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MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS OF ALTERNATIVE ROUTE  
FIRST-YEAR URBAN TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTORS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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## **DEDICATION**

*Even when a journey has a destination, the destination may not be the main part of it all.*

Dr. Johnetta Cole

The phenomenal journey of earning a doctorate involves many successful and challenging moments along the way. My educational career has been marked with opportunities to accomplish goals on many levels and to surpass transitions and struggles. These life events required social and academic adjustments to sustain my momentum, motivation and determination. This doctoral endeavor provided personal and professional learning experiences for growth through perseverance, persistence and patience. Some special individuals shared this journey and blessing with me. I am always grateful for my parents, Raymond and Maria Perkins, who are a source of unconditional love, faith and strength. I am inspired across the miles by my brothers, Rayotis and Bobby Perkins, who support my academic pursuits and dreams. Lastly, I express gratitude to all my devoted friends who stand with me in all seasons.

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understanding of the dynamics of mentoring relationships for urban first-year alternate route teachers and their mentors.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS OF ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FIRST-YEAR URBAN TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTORS**

By Gwendolyn Denise Perkins, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011

Major Director: Whitney Sherman Newcomb, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Educational Leadership  
School of Education

This qualitative study examined, described and analyzed mentoring experiences and perceptions of five first-year alternate route teachers and their five mentors within an urban southeastern school division. The researcher employed a constructivist theoretical model to analyze interview data and frame the adult learning and mentoring experiences to answer the research questions. This investigation explored the benefits, challenges and implications concerning first-year alternate route teachers and their roles in the mentoring relationships. The background of teacher education, introduction of alternative teacher licensure routes and impact of mentoring programs were aspects incorporated in this research.

The major findings revealed the awareness of the mentoring partners and preparation for roles and classroom instruction as pertinent areas in the relationships. In addition, the results indicated perceived ambiguous aims of the mentoring program concerning roles for mentors and

mentees. Furthermore, the mentees had perceptions of minimum to rare change concerning their teaching practices and the mentoring relationships. Moreover, first-year alternate route exceptional education mentees desired training improvement regarding procedures and expectations. New and veteran mentors favored different training based on level of mentoring experience. In addition, mentors preferred background information regarding alternate route teachers' experiences. In summary mentors and mentees shared viewpoints concerning issues of training, teacher development and professional autonomy.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

Career switchers or alternative licensure teachers pursue diverse paths for teacher certification. A career switcher is an individual who “completed a state board approved career switcher program” (Virginia Department of Education, 2010) and moved from a career outside of education to one in teaching. An alternative licensure teacher is defined as an individual who was issued a provisional license and met state alternative route requirements during the teacher career (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). However, for the purposes of this dissertation the phrase “alternative route teachers” will encompass both alternative licensure teachers and career switchers.

Alternative teacher licensure programs vary in design, quality, and scope concerning requirements and expectations. The concept of alternative route teacher licensure is a timely and relevant issue for the field of education. According to the National Center for Education Information (2005), “Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia are now implementing approximately 538 alternate route programs that produced approximately 35,000 newly certified teachers in 2004” (p. 2).

Mentoring systems for first-year teachers are paramount to the profession. Educators have the responsibility to use opportunities to increase effective teaching to meet the goals for student achievement (Good et al., 2006). Mentoring is one strategy to increase effective teaching. Further, the implementation of division teacher induction programs provide

ways to enhance collaboration (Yost, 2006). The creation of teams comprised of mentors and mentees provides opportunities for meaningful guidance. It is vital that educational leaders build successful professional teams for teacher development. Good mentors meet the needs of novice teachers (Schwille, 2008). New teachers require relevant support and collaboration regardless of fast track or traditional teacher preparation training (Tell, 2001). In addition, the principal's support plan should include the new teacher, new teacher mentor and the administrator for an effective relationship (Richardson, 2008).

Alternative route teachers represent a new cadre of potential first-year educators in schools. This group may likely become employed in urban classrooms. Wilson, Floden, and Ferrini-Mundy (2002) stated, "In two studies, researchers found that high percentages of alternatively certified teachers were teaching in urban settings. . ." (p. 199). In particular, the consideration of beginning teacher phases and support may require an assessment of urban alternative route teachers' skills. A challenge exists because the career switchers will need veteran teacher support to adjust to the new work environment and school culture (Morton, Williams, & Brindley, 2006).

Some mentoring is available for new teachers in urban settings (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Educational leaders must increase their knowledge of the capabilities and challenges for new teachers who complete alternative routes to licensure (Simmons, 2005). In their study of the experiences of alternative licensure teachers regarding mentoring programs and administrative support, Rochkind, Ott, Immerwahr, Doble, & Johnson, (2007) found the issue of lack of encouragement as a concern. The implementation of mentoring programs specifically designed for alternative route teachers could guide the development of essential competencies and

provided needed encouragement. Proficient teaching performance is important to preserve the integrity of the field. A closer examination of the mentoring relationships of alternative route teachers and veteran teachers in existence revealed information related to assets, benefits, challenges and implications for mentoring. The intent of this study was to investigate the dynamics of the mentoring relationship for first-year urban alternate route teachers and their mentors. The theoretical concepts of andragogy and constructivism were relevant to the research questions and used to provide an understanding of adult interactions and learning. The two main questions in this study included the following:

1. What are the experiences of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship?

### **Brief Overview of Literature**

Designing relevant support systems for first-year teachers should be critical for educators. Nearly half of all new teachers in urban public schools quit within 5 years (Haycock, 1998; Neita, 2003). In efforts to address shortage areas, some future teachers will enter alternative licensure programs, which provide flexibility, minimum time constraints, and modified requirements for teacher licensure. Glass (2009) comments, “The hiring of K-12 teachers not endorsed through traditional university-based training programs is rapidly growing” (p. 6). Natriello and Zumwalt (1993) report, “Alternate route teachers were more likely than college-prepared teachers to be working in urban districts in the first year of teaching. . .” (p. 59). Perhaps the use of a collaborative model for support through mentoring could promote an open

dialogue specifically regarding the alternative route teachers' strengths and areas for improvement.

These second-career teachers demonstrate professional assets such as personal and work experiences and maturity (Resta, Huling, & Rainwater, 2001). These characteristics could be applicable to the teaching profession. Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) remark, "Career changers who perceived continuity between past skills and present demands were more likely to negotiate the novice role successfully than those who emphasized disparity between the past and the present" (p. 218).

Alternative route teachers require an understanding of the teaching and learning expectations and ramifications in this new age of accountability. In a study spanning 2001 through 2004 regarding completers from the fast-track Massachusetts Institute for New Teachers program, the participants indicated low scores for the ranks of content teaching practices and methods (Maloy, Seidman, Pine, & Ludlow, 2006). Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) conducted a longitudinal study of certification preparation and student performance in mathematics and science to include the emergency licensure credentials. The findings indicated a weak relationship between teacher certification and achievement.

Miller, McKenna, and McKenna (1998) studied teacher licensure and student achievement on the IOWA Basic Skills in the areas of reading and mathematics and found no differences in student performance related to certification. At most, the review of other research regarding the impact of alternative licensure has been inconclusive (Wilson et al., 2002).

Expectations for school mentoring programs and educational leaders should be a consideration. Each new teacher deserves adequate support and opportunities to interact with

mentors and an alternative route teacher also needs this assistance. According to the Assistant Superintendent of the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure, the Virginia Board of Education established guidelines for mentors. (P. Pitts, personal communication, July 29, 2009). School districts may encounter a need for high quality, appropriate and adequate mentoring for alternative route teachers. Research has revealed time, models, practices, and roles of mentors to perform assignments as considerations (Smith & Evans, 2008) for effective mentoring programs.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This investigation combines the research topics of teacher education, adult learning theory, alternative licensure programs, alternative route teachers, mentoring, first-year teachers and urban teachers. The research literature provides teacher mentorship studies conducted by governmental agencies, nonprofit foundations, school district organizations, and universities regarding first-year alternative route teachers in urban schools. The findings and recommendations of these studies are relevant to the topics of interest, theories, and research questions for this study. The framework utilizes andragogy, an adult learning theory, and a constructivist model to explain and interpret the dynamics in mentoring relationships.

