an issue, telling the mentee what to do, allowing them to do it, and then backing out of the way while reassuring the mentee that they were doing okay, was Brad's primary approach with both student teachers and early-career teachers. It occurred to me that this process was very similar to how I had seen him approach instruction with middle school band students—identify problems, tell the students what is wrong, tell them what to do to fix the problem, allow them a supervised opportunity to apply the instruction, tell them how they did, and then move on. All while infusing humor and reassurance at every step of the process.

Brad's drawing of himself seemed to be closely related to his ideal, while adding a bit of nuance to qualify the nature of interaction. The directive feedback from the Ideal Mentor became casual reassurance from Brad himself. The expressionless students were now smiling and exuding musicality. This seemed to be an important distinction for Brad.

I feel like I am pretty good...especially right now...I drew me behind her, like "Hey, you've got it. It takes time to do it, so stay with it."...and then I put "I got this?" and then I put "right?" 'cause it's like "I *think* I got it." Like, "I need you to tell me."...then the kids are really kind of digging it, and I put the happy face just because I think that's important with your kids.

While I expected Brad to draw distinctly different images of the ideal mentor as compared to himself, it seemed that in some sense he viewed himself as an ideal mentor and took the opportunity in his drawings to reflect the nuance of his own values and beliefs. However, I wondered if his directive approach to interaction interfered with the

actualization of those values. Clearly, his goal was to help the mentee to gain a level of competence and expertise that facilitated independence, and I wondered if his directive approach was completely aligned with that goal.

“I haven’t had any sort of mentor training”

Brad had undoubtedly developed a complex personal framework for working with young teachers. He had clear beliefs about the nature of young teachers and the challenges and needs that they may experience. Further, he had developed and solidified strategies for providing support; I wondered how he had developed those strategies. Was this a process of trial and error? Had he consulted books or articles? Had he taken advantage of the OMP workshop offerings? Brad offered some clarity about this process.

Just working with...the guys that I’ve worked with for a long time and seeing the way people operate...I’m on a [teaching] team, and I have been my whole career, so I get to see other teachers teach....I’ve spent a lot of time in the room not on the podium. I get to see people’s idiosyncrasies and the things that I think work really good. Sometimes it’s like “Okay, I don’t know that I would say it that way,” and so you don’t. But to me...it is watching and a lot of it’s the practicality...so just watching people; I think it’s kind of how I’ve sort of just developed it. I haven’t had any sort of mentor training. I would be certainly open to it if it was a thing, and maybe it’s a thing that I’m just unaware of.

It seemed that Brad was unable to isolate mentoring strategies as something separate from the actual content of teaching. For him, it was simply a process of knowing what good teaching looked like—the way that he did it and had seen other people do it—and telling the mentee to do those things. I was surprised that Brad was unaware of the

workshop and online offerings from the OMP, as I felt that it was something that could further increase his effectiveness as a mentor.

“We’re working through that”

Following what he described as a year when he “didn’t do a great job” as a mentor, Brad was eager to volunteer to continue in the OMP with a new mentee. He viewed this as an opportunity to help other band directors grow and improve in the same ways that he had as a young teacher himself. With his new mentee, Madison, Brad was careful to take a more intentional approach to communication and interactions than he had with Thomas. Although they had previously met in passing on several occasions, Brad and Madison did not know each other well. Brad initially reached out to Madison with an email introducing himself, and they followed up with regular informal text message conversations. While most of their communication took place through text messages, they also found time to meet during area band events (e.g., honor band auditions, contests) and met once at a local brewery for an in-person conversation. These in-person meetings served as a kind of anchor point, when they would identify particular areas of concern for Madison, and then Brad would follow up with text messages to check-in. Sometimes, Madison would send a short update or ask a question.

Madison was a percussionist in her third year of teaching and had recently transitioned to a job in a new district. In her new position, she was one of two assistant directors on a three-person staff. As a percussionist, her primary challenges were related to the instructional role that she was expected to fulfill being different than what she expected or desired for herself:

She's a percussionist, and as a percussionist you get pigeonholed sometimes into being, you know, the drum guy, percussion teacher...She's shared some frustration with me in that realm, just because, you know, she wants to be a band director and I fully support that...She doesn't have a band...she works with the percussion at all levels and then gets some time here and there...she's not really in front of a band.

It seemed that Brad's primary area of concern was helping Madison find a way to get more time with a full ensemble, rather than her current responsibility of leading percussion sectionals. However, he realized the complexity of the issue and ultimately wanted to help her feel more valued.

Madison found herself in a new professional position, in which she was likely hired because of her percussion-specific expertise. Given the situation, Brad was not surprised when one of the first questions Madison asked him was related to changing jobs and working in a new district. However, he did acknowledge his own limitations related to this, saying "I've been in this job since I came out of college...I don't have a ton of experience with that...I've kind of had to pick some brains on that." With the input of some friends, Brad quickly realized that he needed to help Madison navigate new relationships by asserting herself in a non-threatening manner.

She's not really in front of a band, so I do know that she gets some frustration on that. We're working through that and I think that's why it's a process. You're in a new school and a new district...I know through my experience...everything is a process, and it's a fairly slow process...She's learning how to be a little bit more assertive and like, "Hey, I wanna spend time in front of these ensembles"...I think

she wants to feel valued and feel like she knows what she's doing, and I don't think she's getting as much opportunity as she'd like or probably deserves, or needs, to kind of show that.

I found it interesting that in all our conversations regarding hypothetical situations of working with young teachers, Brad had focused almost exclusively on classroom management and “band director” knowledge, but now—when he was actually doing the work with an early-career teacher—he needed to focus on a different aspect of her work. Having identified a need to help Madison navigate the micro-politics of working with a new staff, Brad set forth to make that happen.

“Approach the other staff this way”

With a clear goal to help Madison assert herself in a new teaching position, Brad realized that she had an opportunity to not only develop professional relationships with her colleagues, but also to define her own role, in a sense. He seemed to identify an underlying issue related to differing assumptions about the nature of Madison's responsibilities. While Madison viewed herself as a band director who was also a percussionist, her colleagues seemed to view her position as one that was only responsible for teaching percussion. As this dissonance created frustration and a lack of professional satisfaction for Madison, Brad wanted to help her develop a strategic approach to asserting her vision for her role. He described his strategy and approach to helping her solve this issue:

Trying to get her some podium time...I used some things that I've kinda used, so we collaborated on like, “Hey, you know, approach the other staff this way. Offer to switch spots in the room. That sort of thing, to get you on the podium”...and it

is beneficial for the kids and it's beneficial for the other director, but the underlying tone is, "get you on the podium."

This seemed to be Brad's primary approach to provide support for Madison. They identified the issue together and, following questions, elaboration, or storytelling, Brad would recommend a sort of script for how Madison should navigate the issue. It seemed that this sort of scripting and directive interaction gave Madison a useful framework for navigating this issue with her colleagues.

Brad updated me on Madison, saying that "she's just kind of getting into the team vibe of the staff" and that she's "finding her role...and being able to get some more podium time." Having established a certain degree of progress, Brad described his hopes for Madison to "continuing that...and getting valued a little more as a director of three rather than the...percussion tech...that'd be my goal for her, is just to be happy in a role where she wants to go and teach the kids and then wants to be around the staff."

Although Brad primarily adopted a directive approach in many of his interactions with Madison, he also demonstrated some ability to adapt to different situations. He described an ongoing conversation about some specific students that presented a unique challenge for Madison:

Last time, we chatted about making better connections with a couple of kids that weren't behaving well and were having some pretty difficult times at home...just some behavioral issues...and dealing with the dad...she talked last time about making some pretty good connections...she and I talked about that quite a bit, with her ability to make that connection, and then all of a sudden, you can teach a mostly unteachable kid. I don't like that term, but [one] who's hard to reach.

Brad described his role in this situation as “encourager,” saying that he would respond with “Hey, there’s some kids that are really hard to get to.” His primary focus in this context seemed to be validating Madison’s concerns and demonstrating empathy.

“You’re on the same team”

Given his extensive experience working with student teachers—a total of 24 over 13 years—Brad had clearly developed a well-refined personal philosophy, strategic framework, and specific strategies for his work mentoring young educators. His friendly and casual approach to building relationships served as a vital tool to facilitate his implementation of these elements. It was clear that Brad wanted to help young teachers to “be better” at their work with students; he viewed himself as another band director that had experienced it before, and had learned from his many mistakes. He was adamant that mentoring could not begin with a focus on the mentor’s expertise.

It’s not your job to show the mentee how intelligent you are. Doesn’t do anybody any good, you know? It doesn’t matter that you’ve conducted whatever piece.

Nobody cares. You’re trying to help them be better at their job...in theory, you’re better at your job ‘cause you’ve done it longer, but you’re not better for any other reason other than that...you’re on the same team...you’re almost like their assistant band director.

This focus on serving as a more experienced peer was a central element of Brad’s approach to mentoring. He viewed his responsibility as one of noticing when someone was encountering common issues that many teachers face, then pointing out those issues, and following up by providing a simple solution—what he referred to as “tips and tricks” or “Swiss Army Knife tricks.”

