School Administrator Engagement in Teacher Induction and Mentoring: Findings from Statewide and District-Wide Programs

Benjamin Kutsyuruba, *Queen's University*

Abstract

Research shows that school administrators' engagement is vital in creating a structure supportive of induction and mentoring for early career teachers. This article details a mixed-method research study that examined the role and impact of school administrators' engagement in four teacher induction programs in the United States (two statewide and two district-wide) supported by the New Teacher Center. The results identify administrator role expectations and participants' perceptions of the programs, and they indicate how vital school administrators' leadership and commitment are to a successful program. The article concludes with implications for theory, practice, policy, and further research.

Keywords School administrators; Teacher induction programs; New Teacher Center

Introduction

Research has shown that teacher induction that effectively incorporates mentoring as an integral programmatic component can positively affect the retention of beginning teachers and student achievement and help reduce the waste of resources and human potential associated with teacher attrition (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Laitsch, 2005; Long, McKenzie-Robblee, Schaefer, Steeves, Wnuk, Pinnegar, & Clandinin,

2012; Perry & Hayes, 2011; Strong, 2005). Positive outcomes of high-quality teacher induction and mentoring programs include increased teacher effectiveness, higher job satisfaction and commitment, improved classroom instruction and student achievement, and the retention of beginning teachers (Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, & Jacobus, 2010; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Henry, Bastian, & Fortner, 2011; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Richardson, Glessner, & Tolson, 2010; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007). Research also indicates that school administrators' engagement is a vital component of creating the supportive structure and conditions conducive to successful induction and socialization processes, which are essential for the long-term sustenance of beginning teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010). The socialization of beginning teachers and their acclimation into the school culture rests within the scope of the principal's role, as the principal is the steward of the vision, mission, and goals of the school (Delp, 2014). Principal engagement thus becomes critical for induction and mentoring programs to ensure that they are appropriate to the school's context and aligned with its vision, instructional focus, and priorities (Moir, Barlin, Gless, & Miles, 2009). The literature often discusses the general role of school administrators in the teacher induction and socialization processes as "overseer" or "manager"; however, it is also necessary to explore school administrators' specific roles and responsibilities within induction and mentoring programs, as well as the perceived impact of principal engagement on program outcomes and effectiveness.

This article describes findings from a mixed-method research study that examined the role and impact of school administrators' engagement in four induction programs in the United States (two statewide and two district-wide) supported by the New Teacher Center (NTC). The study was guided by the following research questions:

a. What are the mandates, duties, and responsibilities of school principals and assistant principals related to the organization and conduct of teacher induction and mentoring programs?

b. What are the perceived roles and influences of school administrators' engagement on the effectiveness of teacher induction and mentoring programs?

After reviewing the literature pertaining to teacher induction and mentoring programs and school administrators' engagement in these programs, this article provides an overview of methodological underpinnings and data analysis procedures. Research findings are presented based on quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The article concludes with a discussion of research results—which are compared and contrasted with the extant literature—and their implications for theory, practice, policy, and further research.

Review of the literature
Teacher induction and mentoring programs
Scholars have found that between 40 and 50 percent of beginning teachers in the U.S. leave the profession within the first five years (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Henry et al., 2011; Newberry & Allsop, 2017; Smith &

Ingersoll, 2004). Therefore, the first three to four years on the job are considered to be the most formative for a teacher and crucial for a teacher's decision to remain in the profession (Jones, 2003). Unexpected challenges, unclear expectations, difficult working conditions, and unreasonable demands are usually quoted as the main reasons for attrition (Andrews & Quinn, 2004; Anhorn, 2008; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). A supportive and encouraging school culture appears to be critical to helping new teachers to cope with the rigors and challenges of their new career (Schuck, Brady, & Griffin, 2005). There is also consensus that beginning teachers who find support from administrators and peers are less likely to leave the profession (Le Maistre, Boudreau, & Paré, 2006). Teacher induction is a long-term, comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process that is organized by a specific jurisdiction to acculturate, train, support, and retain new teachers and help them develop a lifelong learning program (Wong, 2004). Induction is viewed as one of the most useful ways to retain novices in the profession and prevent potential problems with their instruction and classroom management (Glazerman et al., 2010; Kang & Berliner, 2012; Kearney, 2014; Strong, 2005; Wynn et al., 2007). Induction programs often ensure release time for participants and evaluate progress based on statewide or program-specific standards for teacher success (Woods, 2016). In general, induction programs help novices transition into teaching, overcome challenges, and grow professionally; however, researchers also found programmatic inconsistencies and problems due to unique structural, social, and cultural factors; functional causes; and operationalization in schools (Barrett, Solomon, Singer, Portelli, & Mujuwamariya, 2009; Cherubini, 2009; Doerger, 2003; Jones, 2002).

Mentoring is often viewed as a major component of induction programs, along with orientation and professional development activities; however, sometimes mentoring serves as the induction program itself (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009; Long et al., 2012). Mentoring entails matching beginning teachers with experienced colleagues in a collaborative and nonjudgmental setting in order to assist with their transition into the profession and to help generate ideas for improving their craft (Cumming-Potvin & MacCallum, 2010). Mentoring can be an effective support mechanism for beginning teachers when used in conjunction with other components of the induction process (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wong, 2004). In addition to many professional benefits—such as coaching, guiding, advocacy, counseling, help, protection, and feedback—mentoring programs have the potential to offer personal benefits for novice teachers, such as stronger self-confidence, reduced stress, and increased motivation and learning (Allen & Eby, 2007; Lacey, 2000). At the same time, failure to appropriately match mentor with mentee, unsuccessful teacher/mentor dyads, lack of willing and/or able mentors, lack of mentor training, or individual factors (e.g., burnout, lack of professional respect, judgmental approach) may render mentoring supports ineffective (Benson, 2008; Hobson, 2016; Johnson & Kardos, 2005).

The role of administration in beginning teachers' induction and mentoring

Empirical evidence shows that school administrators' engagement is important for

creating a structure supportive of the induction process through their impact on school culture, instructional leader role, support of new teachers, and involvement in mentor selection (Long et al., 2012). Specifically, administrator actions perceived as helpful by beginning teachers in various studies included a warm welcome and orientation to school (Sabar, 2004), encouragement (Abbott, Moran, & Clarke, 2009; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007), informal interactions and formal meetings (Chatlain & Noonan, 2005), instructional support (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Cherubini, 2007), creating a supportive climate (Roberson & Roberson, 2009), resolving challenges faced by novices (Ingersoll, 2002), and creating conditions for building good emotional and pedagogical relationships in schools (Lassila, Timonen, Uitto, & Estola, 2017). Some scholars found that beginning teachers' morale is improved and their self-concept is bolstered when school administrators strengthen school culture, exhibit supportive and shared leadership, create the opportunity for shared values and vision, and promote professional relationships among novice teachers and experienced teachers (Cherian & Daniel, 2008; Wood, 2005; Wynn et al., 2007).

Michael Totterdell, Sara Bubb, Lynda Woodroffe, and Karen Hanrahan (2004) suggested that high-quality induction support, district policy and commitment to mentor assignment, working conditions, professional development for second-year teachers, and strong instructional leadership among principals positively influenced retention levels in districts that were part of their study. Furthermore, scholars have argued that school administrators' commitment to the development of beginning teachers either supports teachers and promotes their retention or undermines the success of induction and results in teacher attrition (Jones, 2002; Wechsler, Caspary, & Humphrey, 2008). Nevertheless, as Julie Long, Sue McKenzie-Robblee, Lee Schaefer, Pam Steeves, Sheri Wnuk, Eliza Pinnegar, and D. Jean Clandinin (2012) concluded, there is limited empirical evidence directly linking the role of the principal in the induction process with their impact on the retention of teachers.

In addition to the general role of a "manager" responsible for all programs in their school, school administrators have more specific roles and responsibilities within induction and mentoring programs. A review of the literature revealed that the assignment of mentors to beginning teachers is the most widely detailed aspect of a school administrator's role in teacher induction and mentoring processes (Bianchini & Brenner, 2009; Bianchini & Cavazos, 2007; Bickmore, Bickmore, & Hart, 2005; Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Other duties included the implementation of policy or programs aimed at supporting beginning teachers, providing resources, managing workload, offering professional development opportunities, and assigning classrooms and supporting staff in their instruction (Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2014; Glazerman et al., 2010; Gordon & Lowrey, 2017; Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009; Pogodzinski, 2015; Roberson & Roberson, 2009). In addition to the supportive role of school administrators, several studies highlighted the expectations of school principals to supervise and evaluate the work of the new teachers (Abu Rass, 2010; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005). Hence, the tensions associated with the dual relationship of supporter-evaluator can potentially raise difficult issues for the working relationships between school administrators and beginning teachers (Cherubini, 2010).

Research methodology

Research context and sample

This study examined school administrators' engagement in four induction programs in the U.S. that are supported by the New Teacher Center (NTC) in Santa Cruz, California. The programs that were selected for this study included two statewide programs, in one Northeastern state and one Western state, and two district-wide programs in one Southern state.[1] The selection of these programs was conducted in consultation with the researchers at the NTC. Based on the NTC policy report that reviews policies on new educator induction and mentoring across all 50 states (Goldrick, 2016), both statewide programs (Site A and Site B) were in states that have formally adopted induction program standards and require or recommend foundational mentor training and ongoing professional development. In terms of program mandate and length, both statewide program sites required new teacher induction; Site A did not have a minimum program length, whereas Site B required a three-year induction program. Induction program at Site A included fully released mentors. Districts across Site B used three mentoring models: full-time (with fully released mentors servicing all beginning teachers in the district), school-based (with mentors assigned from within the school), and mixed mentoring (a combination of full-time and school-based mentoring options).