Andragogy and constructivism establish the study framework. These frame the exploration of mentoring for first-year alternative route teachers and their mentors concerning relationship building, roles, rapport, and strengths and needs for this cadre of mentees. Stedman and Stroot (1998) contend that “as the relationship is established, the mentor is able to offer individualized advice on teaching” (p. 37). School leaders are responsible for evaluating the alternative route teachers’ professional competencies and providing them with training and guidance. Mentoring provides an opportunity for guidance of new colleagues through career

transitions for growth (Fletcher, 2007). Burden (1990) asserts, “Furthermore, teachers’ orientation for professional development should be centered on professional performance” (p. 319). School divisions face pressure to sustain a competent and effective work force.

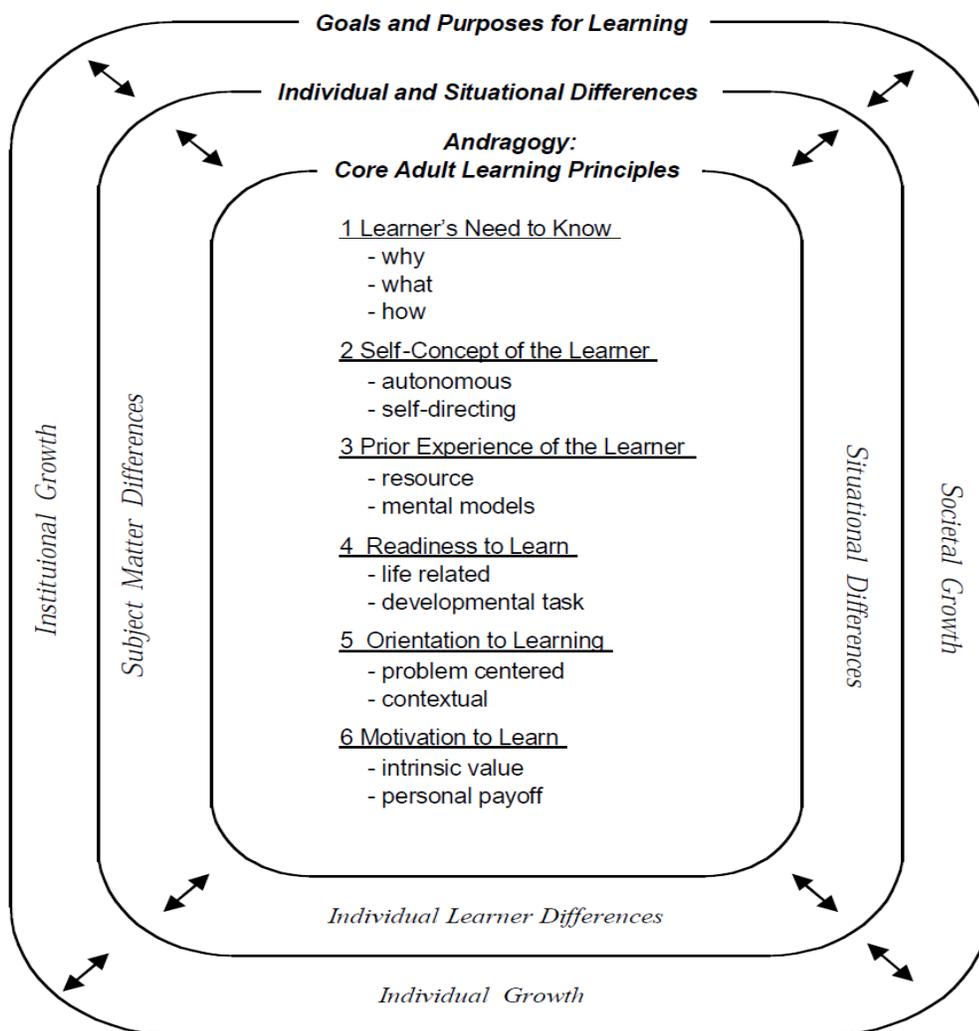
The support for first-year alternative route teachers is an essential professional development area with implications for educators, students, and schools. Professional development for teachers should be continuous work rather than once only seminars (Darling-Hammond, 2005). A strategic and meaningful response to meet the unique needs of alternate route teachers is critical for the acquisition of effective teaching practices and capabilities. Thus, the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the new teacher is the focus to ensure high student achievement and a successful alternative route educator.

### **Andragogy**

Andragogy is one learning model for adult education. Knowles (1984) contends, “The andragogical model is a system of elements that can be adopted or adapted in whole or in part” (p. 418). The model is a three-layer approach to explain adult learning encounters (Holton, Swanson, & Naquin, 2001). It shows a learner’s principles surrounded by other factors as possible influences in the adult learning process (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). Adults possess lifetime experiential knowledge related to expectations, tasks, personal interests, and professional endeavors. They acquire skills through performing different jobs at home, work duties and through leisure opportunities. The listed components are shown in Figure 1.

## **ANDRAGOGY IN PRACTICE**

(Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998)



**Figure 1. Andragogy in Practice Model**

Source. Holton, E. F. III, Swanson, R., & Naquin, S. (2001). Andragogy in practice: Clarifying the andragogical model of adult learning. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 14(1), 118-143.

The outer portion of the model establishes the aims to guide the adult's development toward learning. This section shows that the purpose for learning directs the strategies and activities to reach the goal. The plans are based on specific areas the learner desires to address. Individual, institutional and societal features are included in this ring of the model. Thus, the dilemma occurs when the influence of an individual, the institution or societal influences may not align with the overall goal for the adult's growth.

The middle ring focuses on differences and variables regarding the situation, subject matter, and individual (Holton et al., 2001; Knowles et al., 1998). In this part, the issue of differences is complex in this model. These potential variables might comprise a variety of experiences of an individual. This could be due to previous history, behavior, and competencies. A consideration and prediction of the learner responses to situations presents a challenge because of various learning styles and identification of personal and professional needs at work and in adult life.

The center area consists of tenets to identify the weaknesses and strengths of the learner. The structure guides the learner toward building a foundation for eventual independence. According to Knowles et al. (1998) the core elements and descriptions are listed as follows:

1. Learner's need to know-ask questions to provide a purpose for learning.
2. Self-Concept of the Learner-determine what needs to learned and show initiative.
3. Prior Experience of the Learner-use previous experiences and connect to the present.
4. Readiness to Learn-set a foundation to acquire new skills based on exposure.
5. Orientation to Learning-seek to find solutions to major issues or isolation situations
6. Motivation to Learn-recognize inner worth and focus on individual gains for learning.

Several illustrations that correspond to mentoring of alternative route teachers and these core learner principles for further explanation are included in the next chapter.

Andragogy provides a theoretical groundwork to explain adult learning behavior through the roles of mentors and mentees. Kessels and Poell (2004) contend, “Then, work-related learning inevitably comprises reflection, learning from mistakes, critical opinion sharing, challenging groupthink, asking for feedback, experimenting, knowledge sharing, and career awareness” (p. 149). Mentoring is offered through guidance and assistance by another teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 1990). The mentor and mentee have objectives and assumptions associated with these roles. Experienced teachers use mentoring to help beginners (Johnson, 2001). The andragogy model is useful to describe the actions and dynamics of the adult learner in the mentoring relationship.

The andragogy design offers a guide to explain adult learning experiences and strategies. Merriam (2001) notes, “Andragogy became a rallying point for those trying to define the field of adult education as separate from other areas of education” (p. 5). This theory identifies the target of adult learning experiences as unique and distinctive. Adults become independent thinkers who are empowered enough to have a voice in determining what is important to learn and know. The adult core principles focus on self and the attainment of skills in the learning process. Kessels and Poell (2004) assert the following:

Important elements are the facilitators’ responsibility to help adults move from dependency toward increasing self-directedness; the use of personal experience as a rich resource for learning, especially when related to real-life tasks and problems; the

development of competence in a meaningful way; and the dominant role of intrinsic motivation and self-esteem. (p. 149)

Andragogy is relevant to the first research question to explain the occurrences in the adult learning experiences. The experiences of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship are addressed through this question. The first aspect is mentee as learner through the acquisition of skills. For example, the description of the mentees learning experiences is a focal point. The second aspect of mentor as facilitator presents the explanation of the mentor's knowledge, leadership, and guidance of learning situations for teaching. The last aspect for this illustration is team collaboration and presents the sharing of mentor and mentee about what happened during the opportunities to work together.