Brad seemed to have entered the OMP with a clear understanding of beginning teachers and their experiences (e.g., challenges, frustrations, motivations, questions). While he had a well-established approach to working with young educators—one that was solely informed by his lived experience—Brad seemed to be limited to a single strategy of providing direct suggestions for action. Furthermore, considering his view of student teachers and early-career teachers as “one and the same,” Brad failed to maintain a strong mentoring connection with his initial mentee, Thomas. Following this experience, Brad adapted his approach and, through more consistent communication (i.e., text messaging), was able to establish a stronger and more productive relationship with Madison. Despite this success establishing more consistent communication, Brad’s strategies for support were still primarily limited to directive suggestions. While he was unable to attend, and seemingly unaware of, the mentoring workshops and conference offerings provided by the OMP, attendance at these events may have proven beneficial for Brad as a mentor. Given his experience and level of comfort working with young teachers, I often found myself thinking that he was at a point in his own experience that he could truly internalize and utilize the information shared at those events in a way that someone with less experience may not. Brad seemed to confirm my thoughts at the conclusion of our final conversation, saying “The job is to help them get better and smarter in what they’re doing.” He seemed to truly view other teachers—and even himself—as learners who all had the potential to grow and improve in their work in the music classroom.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was a prekindergarten music and movement specialist in the Pinegrove Public School District. Pinegrove was a large, suburban school district located in central Oklahoma, with over 16,000 Pk–12 students and 17 elementary schools. Elizabeth had been teaching music for nine years, with eight of those in Pinegrove. She taught k–5 music in Pinegrove for seven years prior to moving to her position as a prekindergarten specialist. In this specialist position, she was assigned to three different school sites, requiring travel between buildings throughout the day. Her previous teaching assignment in Pinegrove was at a single school where she worked closely with another elementary music teacher, team-teaching many of her classes. Elizabeth earned her bachelor's degree in music education and initially began her teaching career on the East Coast of the United States but moved to Pinegrove after her first year of teaching. In 2017, she earned a master's degree in music education, which she completed while teaching full-time.

In her previous teaching position at Pinegrove, Elizabeth had hosted one student-teacher and worked closely with five other student teachers assigned to her co-teacher during that time. Given her proximity to a large university, Elizabeth often hosted preservice teachers for field-based practicum experiences. Although she had considerable experience working with preservice teachers in various formats, opportunities to guide beginning teachers was limited to informal interactions at district-wide music educator meetings. Elizabeth seemed eager to form new professional relationships and give back to the profession by helping new teachers navigate the challenges of their first years in the profession.

“I hadn't really thought before how to verbalize those things”

Elizabeth's familiarity advising student teachers seemed to play a central role in shaping her conception of mentorship. She described the challenges that she experienced in her initial relationships with student teachers, and the difficulties she encountered when trying to share ideas with them. "I wasn't very prepared to be a good mentor...I learned a lot... about putting into words how to write a lesson plan...plan objectives... approach behavior...I hadn't really thought before how to verbalize those things."

Elizabeth specifically credited workshops, interactions with other teachers, and general experience for helping her gain a better understanding of what student teachers "need from me...and how to provide them with that." It seemed that her background working with student teachers allowed her to enter into the OMP with a well-informed perspective regarding beginning teachers, their needs, and strategies for providing support.

“It doesn't make a lot of sense to have a student teacher”

Elizabeth no longer had an appropriate teaching context for hosting a student-teacher in her new position as a prekindergarten specialist, given that she only taught one grade level throughout the day. She explained that this limitation, combined with her desire to help others, was her primary motivation for participating in the OMP.

Because my current position as a traveling teacher, and I just teach pre-K music and movement...it doesn't make a lot of sense to have a student-teacher right now. I like teaching beginning teachers, and I feel like I have something to offer them. I felt like this was a way to reach out to someone else that might need some guidance since I can't have student teachers.

Realizing that her current position's specialized and itinerate nature would limit her opportunity to continue supporting young teachers, Elizabeth seemed to view the OMP as an opportunity to fulfill that aspect of her professional life.

“We are islands in our building”

While addressing her desire to work with young teachers may have been a significant motivation for Elizabeth to volunteer for the OMP, she also recalled her own experiences as a beginning teacher. She described how being the only music teacher in the building presented unique challenges for her:

I remember what it's like being a new teacher and feeling under-supported. Also, as fine arts people, we are islands in our building. Not all districts even have a fine arts director...They don't necessarily have colleagues to bounce ideas off of...I just know what it's like to not have a support system built in yet, and I was hoping to be able to provide that for somebody else.

Having experienced the challenges of being both a first-year teacher and moving to a new (more isolated) position in a different district, Elizabeth wanted to provide the support that she had hoped for herself on several occasions.

Acknowledging the unique professional challenges that music educators experience, Elizabeth was highly motivated to help "even just one person" find satisfaction in the profession. While she recognized the value of music education and the need for outstanding music educators, she also wanted to support the well-being of her colleagues.

I hoped to build them up, so they want this job, and want to continue to teach kids, and find joy in what is a really hard job, and a really hard climate, and a

really hard system...I really want people to love what they do, and I think what we do is important, and sometimes new teachers get bogged down in the day-to-day. There are a lot of things out of your control, and I think I just wanted to be a help to even just one person.

It seemed that Elizabeth's motivations for volunteering as a mentor were complex and multi-faceted. While she hoped to provide encouragement and support for a young teacher, there was also an underlying desire to "build up" another human being. These motivations seemed to be guided by both her own human nature and the value that she saw in music education at large.

"She is not confident"

Elizabeth developed a strong and productive connection with her mentee, Megan, in the initial year of the OMP. Megan taught in a mid-sized school district approximately 75 miles away from Elizabeth, which necessitated that much of their communication occur through email, phone, or text message. Elizabeth described Megan and some of her experiences through the initial year of the program:

She is not confident. She's in her second year now, but I started with her last year, and she felt like her undergraduate degree did not really prepare her for being able to teach kids every day. Just not having the resources...and then coming into a school that is not necessarily equipped with up-to-date resources. She has a schedule where she sees all of her kids every single day, which is...unique...so you go through a lot of material when you see your kids that often. So, already feeling at a loss, I think she just doesn't feel very confident and doesn't feel very equipped.

Having developed a trusting relationship and identified specific areas of need, Elizabeth provided some much-needed instructional resources and materials for Megan and strategies to help her navigate a challenging teaching schedule.

Elizabeth took an intentional and proactive approach to communication with Megan. She tried to send a weekly check-in email every Monday; however, she admitted that this often happened later in the week than she would have liked, due to her own busy schedule. Similarly, Megan was proactive in taking note of any questions or ideas she wanted help with and sharing these with Elizabeth through email or text. Many of their conversations during the early stages of their relationship were related to sharing instructional materials and strategies (e.g., "Here are five things you could try...") or celebration and encouragement (e.g., "You've got it!"). Despite her primary focus on providing direct suggestions and encouragement, Elizabeth shared one early conversation in which she used a more facilitative approach:

I said, "I don't really love worksheets, is there a more engaging way that you could practice this with your students? Could you use whiteboards? Could you even make a team activity? Could you make a competitive game out of it?"

Elizabeth described her role in this context as a coach and said that she was "trying to guide [Megan] to a conclusion that I've made based on experience." It seemed that from the earliest stages of their relationship, Elizabeth was comfortable taking on this "coaching" role and guiding Megan through a series of suggestions while simultaneously respecting and supporting her as a colleague.

Although Elizabeth and Megan seemed to have established a productive relationship of support and trust, Elizabeth still experienced some frustration.

It's hard when you have experience, and you know that something is not gonna work. When [Megan] tells me about an idea that she has, or tells me about a plan that she has, and I just already know that it's destined to fail. Or she tells me about something that did fail, and I can pinpoint immediately why, and she just isn't there yet, to know why...or to be able to do anything about it.

Elizabeth attributed these issues to the limitations in Megan's educational preparation and further explained that Megan had particular trouble "planning grade-level appropriate activities." Her short-term strategy was to give Megan as many instructional suggestions as she could (e.g., "Here is a list of books"). However, she also believed that Kodály training would benefit Megan's long-term growth as a music educator. Elizabeth seemed to view Megan on a spectrum of development in her teaching. As such, she approached their interactions with an effort to provide immediate support while also keeping an eye on her long-term learning and professional growth.

“She took her first Kodály level”

During the first year of their pairing in the OMP, Elizabeth and Megan developed both a supportive professional relationship and a trusting friendship—a relationship that they were eager to continue as participants in the second year of the program. Following Elizabeth's suggestion, Megan completed Level I of Kodály training at a nearby university over the summer. Elizabeth viewed this as a vital step toward helping Megan gain confidence and independence in her planning and instruction. Having completed Levels I–III of the training herself, Elizabeth reflected on how the experience impacted her teaching practice and why she thought it would be so beneficial for Megan:

I mean, it changed my life...and changed the way that I teach...changed the way that I see our profession...changed the way I think about how kids learn. I just suggested to her often, last year, to go for it...it also helps with the networking, and you build this group of colleagues around the state that is kind of irreplaceable. She wrote a grant this year for her [Kodály] Level II and she's pumped about it, which is very cool... she's just felt so much more successful. I think Kodály really equipped her with resources...and then the knowledge and the power to be able to go and find your own new resources.

Elizabeth was delighted to tell me about Megan's growth. It was evident that Megan's increase in confidence and expertise brought Elizabeth much satisfaction—genuine satisfaction in Megan's newfound happiness and confidence in her work.

“My purpose in this”

Despite Megan's professional growth and development, she frequently questioned her decisions regarding planning and instruction, and relied heavily on guidance from Elizabeth. This reliance eventually led Elizabeth to a realization about the nature of her role in supporting Megan:

I went to see her teach and she was really fabulous. So, I think she doesn't know that she's really great at what she does. That kind of made me feel like, okay, my purpose, part of my purpose in this, is to help her see that she's doing a fine job.

While Elizabeth had engaged in a pursuit to help Megan solve all the problems that she shared with her, it seemed that before this moment, she hadn't considered the possibility that Megan needed help reflecting on and recognizing her successes.