The two district-wide programs, Site C and Site D, were located in a state that did not require induction for all beginning teachers, but only for certain (e.g., alternatively certified) new teachers. In both districts, school-based mentors were assigned to beginning teachers for two years. Furthermore, it is important to note that while the NTC coordinated or supported these programs by consultation, jurisdictions modified the program design according to their own contexts, state/district requirements, and priorities.

Research methods: Data collection and analysis

This study used a mixed-methods approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). First, document content analysis (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2012) was used to examine internal NTC documents and external state and district policies and standards to determine school administrators' roles and expectations for engagement in teacher induction and mentoring programs. The following types of internal NTC documents were analyzed: promotional brochures, practice briefs, induction program standards, program models and theories of action, the continuum of program development for teacher induction program leaders, and formative assessment and support conversation guides. The external document analysis included publicly available policies, standards, mandates, and handbooks in the states or districts in which programs were located.

Second, the researcher worked closely with the researchers at the NTC to access and examine the data from NTC induction surveys, which are aimed at providing assessments of the teacher induction program, by collecting data from educators in a variety of roles, including site administrators, mentors or coaches, and beginning teachers. This study analyzed surveys in four locations, sites A, B, C, and D, that were administered during the 2013–2014 school year. It is important to note that the surveys were not completely identical, as sites had an option to customize NTC

survey templates according to their specific needs. Overall, the study sample included surveys from school (site) administrators (SA; $n = 401$), beginning teachers (BT; $n = 2,403$), and mentors or coaches[2] (M; $n = 593$). The initial scan of the survey determined the selection of closed- and open-ended questions that directly or indirectly related to the role of school administrator. The closed- and open-ended responses were examined in a separate but complementary manner. A descriptive statistical analysis of closed items was conducted, whereas open-ended responses have undergone interpretative thematic analysis. Finally, four client leads (i.e., program leads or liaisons between NTC and state/district programs) were interviewed, one in each of the locations. The semi-structured interviews with client leads, which explored the program structure, mandates, and effectiveness, lasted from 30 to 45 minutes and were recorded by the researcher. The combination of these research methods provided rich descriptive data for each of the program locations.

Interpretative thematic analysis (Berg, 2001) was used to analyze the open-ended survey responses and interview data. Systematic procedures were followed for data analysis, moving from the "narrow units of analysis (e.g., significant statements), and on to broader units (e.g., meaning units)" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 124). Participants' comments from open-ended survey responses were compiled by the researcher and analyzed using qualitative analysis software called ATLAS.ti. Open-ended questions used for the analysis included direct questions regarding the role and impact of school administrators on the induction program and general questions that sought participant feedback about induction program components or impacts. Responses to these general questions were scanned through by the software for terms such as "administrator," "administration," "principal," or "leader." Both deductive and inductive approaches were utilized, according to standard coding processes for etic and emic data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Where necessary, themes were compared and contrasted with the client interview data. The research questions served as the initial organizing framework for the responses. In addition, the emergent codes were established according to the dominant themes recurring in the responses. Both etic and emic codes were then combined into categories, and categories into patterns or concepts (Lichtman, 2010).

Research limitations

Several limitations are evident in this research. First, this study primarily entailed a secondary analysis of the data that were deemed related to the school administrator's role in the induction and mentoring programs. Only the client leads were asked questions that directly inquired about the role of school administrators. Also, this study did not include interviews with school administrators, beginning teachers, or mentors to further explore the phenomenon. Second, this study was conducted in selected sites with NTC-supported teacher induction and mentoring programs. Based on the contextual environments of the participating sites, the generalizability and transferability of the findings are limited.

Research findings

The results of the data analysis are presented below according to the two broad cat-

egories: a) administrator role expectations; and b) participants' and client leads' perceptions of the program. The first section details the findings from document analysis and from client lead interviews, while the second section represents the thematic analysis of survey participants' perceptions of principal engagement in the teacher induction program (based on the closed- and open-ended survey responses). Where fitting, the latter section includes insights from client lead interviews detailing school administrators' engagement in their particular locales.

Administrator role expectations

Based on the data from internal NTC document analysis, several themes emerged. The common thread across all of the themes was that due to the evolving role of the school administrator, from manager to instructional leader, principals must create thriving school cultures, drive instructional change by helping teachers to continually improve in their professional skills, perform data-driven analysis of student achievement, and actively engage with the community. As a result, school administrators were expected to grow professionally and gain new skills to pivot from evaluating their teachers to developing them through feedback and support. As site leaders, school administrators were seen to be responsible for creating a collaborative school culture where teachers thrive and students excel. The message, clearly conveyed in the documents, was that beginning teacher induction success is deeply linked to the effectiveness, ability, and engagement of the school administrator.

Accordingly, the NTC outlined detailed expectations for the roles and responsibilities of school administrators in four levels of program practices: establishing, applying, integrating, and innovating. Within these practices, the following NTC program standards guided administrators' responsibilities:

> *Support through the provision of resources and policy implementation, culture modeling, and the creation of working conditions conducive to new teachers' success.* In this sense, administrators were expected to address challenging aspects of beginning teachers' working environments, operational barriers, and logistical barriers. They were expected to advocate for statewide or district-wide support policies, ensure the full implementation of the local program, and problem-solve the issues of site implementation. They were to seek out ways to support the mentor-beginning teacher collaboration by providing additional resources or adjusting policies and working conditions to promote beginning teachers' success.

> *Exhibit instructional leadership through well-rounded communication channels and collaboration with mentors to improve beginning teachers' instructional practice.* This theme outlined an expectation for administrators to be aware of the mentor's role and to meet/communicate regularly with mentors to discuss the needs of beginning teachers while respecting the confidentiality of the mentor role. Through these processes, principals were assumed to endorse and/or support the development of a complex, multifaceted, and confidential mentor

role. On the more pragmatic side, principals were expected to schedule time for and promote mentors' work with beginning teachers.

Capacity building through professional development to advance beginning teachers' development and mentors' effectiveness. By participating in initial and ongoing research-based professional development, administrators were to apply learning to ongoing support for the local induction and mentoring programs, develop the skills that support teacher development from the start, and capitalize on their investments in teachers as a primary means to student achievement.

The coordination of induction activities with other school-based initiatives and evaluation procedures. School administrators were to hold meetings at the beginning of the year to discuss induction activities and their integration into other school-based activities and to continuously discuss the ways in which induction can support other school-based initiatives and evaluation procedures. They had to develop an understanding of best practices around supervision and formative feedback. They were also told to ensure that mentoring was aligned with site instructional goals and evaluation timelines and to engage beginning teachers to share evidence of professional growth as a part of evaluation.

Given the flexibility of aligning the NTC program standards to individual program site contexts and mandates, external documents and client lead interviews revealed the varying expectations of administrators in the four program locations for the 2013–2014 school year. The amalgam of expectations outlined in policies and state mandates can be synthesized in the following list[3]:

- develop, implement, sustain an induction program at the school level;
- recruit, assign, select mentors for beginning teachers;
- provide sanctioned time for mentors and beginning teachers to engage in the mentoring process;
- provide orientations for beginning teachers to promote their successful entry into the school community;
- provide the beginning teacher with a balanced teaching assignment/caseload whenever possible;
- ensure regular and ongoing meetings with mentors and beginning teachers to communicate about district/school context, vision, strategic plan, expectations, and progress;
- collaborate and communicate with program leadership, district administration, and other site administrators about the induction program;
- establish confidential, respectful, and trusting relationships with mentors and beginning teachers;
- provide structured/targeted professional development for beginning teachers or facilitate the integration of induction practices into broader professional development initiatives for all teachers;
- develop an understanding of the role of the mentor and the expectations of the beginning teachers and provide clear/consistent communication to school personnel regarding these roles and expectations;

- provide and maintain positive working conditions, a safe school climate, and a collaborative/collegial school culture;
- conduct formative (formal and informal) assessments of teaching practice through classroom observations and provide feedback to beginning teachers;
- conduct beginning teacher evaluations/examinations of instructional practice and student work;[4] and
- participate in training and information sessions available for school administrators in relation to their role in the induction program.

As evident from the list above, school administrators were expected to play a key role in the development and maintenance of the induction programs and processes in their schools by being actively engaged in the operations of the programs, facilitating mentoring and professional development, communicating with participants and administrators, ensuring an appropriate organizational climate, and providing formative and summative assessments to beginning teachers. In addition, only the induction and mentoring program duties at Site C mentioned a specialized position of administrator responsible for teacher quality and retention. Also, at this site, teacher quality and retention administrator duties were substantially different in the 2012–2013 and 2014–2015 school years, the latter being less detailed regarding the interactions with mentors.

Perceptions of principal engagement in induction programs

Data from the closed- and open-ended NTC induction survey responses in the four program locations[5] were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative approaches. Closed-ended questions were designed around the five-point Likert scale, and ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Quantitative data analysis was limited to descriptive statistics in the form of a percentile representation of participants' agreement (i.e., cumulative percentage of *agree* and *strongly agree*) to a selection of questions.[6] The results are presented in the figures below, with numbers representing the combined percentage of participants who answered *agree* or *strongly agree*. Where appropriate, the quantitative analysis is supplemented with qualitative data, i.e., direct quotations from the open-ended survey responses.