Andragogy is also pertinent to the second research question to gain insight of teachers' perceptions in these areas for first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship. The features of andragogy are practical to describe the encounters in the adult learning situations. The first area is collegial support and perhaps, the mentor and mentee share views related to their professional teamwork. The second area is professional autonomy. For example, the mentor and mentee express their opinions about empowerment and independence in the relationship.

### **Constructivism**

The constructivist perspective presents a philosophical approach to understand the roles and interaction of mentors and mentees and the dynamics of the mentoring relationship. Kessels and Poell (2004) note, "Work organizations are increasingly considered to be key sources of social capital, emphasizing the importance of the social networks, partnerships, collaboration and

interaction, and knowledge sharing they provide” (p. 151). The establishment of successful professional teams is a possible factor for the development of alternative route teachers. The optimal level for productive mentor and mentee relationships and experiences may involve meaningful cooperation. Mentoring in education focuses on one-to-one interaction between an experienced mentor and novice teacher (Shank, 2005). Constructivism provides a functional lens to analyze and comprehend the viewpoints of adult learners in the mentoring relationship.

Concepts of the constructivist paradigm include the elements of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and values (Paul, Graffam, & Fowler, 2005). First, ontology emphasizes the concept of reality. Ontology enables the researcher to listen to the participants’ view of the world or what the individuals’ believe to be true and real for them (Paul et al., 2005). Charmaz (2000) comments, “A constructivist approach necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms” (p. 525). This notion allows the participants to express what their life events mean to them.

Epistemology is defined as the nature of knowledge and guides the researcher to employ the approach the participant uses to acquire and seek information (Paul et al., 2005). The listener is receptive and pays attention as the participant shares experiences (Charmaz, 2000). The researcher carefully discerns and captures the multiple ways participants construct knowledge based upon situations.

The element of methodology related to constructivism requires the qualitative researcher to listen to the participant and determine how this person understands (Paul et al., 2005). There is a focus on the participant’s ways of making meaning of situations and relating to others.

Lincoln (2005) notes the following:

Constructivists are first and foremost concerned with the meaning-making activities of research participants, and therefore are deeply concerned with the social realities constructed by various social actors as they attempt to make sense of events, situations, other persons, activities, and communications. (p. 119)

Another concept in the constructivism paradigm is values. The concept of values directs the researcher to explore the belief system of participants regarding their engagement with others (Paul et al., 2005). In addition, the role of values relates to expectations, and consideration of beneficial or potentially unpleasant occurrences for the researcher as well as the participants.

Constructivism offers a practical framework from which to understand the interactions for the first research question in the realms of mentee as learner, mentor as facilitator, and team collaboration. The focal point of this research question is the experiences of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship. One realm is the mentee as learner. For example, the mentee expresses insight about the learning experience. Another realm is the mentor as facilitator. For instance, the mentor discusses feelings regarding leadership and assistance provided in the learning experience.

Constructivism is also germane to the second research question. The central point of this research question is teachers' perceptions of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship. The mentor and mentee express views related to their professional opportunities to work together as a pair. The mentor and mentee may also share, contrast and compare responses and reactions to the various events. Another domain is professional autonomy. For example, the mentor and mentee share their opinions about

empowerment and independence in the relationship. In addition, the mentor and mentee could verbalize their feelings regarding independence in situations.

The examination of the dynamics of mentoring through relationship building, roles, rapport, and the unique needs and assets of alternative route teachers is helpful. The alternative route mentors' skills and competencies are important to broaden the professional talents and abilities of the mentee. It is imperative to promote a favorable and positive bond to maximize the potential of the mentoring relationship. Perhaps the use of mentoring will serve as a catalyst for identification of teaching strengths and areas for improvement. Andragogy and constructivism support the rationale to study the mentoring relationship of first-year alternative route teachers and their mentors.

### **Rationale for the Study**

There are significant implications for teacher education, alternative licensure programs, mentoring and the teaching profession in regards to expectations, responsibility and integrity.

First, alternative route teachers require the development of effective teaching practices. The idea of staff development has existed for years; however, distinct strategies that enhance the occupational strengths of alternative route teachers might be beneficial.

This is important because of the omission of classroom or field experiences component in some nontraditional programs. Baines (2006) suggests, "Some programs have rigorous requirements governing admission, internship, graduation; others require little more than a heartbeat and a check that clears the bank" (p. 327). The nature of some alternative teacher licensure programs may create gaps in the preparation of teachers and dilemmas for our schools.

Second, the variation of alternative teacher licensure programs may reveal the need to supplement the nontraditional teacher preparation. Darling-Hammond, Chung, and Frelow (2002) found that the need for teachers and the growth of alternative teaching programs developed simultaneously; however, a void exists in the preparation of alternative licensure teachers and job expectations in the classroom. The absence of the student teaching or practicum experiences for some alternative route teachers is a problematic issue. Some alternative certification programs allow teachers to meet these requirements on the job (Suell & Piotrowski, 2006). A concern that has been identified is whether the completion of the fast-track program alone provides everything necessary for a successful teaching career.

Lastly, the mentoring initiative is an important professional development component for alternative route teachers. These alternative route teachers need an induction to the profession and assistance for the first year. The establishment of collegial relationships could empower first-year alternative route teachers. Further research is necessary to evaluate the training and roles of mentors, mentees and teacher performance due to diverse alternative teacher certification programs and requirements. The rationale is to study the relationships of alternative route teachers and their mentors.

### **Purpose for the Study/Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships of first-year urban alternate route teachers and their mentors. An orientation through mentoring could support these teachers in the school transition. Morton et al. (2006) report that “a common presumption was that older adults well removed from their baccalaureate degrees and successful in a career field would transition into the classroom with ease—as if it were intuitive and natural” (p. 48). Jones and

Pauley (2003) explored the elements of a mentoring model for beginning public school teachers; however, there was lack of discussion pertaining to a design for alternative licensure teachers. Smith and Evans (2008) included a discussion of issues related to effective support for alternative licensure teachers and the importance of mentoring; however, the research did not address the interactions of mentors and the mentees. The assignment of mentors and mentees is a critical factor of the program (Normore & Loughry, 2006). The alternative route teachers will complete alternative programs and transition quickly from other careers due to their availability, established work history and a willingness to try something new despite possible salary reductions (Bauer, 1999; Erdem & Aytumur, 2008). Smith and Evans (2008) contend that “a brief look at AR models and the literature on mentoring in AR program highlights the importance of mentoring and the need to further develop mentoring research and practices for teachers” (p. 251). Additional research is necessary to explore dynamics of mentoring through relationship building, rapport, and the identification of the unique needs of alternative route teachers.

### **Research Questions**

The establishment of a positive and mutual rapport may be essential to maximize the mentoring relationship. Perhaps the mentoring of alternative route teachers will serve as the catalyst for identification of potential skills based upon their previous work experiences. Allgood and Rice (2002) note, “...urban school teachers work with students who present more classroom difficulties, who may require more or different teacher skills, and in an environment that is often marked by conflict and strife” (p. 170). The mentoring of alternatively certified teachers is important due to their lack of student teaching and internship experiences (Simmons,

2005). These teachers most likely missed opportunities to engage in interactions concerning achievement. Berry (2001) notes, “Many midcareer recruits lack the wide range of knowledge and skills that research has identified as necessary for effective teaching: understanding subject matter in ways that allow them to organize it and make it accessible to students” (p. 34). It is critical for administrators to identify the advantages of supporting teacher mentoring relationships (Jones & Pauley, 2003). Moreover, the studies primarily investigated beginning teachers on teacher preparation and mentoring, however, there is limited research regarding the dynamics between mentors and mentees in the relationship.