“We don't get a lot of those moments”

Recognizing the importance of in-person, real-time interaction, Elizabeth remembered another interaction that she considered pivotal in her relationship with Megan. Both Elizabeth and Megan took full advantage of the workshop offerings from the OMP, although Elizabeth also lamented the poor attendance by other mentors. One particular day-long workshop culminated in an organized social event and afforded a much-needed in-person interaction for Elizabeth and Megan:

At the Beginning Teacher Workshop, we hung out at [local restaurant]. [Megan] made a list...all day long, she was just thinking about things that she wanted to ask about, and she's very good at asking questions. She recognizes when she doesn't know something and she needs help on it. So, all day long her brain was just going, and she had this whole page of things...so we just sat there after everybody left and just kind of knocked out things on the list...It was very cool that we already knew each other enough to be able to do that, and that she felt comfortable enough to kind of ask anything...It felt good to be able to help her with this laundry list of things.

It seemed that this kind of in-person interaction provided an opportunity for Elizabeth and Megan to connect in a more profound, more collaborative manner than they had before. Elizabeth reiterated how meaningful that experience was, saying, "I think...since we were so far away from each other, we don't get a lot of those moments."

“Save the date”

It was clear that Elizabeth and Megan had moved beyond simply being mentor and mentee for the sake of participation in the program, and that they had indeed become

friends. In a video meeting, I observed their genuine excitement to see each other. Elizabeth enthusiastically greeted Megan and followed up on a recent text message, telling her, "I was so tickled that your fifth-graders rocked *Snowball!*" and Megan quickly responded with a recap of various activities she had recently used in her instruction. Following this quick check-in, Elizabeth said, "OH! I got your Save the Date!" and Megan giddily described the way that she had announced to her students that she was getting married during an upcoming break. Throughout this nearly 2-hour virtual meeting, they would shift between a focus on specific teaching questions that Megan had shared with Elizabeth in advance, and this kind of casual, friendly conversation. The relational dynamic seemed similar to that of two close colleagues who were also great friends. There was laughing, storytelling, and venting of frustrations. However, within the context of the personal interaction, Elizabeth was sure to guide their conversation back to the specific pedagogical questions or topics that Megan had previously shared with her.

"I wish she would trust me"

While Elizabeth and Megan had grown to be friends and colleagues, as may be expected with any relationship, Elizabeth still experienced some frustrations. Megan was excellent about noting her questions and recognizing areas of potential improvement for herself, which meant that she would often compile a "laundry list" of questions that she would share with Elizabeth through email. Elizabeth would then take the time to thoughtfully develop suggested strategies only to have Megan dismiss them as something that she had tried in the past, or simply saying "I don't think that will work." Elizabeth's frustration was evident in her drawing of herself as a mentor (see figure 4.5). She presented herself in front of a computer screen, surrounded by thought bubbles. Elizabeth

exposed specific frustrations through the thought bubbles, which she seemed hesitant to share in our prior conversations. These frustrations included difficulty maintaining her regular check-ins, limitations of email, and lack of trust. For example, two of the thought bubbles contained "I know I sent this idea last year" and "I am out of suggestions, so how can I help her think outside the box?" It is interesting that, while this may be considered a frustration or roadblock, it seemed to necessitate a different approach or role for Elizabeth. Rather than simply providing a list of suggestions, she identified a need to facilitate a different kind of thinking for Megan—"how can I help her think outside the box?"

Figure 4.5

Elizabeth's Drawing of Herself as a Mentor

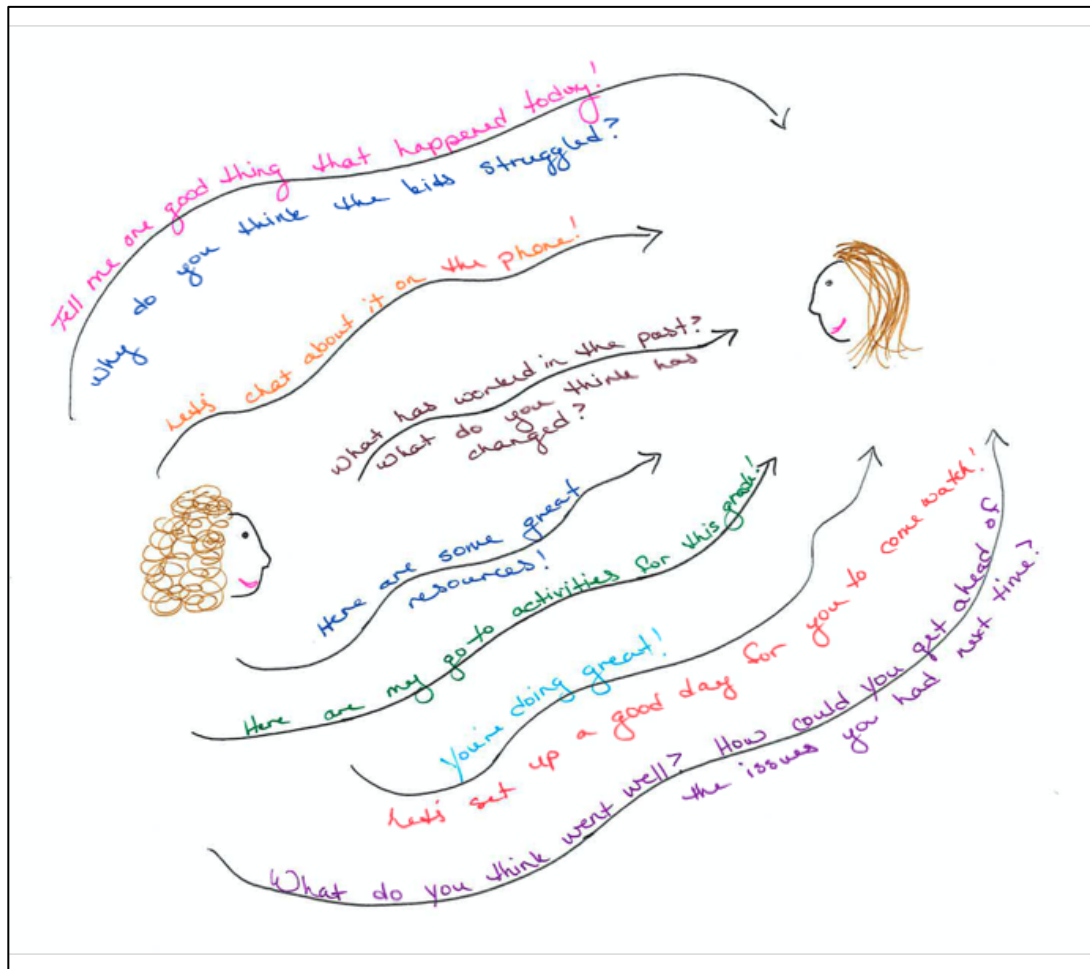


“If I were the ideal mentor”

In her drawing of an ideal mentor (see figure 4.6), Elizabeth contrasted the frustration that she presented in the picture of herself as a mentor with those characteristics that she hoped to embody in her relationship with Megan. When I asked her about this drawing, Elizabeth reiterated her primary goals for serving as a mentor, saying that "We have the experience, and we have the knowledge. This is an opportunity to help lift someone else up." She further described her representation of the ideal mentor:

If I were the ideal mentor...I would be encouraging her and asking her to share positive experiences with me. Asking critical thinking-type questions to help her remedy situations. Offering to talk on the phone...What has worked in the past? What do you think has changed? Why is that not working? Offering resources. Offering go-to activities...Offering encouragement...What do you think went well? How could you get ahead of issues next time?

I found it interesting that Elizabeth's conception of the ideal mentor included many of the strategies and characteristics I observed in her work. It seemed that she desired to increase the presence of these characteristics while moving away from her reliance on providing direct suggestions to Megan. She described her current role with Megan as a "problem solver," which seemed to function as a barrier to her adoption of the more facilitative strategies that she presented as the ideal in her drawing.

Figure 4.6*Elizabeth's Drawing of an Ideal Mentor****"She sees me as...a problem solver"***

Megan's lack of confidence in her ability and expertise seemed to have a significant influence on how she and Elizabeth engaged with each other. Elizabeth explained that she sent Megan an email every week and tried to ensure that the content of that email was as positive or encouraging as possible, to help Megan recognize her own strengths and successes:

Because she sees me as...a problem solver...sometimes she really gets kind of negative... "These are all my problems that I need help with." So, I try to make a point to ask about good things that are happening, especially after seeing her teach and seeing that she's way better than she acts like she is to me. So, I try to get her to think about successes that she has had...If she needs help on a specific issue, I try and give her my opinion and then try and help her think through her own ways to fix it.

It was evident that Elizabeth made a conscious effort to help Megan move beyond focusing on her problems, and toward a more positive engagement with her experiences. She accomplished this through a focus on asking facilitative questions to encourage critical reflection. Elizabeth described her thought process in these moments:

If it's something broad, like "My fifth graders don't like anything that we're doing, and they're awful in class," then trying to help her think through why...or what—"What can you do? What have you done that they love? Okay, how can you...translate that into a new activity, or you know, What have they been talking about? What have they been begging for that you did last month? Okay, great! So, what can you take from that, and how can you turn it into something?"

I found it interesting that this description of her work seemed to directly align with her representation of the ideal mentor. First, she helped Megan pinpoint the problem, including identifying possible sources of the issue. Elizabeth then followed by asking Megan to think of potential solutions. Finally, Elizabeth facilitated a transfer of these elements for application in Megan's classroom. In this way, Elizabeth demonstrated

facilitative mentoring—guiding Megan to critically reflect, facilitating her problem solving and bolstering her confidence.

“Do you think there's a different way”

Recognizing that Megan viewed Elizabeth as a "problem solver," and realizing that Megan had gained a new level of independence in her teaching, Elizabeth seemed to have made a conscious effort to transition from directly telling her what to do ("Here are five things that have worked for me"), to adopting a more collaborative and facilitative approach to mentorship. On one occasion, I observed Elizabeth navigating this balance while discussing the challenges that Megan had experienced while teaching folk dances with her older elementary music students:

Megan: It's hard to get stuff done in that class, there are a few that just want to steamroll everything...I don't know what to do about it...I send them out of the room...I take away dojo points...it just doesn't help.