School administrator satisfaction with the induction program

Across the four sites, school administrators' satisfaction with the induction program and mentoring processes varied (see Figure 1).

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the majority of school administrators in sites A and B were fairly closely aligned in their perceptions of high satisfaction with the mentoring received by beginning teachers, the teacher induction program, and the positive influence of the program[7] on their school's growth in advancing teacher practice and student learning. Site D school administrators' responses exhibited the highest satisfaction level, while Site C was considerably lower than the other three sites. (The latter may be explained by the fact that in the 2013–2014 school year, Site C was only in its second year of programming with the NTC). In addition, school administrators' responses indicated a mixed agreement with the statement that they received resources and support for policy implementation and that working condi-

Figure 1. School administrator satisfaction
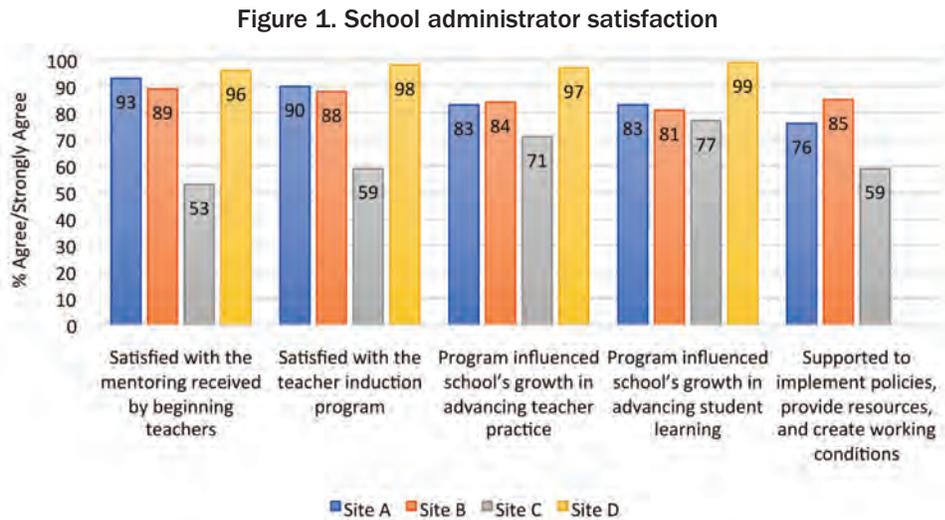
tions promoted beginning teacher success (higher in sites A and B and lower in C; Site D did not feature this question).

The surveys elicited school administrators' perceptions about the most effective aspects of the teacher induction program. To analyze these questions, specific messages were sought about the role of administrator in the program effectiveness.

Across the four sites, school administrators pinpointed the significance of mentoring (e.g., regular interactions between the mentors and beginning teachers through meetings and communication) and consistent support for beginning teachers through resources and professional development. At Site A, the majority of the principals indicated that mentors' support and feedback (non-evaluative, trusting, and respectful) and resources for beginning teachers were the most important factors in the success of the program. Considerable but lesser impact was attributed to their regular contact with a mentor as a liaison between school administrators and beginning teachers, meetings with beginning teachers to discuss concerns, and ongoing support and the provision of resources for beginning teachers:

> [The induction program] is providing new teachers with support and someone to listen to and help them in the ways they need. Sort of a safety net, someone they can trust and share concerns with in an open and honest way. (School administrator, Site A [SA-A])

At Site B, the majority of the principals indicated that well-trained mentors and a supportive framework for beginning teachers through effective and consistent mentorship were most effective for the success of the program. Other factors conducive to a successful program were observation and feedback, building collaborative relationships, camaraderie, connections, instructional support and resources, and regular meetings and communication between mentor and teacher and mentor and administrator. For example, principals noted:

> The mentors are on campus on a regular basis offering support and guidance to the beginning teachers. They are unobtrusive in that they report directly to the classroom teachers and mentor them without requiring assistance or oversight of the administrator. The beginning teachers look forward to this support/advice they receive and profit from the recommendations of the mentor. They feel sup-

ported and validated and are encouraged and enriched by the relationships that are formed with their mentor teacher. (SA-B)

> The mentor training and work with the mentor teachers helps the school develop leaders and the roles they play in support of the beginning teachers. I think the relationship building with get-togethers in the district is also important. It gives administrators a chance to talk with their teachers in a bonding type setting. (SA-B)

At Site C, by far the most effective aspects of the teacher induction program were personal contact and interaction with mentors and personal support for beginning teachers:

> The opportunity for new teachers to meet with [mentors] on a regular basis. These meetings provide consistency in support which builds trust as well as opportunities for growth. (SA-C)

> Our new teachers feel supported and believe that they receive timely information and support in order to be successful. (SA-C)

At Site D, mentoring was the most effective component of the teacher induction program. Most common descriptors included mentor interactions with beginning teachers; personal contact; the mentor's support, experience, guidance, training, help, and feedback; ongoing communication with the mentor; and consistent support. School administrators posited:

> The mentor program is the most effective part of the teacher induction program, because it applies the part of professional development that is most effective according to research—an actual [mentor]—as teachers implement skills learned from trainings. Administrators and other teachers do not have the time to give this level of support to new teachers. (SA-D)

> Having the continuous support of a mentor, along with administration, and placing the new teacher in close proximity to other teachers who support him/her has had the greatest impact. (SA-D)

> The school leadership team working with the [mentors] and new teachers, orienting new teachers, and providing targeted guidance and support throughout the year has been a critical element for success for our new teachers. (SA-D)

In addition, school administrators' responses indicated that the following aspects had the greatest impact on student learning: feedback and observations, mentoring/coaching, teamwork between administrators and mentors, and modeling. Some typical comments are as follows:

> The modeling that [one mentor] did with her teachers was most valuable and appreciated by the teachers. When teachers can actually see strategies being used with their students, it becomes "Aha" moments for the teacher … this does work … even with my students. (SA-C)

> The school leadership team working with the [mentors] and new teachers, orienting new teachers, and providing targeted guidance and support throughout the year has been a critical element for success for our new teachers. (SA-C)

> The strong collaboration between the [mentor], beginning teacher, and principal has resulted in significant growth this year. (SA-A)

> Developing effective mentors for schools to build capacity to support new teachers. If schools have the expertise within, they can individualize and differentiate support to new teachers in the building. Support can be given in real time, not when someone's schedule allows it. (SA-B)

> Principal's role. It is necessary to provide support to the mentor and mentee. (SA-D)

As noted by school administrators across the sites, collaboration between the mentors and administrators to support beginning teachers considerably affected new teachers' growth and, ultimately, student learning.
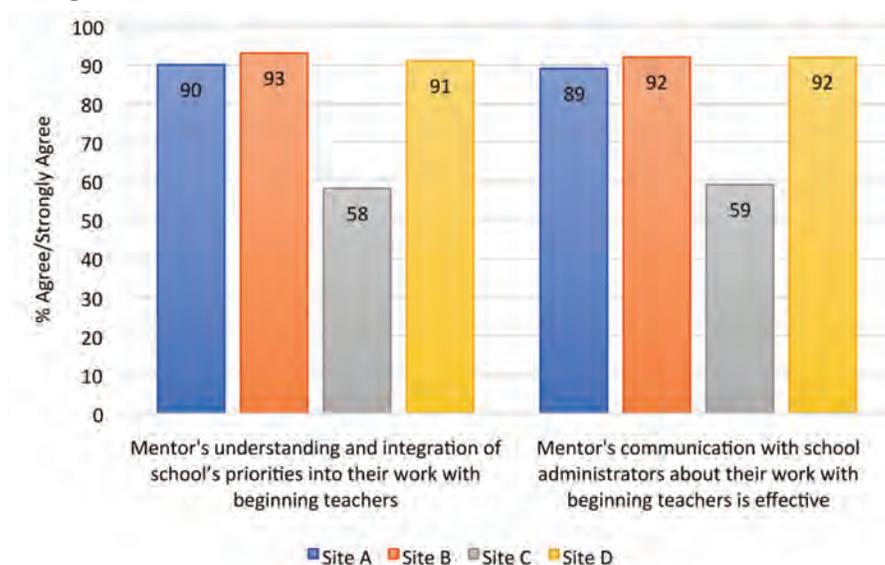
School administrators' interaction with mentors

At all four sites, the majority of school administrators met monthly with the mentors to discuss their work with beginning teachers, which was mostly deemed to be sufficient. The topics most frequently discussed at these meetings were:

- the needs of beginning teachers;
- working conditions that support beginning teachers;
- working conditions that challenge beginning teachers;
- confidentiality issues faced by beginning teachers; and
- establishing partnerships between the mentor and site administrator.

Overall, school administrators (in sites A, B, and D; see Figure 2) were satisfied with their work with mentors who, they thought, understood and integrated school

Figure 2. School administrator satisfaction with interaction with mentors

% Agree/Strongly Agree

Mentor's understanding and integration of school's priorities into their work with beginning teachers: Site A 90, Site B 93, Site C 58, Site D 91

Mentor's communication with school administrators about their work with beginning teachers is effective: Site A 89, Site B 92, Site C 59, Site D 92

■ Site A   ■ Site B   ■ Site C   ■ Site D

priorities into their work with beginning teachers and effectively communicated with administrators about this work. An exception was noted at Site C, where data pointed out that 15–18 percent of respondents had not met at all with the mentors and had not communicated with them about their work with beginning teachers. Hence, this finding may also offer another clue regarding the lower level of satisfaction with the program at Site C.