Two research questions examined within this study were:

1. What are the experiences of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship?

### **Design and Methods**

A qualitative design was used to describe the experiences of alternative licensure teachers and their mentors. Interview guides were developed and utilized to collect responses from the mentors and their mentees. The human resources and professional development departments for an urban southeastern school division provided names of alternative route teachers and their mentors at the elementary and secondary levels for the sample. The researcher assumed the role of interviewer and engaged in a one-on-one dialogue with each mentor and mentee to capture the participants’ authentic expressions of ideas pertaining to the mentoring relationship. The selection criteria included the interviewer’s initial telephone conversation with the mentors and

mentees to discuss the study. Appointments were arranged for the interviews and to secure permission of the participants. The design of the study included interviews conducted to provide opportunities for open-ended responses. Each participant's response was audio taped for the completion of transcription. The participants reviewed the transcripts for accuracy. The data were categorized and analyzed to identify themes related to mentoring of alternative licensure teachers. The statements of the interviewees were summarized in the study. The use of data management techniques, such as codes and categories, were developed for organization. The core principles of the andragogy model and the constructivism paradigm were employed to analyze the interview findings to answer the two research questions. These concepts provided the theoretical frameworks for an interpretation of the data regarding adult learning experiences.

### **Definition of Terms**

The meanings of these terms provide information for the understanding of this study.

*Alternative licensure teacher.* An individual who was issued a provisional license and met state alternative route requirements during the teacher career. (Virginia Department of Education, 2010)

*Alternative licensure program.* A nontraditional preparation program for teacher certification (Miller et al., 1998).

*Alternative route to licensure teacher.* This path into teaching requires an educational agency recommendation for an individual regarding a 3-year nonrenewable license on the completion of endorsement course work, experiential learning, or satisfying provisional special education mandates (Virginia Department of Education, 2010).

*AR.* This is an abbreviation for alternate route (Smith & Evans, 2008).

*Career changer.* An individual who switched from another career to teaching (Crow et al., 1990).

*Career switcher.* An individual who completed a state board approved career switcher program (Virginia Department of Education, 2010)

*Encore teacher.* An individual who entered teaching as a midlife transition from another career (Freedman & Goggin, 2008).

*Fast-track teacher.* An individual who completed accelerated alternative teacher preparation (Suell & Piotrowski, 2006; Tell, 2001).

*Mentee.* A first-year teacher with an assigned mentor for support (Virginia Department of Education, 2010).

*Mentor.* A veteran teacher assigned to provide support to a first-year teacher (Virginia Department of Education, 2010).

*Midcareer teacher.* An individual who left another occupation to pursue teaching (Resta et al., 2001).

*Protégé.* A person without experience in an organization (Bauer, 1999; Erdem & Aytemur, 2008).

*Second-career teacher.* An individual who chose teaching as a new career (Resta et al., 2001).

## **CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Methodology of Literature Search**

This chapter provides a review of the literature regarding the mentoring relationships of alternative route teachers and their mentors. An evaluation of scholarly and empirical literature for relevance, thoroughness, timeliness, and peer-reviewed distinction was completed to address the research questions for this study (American Education Research Association, 2010). The first stage involved specific computer searches of phrases, subject headings and descriptors such as alternative licensure teacher, alternative certification, beginning teachers, first-year teachers, mentors, mentoring relationships, and mentoring of first-year teachers and urban teachers. Additionally, the key words were organized in the following arrangement: (mentee, mentor, protégé) and word sets (alternative certification, alternative licensure teacher, alternative routes to licensure, beginning teacher, career changer, career switcher, encore teacher, fast-track teacher, first-year teacher, mentoring relationships, midcareer teacher, second-career teacher, and urban teacher). The literature search was conducted via the Virginia Commonwealth University access to the databases of EBSCOhost, Academic Complete, Education Complete, PsychoInfo, Dissertations and Theses, ERIC, Jstor and Lexisnexis. The online data sources included electronic articles, government documents and nonprofit foundation reports, and web sites. Reference lists from books, newspapers, journal articles, and reports were reviewed to expand the process.

## **Components of Andragogy**

There are three bands in the andragogy model to frame adult learning actions and experiences. The foundation of andragogy is the adult's capacity to determine individual needs and to initiate a learning process (Kessels & Poell, 2004). An adult learner possesses the capability to recognize and seek help when more skills are necessary to complete tasks. In this example, Woodard (2007) concluded that the implementation of the andragogy model produced favorable perceptions of training for new employees at the American Corporate Electric Power Company. The issue for this business involved workers' comments related to the inadequacy of their training. The company's solution included the use of andragogy approach to prepare employees to perform their jobs effectively (Woodard, 2007). Grace (1996) argues, "Individual freedom is the instrument enabling the self-directed learner to fulfill personal and professional needs" (p. 389).

The exterior band consists of goals and purposes for learning. The three categories in this ring are individual, institutional, and societal (Holton et al., 2001; Knowles et al., 1998). The individual has the opportunity to increase skills and competencies. The institutional and societal aspects of the ring have influences that promote or hinder performance or improvement goals. There is also an integration of social and political influences for the individual learner. For instance, schools exemplify an arena of diverse needs of adults and students. Alternate route teachers should be encouraged to embrace a humanistic philosophy to address the academic and affective realms for educators and students in schools.

Situational subject matter and individual learner differences are located in the middle band (Holton et al., 2001; Knowles et al., 1998). The components in this ring are variables that

relate to personal differences in cognition, personality, experiences, culture, and interests (Holton et al., 2001). These variables impact adult learners in the realms of situations, subject matter, and individuals (Holton et al., 2001). The alternative route teachers possess a rich work history and occupational backgrounds. Pratt (1988) suggests, “Even if we could set aside these individual attributes, we would have to acknowledge the fact that people come to educational situations with varying degrees of prior knowledge, experience, commitment, and self-confidence” (p. 163). These aspects could be incorporated into learning situations in the mentoring relationship.

The center of the andragogy model consists of core learning principles. The learner’s foundation and context is the focus. Here is an example. The core of the model shows the learner’s motivation should be identified to support the individual in reaching his or her potential. A failure to connect the goals for the learner to the intrinsic importance for that individual might be problematic. Knowles et al. (1998) identify the following center ring components: (a) learner’s need to know, (b) self-concept of the learner, (c) prior experience of the learner, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, (f) motivation to learn.

There are some depictions that relate to mentoring of alternative route teachers and andragogy core assumptions. The first principle is the learner’s need to know. This assumption allows the learner to ask questions to set a purpose for learning (Knowles et al., 1998). The alternative route teacher can identify the rationale for learning instructional techniques and use resources in the classroom. McGrath (2009) states, “Adult learners need to know why they are learning new knowledge before they are willing to participate” (p. 99). The alternative route

teacher may seek clarification regarding the connection of the information to teaching strategies in the classroom.

The second principle is self-concept of the learner. The learner determines what needs to be learned and shows initiative (Knowles et al., 1998). The alternative route teacher may establish learning objectives through self-assessment for success in the profession. Kessels and Poell (2004) argue, "Learning opportunities and decent work underpin individuals' independence, self-respect, and well-being and, therefore, is a key to overall quality of life." (p. 153). The alternative route teacher can demonstrate the ingenuity to evaluate his or her capabilities. This identification of strengths and weaknesses provides opportunities to discuss ideas for improvement and ways to expand assets.

The third principle is prior experience of the learner. The learner uses previous experiences for connection to the present (Knowles et al., 1998). Alternative route teachers worked or retired from the corporate sector or military. They desire the opportunity for application of their learning and their work history to the present situation. Forrest and Peterson (2006) argue, "Involving experience makes learners active participants in the education process" (p. 118). The alternative route teacher can become reflective and think about previous vocational skills and discover practical ways to incorporate these techniques into the present job responsibilities. For instance, a former trial lawyer can teach students self-expression and communication skills for effective persuasive speaking and writing through role-play scenarios in the classroom.

Another assumption is readiness to learn. The learner sets a foundation to acquire new skills based on exposure (Knowles et al., 1998). The alternative route teacher could acquire

basic teaching skills as building blocks for more learning. Forrest and Peterson (2006) suggest, “Thus, adults will learn about the concepts that have applicability to them” (p. 119). The classroom is a rich environment to enable fast-track teacher candidates to understand and gain knowledge of the learning process. In this example, alternative route educators could explore instructional strategies to engage students in learning and provide a good academic foundation for children.