Elizabeth: That is hard, but I think you're on the right track with picking hard dances—stuff that is hard, but that they can do.

There's one...*Mariposa*...it has one really hard move... that's the only hard thing...if they do the hardest thing first...work on just that chunk for a couple of days...then they know they've done the hardest part, and you can just throw the rest at them in one or two classes.

Megan: My main problem with folk dancing is that I wait until I'm losing them, and then I get frustrated that I've lost them.

Elizabeth: Well, it's hard because dancing can get out of control really fast. If it's too wild, then it's not fun anymore. But there's this kind of like magic level that you hit where it's just enough silly and just enough wild that it's super fun... that's the optimum place that you want to be...you want them to be super into it, and if they're a little bit silly, that's fine!

Megan: I have some that if we're going forward and back, their goal in life is to chest bump their partner and then push them and knock them onto the floor.

Elizabeth: When I'm dancing with big kids, I try to put myself in their shoes. Sometimes dancing is awkward, even though we as teachers don't want to admit that...sometimes you are partners with a person that you don't really want to be partners with. So, I try to think with the older kids, "Can I relax a little bit? What can I do to make it more enjoyable? Would it be okay if they picked their partners? Because they're chest bumping...can we put a place holder in where they

are creating their own behaviors?" You know what's best for your kids... it's hard.

Elizabeth began by reassuring and affirming Megan's efforts, suggested a specific dance, followed with a simple recommendation for sequencing instruction, and ending with acknowledging her feelings that it can be "hard." Throughout this entire interaction, Elizabeth was careful to fully acknowledge the challenges presented by teaching folk dance in this context. For example, when Megan described the specific issues of chest bumping and students pushing others to the floor, Elizabeth identified a problem related to partner pairing and an associated undesirable student behavior. Rather than dictating how Megan should approach similar situations, Elizabeth framed her response as a series of questions that she might ask herself in this situation, providing an opportunity and space for Megan to consider these questions for herself.

Having observed Elizabeth using this strategy in action, I wanted to know more about her decision-making in this context. How did she decide when to take this more facilitative approach, instead of directly stating the problem and how Megan should respond? She explained that the specificity of the issue informed her approach. When Megan came to her with a specific question, Elizabeth was likely to provide a direct answer or suggestion. In contrast, she explained that, with a broader issue, she would "back off a little bit...because [Megan's] not really gonna know until she experiences it." Elizabeth further explained this process in relation to their conversation about folk dancing:

Okay, your fourth-graders hate to dance...I don't make them be boy and girl couples. I don't assign them couples, ever. They get to pick their own partner...I do make them be respectful...There are things that I ALWAYS do, teaching a dance. I don't think that would be helpful to say to her, "You have to make them be respectful to each other, and you have to do these things that I did." But I do say things like, "Do you think that's working?" or "Do you think that there's a different way...that would help with the behavior problems?"

Our conversation about her approach cued Elizabeth's memory of a prime example of her decision-making in another context:

There was something at Thanksgiving...*Great Big House in New Orleans*, and they had this rhythmic dictation activity, and they were all over it, and they had these manipulatives that they were working with. I just thought, "Yes, this is exactly what you've been looking for!" She said, "They just ate it up." So, I just really tried to drive home, like, "Remember how successful that was. Okay?"

It seemed that in response to Megan's growing pedagogical independence, Elizabeth had developed a more nuanced perspective of how best to adapt her strategies for support. Although, she explained how the focus of Megan's attention and concerns informed her chosen approach, "it's all kind of survival, and you do what you know, and you're kind of scrambling...once you make it more about your students' needs...I think that probably opens the door for wanting to improve and grow." While Elizabeth had shifted much of her interaction with Megan toward a focus on facilitating reflection and helping Megan explore the complexities of her own decisions, she was still willing to provide direct suggestions when she felt it was appropriate.

“She probably does need different things from me now”

Elizabeth began her work in the OMP with the hope of supporting a young music educator. Her previous experiences working with student teachers had allowed her to examine her teaching practices, develop strategies for presenting ideas about complex teaching tasks, and understand the developmental needs of beginning educators. Through the two years that she had been a mentor in the OMP, Elizabeth developed a close personal and professional relationship with her mentee, Megan. Having identified Megan's lack of confidence and limited professional resources, Elizabeth began by providing lesson plans, strategies, books, and other resources simply to help Megan survive each day. As their relationship developed, Elizabeth began to refine her strategies for supporting Megan's professional growth. Elizabeth's approach to her work with Megan seemed to be rooted in an understanding of her potential for learning and development. As Megan gained confidence and independence in her teaching practice, Elizabeth more frequently adopted a facilitative approach, guiding Megan toward critical reflection on her own experiences and allowing her to answer her own questions and come to her own conclusions. Elizabeth credited much of her growth as a mentor to lessons learned through the workshops provided by the OMP. In our final conversation, she reiterated the adaptive nature of her approach: "She probably does need different things from me now than she did then. You know...then it was more...cheerleading...now it's more...brainstorming and collaborating, because she needs more of that."

Chapter 5

Cross-Case Results and Discussion

Veteran teachers may call on a lifetime of varied experiences, motivations, assumptions, beliefs, and even insecurities to inform and guide their work as mentors. The individual participants in this study unveiled complex and dynamic experiences as mentors in the Oklahoma Mentorship Program (OMP)—experiences that were unique to their own mentoring and professional contexts. In the previous chapter, I focused on a narrative presentation of each participant's unique professional journey and development as a mentor; However, there also were several common themes that emerged across all participants. In this final chapter, I discuss trends related to participants' motivations for participation in the OMP, as well as their beliefs and assumptions about beginning teachers, the nature of mentoring, and themselves as educators and mentors. I conclude with a presentation of implications for practice and suggested considerations for mentor preparation and support in similar formal mentoring programs.

Motivations for Participation

The mentors in this study seemed to share common motivations for participating in the OMP. Participants described their desire to give back, lift up, "provide a support system" (Elizabeth), or "help someone stay in [the profession of music teaching]" (Brad). Such descriptions seemed to simultaneously reflect each mentor's desire to support and encourage an individual educator, while also serving to strengthen the field of music education as a whole. These mentors recognized the difficulties and challenges faced by novice teachers, while highlighting the unique experiences of music educators who are

often "islands in our own buildings" with no area-specific colleagues to turn to for support.

Recalling the complex challenges they faced early in their own careers, the mentors expressed a strong desire to support the well-being and professional satisfaction of their colleagues while simultaneously supporting their own professional growth and effectiveness in the classroom. Elizabeth described her hope for "people to love what they do" because "what we do is important, and sometimes new teachers get bogged down in the day-to-day." Similarly, Brad recognized the difficulties of the teaching profession, asserting that his "goal is to not scare people off...I feel like it's not my job to show them how hard the job is 'cause they're gonna figure that out." Amanda recalled the lack of support she experienced early in her career and recognized an opportunity to help her mentee gain confidence and feel successful. She further pinpointed her motivation, stating, "I just feel like there's all this collaboration that's gonna trickle, and all these relationships are gonna be there, maybe more than we have now...Better teachers, better students. I mean, I think it trickles to the students." This belief in the potential for mentoring to improve the state-wide community of music education, and even impact the quality of music student learning experiences, echoed the hopes of leaders during the development of a similar mentoring program organized by the American String Teachers Association (Berg & Conway, 2016). While mentoring (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Hobson et al., 2009) and holistic induction (Glazerman et al., 2010) could indirectly benefit student outcomes over time by promoting more consistent and effective instruction, there is limited evidence directly linking mentoring to increased student achievement. Nonetheless, the three mentors' belief in this "trickle-down" effect reflects

the significance that they placed on their mentoring role. Given the significance of these potential outcomes of their mentoring, it seems that some mentors may internalize a complex sense of responsibility for their work with beginning teachers.

As part of their complex motivations for undertaking their work as mentors, the participants also discussed an underlying sense of responsibility to share the knowledge and wisdom they themselves had gained from mentors and colleagues throughout their careers. During a focus group discussion, Elizabeth shared that she felt "like it's a way to give back, too. I've learned a lot from a lot of people and have the opportunity to share that with somebody else." Brad shared that he wanted to be available and approachable to other directors: "I got lots of help from folks and it's humbling to have people say, 'You know how to do it, will you tell me?' Oh, sure...there's no secret." Clearly, these mentors shared a desire to support new and inexperienced teachers (Conway & Hodgman, 2008; Greene et al., 2020). Still, it seemed that this desire to help also was, to some extent, part of a deep sense of responsibility to the entire field of music education (e.g., those teachers who came before, in-service teachers, novice teachers, students, teachers of the future). This dual commitment to individual teacher support and to the broader advancement of the field echoes the findings of existing studies on music mentoring (Conway & Hodgman, 2008; Greene et al., 2020). In both studies, the researchers identified a similar sense of responsibility among mentors who believed it was important to provide targeted support to help individual teachers thrive, while also viewing mentoring as an opportunity to contribute to the overall quality of music education. The three mentors in the current study exhibited a perceived dual responsibility for meeting the immediate

needs of their mentees while contributing to the enduring quality and sustainability of the music education profession.

While the mentors' motivations to serve others "without expecting something back" helped to initiate their work in the OMP, some eventually recognized that their mentoring efforts facilitated a new commitment to reflection and evaluation of their personal teaching practices. Brad shared that

It reminds me, like, "Oh yeah, I need to think about X, Y, Z"...It kind of just forces me to go, "Okay, but why am I doing that? Maybe I should change, you know, or adjust a little bit on that approach." Because here is somebody that's younger that's really focused on trying to do this one thing—a thing I do all the time and don't think about. Maybe I should think about it.