Generally, as noted by beginning teachers, administrators, and mentors themselves, mentors served an important role as a liaison between school administrators and beginning teachers. Data analysis showed that principals and mentors worked closely together at all sites to coordinate induction activities with other school-based initiatives and evaluation procedures. Principals viewed mentors as the "go-between" between the administrators and beginning teachers because they communicate with the administrator and work out a plan to support the beginning teacher:

> The support, which the mentors provide the teachers, is helpful especially because it comes from someone who has a different perspective. Mentors have also helped to address any issue from my perspective with the beginning teachers. (SA-B)

> [Mentors are] a "buffer" between the administration and [beginning teachers] as they grow in experience.… The mentor provides the administration with helpful "hints" and/or clues that a newbie needs some TLC [tender loving care] or some additional attention. The mentors are teacher advocates but work closely with the administration as needed to improve practices and learning. (SA-D)

> Mentors are able to spend time with new teachers, differentiating support as needed. As an administrator, I don't have the time necessary to provide the same level of support. While peer teachers are willing to help, their time is also limited. (SA-D)

Similar sentiments were expressed by beginning teachers who viewed their mentors as advocates for them and for their students, communicating with—and often pushing—administrators for answers to important questions:

> Mentors should serve as a buffer between administration and new teachers. When it is portrayed that there is more of a friendship and relationship with administrators than those the mentor is supposed to serve and assist, it discredits the mentor. Trust is lost at that point that cannot be restored. (Beginning teacher, Site D [BT-D])

> [My mentor] has been a great go-between for my principal and I. My mentor listens to the things that all her mentees say to her and words them in an appropriate way to our principal. She does this in such a way I never felt I couldn't trust her or that I had to censor what I had to say. (BT-D)

Moreover, beginning teachers viewed mentors as a source of emotional and teaching support. This was especially noticeable when there was a conflict or lack of support from the administrators when teachers needed it:

> I believe that the emotional support that my mentor has provided
> me has been extremely helpful. At this moment the emotional stress
> that this job is giving me has made it almost impossible to work on
> improving myself as a teacher. Every day I learn to deal with it better,
> but realistically there is no time to deal with the stress and academ-
> ics. I get very little support from my administration, and the text-
> books that are available to me are really out of date. (BT-B)

> [My mentor] has offered a sympathetic ear when I was feeling over-
> whelmed or unfairly targeted by my administration and has brought
> sense out of chaos. I value her openness and her honesty regarding
> all matters of classroom instruction, management, and interpersonal
> relations. (BT-B)

> My mentor has been so helpful and an inspiration. This has been a
> challenging year, especially with the drastic change of administra-
> tion at my site. She supported me emotionally as well as profession-
> ally throughout the year. (BT-D)

Overall, beginning teachers were pleased to have mentors intervene or advocate for
them with administrators.

Mentors also acknowledged the importance of privacy between mentors and be-
ginning teachers, which created a safe space in which to ask questions, try things,
and get feedback without evaluation and/or consequences:

> I've found new teachers to be extremely receptive and grateful for ad-
> vice and help they receive, without any evaluation or judgment. They
> are not afraid to raise sensitive issues or ask difficult questions, as
> they know our conversations are privileged. (Mentor, Site A [M-A])

> The most valuable feature is that the program [is] non-evaluative. This
> allows teachers to feel safe when they are with their [mentor]. (M-B)

> The observations [help] to truly get a "feel" for what is happening
> in the classrooms but not being [observed by] administration, just
> another set of eyes, ears, etc. for more collaboration and effective
> teaching to happen. (M-B)

However, mentors remained unsure whether being an advocate was a part of
their role. This was especially evident in Site D mentors' responses to questions about
what was the most or least clear about the expectations for their role as a mentor:

> Most clear: support beginning teachers so that their instruction can
> have a positive impact on student learning. Least clear: what is the
> real expectation for communicating with principals? (M-D)

> Most clear: support teachers to be as effective as possible and push
> student achievement. Least clear: how to have discussions with prin-
> cipals about supporting my teachers when the teachers feel intimi-
> dated and not supported by the same administration. (M-D)

> I am unsure how to deal with administrators who have made their minds up of who they don't want in the school by October and refuse to give me information that will help the teacher grow and develop. (M-D)

In the same site (D), mentors expressed multiple concerns with the lack of support they felt from school administrators. It was manifested in a lack of structure, lack of consistency, increased demands from administration (at various levels), criticism, and lack of guidance and teamwork.

Because standards and expectations for teachers differed among schools, it was important for full-time (or full-release mentors) to get well acquainted with each school administration they were assigned to in order to facilitate their role as liaison. To this end, data across the groups of participants revealed the need for improved communication between administrators and mentors:

> Our district-wide program has strengthened communication with principals, but it is not as smooth in some schools as others. I believe that administrators need more information about the induction and mentoring program, especially ideas for improving new teacher support, and mentors need to be able to answer questions and address concerns without betraying confidentiality. (Client lead, Site B [CL-B])

> I wish I had more opportunities to meet and discuss the expectations of my school and debrief the needs of my teachers with the [mentor]. I actually do not speak to her when she is on my campus except for potentially three planned meetings. (SA-A)

> This year we significantly strengthened our communication with principals via an orientation to the program, summary notes of quarterly beginning teacher PLCs [professional learning community], and a face-to-face conference at midyear with each principal. (M-B)

> Time needs to be built in their schedules so that the mentors are more involved on campus (i.e., faculty meetings) so that they are more embedded in our school culture and can better support the vision of the administration and the district. Monthly meetings between the principal, assistant principal, and mentors involved at each school could also be helpful. (SA-D)

> There should be a working relationship between the [mentor] and administrators. At this time there is no communication between [mentors] and administration and so it is difficult to know what is happening and the effect of the TIP [teacher induction program] on our beginning teachers. (SA-C)

Interestingly enough, some school administrators noted the need for less meeting times with mentors. Several comments from Site B conveyed the point that sometimes a lack of communication between mentors and administrators is a good thing, as principals want to be informed but do not want to (or have time to) be too involved.

School administrators' engagement with beginning teachers' instruction

Key types of support identified by beginning teachers included regular communication between administrators and new teachers, and administrators' direct support for new teachers. However, perceptions of their significance differed between administrators and beginning teachers. As evidenced in Figure 3, beginning teachers' agreement with the statements that they experienced regular communication and administrator support were consistently lower than the perceptions of school administrators. In addition, both school administrators' and beginning teachers' responses indicated lower agreement in Site B. Interestingly, beginning teachers at Site C expressed the highest levels of communication and support from school administrators. Given the prior finding that Site C administrators had the least communication with mentors, communication channels between administrators and beginning teachers might have been more direct at this site.

School administrators' direct support was manifested, in part, through classroom visits and observations. Although questions about the frequency of visitation were not consistent in all site surveys (e.g., Site B questions were based on set frequencies, such as weekly, monthly, per semester, etc., while other sites included questions based on the number of 5–10-minute visitations per year). Therefore, inferences were made based on the average responses to align the data across the sites.

As shown in Figure 4, the number of visitations as reported by school administrators was very similar in sites A, C, and D. On average, school administrators at Site B observed beginning teachers once or twice per semester, or monthly, and they offered feedback at roughly the same frequency. Almost all of them provided support to beginning teacher(s) dealing with highly challenging student behaviors and crisis situations. Similar to Figure 3, beginning teachers' perceptions of the frequency of visitations were consistently lower compared to the perceptions of school administrators.

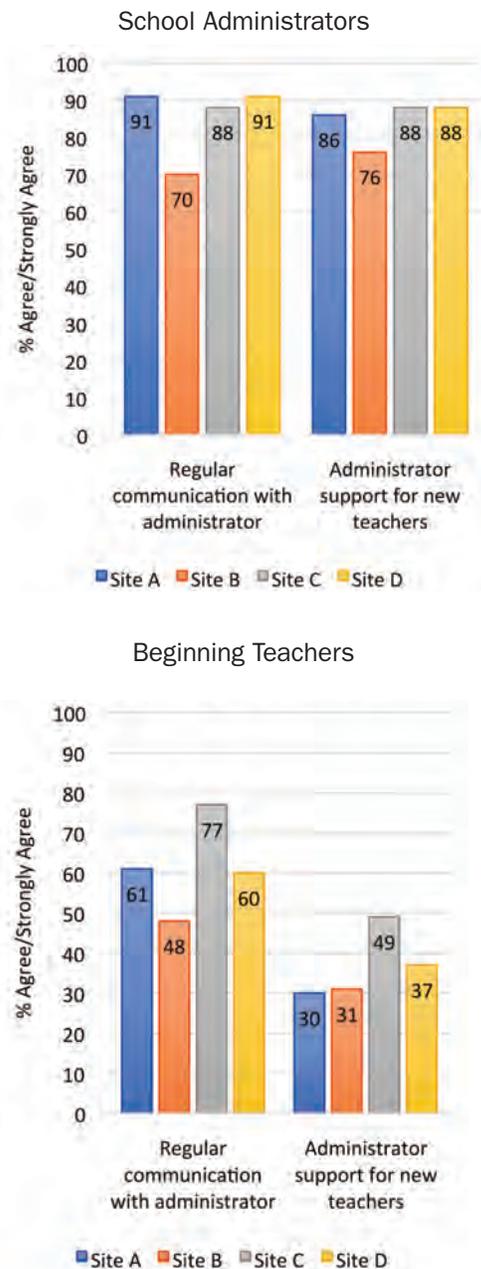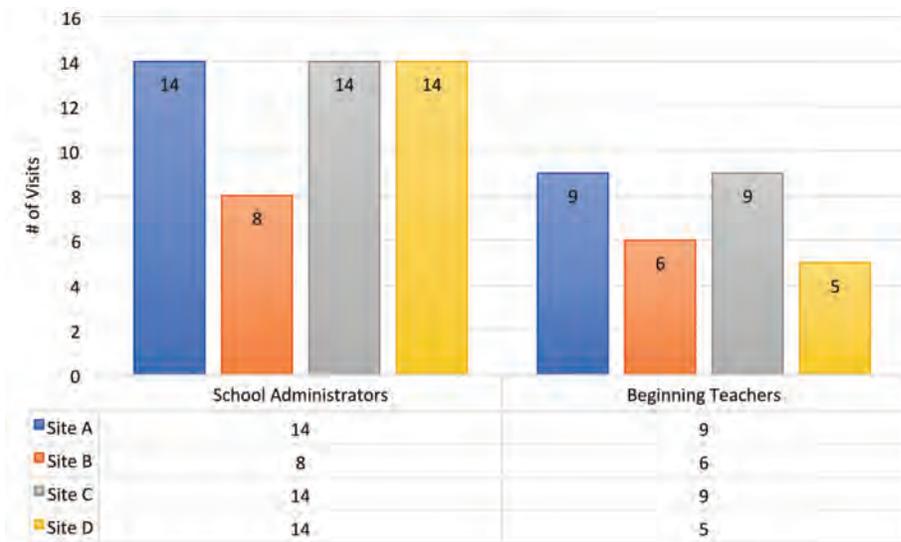**Figure 3. Types of administrative support for beginning teachers**