An additional assumption is the orientation to learning principle. The learner seeks to find solutions to major issues or isolation situations (Knowles et al., 1998). The alternative route teachers could demonstrate leadership and ownership for learning. Forrest and Peterson (2006) contend, “From the andragogical point of view, adults learn because they need to address issues in their lives” (p. 119). This group of accomplished professionals has outstanding competencies in such areas as banking, accounting, engineering, chemistry, and public relations. Perhaps, a former banker can reflect on the negotiation and analytical skills used to examine problems and learn how to teach adults and students to resolve financial disputes effectively.

The last assumption is motivation to learn. The learner recognizes inner worth and emphasis on individual gains for learning (Knowles et al., 1998). The alternative route teachers’ intrinsic interests outweigh outside factors because of their pursuit of teaching as a second career and desire to make a difference in the lives of children. McGrath (2009) notes, “While adult learners may respond to external motivators such as bonuses from their employers when they attain a certain grade, it is the internal priorities that are more important to the learner” (p. 104). Alternative licensure teachers exhibit maturity and acceptance for learning. These individuals are highly motivated and inspired for personal and professional progression.

## **Teacher Education**

Teacher preparation and expectations for academic achievement remain a public concern and political issue in this era of accountability. Hallinan and Khmelkov (2001) assert, “The teacher education reform movement is intended to improve the quality of teacher education by preparing teachers to work in the rapidly changing social environment of contemporary schools and to meet the complex needs of students” (p. 177). This task is accomplished through the teachers’ development of effective teaching strategies and demonstration of competence in classrooms. Berry (2001) contends, “Despite the wide variation in the alternative strategies, educators and policymakers should insist that all teachers meet the same high standards, no matter how they enter teaching” (p. 35). The need to gain information regarding the mentoring relationship is worthy of study because it contributes to providing help for new teachers.

### **Introduction to Alternative Teacher Licensure Programs**

The nontraditional teacher preparation routes are designated as alternative teacher licensure or career switcher programs. Shaw (2008) contends, “The alternative certification programs vary from national programs to programs run by each state or district” (p. 89). Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) argue, “However, licensing in the United States is a state responsibility and there is considerable variation in state licensure and certification policies” (p. 130). Glass (2009) stated that “though rare prior to 1985, such training routes are increasingly common” (p. 6). Now due to the present economic challenges for school divisions the employment of new teachers has diminished. On the other hand, Chandler (2009) asserts that “the high unemployment rate has provided an unexpected boom for the nation’s public schools: legions of career switchers eager to become teachers” (p. B01). It appears that individuals still

have an interest in a career in education despite the budget constraints for hiring personnel. Perhaps schools will benefit from this pool of prospective candidates for teaching positions in school districts in the future.

The development of nontraditional teacher education programs provided alternative routes to teacher licensure. The recruitment of career switchers in particular became a solution to address critical shortage areas for teachers in the past. Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary, former Superintendent of Public Instruction, noted: “Virginia established a career switcher program in 2002 after the completion of two successful pilot initiatives to provide teachers to address this situation” (J. DeMary, personal communication, July 26, 2002). The creation of programs in the 1980s was to satisfy the goals of states for recruiting persons and training individuals to teach who did not possess education degrees (Basinger, 2000).

A national timeline for these nontraditional teacher licensure programs was developed according to the U.S. Department of Education, The National Center for Alternative Certification, and the National Center for Education Information as data sources. Khadaroo (2008) asserts, “Many alternative pathways into teaching have cropped up over the past 25 years” (p. 2). The beginning programs in Virginia and Florida focused on the addition of secondary teachers (Cornett, 1990). A chronological listing of the development of career switcher programs or alternative teacher licensure routes nationally is listed below (Feistrizer & Harr, 2010; National Center for Alternative Certification, 2010; National Center for Education Information, 2005; New York City Department of Education, 2010; “Teach for America,” 2010; “The New Teacher Project,” 2010; Virginia Department of Education, 2010):

- 1985-Houston School District (single program).

- 1985-New Jersey-Provisional Teacher Program.
- 1990-Teach for America.
- 1994-Troops To Teachers (nontraditional recruitment).
- 1997-The New Teacher Project (nontraditional recruitment).
- 2000-Virginia Career Switcher Program (Pilot Study Old Dominion University).
- 2000-New York City Teaching Fellows Program
- 2003-Creation of National Center for Alternative Certification.
- 2005-Career switcher or alternative licensure certification operation in 538 sites.
- 2006-All states and the District of Columbia (alternate route to teacher licensure).

This sequence of events illustrates the evolution alternative licensure or career switcher programs nationally.

A Virginia timeline for alternative teacher licensure routes revealed the emergence of career switcher programs in Virginia. MacDonald and Manning (2002) contend that “as early as 1988, the Military Career Transition Program (MCTP) was started at Old Dominion as a program to provide alternative teacher licensure” (p. 186). According to the Virginia Department of Education web site, Old Dominion University established the first pilot career switcher program in 2000 to focus on military personnel. Old Dominion University participants can graduate and start a new teaching career in 6 weeks (Salasky, 2009).

The Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources of Spotsylvania County, Virginia Public Schools designed and submitted the proposal for a school division career switcher program (B. Seals, personal communication, July 15, 2009). Thus, Virginia expanded the career switcher program in 2002 with the approval of Spotsylvania County Public Schools.

Furthermore, Bergeron, Larson, Prest, Dumas-Hopper and Wenhart (2005) note, “Another avenue for recruiting nontraditional teacher candidates is to collaborate directly with districts to ‘grow their own’ educators” (p. 66). The sequence of career switcher programs or alternative teacher licensure routes in Virginia is shown below (University of Richmond, 2010; University of Virginia, 2010; Virginia Community College System, 2004; Virginia Department of Education, 1998, 1999, 2010):

- 1988-Military Career Transition Program (MCTP) at Old Dominion University.
- 1995-MCTP joined the “Troops to Teachers” placement program.
- 1999-Virginia General Assembly Study (alternative licensure program).
- 2000-Career Switcher Pilot Program (Old Dominion University).
- 2002-Spotsylvania County Public Schools (career switcher program).
- 2004-Virginia Community College System-Educate VA
- As of 2010 this is a list of additional Virginia career switcher programs:

Regent University, Shenandoah University

West Virginia Public Education Consortium

- As of 2010-These alternative routes to licensure are at these locations:

University of Richmond School of Continuing Studies

(<http://scs.richmond.edu/tlp/>)

University of Virginia School of Continuing and Professional Studies

(<http://scs.richmond.edu/tlp/>)

A wide disparity exists in the alternative teacher licensure programs. For example, the community college alternative route program allows students to meet licensure requirements while working as teachers (Freedman & Goggin, 2008). The classroom is a rich environment to enable fast-track teacher candidates to understand and gain knowledge of the learning process. Cornett (1990) asserts, “A 1986 study by the Houston Independent School District showed no differences in teacher performance for first year certified teachers and those in the alternative certification program” (p. 73). The teacher candidates completed a variety of education classes and experiences (Simmons, 2005). Costigan (2005) commented on a study involving 38 New York City Teaching Fellow participants, which explored the involvement of these teachers in a cohort for 2 years in the program through the use of interviews, group discussion, and journal entries. The findings indicated areas of concern related to curriculum, accountability and high stakes testing. The organization of new teachers as a body in schools differs from the traditional practice of an independent assignment of graduates (Vaznis, 2008).