Similarly, Amanda acknowledged the impact of her work as a mentor on her increased professional confidence:

I think for me, I was always hesitant to put myself out there; like 13 years that I've never mentored before. I just didn't see in myself that I had something to give, and this kind of—not forced me to, because I volunteered to do it, but—in a sense, I think [it] helped my confidence as a teacher.

Although these mentors may have initially entered the OMP with a focus on the support they could provide a beginning teacher, it seems likely that engaging in the mentorship process may spark meaningful learning and growth for both novices and mentors.

Similarly, this learning and growth may serve as ongoing motivation for their continued efforts in developing their mentoring relationships, suggesting that mentoring is a mutually beneficial experience (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006; Berg & Rickels, 2018;

Conway & Hodgman, 2008; Greene et al., 2020). In a similar mentorship program, Berg and Rickels (2018) found that peer discussions, reflection, and exposure to new instructional strategies fostered mentors' professional growth alongside their mentees, supporting Achinstein and Athanases's (2006) view of mentors as *learners*. In addition to the benefits to mentees, it seems that mentoring relationships have the potential to offer mentors new insights, renewed confidence, and sustained motivation.

Summary

The participants in this study exhibited multifaceted motivations for their commitment to support novice music educators. Central to their work as mentors was a strong desire to give back to the profession, driven by personal experiences navigating career challenges and a recognition of the unique difficulties faced by music educators. Mentors expressed a commitment to not only support their individual mentees, but to also contribute to the broader field of music education by fostering a supportive and collaborative community among professional educators. This motivation was coupled with a sense of responsibility to “pass on” the wisdom they have gained from their own mentors, colleagues, and teaching experiences.

Beliefs and Assumptions

Mentors often assume that their teaching experience will seamlessly translate into effective mentorship, leading them to emphasize practical solutions based on personal strategies (Zaffini, 2015). This approach can limit a new teacher's growth by prioritizing immediate survival over fostering reflective and adaptive teaching skills—skills which are essential for long-term growth and independence (Feiman-Nemser, 2012). Additionally, mentors may assume that novices need direct answers rather than support in

becoming self-directed learners (Feiman-Nemser et al., 1993). In contrast to these assumptions, research findings suggest that a shift towards *educative mentoring*—where mentors balance immediate support with facilitating critical reflection—more effectively prepares novices for sustained growth and adaptability (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Ginkel et al., 2016).

The assumptions that mentors make about themselves also may impact their own engagement and growth. Those who view mentorship as a collaborative process often find that the role prompts them to reflect on and refine their own practices (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Weimer, 2020). However, mentors with low self-efficacy may approach the mentoring role with hesitation, potentially limiting their engagement and effectiveness (Riggs, 2000). Mentor beliefs that prioritize the development of a novice's independence, resilience, and reflective practice can foster a more impactful mentoring experience for both mentor and mentee (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Blair, 2008).

The three mentors in this study held beliefs and assumptions which played a pivotal role in shaping their approaches and interactions with mentees. Drawing from their experiences as educators and their personal journeys through the early stages of their careers, the mentors in this study carried preconceived ideas about the challenges that new teachers were likely to experience. Reflecting on their own early struggles, Elizabeth, Amanda, and Brad entered the OMP with a strong desire to provide the support they recognized that they themselves needed early in their careers. The three mentors approached this support as a professional responsibility, to ensure that new teachers do not feel as isolated and overwhelmed as they once did. Isolation and overwhelm are commonly experienced amongst new music teachers who often are the

only content specialist within their school, leading to increased stress and exhaustion (Conway, 2015; Conway & Garlock, 2002; Conway & Zerman, 2014). Researchers have presented discipline-specific mentorship as a valuable tool for combating these unique challenges (Benson, 2008; Conway, 2015; Vaughan Marra, 2019).

Beliefs and Assumptions About Beginning Teachers

Given these mentors' extensive experiences as professional music educators, it may come as no surprise that they entered the OMP with many assumptions regarding beginning teachers and the challenges they might encounter. Many of these assumptions were based on the mentors' personal experiences from their own early teaching careers (Vaughan Marra, 2019), as well as their more recent interactions with pre-service music educators through fieldwork and student teaching. Although there was some variance in the specific assumptions held by each mentor, these assumptions seemed to play a pivotal role in guiding the mentors' actions and interactions with their mentees from the earliest stages of their relationship.

Perhaps mentors' most salient assumption regarding early-career music educators was a seemingly universal expectation that these teachers would lack adequate professional support systems to help them navigate the complexities of their new positions. This assumption seemed to be heavily informed by their own beginning experiences. Elizabeth and Amanda described the challenges they experienced early in their own careers, and the support systems that they had hoped for themselves. Elizabeth reflected on her own experiences, stating

I remember what it's like being a new teacher and feeling under-supported...as fine arts people, we are islands in our building...and don't necessarily have

colleagues to bounce ideas off of. I've had to start over at several schools, just moving positions and moving school districts and moving states, so I just know what it's like to not have a support system built in yet.

Amanda shared a similar perspective, recalling that, “I didn’t get the mentorship I needed. My mentor was my principal, who had no idea [about effective music teaching]. I feel like maybe...I would’ve gained more confidence in the beginning, rather than taking so long to finally get there.” It seems clear that these mentors were motivated by a belief in the potential for an experienced music educator to support the early success and well-being of a music teacher who is beginning their work in a classroom, or possibly even starting work in a new district or state.

Acknowledging the complex nature of their own early-career experiences, the mentors highlighted the importance of music-specific support—support from someone who understands and has experienced the unique, and sometimes unexpected, challenges (e.g., professional isolation, scheduling, classroom management) that new music teachers are likely to encounter. The mentors discussed this at length during the focus group meeting, below is a short excerpt of that conversation.

Amanda:

Others can't understand what is going on in our field. There's usually not someone else in our building that does the same thing we do. Like, every other team, for elementary especially, they have someone that they co-teach with, but we're kind of by ourselves.

Brad:

Any given junior high, you're gonna have one band director maybe two, if it's a big school or district. But you know, there's five or six or however many English teachers.

Elizabeth:

And there are unique situations to fine arts. I feel like just scheduling, even. I mean, just logically and then behaviorally, and only seeing kids for a certain amount of time. We just have really unique needs.

Brad:

Classroom management is a lot different too, versus a traditional square classroom.

With a recognition that these seemingly ubiquitous and universal elements of education may present unique challenges and experiences for music educators in relation to their general education colleagues, the mentors emphasized the importance that early-career music educators have a support system made up of those who have successfully navigated similar challenges themselves. This need for discipline-specific mentors echoes the long-standing recommendations from scholars and researchers (Berg & Conway, 2016; Conway, 2003; Conway & Holcomb, 2008; Conway et al., 2010; Haack, 2003; Zaffini, 2015) and was a consideration that the OMP leaders accounted for with the design of their program (Baumgartner, 2016). Despite mentors being sensitive to these challenges, some early-career music educators may simply be too insecure or uncomfortable to reach out or request help.

Realizing the unique nature of early-career music educators' experiences, and the potential value presented by music-specific support systems, mentors emphasized the need for these teachers to quickly establish professional connections locally within their own districts, as well as the state-wide music education community. However, the mentors also recognized potential barriers to beginning teachers independently and proactively establishing such connections—a view supported by research findings that suggest that the social dynamics involved in mentoring may result in new teachers feeling hesitant to seek mentorship due to fears of appearing incapable (Heikkinen et al., 2018). Elizabeth described a disconnect between the common suggestion to “network” and a potential lack of understanding about the true value of having such a network of support:

You don't realize, as a beginning teacher—I know people say over and over and over, networking, networking, networking is all you need. You don't really know what that means until you have a colleague that you can talk to about anything, and they know people that they can direct you to. So, having that network, or starting that network, [is important] because you are kind of starting from scratch with nothing.

While Elizabeth highlighted the likelihood that inexperienced teachers may not recognize the true value and potential of having a robust professional network, Brad emphasized that many may simply never ask for help because of a perceived “intimidation factor.”

When you're young it's so intimidating to ask anybody for help...you look at the people that have been teaching for a while, they seem so untouchable...or like, so good at it...Really, [they're] not any better. [They're] just older and taught longer...but as a young teacher I was reluctant to call...it's like, “They're going

to think I'm a dummy, an idiot." Like, "No, he's gonna think you're a second-year band director!"...but you get that intimidation factor, so I just try to be approachable...I think [with] things like student teachers and this mentor deal, I've had more people that I don't really know that have kind of come up to me, at like OkMEA or All-State, and start to build those connections.

For Brad, this "intimidation factor" stemmed from a fear of being perceived as an annoyance—or worse, incompetent—by those perceived as "untouchable" in the field. Elizabeth presented an interesting facet of a similar fear, highlighting the power differential between administrators and beginning teachers.

Also just having a go to person that's outside of your building...you're not going to ask your boss something that you might feel is stupid, or you feel like you should know...you could have somebody that's totally objective and out of the picture to be able to give you some guidance.

It seems that the mentors in this study perceived significant value for novice teachers to have a varied and robust support system. Additionally, it seems that these mentors recognized a need for those veteran educators in the field to proactively establish connections with beginning teachers (Baumgartner, 2020; Conway et al., 2010; Koerner et al., 2018).

With a wealth of experience navigating the early years of their own career, transitioning to new teaching environments, and supporting colleagues and student teachers, the mentors entered the OMP with wide-ranging assumptions regarding beginning teachers and the challenges they may experience. While the mentors

approached their work with many assumptions about beginning music teachers, they also had pre-existing assumptions regarding mentoring and the nature of mentorship.