School Administrators

Beginning Teachers

Figure 4. School administrator classroom visits and observations (5–10 minutes)

	School Administrators	Beginning Teachers
■ Site A	14	9
■ Site B	8	6
■ Site C	14	9
■ Site D	14	5

Beginning teachers' perceptions of school administrator support

Beginning teachers' perceptions of school administrator support varied across four sites. On one hand, beginning teachers highly praised the administration's engagement in induction and mentoring programs, describing the support as "valuable," "beneficial," "helpful," and "highly collegial." This was evident in the following responses:

> The quality of support from my [mentor] and school administrator have been excellent and have helped me excel in my new profession. (BT-A)

> The most valuable feature is the support that we have from [mentors], teachers, and admin, because without their support and guidance I would be lost and confused about standards and lessons. (BT-B)

> The constant support from my [mentor] and my principal helped me in all aspects. Observations, evaluations, and discussions were very helpful. (BT-C)

> My site has been a pleasure to work at. The school administration and faculty have made the working conditions wonderful. Administration and faculty are always willing to help, answer questions, and take time to assist you in any way. I really enjoy the site that I work at. (BT-D)

> Bravo to the administration that is able to find these excellent teachers who are able to translate their own experiences and knowledge to benefit adult learners. The impact of the whole program on my growth has been important and I look forward to continuing it. (BT-D)

Particularly significant was the fact that in almost all instances that beginning teachers commented on the quality of the support they received from the administrator and cited their appreciation of it, they mentioned it in conjunction with the support they received from the mentor and their colleagues.

> I think I had a great amount of support this year. Between my [mentor], my administrators, and my department, I felt as though I always had someone I could turn to whenever I needed support. (BT-A)

Meeting with colleagues, mentors, and administration has helped me access valuable resources of information and strategies to improve my practice and handle the workload with a more positive attitude. (BT-B)

The constant support from my [mentor] and my principal helped me in all aspects. Observations, evaluations, and discussions were very helpful. [The] new teachers orientation workshop and all the other professional developments had a great impact on me and on my students as well. (BT-C)

I am exceptionally fortunate that the school I work for has incredible administrators, faculty, and staff. The principal continually gives valuable feedback to me, and also makes sure that he gives praise for hard work for both teachers and students. This makes a HUGE difference for both the teacher and the student, because you feel valued and want to continue to better yourself. (BT-D)

On the other hand, responses highlighted negative perceptions of principals' involvement in the program, mainly due to unapproachability, a lack of resources, and a lack of administrative support:

I felt that I have received more support from my "mentor" and early childhood supervisor than I have from my own building principal. The only times that I talked with my principal at length, without students present, was during my midyear conference and one meeting in which I requested more support to guarantee student safety in my classroom. The only times that I have seen her in my classroom was during the two times that she evaluated me. If it had not been for the induction process … I would have had almost no support as a first year teacher in my district. (BT-A)

I believe that I would have benefit[ted] more if my mentor was not that of an administrative or support position and was someone from my grade level. Admin and support positions have a lot on their plate and have lot of things to handle and don't really have time for mentoring. I feel like my fifth-grade teaching team has played a big role in my perseverance and success during my first year of teaching. Lots of support and guidance from my teaching team. (BT-B)

There were times that I felt my school and administration were not doing a good job of supporting me, and it would have been nice to know what to do in that situation. (BT-D)

The administration is not supportive of its staff and doesn't have a tolerance for new teachers. It is very difficult to work in an environment where you feel like the administrators' goal is to "getcha" every day. I also didn't have adequate resources in my classroom, even after asking for them for months. It was difficult moving to a new

grade and not having any of the resources that the rest of the team was using to plan instruction. (BT-D)

However, it should be also noted that the majority of beginning teachers did not mention what kind of support would have been helpful from their school administrators; instead, they just stated that they did not get support.

Overall, in contrast to the perception of a mentor as a low-stakes, non-judgmental helper across the board, beginning teachers saw school administrators primarily as a high-stakes observer and evaluator.

> The focus on the evaluation has been a tremendous help because I can shape my teaching to ensure that any time an administrator walks into my classroom, all aspects of the evaluation are addressed. (BT-A)

> Observations and the post-observation discussions were most helpful from my administrator and mentor. It gave us both an idea of where I stood as a teacher, and where to go (as a teacher/instruction) to become better. It also was great because it provided a specific situation to discuss versus a "what if" scenario. (BT-B)

While some teachers appreciated administrators' evaluations and found them helpful, the more common response was feeling afraid of these evaluations, characterized by such adjectives as "fearful" and "unnerving." Particularly, at sites B and D, beginning teachers reported feeling criticized or unfairly/inaccurately evaluated.

> I am very concerned that I am being observed by someone who has never taught special education. I am concerned that I am being held to impossible standards that I cannot achieve in my first year. … I feel I am being held to unreal expectations by my administrator. (BT-B)

> Feeling overwhelmed with criticism from the administration instead of support. When I ask for support, they often imply that doing so reflects poorly on me. When I discuss student behavior, they use it against me instead of helping. When evaluating, they have unrealistic expectations and reflect a lack of knowledge of both the material and the needs of the students. … The administration has gone back on their promise. … (BT-D)

> I feel that my principal does not focus on what matters: my instruction. For example, she has NEVER observed me teach, yet she is constantly telling me all the things I need to improve upon—many of which are irrelevant to what I am paid to do—teach! (BT-D)

One of the most frequently quoted strategies to improve observations and the evaluation process was increased communication and more frequent meetings with a formative focus between beginning teachers and administrators.

School administrators' perceptions of their support for beginning teachers

Data showed that across all sites there was an acknowledgment among school ad-

ministrators of the importance of the non-evaluative and supportive aspects of the program for beginning teachers.

> The non-evaluative layer of support in relation to teacher practice and the emotional safety net provided to beginning teachers are the most effective parts of the induction program. (SA-A)

> The program helps support new teachers with an academic and a cultural mentor. Teachers learn the cycle of instruction, formative assessment, and they analyze student work. … The emotional support that is provided by school-level mentors is vital in new teacher growth and in retaining teachers. (SA-B)

In addition, they felt that mentoring benefited their teachers, their school, and also themselves:

> Having a mentor to guide them [beginning teachers] and someone they can confide in has been very helpful. As an administrator, it has been a tremendous asset for me because I was in charge of the [teacher induction program] at my school [before], and I was reluctant to hire new teachers because of all the extra time involved. (SA-D)

> Having a [mentor] working with beginning teachers in year one is a great support not only to the teacher but also to administrators. (SA-A)

At the same time, principals expressed concern and awareness of their own short-comings and the evaluative nature of their work:

> Teachers that are hired with one year of experience [should] get a MENTOR and not be assigned to the principal for the [teacher induction program]. Most of the one-year-of-experience teachers need more support than I can give them. (SA-D)

> We need to continue the use of mentors. It is currently the only established method to coach our teachers. Administrative and peer observations incorporate little to no time for coaching the teachers. Other than "next steps," it simply tells teachers what they are not doing effectively. (SA-D)

Discussing the various administrative issues of the teacher induction and mentoring programs, school administrators emphasized the need for adequate funding as mentoring is resource-intensive; it takes time, requires clear focus, and demands appropriate training. The following quotes represent the scope of school administrators' concerns regarding what needed to be addressed in order for the programs to function properly:

> Increase funding support for mentors. They are expected to do a lot of documentation: meeting with teachers, follow[ing]-up with mentee concerns, and meet[ing] with the administration. Many of these tasks are done at the end of the school day! (SA-B)

> Very simply: more funding is needed to continue the valuable opportunity. (SA-A)

> I still have difficulty getting my best tenured teachers to take the time to go through the training to become a mentor. It's not always my best teachers that are willing to step forward. Need to look at incentives to get them to the training. (SA-B)

> Another idea would be to provide a stipend for the principal to pay a veteran/outstanding teacher to support the one-year-experience teachers. (SA-D)

> I wish I could free [the mentor] up to do more one-on-one with new teachers. We focused on two teachers, when in reality all four new teachers would have benefited. (SA-C)

In Site D, school administrators overwhelmingly argued that when mentors have training, knowledge, and time, they are best positioned to ensure that beginning teachers benefit from the program:

> I feel that the quality of the mentor makes the program. This school's mentor is an example of one that could be improved. She lacks consistent communication with the administration. … She lacks the time to spend with the teacher in planning. She lacks … humbleness to relate to the new teacher and be genuinely supportive and helpful, building trust. This is due partially to the number of new teachers that are on her caseload. (SA-D)

> One of the key areas [the mentoring program affects when it comes to student achievement] is classroom behavior management. This is because many factors play into the students' misbehavior, and the mentor is able to give the time needed to assist the new teacher—even more than the principal, administration, or "buddy" teacher on campus. (SA-D)

At all sites, the message was clear that continuous support from mentors, administration, and peers has had a considerable positive impact on teachers' experiences in their first years of teaching. In a more nuanced way, findings show that mentors are the ones that offer an essential support that the administrators cannot provide due to lack of time and their summative evaluation duties, which makes it hard to be a non-judgmental confidant and guide to beginning teachers.