Schools are filled with diverse students from various cognitive, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds in society. Even so, Hallinan and Khmelkov (2001) argue that “little attention is given to preparing teachers to educate a diverse student body” (p. 177). Chin and Young (2007) suggest that “diversifying the teacher labor force has been one of the most pressing goals in the preparation of new teachers” (p. 82). The hiring of teachers who possess different backgrounds and experiences could promote a variety of learning opportunities in schools for children and adults. Seals (2003) remarks, “Alternative routes to teaching are programs designed to entice individuals from various occupational and life experiences to become teachers, thereby increasing the quantity and diversity of applicants to the profession” (p. 16). In 1997, Shen

conducted a qualitative study regarding a comparison of traditional and alternative teachers regarding demographics (Shen, 2000). This researcher analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics survey for 1994 for 13,602 traditional and 1,110 alternative licensure teachers regarding such areas as work experience, degree school, and career pattern. The findings suggested the areas of diversity and teacher shortages would reveal implications for teacher preparation policies. Furthermore, this research included different alternative teacher licensure programs and diverse requirements and expectations.

In another comparison study, Houston, McDavid, and Marshall (1993) also examined demographic characteristics of certified elementary and alternative certified teachers through surveys. The results revealed concerns related to preparation and student impact; however, no major differences based on certification. Another noted feature included teaching problems such as personal and professional teacher time, student motivation and grading. In addition, the mentor assistance aspect was effective regarding classroom management, materials and equipment and school administration areas. However, the final aspect of satisfaction for continued employment in teaching indicated that alternative certified teachers were less satisfied with their career but planned to remain in education longer. Zeichner and Schulte (2001) also remarked that the perceptions of the 69 traditionally certified teachers and 162 alternative program interns in this particular study were not significant.

### **Implications for the Teaching Profession**

There are important questions and implications of alternative teacher licensure programs for the teaching profession and mentoring support for new educators.

The public scrutiny and accountability issues regarding high quality education and student achievement mandates require careful attention to these professionals currently in our classrooms. First, what are the benefits for alternative route teachers? Furthermore, how will the career challenges impact the alternative licensure teachers' growth and success? A closer examination of the benefits and challenges is necessary to address these areas.

### **Benefits of Alternative Teacher Licensure**

There are numerous benefits of alternative teacher licensure programs. Second-career teachers are talented and possess expertise from other fields. The alternative route teachers connect with students in the classrooms and provide real applications of academic skills and relevant real life experiences. Resta et al. (2001) remarked, "Second-career teachers can help alleviate the teaching shortage and can bring strengths that will benefit schools and students" (p. 63).

Career changers display an understanding of decisions related to education and teaching and identify their goals and purpose for entering the teaching profession (Easley, 2006). These teachers demonstrate initiative to attain goals through high motivation and pursuit of opportunities for personal and professional growth. MacDonald and Manning (2002) note that "both career switchers and school districts benefit, but the real beneficiaries are the children and adolescents who will have in their classrooms qualified individuals who made a deliberate choice to enter the teaching profession" (p. 188). This group of accomplished professionals has outstanding competencies and can easily transfer and utilize their vocational skills to teaching positions in a short period of time.

## **Challenges of Alternative Teacher Licensure**

Alternative teacher licensure programs are not without challenges. The alternative teacher program participants who seek teacher licensure will include individuals from the corporate or military fields and even retirees. There is a variation regarding academic experience and work competencies of alternatively certified teachers and traditionally trained novice teachers. (Simmons, 2005) There has primarily been a focus on the assets and professionalism that alternative route teachers bring into classrooms.

The promotion of alternative licensure routes to teaching involves continuous professional development for new teachers to address critical expectations related to aspects of teaching and learning. Crow et al. (1990) studied the Bank Street College Education Program. This program provided teacher training for individuals who decided to change to this new career. Data were collected in this ethnographic study from 15 students through interviews and groups sessions to gain information regarding a change to a new career. The results suggested that improvements for teachers as professionals may increase with the addition of more persons from other occupations. In the Maloy et al. (2006) study, alternative licensure candidates enter the teaching profession without classroom experiences in planning for students and ways to improve the craft. Darling-Hammond (2005) contends, “Professional development in most districts still consists primarily of one-shot workshops, rather than more effective problem-based learning that is built in to teachers’ ongoing work with their colleagues” (p. 238).

It is crucial for all teacher education programs to produce highly capable teachers to provide quality learning experiences. Extensive plans are necessary to supplement teacher education preparation of fast-track educators. Feiman-Nemser (2005) contends, “At a time when

the work of teachers is becoming increasingly complex, alternative certification programs allow people to teach with little formal preparation” (p. 219). Educational leaders must implement beneficial induction and meaningful professional development through training and mentoring to provide support for alternative route teachers. Workshops to address the school occupation and culture are recommended for career switchers (Bergeron et al. 2005). In summary, the history of teacher education and future trends, benefits, challenges and implications for the profession are important areas for consideration. An important challenge relates to a closer look at meaningful support initiatives for new teachers through mentoring programs.

### **Mentoring**

Mentoring is an important component of professional development. The mentor protects the protégé from performing duties incorrectly (Pastore, 2003). Mentoring is linked to social interaction in an organization and serves as a resource (Little, 1990). The mentoring process involves an employee’s complete introduction to a job or position in an academic, business, or social organization. The concept of teacher mentoring presents a growth initiative marked through teaching and learning experiences between educators.

### **Teacher Mentoring**

The implementation of division teacher induction programs provides the opportunity to enhance teacher collaboration (Yost, 2006). For instance, Schwille (2008) completed a cross national study of mentoring actions and patterns for preservice and beginning teachers from the United States, England, and China. The findings revealed that mentors adapted learning opportunities to meet the needs of novice teachers. There were 26 pairs included in this investigation that explored mentoring forms such as coaching, stepping in, teaching together and

demonstration teaching, brief interactions or mentoring on the move, and mentoring sessions and debriefing sessions. The mentoring of new teachers allows for reflection to a teachers' first-year experience (Delgado, 1999). Shank (2005) conducted a qualitative study to explore mentoring experiences of participants over 13 months through reflections of a collaborative inquiry group. The findings revealed that the group members focused on opportunities to learn and share from each other and moved away from defined roles of veteran teachers, mentors, novice educator, and mentees. Furthermore, the characteristics of the collegial relationships included open interactions regarding teaching practices, beliefs, student engagement and adult learning experiences rather than isolation.

### **Overview of Teacher Mentoring Models**

Teacher mentoring models provide a foundation to guide collegial relationships in education. Joyce and Showers (1982, 1983) identify one mentoring model that includes five phases. The first stage focuses on companionship and includes sharing. The second stage provides technical feedback. This phase is nonjudgmental and provides information on skills. The third stage is analyzing application and extends executive control. The mentee increases understanding of strategies to gain confidence. The next stage emphasizes adapting to students. This phase permits variation to adjust teaching to meet the needs of students. The last stage includes facilitating and mentee practice for success. The mentee's teaching methods are monitored by the mentor (Joyce and Showers, 1982, 1983).

Another mentoring model was developed by Cohen (1995). This model shows the four phases of mentoring. The early phase entails building trust between the mentor and mentee. The

middle phase involves the development of a partnership. The later phase addresses the mentees' decision making. Finally, the last phase promotes mentee reflection (Cohen, 1995).

### **Components of Teacher Mentor Models**

Roles, assignments and selection, and training are elements in the establishment of a mentoring relationship. Portner (2008) remarks, "A mentor functions best in this role by relating, assessing, coaching and guiding" (p. 8). The mentors' role is to promote learning for new teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Expectations and goals must be clear for mentors and protégés (Lipton & Wellman, 2005). The mentor provides advice to meet specific needs (Stedman & Stroot, 1998).

The assignment and selection process in the mentor model is significant. The connection between the mentor and mentee is crucial for the foundation of the relationship. Batenhorst (2004) notes, "Relationships grow when both parties are learning and one does not overpower the other with only one way to accomplish tasks" (p. 25). The matching is done before a meeting between the mentor and mentee (Rowley, 1999). Koballa, Bradbury, and Deaton (2008) mention that "pairings may also be based on the mentor's years of teaching experience or a school administrator's knowledge of the mentor's successful classroom practices" (p. 45).

Administrators can provide time for the mentor and mentee to collaborate (Jones & Pauley, 2003).

Mentor training is a necessary factor for induction (Wong, 2005). Mentors require training to incorporate reflection and recognition of leadership approaches (Rowley, 1999). Feiman-Nemser (2005) notes, "Support and advice are provided by mentors, usually classroom

teachers, who receive a stipend for their work” (p. 219). A successful induction and mentoring program requires knowledgeable mentors (Moir, 2005).