Beliefs and Assumptions About Mentoring

Recognizing the likelihood that early-career music educators may not have adequate or appropriate support systems to help them successfully navigate their early years in the field, the mentors also entered the OMP with preconceived ideas regarding the specific types of support that their mentees might need. As previously discussed, Elizabeth was initially drawn to the program with the hope of helping “at least one” new music teacher to navigate their transition into the profession. It seemed that she expected her mentee to primarily need encouragement and “building up.” She shared that, “I think we need other people to help us, to build us up...new teachers get bogged down in the day to day, that there are a lot of things out of your control.” Although her mentee certainly needed encouragement and reassurance, Elizabeth found that she also needed extensive support related to basic instructional resources and appropriate planning (Glickman et al., 2001)—a need which seemed to be intertwined with her need for encouragement and reassurance. It appeared that the shortcomings of her mentee’s preservice preparation necessitated more significant support with those “day-to-day” aspects of planning and instruction. Elizabeth’s description of her mentee illuminated the complexity of these needs.

She is not confident. She's in her second year now, but I started with her last year, and she felt like her undergraduate degree did not really prepare her for being able to teach kids every day. Just not having the resources...and then coming into a school that is not necessarily equipped with up-to-date resources. She has a

schedule where she sees all of her kids every single day, which is...unique...so you go through a lot of material when you see your kids that often. So, already feeling at a loss, I think she just doesn't feel very confident and doesn't feel very equipped.

While Elizabeth's initial assumptions regarding her mentee's need for encouragement and "building up" proved to be true, it seemed clear that the multiple facets of these needs were more nuanced and complex than those early beliefs reflected, necessitating a flexibility and adaptivity that other mentors may not possess (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006).

While Elizabeth entered the OMP expecting her mentee to primarily need emotional support in the form of encouragement, Amanda approached the program with an expectation of providing instructional support—sharing curricular and instructional plans, materials, and strategies. Amanda elaborated on thoughts regarding the reality of what her mentee needed from her, hinting at her own expectation to provide instructional support.

Oof. I think so far, I've just been an ear to listen...She's co-teaching with someone that she is struggling to work with, and she feels like she can't talk to that person...I mean every time we get together it's like two hours of her just venting. I think that is therapeutic in its own way for her. I shared all of my concept plans and yearly plans with her, so that's definitely gonna be helpful, but I don't know, so far she's just needed a shoulder to lean on.

Similarly, Brad assumed that his mentee would primarily need instructional support in the form of directive guidance. He made frequent references to "telling them" (mentee) a

correction for some fundamental aspect of band teaching (e.g., “get off the podium,” “get out of the score,” “flute fingerings,” “left hand on top”). In addition to this emphasis on basic skills and content knowledge, Brad strongly emphasized the need to share “tips and tricks” for classroom management strategies.

I like working with some younger teachers that are trying to figure out kind of their routine and their role and how to interact with kids...I feel like I’m a pretty good band director, but I’m *good* at classroom management. That’s something that I feel like I really help people with.

Brad’s assumptions regarding his mentee’s need for guidance with these fundamental elements of teaching seemed to align with his previously mentioned belief that student teachers and novice in-service teachers are “one in the same.” His preconceived ideas about mentoring novice teachers appeared to align with the concerns expressed by leaders in the American String Teachers’ Association (ASTA) that many mentors would unwittingly try “to recreate themselves rather than help that particular young teacher figure out the answers, or help them to figure out how to figure out the answers” (Berg & Conway, 2016, p. 70). The mentors in this study entered the OMP with varied assumptions regarding the challenges and needs that their mentees would experience, but may not have fully reflected the reality of their mentees’ needs.

Mentors’ pre-existing assumptions about beginning music teachers and their mentoring needs seemed to work in tandem to inform their mentoring strategies and approaches. While these beliefs were evident in the stories and interactions the mentors shared with me, it also was evident that their beliefs about *themselves* as teachers and mentors played an important role in their approaches to mentoring.

Beliefs and Assumptions About Self

Brad, Elizabeth, and Amanda all were experienced music educators who also were highly respected by their area colleagues. While they each had different levels of experience working with pre-service and early-career teachers, they all appeared to be successful and well-established professionals. Their stature in the field of Oklahoma music education came through years of experience—navigating the many challenges and successes that came along the way, including continual student/program achievements. While many in the field would view these professionals as accomplished and confident leaders who were well-situated to support an early-career colleague, that didn't fully reflect the mentors' views of themselves.

Brad seemed to view himself as one in a long line of band directors—a position that carried a responsibility to support younger and less experienced educators through friendly reassurance, the sharing of tips and tricks, and possibly some guest teaching. While he admitted he put some directors on a pedestal early on in his career, he declared that there was “nothing special” about him or any other director that “helps people out;” at this point in his career, Brad attributed that pedestal status to the fact that those directors simply had more experience that situated them in a position to offer others support. Given this framing of mentorship, Brad seemed to have a healthy confidence in his effectiveness as a mentor. These views of self—and his position in a band director line of succession—appeared to intertwine with his beliefs about beginning teachers in a way that directly informed his directive approach to mentoring. Such a view aligns with a common tendency for mentors who do not adequately engage in reflective practice to adopt a rigid approach to mentoring (i.e., providing only directive feedback), hindering

their potential effectiveness on the mentee (Vaughan Marra, 2019). While directive mentoring approaches aren't inherently ineffective, in adhering to this one-dimensional approach, Brad's mentoring efforts seemed to be limited by his inability to adapt to the unique needs of his mentees.

In contrast to the confidence that Brad exhibited regarding himself as a teacher and mentor, Elizabeth and Amanda both experienced at least some level of uncertainty. Amanda expressed significant doubts about her potential as a mentor. These doubts were framed in her relative lack of teaching experience and expertise, in comparison to widely-respected teachers who were nearing the end of their careers—doubts which noticeably affected her early mentoring efforts. Despite her questioning of “Who am I to mentor someone?” Amanda experienced a significant transformation in her role as a teacher, which seemed to spark a similar change in her work as a mentor. Unlike Amanda—who experienced many mentoring challenges because of her early lack of confidence—Elizabeth quickly established a strong rapport with her mentee, with whom she had frequent and productive communication. Despite the apparent success of Elizabeth's mentoring relationship, she hesitantly shared the self-doubt that she experienced when encountering certain challenges that made her feel “not quite good enough.” Like Amanda, this uncertainty led Elizabeth to question what she had to offer her mentee and seemed to impact her approach to communication moving forward.

Given the likelihood that programs may primarily select mentors based on their seniority in the field and perceived distinction as teachers (Porter et al., 2001), Amanda's uncertainty about her own potential as a mentor may be a common perspective amongst new mentors in similar contexts. However, scholars have argued for a view of mentors as

learners in a continuing state of development (Achinstein & Athenases, 2006; Berg & Conway, 2016; Berg & Rickels, 2018; Conway & Holcomb, 2008; Zaffini, 2015), suggesting that “making mentors needs to be cast as a deliberate act that rests on a knowledge base for effective mentoring” (Achinstein & Athenases, 2006). It seems that all the mentors in this study could benefit from deliberate training experiences designed from this perspective of mentors (and teachers) as learners.

Summary

The mentor participants held nuanced and, in some cases, dynamic beliefs about themselves as both teachers and mentors. These beliefs seemed to carry a potential to negatively impact a mentor’s work. Based on the findings from this study, it is plausible that beliefs about oneself may limit a mentor’s ability to enact their other beliefs about beginning teachers and the nature of mentoring in general—limitations which could be mediated by deliberate and ongoing mentor training.

Implications for Mentor Training and Program Design

It is evident that veteran music teachers are likely to have varied motivations (e.g., giving back, lifting up, helping someone find professional satisfaction, ensuring more effective instruction for students) for taking on the role of mentor in a formal program like the OMP (Berg & Conway, 2016; Conway & Holcomb, 2008; Robinson, 2005; Smith, 2010). Similarly, they bring strongly held (and often unexamined) beliefs and assumptions—about beginning teachers, mentoring, and themselves—informed by years of personal and career experiences; such beliefs and assumptions seemed to directly inform these three educators’ approach to mentoring. This interconnection between

motivations, beliefs, and mentoring approach seemed to influence the successes, challenges, and frustrations that mentors experienced in their work.

Reflective Practice as Mentor Preparation

While mentors' beliefs and assumptions likely influenced their mentoring approach and overall experience in their guiding role, formal training appeared to mediate this effect for some participants. Amanda and Elizabeth both discussed the role that the mentor training workshops played in transforming their understanding of beginning teachers, teacher development, mentoring strategies, and communication (Berg & Conway, 2016; Berg & Rickels, 2018; Conway & Holcomb, 2008; Zaffini, 2015). Their evolving understandings were evident in the changing nature of their mentoring approach over the course of the program, leading to richer and more fulfilling mentoring experiences. In contrast, Brad, who did not attend any of the trainings offered through the OMP (and seemed to be entirely unaware of the offerings), relied mostly on his own experiences as an early-career teacher to guide his mentoring approach (Berg & Conway, 2016; Zaffini, 2015). He demonstrated few changes in his beliefs, assumptions, or approach over the course of the study—even when facing failed mentoring efforts. Despite Brad's lack of participation in the mentoring workshops, he did discuss increased reflection on his own teaching practices as a result of his work with pre-service and novice music educators (Berg & Conway, 2016; Berg & Rickels, 2018; Zaffini, 2015). This reality suggests that critical reflection may be impactful in encouraging growth and development as a mentor (Berg & Rickels, 2018)—even when reflection arises organically from the nature of the work itself, rather than through formal training experiences. Training designed to facilitate mentor reflection as a central strategy for

building their understanding of teacher development, communication strategies, and mentoring strategies may be vital toward guiding mentor growth and effectiveness. By connecting to this ubiquitous process that many veteran teachers have refined over years of professional practice, mentors may more deeply integrate these vital elements into their mentoring relationships.