The impact of school climate and working conditions on beginning teachers

Three of the sites (A, B, and C) included in their survey questions related to the conduciveness of the school climate and working conditions to beginning teachers' growth and success (see Figures 5 and 6). As defined in one of the documents, working conditions encompass the external environment and circumstances where teaching and learning occur (i.e., physical facilities, time schedules, professional responsibilities, class size, etc.).

Overall, the majority of beginning teachers and school administrators agreed that there was shared vision, trust, and mutual respect in their school, and a safe environment for teachers to voice issues and concerns. Almost all administrators felt

that they consistently supported teachers and effectively facilitated the use of data to improve student learning. Overwhelmingly, administrators at all sites (A, B, and C) agreed that teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instructions and are consistently evaluated. However, beginning teachers' responses were much less positive in some areas. This was especially evident in relation to questions about trust and respect, the consistency of leadership support, evaluation procedures, and levels of comfort in regard to asking questions.

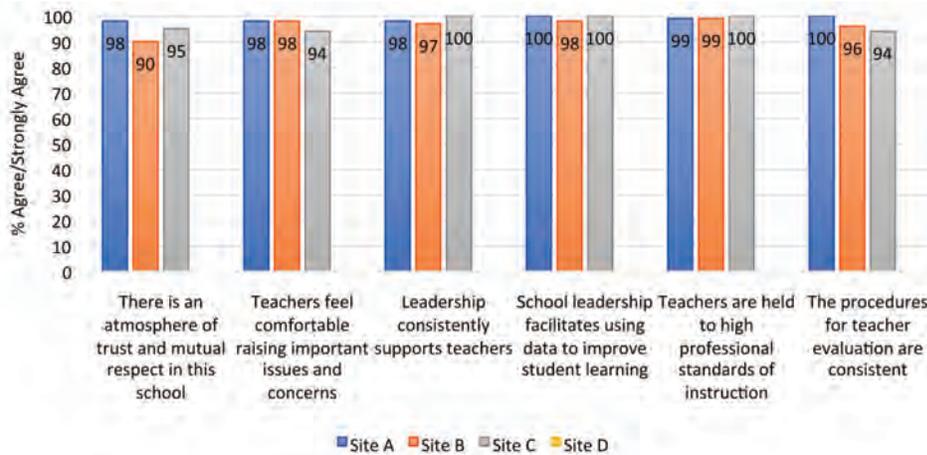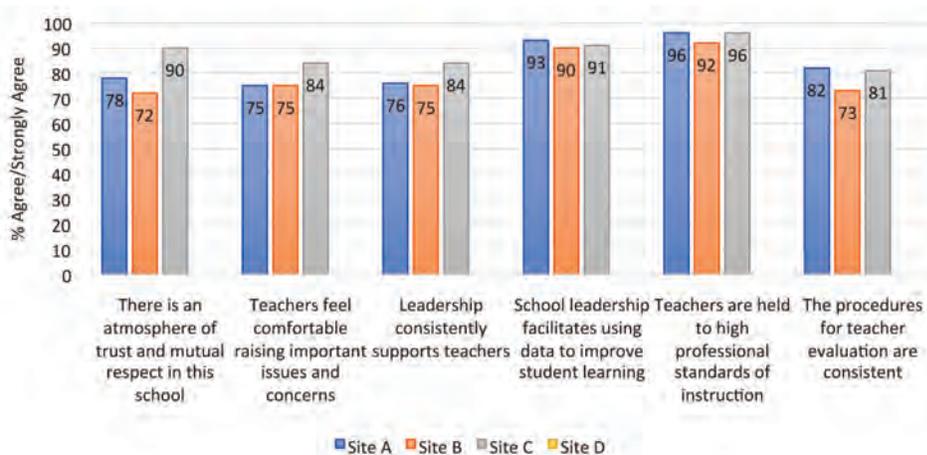**Figure 5. School administrator perceptions of school climate and working conditions**

Figure 6. Beginning teacher perceptions of school climate and working conditions

School administrator's influence on school climate

School administrators had an influential role in ensuring that working conditions and school climate were seen as conducive to beginning teachers' success in all four sites. Having a mentor was seen as a necessary condition for beginning teachers' success. Multiple comments revealed that if an administration is supportive of beginning teachers, they thrive. This support entailed encouraging and appreciative feedback, a lower workload, class assignments, resources, release time, and professional development:

> I am exceptionally fortunate that the school I work for has incredible administrators, faculty, and staff. The principal continually gives valuable feedback to me, and also makes sure that he gives praise for hard work for both teachers and students. This makes a HUGE difference for both the teacher and the student because you feel valued and want to continue to better yourself. My school is incredible.

> Being a first-year teacher I have a lot to learn, but [the school] does an excellent job of making sure that I am informed and [they are] doing all that they can to make sure I am supported. (BT-D)

> Between my [mentor], administrator, and colleagues, I could not ask for a better first year. (BT-A)

> The most valuable feature … is the ongoing support from my colleagues, administrator, and support staff. The support has helped me grow as a beginning teacher. (BT-B)

> I truly don't know that I would have been able to survive my first year without the support of a mentor and my administrative support! (BT-D)

Most evidently, the collaborative effort between peers, mentors, and administration created a sense of belonging, teamwork, trust, and community, as well as increased a sense of self-efficacy in beginning teachers:

> The open-door policy of administrators and teachers has been welcoming. (BT-B)

> [I appreciate] the availability and willingness to provide help and suggestions for questions I was too embarrassed to ask or didn't have anyone else to go to. It builds up my efficacy that I have support from district level, and that my principal has a good relationship with the mentor teacher as well. (BT-B)

> The environment that has been created, including teachers, the principal, assistant principal, mentor, reading coaches, aids, and so on, has made me feel welcomed. I feel like a meaningful part of the staff and school. (BT-D)

> [Our] staff is a big family. Teamwork is evident in my school. It's a great place to work because I have received help from the principal, administrators, and teachers during my first year. (BT-D)

> The constant support from my [mentor] and my principal helped me in all aspects. Observations, evaluations, and discussions were very helpful. … (BT-C)

On the contrary, if administration was not supportive, beginning teachers remained dissatisfied. They frequently discussed challenging working conditions, very often administration related, such as a lack of support, lack of consistency (especially in discipline issues), lack of follow-through, and lack of trust, as well as communication issues (e.g., miscommunication, gossip, "not walking the talk," and not keeping promises):

> There were no valuable features [of the program], I was left to fend for myself! My administrator/principal was biased against me and harassed me. I feel the beginning teacher program FAILED me. (BT-B)

> My most challenging working conditions seems to be a disconnect between administration … and administration with faculty. For example, I feel there is a lack of discipline at the school, which is also apparent to students. At a certain point I feel as a teacher, when I have exhausted my resources, I need administration to help me out. I feel that I do not get this help all the time, which is frustrating. (BT-D)

> Although we were all mentored by the same mentors with great assistance, we felt within the school we were drowning fish. I suggested a new teacher PLC to my principal, which was implemented shortly before spring break. I wish this occurred earlier in the year. (BT-D)

Challenging working conditions were also often attributed to a perceived divide between administration and teachers in general (not just beginning teachers). Although this was demonstrated in data from all sites, it was especially evident in responses from Site D:

> [I would like to see] the development of a single plan for professional classroom growth with my [mentor], department head, mentor, and administrators. (BT-D)

> There is little to no sense of community. Teachers don't work together; we feel a huge lack of administrative support. (BT-D)

> I wish the administration was less gossipy and cliquey and more supportive. (BT-D)

> Administration should be encouraged to better explain their expectations and likewise should take time to understand the actual needs of the students and the teachers—not just the wants, at best—and should be consistent in their relationships with students, teachers, and families. (BT-D)

In order to improve the working environment, findings pointed to the need for increased collaboration between school administrators and teachers around developing a shared vision and shared goals and aligning those priorities through the induction program. This was presented through comments remarking on the impact of administrators and teachers working together effectively:

> Working with [induction program] staff, we have been able to support new teachers through a collaborative dialogue that promotes best practices, school goals, and the relevance of professional growth for teaching staff. Staff has always made it a point to share strong evidence of growth for new teachers and continually seeks guidance from school leadership to best support staff with any struggles in classrooms. We are always excited about another pair of eyes and ears that can offer "non-evaluative" perspective to engage new teachers in being reflective practitioners. (SA-A)

Collaboration among colleagues is something valuable and is working at our school. Without the time for collaboration things will not be where it is today [*sic*]. Thanks to our administrator's vision and goals that [were] communicated to the teachers … we all are working to reach the same goal and vision. (BT-B)

We are all working together to find ways to help children, and the administration has been fantastic and proactive in this front. (BT-D)

I enjoy the unity between the teachers and administration to reach the higher goal of helping the kids. I am comfortable approaching a staff member for help, because people here are always more than willing to help one another. (BT-D)

Overall, the themes of the need for collaborative relationships and effective communication between all parties involved in the induction and mentoring programs were evident across the sites and across the groups of participants. These were clearly connected to their significant influence on improving working conditions and creating and sustaining a school climate conducive to the personal and professional growth of beginning teachers. Several suggestions also emerged about the need to improve collaboration by focusing it on the needs of beginning teachers, finding dedicated time to meet, and using time effectively. One comment represented the common thread among these suggestions: "I wish that our time together was planned out prior to meeting so that our time could be used more effectively (versus it sometimes feeling like we are meeting simply for the purpose of meeting)" (BT-A).