### **Teacher Mentoring Programs**

Different mentoring programs exist in the education arena (Johnson, 2001). Thorndyke, Gusic, and Milner (2008) contend, “Traditional mentoring focuses on the relationship between the mentor and protégé” (p. 157). In 2008, Erdem and Aytemur conducted a qualitative study and interviewed 32 postgraduate or doctoral protégés regarding informal and formal university interactions and trust issues. The areas of satisfaction, characteristics, functions and perceptions were explored related to academic mentoring relationship. The findings revealed that fairness and sharing control were positive areas. Competence of mentors was a concern. Portner (2008) notes, “But in order to be productive, mentors-mentee interactions must take place within a relationship that includes mutual trust, honesty, respect and a joyful willingness to work together” (p. 12). Thorndyke et al. (2008) explored the issue of traditional and functional mentoring models in a university setting that focused on objectives and products. The areas of participation, satisfaction, mentoring relationship, skills development, and projects were investigated. The results showed favorable ratings for mentor feedback, impact on the project and preparation and negotiation for the mentoring relationships. It is necessary that mentoring programs include measurable outcomes (Brown & Daly, 2009). Mentoring models are implemented across the nation to address teachers’ professional growth. Ganser (2005) asserts, “Although formally organized mentoring programs for beginning teachers are relatively new, as long as there have been schools and teachers working in them, at least some portion of beginning teachers have benefited by being mentored by their veteran colleague” (p. 6). The Santa Cruz

New Teacher Project was started in California in the 1980s. The goals were teacher retention, relationship building, reflection, and collaboration. This program provides induction for new teachers and mentor integration. The trained mentor teacher is released from his or her teaching assignments and provides instructional support for novice teachers. This is accomplished through observations, demonstration, data evaluation, and lesson plan development (Moir & Bloom, 2003). Mentoring programs and professional standards require a connection in the approach to teaching (Ganser, 2005).

Strong and Baron (2004) studied a cognitive coaching model for 16 mentors and protégés who were participants in a beginning teacher support and assistance program. There was an examination of 64 conversations about pedagogy, suggestions and the responses of novice teachers. The findings revealed information regarding the dynamics of the program. The 144 suggestions related to teacher focus. There were 36 student-oriented responses. The protégés accepted 80% of the mentors' suggestions and rejected 20%. Portner (2008) asserts, "Mentors build and maintain relationships with their mentees based on mutual trust, respect and professionalism" (p. 8). Koballa et al. (2008) note, "Those responsible for arranging mentoring assignments should enable teachers to understand their perceptions of mentoring and encourage conversations among new teachers and potential mentors before mentoring assignments are confirmed" (p. 47).

Finally, the Peer Assistance and Review Program was implemented in the Columbus, Ohio school system in 1986 to assist new teachers with their difficulties. Ohio State University and the school division entered into a partnership to allow the release of consultants from teaching assignments to work with classroom interns for up to 3 years. Observations, visits,

conferences and follow-up components are completed in the mentoring relationship (Stedman & Stroot, 1998).

### **First-Year Teachers**

First-year teachers possess attributes that epitomize the profession. In 2006, Yost describes teacher qualities such as perseverance, patience, enthusiasm, attitude, creativity, and organization as necessary personal and professional characteristics. New teachers will have to discover known or unknown inner assets for success (Delgado, 1999). Various teacher education programs prepare candidates for teaching positions. Diverse preparation exists in pedagogy and teaching experience (Boe, Shin, & Cook, 2007). Mason and White (2001) reported the following: “Recommendations from mentor teachers about the needs of new teachers included help with time management, and organization skills, understanding information on special education regulations and implications for teaching, and more training in behavior management and differentiated instruction” (p. 81). Isolation will hinder the success of first-year teachers (Johnson, 2001). The following is one description of the developmental phases and descriptions of first-year teachers (Moir, 1999; Rutherford, 2005):

1. Anticipation - the excitement about the teaching position.
2. Survival - experienced during the first month with new situations.
3. Disillusionment - a stressful period related to job demands.
4. Rejuvenation - an improvement in demeanor about the position.
5. Reflection - a review of the aspects of the year and the teaching experience.
6. Anticipation - thinking about the next year and things learned.

The supportive movement through the periods is a mentor’s task (Rutherford, 2005).

Feiman-Nemser (2003) asserts, “If we leave beginning teachers to sink or swim on their own, they may become overwhelmed and leave the field” (p. 27). A mentor uses techniques to organize ideas about classroom situations (Pedro, 2006). Mandel (2006) comments, “New teachers often sense that what they are doing is not working but don’t know how to fix it” (p. 67).

Studies of first-year teachers have been conducted to explore their experiences related to confidence, beliefs and support. Yost (2006) studied reflections of novice teachers concerning success. The findings revealed that course work and the completion of diversified field experiences were important for self-efficacy and confidence. Darling-Hammond et al. (2002) analyzed the findings of the 1998 New Visions for Public Schools survey administered to New York City beginning teachers. The analysis indicated that teachers' efficacy perceptions related to their traditional or nontraditional preparation and confidence regarding teaching students and experience. Darling-Hammond (2003) notes, “A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs raise retention rates for new teachers by improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills” (p. 11).

In other research, Inman and Marlow (2004) explored the attitudes of Georgia beginning teachers and factors of staying in the profession such as stability, attrition and retention. The results revealed teachers’ concerns related to salary and professional prestige beliefs. Ingwalson and Thompson (2007) also conducted a comparative study of two siblings who were hired as middle school teachers in the urban Midwest and the northern plains. The findings revealed discrepancies concerning administrative support and mentoring in these regions that could

influence an educator's decision to stay in the profession. Renard (2003) contends, "We must commit ourselves to becoming the profession that nurtures its young" (p. 64).

Furthermore, Doppen's (2004) study explored four new teachers' integration of technology in a social studies classroom. The findings indicate that these new teachers experienced difficulty related to the lack of formal training for computer use and resources. It was also noted that professional development beyond informal technology mentors would provide opportunities for growth through formal orientation. Strong and Baron (2004) remark, "Teachers today are being asked to teach technological and analytical skills to students from a broad range of backgrounds, prepare them to think critically and to apply their knowledge to solving real-world problems" (p. 47).

### **Urban Teachers**

Urban schools mirror society and represent diverse populations. Weiner (1993) asserts, "Thus, urban teachers of at-risk students face harder choices more frequently because of the juxtaposition of consistently scarce resources, continually pressing need, and institutional pressures to ignore the conflict" (p. 135). Haberman (1991) states, "Reformers of urban schools are now raising their expectations beyond an emphasis on basic skills to the teaching of critical thinking, problem solving, and even creativity" (p. 292).

Moreover, Easley (2006) studied attrition of alternative route to teacher licensure participants enrolled in the Mercy College New Teacher Residency Program. The results indicated that participants value education and desire to continue the teaching career. Useem and Neild (2005) contend, "Attracting and keeping new and veteran teachers in high-poverty, low performing schools is the toughest challenge of all" (p. 47).

There are studies regarding the job circumstances urban teachers encounter to address cognitive, affective and social needs of students in diverse classrooms. Clarke and Thomas (2009) studied the perceptions of four urban alternative licensure mathematics teachers related to teaching, learning experiences, and student achievement. The results revealed themes such as classroom culture, management of students, teaching content, cognitive and affective aspects of student learning. The findings also noted the necessity in urban settings for the demonstration of teachers' authentic caring and proactive approaches to teaching. Neita (2003) argues, "We must rethink teacher education so that it focuses on preparing teachers to work with enthusiasm, competence and caring among the students in urban schools" (p. 18).

In comparison, Souto-Manning and Dice (2007) examined case studies of collaborative mentoring groups to investigate diversity and mathematics instruction. Findings indicated that subject relevance and ability level experiences relate to student success. Professional development and real life connections for the beginning teacher in the primary classroom pertain to the educator's success. There was an increase in university awareness of diversity in the classroom. Jeanpierre (2007) conducted a case study of the transition of three urban science teachers from a fast-track teacher preparation to the middle school classroom. A university and an urban school district established a partnership to support the interns in the alternative certification program. The findings revealed participants completed the program and began their first year as middle school science teachers. Mentoring and the completion of a quality preparation program are necessary factors for the success and retention of urban teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002).