Integrating Self-Reflection

Scholars and researchers have documented the need for and potential impact of mentor training that emphasizes interaction with other mentors, considering mentor characteristics, communication strategies, teacher development, and skills to facilitate novice teacher reflection (e.g., Berg & Conway, 2016; Berg & Rickels, 2018; Zaffini, 2015). While Berg and Conway (2016) designed trainings that focused on developing mentors' abilities to lead reflective conversations with their mentee, these sessions did not address mentors' abilities to reflect on their *own* beliefs, assumptions, and mentoring practices as an ongoing process throughout each stage of the experience. Berg and Rickels (2018) embedded written activities in their training workshops; however, these activities were limited to mentors' reflection on their use of mentoring strategies in the context of workshop-based events. Similarly, Munroe (2018) utilized cooperating teachers' reflection on video-recorded interactions with student teachers to examine various aspects of their dialogue, finding that this video-based reflection helped mentors recognize and adjust their mentoring styles—a strategy that may be useful for application to formal mentor training offerings. Program coordinators can incorporate the use of case studies, role-play activities, and video-based reflection to help mentors develop their

abilities to recognize and respond to mentees' evolving needs—a practice aligned with Glickman and Burns' (2020) concept of adaptive, impactful leadership.

The findings of this study suggest that initial and ongoing mentor training activities that deliberately facilitate mentor reflection on their own beliefs and assumptions regarding themselves, beginning teachers, and mentoring in general may reflect necessary (and often unavailable) support tools for new mentors. Given the ubiquitous role reflection plays in teacher development (Schön, 1983, 1987) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), it seems logical that veteran educators would experience similar developmental benefits in their role as mentors. Scholars Yendol-Hoppey and Fichtman Dana (2007) designed a guide to support the development of mentoring practice through the use of stories and metaphors. This guide—intended to engage mentors through a consideration of *themselves* as a mentor, and lead them through a nuanced exploration of varied mentor roles and actions—provided applications to meet wide-ranging mentee needs. Those who design/lead formal mentor training efforts may consider that “mentors are not born, but made, and are in a continuing process of becoming” (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006, p. 10). As such, mentors must be afforded opportunities to identify, interrogate, and challenge their personal beliefs and assumptions at every point throughout their mentoring journey—similar to how they would reflect on their work as educators in a classroom setting.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this study present several important implications for future research. These implications center around the need for a deeper understanding of the multifaceted motivations, beliefs, and assumptions that guide mentors, as well as the

development of more effective mentor training programs that foster reflective practices among participants.

Mentor Demographics

In this study, I focused on the experiences and perspectives of three first-time mentors in the early stages of a state-wide mentoring program for novice music educators. As such, future researchers should examine the experiences of a larger and more diverse population of music mentors. The participants in this study were similar in age and experience-level; two participants taught in elementary general music settings, while the third participant primarily taught middle school band. Considering the common practice of pairing mentors and mentees based on their specific area of music instruction (Conway, 2003; Koerner, 2017; Smith, 2003), continued research that explores the experiences of teachers from different social and professional contexts (e.g., age, experience, preparation, area of instruction) would be important in an attempt to develop an accurate understanding of mentors' experiences.

Mentor Motivation

Future researchers should explore the diverse motivations that drive experienced music educators to become mentors in a formal program. Understanding these motivations in greater depth can inform the design of mentoring programs that engage and build upon mentors' personal and professional goals, thereby enhancing their own growth and effectiveness in this role. Researchers may consider investigating how mentors' personal career challenges and triumphs influence their desire to give back to the profession, providing insight into facilitating more meaningful mentor–mentee relationships. Eros (2011) noted that second-stage teachers—typically those with 4–10

years of experience—often seek opportunities to contribute beyond their own classrooms. This desire for broader impact could be a powerful motivator for experienced educators who are still in the early stages of their careers to serve as mentors. Similarly, Retired educators may be motivated by a desire to share their expertise and contribute to the development of future educators, continuing a legacy in the field. Mentoring also provides these retired teachers with opportunities to stay actively engaged with the music education community (Berg & Conway, 2020). Researchers might explore opportunities for mentorship programs to intentionally leverage this drive for influence, making mentoring roles more appealing to this demographic of educators.

Mentor Beliefs and Assumptions

It is crucial for music education researchers to further examine the impact of mentors' beliefs and assumptions on their mentoring practices. The findings from this study highlighted that these three mentors entered their roles with preconceived notions about beginning teachers—which may both facilitate and hinder effective mentoring. Researchers should focus on identifying the specific beliefs and assumptions that most significantly affect mentoring outcomes (both positively and negatively). Such findings could influence the design of training activities to intentionally engage mentors in a critical consideration of their inherent beliefs and associated outcomes. Additionally, understanding how these beliefs evolve over time and through experience (both across a mentoring relationship and/or work in the profession) may help to develop training programs that encourage continuous reflection and adaptation by mentors.

The relationship between mentor training and mentor effectiveness warrants further investigation. While findings from this study indicated that training workshops

positively influenced some mentors' understanding, approach, and development to mentorship, there is a need for more comprehensive and longitudinal investigations to determine the most effective training components. Researchers should explore the benefits of various training methods such as interactive workshops, reflective activities, and peer discussions, to determine how best to guide mentors' abilities to support novice music teachers. Empirical evidence from both qualitative and quantitative approaches would be helpful in gathering both specific and broad information on mentor preparation effectiveness.

Effects of Music Mentorship

Finally, it seems imperative to study the long-term impacts of mentoring on both mentors and mentees. While this study provided valuable insights into the immediate experiences and outcomes of mentoring, future researchers might follow participants over extended periods to assess the enduring effects of mentoring relationships on their (both mentees' and mentors') professional growth and satisfaction. Similarly, investigating the potential impact on student learning seems paramount in highlighting the importance of mentoring for early-career educators. Uncovering any direct relationship between effective mentorship and student achievement would provide evidence for the support of organized mentorship programs in music education.

The findings of this study highlight the complex and dynamic nature of mentoring in the OMP and underscore the need to delve deeper into the motivations, beliefs, and reflective practices of mentors. By addressing these areas, future researchers can contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable mentoring programs that

support the professional growth of both mentors and mentees, ultimately strengthening the field of music education.

Conclusion

In this study, I explored the landscape of mentor teachers' experiences in the Oklahoma Mentoring Program (OMP), revealing the multifaceted motivations, beliefs, and assumptions that guided their work. Each mentor's unique professional journey, coupled with the common themes across cases, illustrates the complex and dynamic nature of these first-time mentors' experiences.

The motivations driving mentors to participate in the OMP (e.g., desire to give back to the profession, support novice teachers, strengthen the field) highlight a commitment to fostering a supportive state-wide music education community. This commitment was often rooted in the mentors' experiences of navigating their own early career challenges, fueling their dedication to provide the support they once needed. Participants' shared belief in the transformational nature of mentoring underscores the potential for these relationships to enhance not only the professional growth of beginning teachers, but also the mentors' own reflective practices and continued professional satisfaction—perhaps a key to sustaining longevity in the field of music education.

Mentors' beliefs and assumptions about beginning teachers, mentoring, and themselves shaped their approaches to supporting novice educators. These assumptions—informed by personal and career experiences—may facilitate or hinder effective mentoring practices. While these mentors generally recognized the importance of providing emotional and instructional support, their preconceived notions about mentees did not always reflect novices' actual needs. Such misalignment between perceived and

actual mentee needs highlights the necessity for ongoing reflection and adaptation in mentoring practices.

The implications for mentor training are noteworthy. Effective mentor training programs must address not only the practical aspects of mentoring, but also the reflective processes that enable mentors to critically examine their beliefs, assumptions, and practices. Facilitating mentor reflection on personal beliefs and assumptions is essential for fostering adaptive and responsive mentoring relationships. Training that emphasizes mentor reflection, in addition to knowledge of teacher development and communication strategies, may enhance the effectiveness and satisfaction of both mentors and mentees.

The findings from this study highlight the importance of a comprehensive approach to mentor preparation and support. By addressing the intricate connections between mentors' motivations, beliefs, and assumptions, and providing opportunities for reflection and professional growth, mentoring program coordinators can design meaningful experiences that support the development of novice music educators and contribute to the overall strength of the music education community. The insights gained from this study offer valuable considerations for the design and implementation of music mentor training programs, ensuring that mentors are well-equipped to navigate the complexities of their roles.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Approval of Continuing Review – Expedited Review – AP0

Date: September 03, 2019 **IRB#:** 10011
Principal Investigator: Ryan Neal Meeks **Approval Date:** 09/03/2019

Study Title: Role perceptions of mentor teachers in the Oklahoma Music Educators' Association Mentoring Program

Based on the information submitted, your study is currently: Active, closed to enrollment. On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and approved your continuing review application. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As part of IRB approval, this study has been transitioned to the new requirements under the revised Common Rule. It has been determined that this study now meets the criteria for Exempt Category 2. Please continue to submit Modification and Protocol Deviation forms as needed, and notify the IRB office when this project should be closed by submitting the Exempt Study Closure Report form within iRIS.

Even though future continuing reviews are no longer required for this study, you are reminded that, as principal investigator of this research, it is still your responsibility to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Obtain informed consent and research privacy authorization using the currently approved, stamped forms and retain all original, signed forms, if applicable.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications.
- Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related, per HRPP SOP 407.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- **Submit a final closure report at the completion of the project.**

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Appendix B

Recruitment Letters

Dear [name of music educator],

I am a former public school and university band director from Oklahoma working to complete a research project at The University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus. I am interested in developing a better understanding of the experiences of participants in the Oklahoma Music Educators Association, Music Mentoring program. I am particularly interested in understanding the experiences of mentors within this program. There is a large body of research related to the mentorship of beginning music teachers, however most of this research focuses on the needs and experiences of the beginning teacher. A deeper understanding of how mentor teachers in the OkMEA program perceive certain aspects of their experience may help facilitate the development of enhanced offerings and support for both mentors and beginning teachers. Your participation in this important project will help to develop such an understanding.