Discussion: School administrators' engagement in and perceived impact on induction and mentoring programs

Research findings pointed to a number of direct and indirect duties and responsibilities that school administrators at the study sites had in relation to induction and mentoring processes in their schools. Although role expectations and actual duties slightly varied across the participating sites due to different interpretations of the NTC program design and varying levels of willingness to engage with the role expectations for administrators, common patterns emerged from the data analysis. An increased understanding of their direct and indirect roles will enable school administrators to positively impact the level of success of the induction programs (Baker-Gardner, 2015) and to grasp the factors associated with beginning teacher effectiveness (Shepherd & Devers, 2017). Data indicate that role identification and role clarity are crucial elements of school administrators' work with early career teachers.

Direct involvement

The direct involvement of principals typically entails overseeing and managing the everyday operations of induction programs, which is critical to their success (Cherian & Daniel, 2008). According to Ben Pogodzinski (2015), principals directly influence mentoring programs through mentor selection and assignment, mentor training and support, the reduction of structural barriers to interactions, and program oversight and evaluation. The role of school administrators outlined in the program policies

and related NTC- and location-specific documents included the development and maintenance of their school's induction program and processes, active involvement in program operations, mentor selection and the ongoing facilitation of mentoring relationships, the provision of professional development, communication with mentors and beginning teachers, and conducting formative assessments and summative evaluations of beginning teachers.

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis showed three key aspects of school administrators' direct engagement:

a. regular contact and communication with mentors;
b. meetings with beginning teachers to observe instruction, discuss concerns, and provide feedback; and
c. the provision of ongoing support and resources for beginning teachers.

Beginning teachers, administrators, and mentors themselves often saw the role of the mentor as a liaison between school administrators and beginning teachers. This study showed that principals and mentors worked closely together at all sites to coordinate induction activities with other school-based initiatives and evaluation procedures. School administrators in this study provided funding and resources, as well as sanctioned time for mentors and mentees to meet. Effective principals support induction and mentoring programs by providing time for the carefully matched mentor and mentee to plan and affording time for the mentee to observe other well-established teachers (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2006). Principals often viewed mentors as a "buffer" and "go-between" because they communicate with the administrator and work out a plan to support the beginning teacher. In addition, this phenomenon might be related to the more direct role mentors have in induction programs, administrators' desire to channel feedback to beginning teachers through a non-evaluative role, or simply the need for administrators to focus on other priorities. Jean Boreen, Mary Johnson, Donna Niday, and Joe Potts (2009) noted the potential drawbacks of such a mentoring arrangement, arguing for keeping the communication flowing in positive directions and avoiding "communication triangles," where the mentor becomes the conduit for information from the school administrator to the beginning teacher and vice versa. As they noted, "mentors need to speak directly to teachers with whom they are working, and they must make sure that principals know that if they have something to communicate to teachers being mentored, they must speak directly to the teacher without using the mentor as a filter, buffer, or reinforcement" (p. 133). In addition, they suggested that mentors encourage teachers with whom they are working to speak directly to the school administrator about concerns they have about policies, observations, comments, or evaluations. Overall, there should be direct, face-to-face conversations whenever possible among the participants.

In addition, mentors reported some uncertainty about role expectations in their interactions with school administrators. This finding might be related to the variety of models used across different programs (e.g., school-based or full-release mentoring). Alternatively, it might stem from mentors' reluctance to share concerns with the administrators for fear of it having a detrimental impact on beginning teachers (which then suggests the administrators' actual roles differ from the role expectations evident in the documents). Tom Ganser (2002) argued that mentors need support

in their expanding, multifaceted, and complex role as a liaison between the principal and the beginning teachers. Similarly, others have recommended increasing and tailoring formal mentor training in order to maximize the potential of the role. Others have argued for tailored mentor training that can assist in developing critical reflective practice and a new teacher's increasing professional autonomy (Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2013; Harrison, Lawson, and Worley (2005). Mentors indeed are in a special position in relation to beginning teachers, often assuming such roles as parental figure, scaffolder, supporter, troubleshooter, and colleague, and they need to perceive and understand the issues facing their protégés. Beginning teachers in this study emphasized the role of mentors as low-stakes, non-judgmental helpers and advocates for their needs, as well as significant sources of emotional and professional support. Similarly, other researchers have drawn attention to the importance of mentors providing emotional and psychological support to their mentees (Hobson et al., 2009; Ralph & Walker, 2010).

The study results show that having a mentor was a necessary aspect of beginning teachers' success, but developmentally appropriate administrative support was also needed. For beginning teachers, having regular communication with and support from administrators were key types of direct support. Other researchers reported that beginning teachers found support from school administrators to be helpful (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allen, 2005). However, findings across sites revealed that beginning teachers and school administrators reported differences in their perceptions of the frequency and significance of support. Similarly, Shirley Andrews, Linda Gilbert, and Ellice Martin (2006) found that although principals felt they were providing supports, beginning teachers did not necessarily agree.

Beginning teachers reported a range of experiences, whereas some highly praised the engagement of their administrators in induction and mentoring programs, deeming their support to be valuable, helpful, and highly collegial, others highlighted negative perceptions, such as unapproachability, inconsistency, and a lack of resources and administrative support. Peter Youngs, Kwak Hyun-Seung, and Ben Pogodzinski (2015) found that beginning teachers are likely to be satisfied and intend to continue teaching in their current schools when they perceive that principals are consistent and practical about student behavioral issues and curriculum enactment. Principals' personal interactions with new teachers affect teachers' needs; principals who positively meet these needs improve new teachers' practice and contribute to their retention (Wang & Odell, 2002). On the contrary, when administrators are unresponsive to teachers' needs, their well-being is negatively affected and isolation and frustration increase (Brindley & Parker, 2010; Cherubini, Kitchen, & Hodson, 2008; Frels, Zientek, & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). As Lisa Scherff (2008) found, when teachers deem principals' personal interactions to be unsupportive and negative, it may lead to their dissatisfaction and potential attrition. One of the most frequent reasons beginning teachers give for leaving the profession is the poor quality of support from the school principal (Richards, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial that school-level administrators set aside more time for mentoring, planning for instruction, observation, discussing student achievement, and giving feedback (Catapano & Huisman, 2013; Certo, 2005).

Of particular significance was the finding that in almost all instances, beginning teachers mentioned support from administrators in conjunction with the support received from their coach/mentor and colleagues. This indicates that mentors' work enables administrators to be more effective in supervising and supporting beginning teachers. Similarly, another study that sought to determine the relationship between the presence of administrator-facilitated support for mentoring and the perceived helpfulness of mentoring suggested that novice teachers perceived their experiences with mentors as more likely to occur and more helpful when administrative support is built into the mentoring program (Clark & Byrnes, 2012). According to Sonya Vierstraete (2005), reflective practice in a mentoring process that encompasses the principal, the mentor, and the beginning teacher is important to the ongoing professional learning of the new teacher within the school community.

In contrast to the perceived roles of mentors, beginning teachers saw school administrators primarily as supervisors, high-stakes observers, and evaluators. This stems from the role of the principal, who is expected to supervise the induction programs for beginning teachers, providing counsel for best instructional practices and classroom management skills (Correa & Wagner, 2011). Across the four sites in this study, school administrators' direct support was manifested, in part, through classroom visits and observations. Of course, the benefits for beginning teachers are related to the nature of those visits and the associated communication between administrator and teacher rather than the mere fact that visits occurred. In other words, the instructional leadership capacity of principals is manifested through the initiation of conversations with beginning teachers, observation of instruction, provision of feedback, monitoring of progress, and facilitation of the transition between teacher education programs and the realities of classroom teaching (Clandinin, Schaefer, Long, Steeves, McKenzie-Robblee, Pinnegar, Wnuk, & Downey, 2012). The principal is deemed the instructional leader who actively supports and participates in professional development for beginning teachers (Correa & Wagner, 2011). For some teachers, observation and feedback on their teaching was considered valuable, and it was appreciated by many beginning teachers. Along with the positive experiences of evaluation, however, beginning teachers' responses revealed feelings of criticism, fear, and unfairness. Relatedly, many school administrators in this study expressed an awareness of their own shortcomings in regard to the evaluative nature of their work. Research literature notes that the supportive role of school administrators in teacher induction may be counteracted by the requirements to supervise and evaluate the work of the new teachers (Abu Rass, 2010; Brindley & Parker, 2010; Chatlain & Noonan, 2005; Cherubini, 2010). The perceived evaluative role of an administrator, evident in this study, also raises the important issue of beginning teachers' accountability for their progress. Betty Achinstein (2006) highlighted the importance of beginning teachers understanding and being aware of the overall role of the school principal in both teacher development and in relation to beginning teachers' support within the broader context of schooling.

School administrator's indirect involvement

Much of this study's findings pointed to the significance of the *indirect involvement*

of school administrators in the induction and mentoring processes. Primarily, this has been visible through their role in the establishment of supporting working conditions and organizational climate. This is significantly related to the broad, overall expectation for the school administrator's role to shift from that of a manager to that of an instructional leader, as noted in the documents related to NTC program standards and expectations (New Teacher Center, 2014). Several instances in the data demonstrated that greater success is achieved when this expectation is met. In particular, findings pointed out that the effective indirect involvement of administrators in induction programs entailed creating positive, thriving school cultures; helping teachers to continually improve their professional skills; and focusing on student achievement. The fact that new teachers are more influenced by support in the context of their initial school settings than by teacher preparation programs underscores the importance of the principal's instructional leadership role (as opposed to just the summative evaluation responsibilities) (Cherian & Daniel, 2008). Indeed, the results pointed to the significant influence of school administrators' engagement on the improvement of working conditions and creating and sustaining thriving school cultures and school climates that are conducive to the personal and professional growth of beginning teachers.

Susan Wynn, Lisa Carboni, and Erika Patall (2007) posited that school climate reflects the supportive working conditions that include both the physical and the human dimensions necessary for a learning community. Although there were some mentions of physical and material (resource-based) conditions that were not conducive to effective induction and mentoring processes, most of the responses related to the human or interpersonal aspects of school climate. Challenging working conditions were attributed to perceived divisions between administration and teachers in general (not just beginning teachers). This, in turn, affected beginning teachers; they were dissatisfied with the programs if administration was not supportive or attentive to their needs. The most frequently discussed challenging working conditions were very often administration related, including a lack of support and consistency (especially in discipline issues), a lack of follow-through and trust, and communication issues (e.g., miscommunication, gossip, "not walking the talk," and not keeping promises).

Working conditions that meet teachers' instructional needs (e.g., appropriate space, material, and support) have been shown to influence beginning teachers' decisions to remain in the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). In this study, participants' responses highlighted that positive school climate; supportive administrations; and collaborative relationships between peers, mentors, and administration created a sense of belonging, teamwork, trust, and community, as well as increased a sense of self-efficacy in beginning teachers. At the same time, participants across all groups and sites clearly called for improved collaborative relationships and effective communication between all parties involved in the induction and mentoring programs. In order to improve the working environment, findings pointed to the need for increased collaboration between school administrators and teachers around developing a shared vision and goals for the induction program and aligning them with school priorities.

Because teaching in schools involves working with colleagues and administrators, a perceived lack of collaboration is one reason that beginning teachers give for leaving the profession (Scherff, 2008). Successful collaboration will ensure that school administrators are informed about the needs of novice teachers and the various supportive structures and programs available to them (Rhodes et al., 2005). Providing new teachers with appropriate working conditions is not sufficient; schools must have collaborative cultures, where teachers can share ideas, materials, problems, and solutions in order to foster student learning (Kutsyuruba, 2011). In this matter, "school leadership as the fulcrum for organizational climate and socialization sets the tone for the beginner's first experience … largely through the assistance and monitoring of the principal" (Angelle, 2006, p. 319). Therefore, principal leadership is a key component in creating a collaborative learning environment that contributes not only to the retention of new teachers but also to nurturing teachers who can meet the expectations of working in a complex milieu of diversity and change (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). As organizational leaders, principals are responsible for creating conditions that foster collaboration among all stakeholders (Correa & Wagner, 2011) and for establishing a mentoring culture aimed at transforming learning and leveraging experience (Zachary, 2005). Cassandra Guarino, Lucrecia Santibañez, and Glenn Daley (2006) posited that collegial and administrative support in mentoring and induction programs were associated with higher rates of beginning teacher retention.

Conclusions and implications

The results of this research study pointed out the significance of school administrators' leadership and commitment to the success of induction and mentoring programs. First of all, school administrators played an important role in implementing teacher induction and mentoring programs through directly providing beginning teachers various types of support, including mentor assignment, time allocation, resources and professional development, meetings and communication, and providing constructive and formative feedback on beginning teachers' instruction through observations. In addition, school administrators were responsible for ensuring that school culture and working conditions were conducive to the successful socialization and personal and professional development of beginning teachers. As such, school administrators' commitment and efforts to develop collaborative cultures and establish, maintain, and sustain trust in relationships with mentors and beginning teachers were pivotal.

The results of this study suggest that although the mentoring process between beginning teachers and mentors is the most beneficial and helpful aspect of an induction program, it relies on the support of and commitment from school administrators. However, as much as principal leadership is key for teacher success and retention, these study findings show that the holistic supportive system—consisting of mentors, administration, and peers—exerts considerable impact on the positive experiences of beginning teachers. Ultimately, it is shared leadership, collegial decision-making, trust, and collaboration that create successful learning communities in schools. Collaborative and trusting relationships are necessary for teacher induction and mentoring programs, they not only help beginning teachers survive the first years of teaching but also empower them to thrive and develop into school leaders.

This study's findings have several implications for theory, practice, policy, and further research. In terms of implications for theory, this study reinforced the findings in the extant literature about the key role of school administrators in the ultimate success of the teacher induction and mentoring programs. Administrators' direct duties and responsibilities and indirect engagement are key to the success of induction and mentoring programs. Ultimately, induction and mentoring depend on collaborative support structures among various stakeholders within the school (administrators, mentors, teachers, and others), but without the support and commitment of the school administrators, the goal of developing beginning teachers into successful and thriving teacher leaders may not be attainable. Moreover, this study's findings have illuminated the importance of a principal's instructional leadership and the detrimental effects of summative evaluation early in a teacher's career. Furthermore, it is important to explore the role of the contextual factors (social, political, cultural, educational, organizational, etc.) in framing the conditions necessary for school administrators to ensure the overall success of teacher induction and mentoring programs.

In terms of implications for practice, the findings revealed organizational (programmatic) and personal (agentic) factors in the role of school administrators within the implementation of teacher induction and mentoring programs. Creating an awareness and deeper understanding of school leaders' agentic role in the establishment and functioning of the programs will enhance the quality of their interactions with mentors and beginning teachers. The presence of trust in the relationships and communication with mentors and beginning teachers are critical factors. As an instructional leader, the school administrator is responsible for observing new teachers' classrooms and being aware of their strengths and areas needing improvement. Trusting relationships between the principal and the beginning teacher will ensure that school administrators will not need to rely on the mentor as "buffer" or "go-between" to assess the teachers' strengths and needs. Furthermore, school administrators must understand the importance of allocating sanctioned and protected time to visit teachers' classrooms for formative and summative observations and evaluations.

In terms of policy implications, the findings revealed that the principal's evaluative responsibilities created tensions in the perceptions of their supportive role in teacher induction and mentoring programs. Therefore, clarifying school administrators' duties, responsibilities, and expectations in teacher induction and mentoring programs at various organizational levels (state, district, school) is recommended. Ensuring that duties and responsibilities within the mentoring process are clearly delineated will be beneficial not only to school administrators but also to mentors and beginning teachers. Specifically, this pertains to the administrators' evaluation duties. A deeper analysis of the evaluative role of administrators could help to ensure that future policy regarding teacher induction and mentoring is concentrated on the growth and development of new and beginning teachers, rather than performance and competence.

In terms of implications for further research, this study pointed to the school administrator's pivotal role in a holistic, collaborative support system for beginning teachers. Further studies would do well to examine the mechanisms and structures that can help school administrators develop trust and sustain collaboration with

mentors and beginning teachers. This study took initial steps in exploring the differentiated roles in school-based, mixed, and full-release mentorship programs; further research in this area is needed. An international or intercultural study of different models of mentoring and the role school administrators play in them could contribute greatly to our understanding of the administrative supports necessary for beginning teachers' success. Finally, it is important to further examine the implications of increasingly diverse contexts of schooling and the ever-increasing policy requirements for the administrator's role.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Identifying information regarding the program location has been concealed due to a request for confidentiality from the NTC.
2. Mentors is the preferred term in this article, although the terms "mentor" and "coach" were used interchangeably in the data, depending on the contextual and programmatic features in different locations.
3. Identifying information and specific policy details have been removed due to the potential disclosure of participating locations.
4. In some locations, evaluation by principal was not mentioned. In one of the locations, it only constituted a portion of the overall teacher evaluation process.
5. The breakdown of the four locations is: Site A (statewide), Site B (statewide), Site C (district-wide), and Site D (district-wide).
6. Due to the customizability and adaptive nature of NTC induction surveys, not all items were identical in surveys at all four locations. Empty spaces in some figures indicate that the data were unavailable for that particular question. Furthermore, some questions differed in wording but were deemed to be similar in meaning.
7. The wording of questions differed regarding the influence of program (in sites A, B, and C) and mentors' interactions with beginning teachers (in Site D).

Website

Atlas.ti, https://atlasti.com/

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