I am requesting your participation in this study because of your role as a mentor in the OkMEA program. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete the following:

- Two in-person audio recorded interviews (approximately 1-hour each, scheduled at your convenience)
- Two video-recorded mentorship meeting observations (scheduled with your mentee at your convenience)
- Three reflective drawings
- Two focus group interviews (meals provided, scheduled at a time and location convenient to the study participants)

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the research team at the email or phone numbers listed below, or the OU Office for Human Research Participation Protection (405-325-8110).

Ryan Meeks – ryan.meeks@ou.edu, (405) 833-2697

Christopher Baumgartner (faculty advisor) – cbaumgartner@ou.edu (405) 325-2081

Please respond to this email to inform me of your willingness to participate. I know your time is valuable, and I thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

RYAN MEEKS | PhD Candidate and *Graduate Teaching Assistant*
 Music Education | School of Music | University of Oklahoma
 500 W. Boyd, Norman, OK 73019
 Cell: 405-833-2697 | ryan.meeks@ou.edu

Dear [name of music educator],

I am a former public school and university band director from Oklahoma working to complete a research project at The University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus. I am interested in developing a better understanding of the experiences of participants in the Oklahoma Music Educators Association, Music Mentoring program. I am particularly interested in understanding the experiences of mentors within this program. There is a large body of research related to the mentorship of beginning music teachers, however most of this research focuses on the needs and experiences of the beginning teacher. A deeper understanding of how mentor teachers in the OkMEA program perceive certain aspects of their experience may help facilitate the development of enhanced offerings and support for both mentors and beginning teachers. Your participation in this important project will help to develop such an understanding.

I am requesting your participation in this study because of your role as a mentee in the OkMEA program. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to provide the following:

-Two video-recorded mentorship meeting observations (scheduled with your mentor at your convenience)

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the research team at the email or phone numbers listed below, or the OU Office for Human Research Participation Protection (405-325-8110).

Ryan Meeks – ryan.meeks@ou.edu, (405) 833-2697

Christopher Baumgartner (faculty advisor) – cbaumgartner@ou.edu (405) 325-2081

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 Music Education | School of Music | University of Oklahoma
 500 W. Boyd, Norman, OK 73019
 Cell: 405-833-2697 | ryan.meeks@ou.edu

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I am requesting your participation in this study because of your role as a director of the OkMEA program. You will be asked to complete the following:

-One in-person audio recorded interview (approximately 1-hour, scheduled at your convenience)

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the research team at the email or phone numbers listed below, or the OU Office for Human Research Participation Protection (405-325-8110).

Ryan Meeks – ryan.meeks@ou.edu, (405) 833-2697

Christopher Baumgartner (faculty advisor) – cbaumgartner@ou.edu (405) 325-2081

Please respond to this email to inform me of your willingness to participate. I know your time is valuable, and I thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

RYAN MEEKS | PhD Candidate and *Graduate Teaching Assistant*
Music Education | School of Music | University of Oklahoma
500 W. Boyd, Norman, OK 73019
Cell: 405-833-2697 | ryan.meeks@ou.edu

Appendix C

Interview Protocols

Round 1 Interview Protocol: Mentor

Pseudonym _____ **Mentor #** _____ **Consent:** ____ yes ____ no

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in your work as a mentor in the OkMEA beginning teacher mentorship program. If some of my questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any details you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

MENTOR PERCEPTIONS

1. Tell me about your teaching background. How long have you been teaching?
How long have you been at this school? What classes and age levels do you currently teach?
2. Do you have any previous experience as a formal or informal mentor for a beginning teacher? Student teacher? Tell me about those experiences.
3. Tell me about your initial decision to become a mentor in the OkMEA program.
 - Possible follow-up: Why did you choose to dedicate your time to serve in this capacity?
 - Possible follow-up: What do you think is the value of a program like this?
 - Possible follow-up: What did you hope to take away or gain from participating as a mentor to beginning teachers?
4. Tell me about your mentee. (last year? this year?)
 - Possible follow-up: Tell me about a particularly successful experience with your mentee.
 - Possible follow-up: Tell me about a particularly challenging experience with your mentee.
5. Tell me about your decision to continue as a mentor this year.

6. Tell me about the characteristics that you think are most important for being a good mentor.
 - Possible follow-up: Tell me how you adopt/embody/display those characteristics in your interactions with your mentee.
 - Possible follow-up: Discuss participant created drawings.
7. Tell me about some specific strategies you use to support your mentee.
 - Possible follow-up: How did you develop those strategies?
 - Possible follow-up: How do you choose which strategies to employ when?
8. Tell me about your participation in the mentoring workshops provided by OkMEA.
 - Possible follow-up: What contributed to your ability to attend/not attend?
 - Possible follow-up: If you were able to attend, what were the most useful aspects for you?
9. What do you think the OkMEA mentoring program directors expect from you as a mentor?

BEGINNING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS/NEEDS

10. Tell me about your experiences as a beginning teacher.
 - Possible follow-up: Did you have any mentors as a beginning teacher?
Tell me about that experience.
11. What do you think are the biggest challenges for current beginning music teachers?
12. How do you think your experience as a new teacher compares to the experience of current beginning music teachers?
13. What do you think beginning music teachers need from a mentor?
14. How do you think your mentee would describe you as a mentor?
15. What do you think is the most important thing for a new mentor to know?

Closing – “Thank you very much for your time.”

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you’d like to ask me about this research project?

Round 2 Interview Protocol: Mentor

Pseudonym _____ **Mentor #** _____ **Consent:** ____ yes ____ no

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in your work as a mentor in the OkMEA beginning teacher mentorship program. If some of my questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any details you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your mentoring relationship since we last met. Have you had any recent meetings or other interactions? Have there been any changes in the dynamic of your relationship
2. Tell me about your mentee’s immediate and future goals for their teaching. Tell me about **your** hopes for them.
3. How do you think your work as a mentor has impacted the experiences and/or learning of your mentee’s students?
4. Mentors may fulfill many functions such as...teacher, coach, collaborator, advocate, counselor, and countless others. Which functions have you fulfilled as a mentor?
 - a. Possible follow-up: Which are the primary functions for you?
 - b. Possible follow-up: Can you tell me about a time when you functioned as...?
 - c. Possible follow-up: How do you know which functions to fulfill at a given time?
 - i. Can you provide an example of that decision making?
5. The use of metaphors is a common approach to help us describe the role of a teacher. Can we consider some possible metaphors for mentors? Here are a couple of examples:

- a. *Mentor as Story Weaver*: Spins fiber into yarn and when you pull a thread of a story it elicits common threads while assisting mentee in weaving their own cloth.
- b. *Mentor as Jigsaw Puzzle*: logical and methodical approach; can't force pieces together but works carefully to ensure connections are appropriate and pieces are compatible through a nurturing relationship.
- c. *Mentor as Tailor*: adjusts, accommodates, adapts garments to suit mentee; asks questions to monitor growth and make garment adjustments considering the needs of the mentee.

What would your MENTOR metaphor be?

- 6. We've all studied the developmental stages and processes of children. What do you think are the developmental needs of beginning teachers?
 - a. Possible follow-up: Does this change over time?
 - b. Possible follow-up: How does this impact your approach to mentoring?

Closing – “Thank you very much for your time.”

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about this research study?

Interview Protocol: Program Director

Pseudonym: _____ **Consent:** ____ yes ____ no

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in learning more about the experiences of mentors in the OkMEA beginning teacher mentorship program. If some of my questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing on – any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your professional background and your current position.
2. Tell me about your work related to beginning teachers and mentoring.
3. Tell me about the impetus for starting the OkMEA mentorship program.
4. Tell me about your goals in developing this program.
5. Tell me about your expectations for mentor participants.
 - Possible follow-up: What were the criteria for mentor participation?
 - Possible follow-up: How did you go about matching mentors and mentees?
 - Possible follow-up: What benefits do you anticipate for mentors?
6. What do you think are the biggest challenges for mentors in your program?
7. Tell me how you support the mentors in your program?
8. What do you consider to be the characteristics of an effective mentor?
9. What do you think is the most important thing for a new mentor to know?

Closing – “Thank you very much for your time.”

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you’d like to ask me about this research project?

Focus-Group Protocol

Introduction – (facilitator)

Thank you all again for your help throughout this process. This focus group will mark the completion of your participation in the study. While I hope that we will have open discussion, it is also important that everyone has a chance to speak. Please take care to be respectful of all participants. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Please Tell us about your mentoring relationship. Have you had any recent meetings or other interactions? Have there been any changes in the dynamic of your relationship?

2. In my last interview, you each talked about your hopes and/or goals for your mentees. Can you share some of those?
 - What will be your role in helping them achieve those goals?
 - What will be the role of your mentee?

3. We are nearing the end of your second year as mentors. What have been the biggest surprises about being a mentor?
 - How have you changed as a mentor?

4. I've talked with all of you about what makes someone a good mentor, what might be some red flags when considering someone to serve as a mentor?

5. You've all talked about helping your mentees with certain things related to logistical challenges of a new position, planning and instruction, working with colleagues and administrators, and coping with stress and challenges. Based on your and others experiences, what do you wish you had known as a new mentor?

6. I've talked with all of you about beginning music teachers, their needs and challenges, and how they develop. Here are a few theories about how teachers develop, what do you think?

7. We are wrapping up year two of the mentoring program. When does mentoring end? How do we know if it was successful?

8. OkMEA and the mentoring program directors have worked to design a flexible program, that can adapt to meet the needs of Oklahoma teachers. What do you need from them to be more effective as a mentor? What do you wish they would do differently? What could they do to help new mentors get a solid start?

Closing – “Thank you very much for your time.”

Now that we are done, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about this research project?

Appendix D
Observation Protocol

Consent Obtained: ☐	Date:
Pseudonyms:	Location:
	Length of Observation:
<i>Descriptive Notes</i>	<i>Reflective Notes</i>