In addition, Dickar (2005) studied the New York City Teaching Fellows Alternative Certification Program participants to compare 26 career changers to 30 college graduates. University and district mentors were provided during their teacher preparation for English, social studies and ESL positions in urban middle schools. The findings indicated 11 career changers exceeded expectations and 10 college graduates had the same outcomes. The aspects of motivation, professional behavior, and positive approach to learning new things produced teachers' success in the classroom. The areas of concern pertained to teaching interest, student distance, adjustment to school, and insecurity.

Midcareer teachers have reported feeling replenished, having a renewed passion for teaching as a result of mentoring (Hanson & Moir, 2003). Johnson (2001) comments, "Although these teachers expressed a deep commitment to teaching and a desire to do it well, their experience in other careers had taught them that workplaces differ and that the work environment is crucial in fostering satisfaction and success" (p. 47). More support might be necessary for changing occupations (Shaw, 2008). Steadman and Simmons (2007) argue that "experienced teachers are the ones who must shoulder this new mentoring burden, one that differs vastly from the kind of interaction associated with student teaching" (p. 366).

Many studies were identified which investigated teacher education for first-year teachers and mentoring. Additionally, some studies pertained to nontraditional teacher preparation and mentoring programs for first-year alternate route teachers. However, this review of relevant literature has revealed limited research regarding the dynamics of veteran teacher mentors and first-year alternate route teachers as mentees in the mentoring relationship.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

One challenge for public education and the teaching profession is providing adequate support for first-year alternative route teachers. Veteran teachers are often assigned as mentors to guide these new teachers and foster collaboration. Alternative route teachers, just as teachers who graduate from traditional preparation programs, will encounter federal achievement requirements, school district mandates, and community expectations concerning instruction and performance in classrooms. The existence of a school division mentoring program to meet the needs of alternative route teachers is important.

Preparation, transition, culture, expectations, and professional development in urban school systems for alternative route teachers warrant exploration. There is limited research evidence pertaining to the dynamics of the mentoring relationship for first-year alternative route teachers. The research questions are:

1. What are the experiences of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship?

### **Type of Study**

A qualitative research design was utilized to study the experiences of first-year alternative route teachers and their mentors. This investigation of participants' perspectives framed the context for meaning of real life occurrences between these mentors and mentees in school. Furthermore, this approach allowed for the study of meanings of the shared experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

### **Population and Sampling**

The alternative route teachers hired in an urban southeastern school division in the United States of America for the 2010-2011 academic school year were selected as an adequate sample size for the study. This school division provides education services for grades, preK through 12 students. The levels included elementary, middle, and high schools along with career and technical education and alternative programs. The school division's human resources and professional development departments provided lists of alternative route teachers at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels and their mentors for the 2010-2011 school year. The listing contained such information as principal's name, school location, teachers' assignment and licensure status. There were 79 teachers with no experience employed for 2010-2011 of which 15 alternate route teachers had been hired. Nine teachers were hired at the secondary level. Six teachers were employed at the elementary level. An invitation to participate in the study was extended to 5 first-year alternative route teachers and their 5 veteran mentor teachers. The investigation was comprised of 10 individual participants that made up the five mentoring teams in the sample.

There are additional descriptors regarding the participants. The participants represented all school levels. There were two mentoring teams at the elementary and two located at the middle school levels. There was one mentoring team at the high school level. This study included 6 exceptional education teachers, 4 elementary school teachers, 4 middle school teachers, 1 high school business teacher, and 1 high school science teacher as participants. Two mentors had previous experience as veteran teacher mentors. One veteran mentor was a graduate student. Three novice mentors were veteran teacher leaders and graduate students. Three mentees were graduate students. Two mentees had served in the military. Two mentees had worked in the mental health field as behavior aides. One mentee previously worked in personnel services. One mentee worked in corporate training before entering teaching.

The five teams in this investigation are identified regarding age, subject/content assignment, mentees' former career and mentors' years of teaching experience in Table 1.

The mentoring pairs of the first-year alternate route teacher as a mentee and the veteran teacher as a mentor are depicted in Table 2. The selection process included the interviewer's initial conversation with the school principal to discuss an overview of the study. The next selection step with the principal also included the identification of teacher preparation for the hired first-year teachers and the verification of trained assigned mentor teachers in the schools. The final phase of the selection criteria process involved the confirmation of first-year alternative route teachers and their mentors in the school.

The principals were asked to recommend genuine, approachable, responsive, reflective willing, and accessible teachers for functional mentoring teams. Additionally, during the conversations, similar assignment/content areas, grade levels, classroom locations, and mentors'

Table 1

*Description of Mentoring Teams*

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Team	Alternate route teacher (Mentee)	Veteran mentor teacher (Mentor)
1	Mentee A - Early 30s, exceptional education history teacher, former behavior counselor, and military background.	Mentor F - Late 20s, exceptional education math teacher, 5 years of teaching experience.
2	Mentee B - Middle 40s, exceptional education English teacher, former corporate trainer.	Mentor G - Late 40s, exceptional education teacher, 10 years of teaching experience.
3	Mentee C - 30, general education teacher, former retail clerk, and military background.	Mentor H - Early 30s, general education teacher, 9 years of teaching experience.
4	Mentee D - Late 30s, science teacher, former corporate director.	Mentor I - Early 50s, business teacher, 27 years of teaching experience.
5	Mentee E - Late 20s, exceptional education inclusion teacher, former behavior counselor.	Mentor J - Early 30s, exceptional education consultative teacher, 8 years of teaching experience.

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Table 2

*Mentoring Pairs*

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Team	Alternate route teacher (Mentee)	Veteran teacher (Mentor)
1	Mentee A (FS)	Mentor F (SA)
2	Mentee B (BN)	Mentor G (LF)
3	Mentee C (HP)	Mentor H (MG)
4	Mentee D (KM)	Mentor I (VR)
5	Mentee E (DO)	Mentor J (TE)

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previous experience were requested regarding the mentoring pairings. Permission was requested to meet with the teachers after student dismissal. I employed purposeful sampling to complete the screening of 9 secondary and 6 elementary alternate route teachers as participants through conversations with principals and teachers. I narrowed the sample and chose 3 secondary and 2 elementary alternate route teachers as participants who could provide candid and substantive answers for the interviewer. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) remark, “The researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest” (p. 126).

Mentees were selected based upon their identification as first-year teachers who entered education through nontraditional licensure routes. First-year teachers who completed traditional licensure routes were not included. Mentors were chosen using the criteria of veteran teacher distinction and the completion of school division’s mentor training program. Veteran teachers without mentoring training were excluded. Mentoring teams were selected and each partner agreed to participate in the study. Each mentoring team member also engaged in individual interviews on dates and times at schools with the interviewer.

### **Procedures**

The Virginia Commonwealth University Internal Review Board (IRB) application was submitted for approval. In addition, a proposal and application for conducting research projects with the school division was submitted to this particular institution for approval. The purpose and procedures of the study were reviewed with the research and professional development directors and staffing coordinators after the approval notification from Virginia Commonwealth University and the school division.

## **Data Collection**

The data collection process was initiated by my telephone conversation with the mentors and mentees at schools to discuss the study. Marshall and Rossman (2006) contend that “decisions about sampling people and events are made concurrently with decisions about the specific data collection methods to be used and should be thought-through in advance” (p. 65). Interviews were one type of qualitative data collected and analyzed to answer the research questions. Appointments were arranged for three face-to-face interviews in designated locations at the schools for privacy and confidentiality. I asked the interviewees to read the consent form and explained that their participation was voluntary. The design of the study included the development and use of interview guides for rich discussions with the mentor and mentee. Kvale (2009) remarks, “Interviews can also be reported in the form of dialogues” (p. 284). The participants engaged in thorough interviews to address the research questions. The questions guided conversations for natural and open responses to support my plan for data collection. Each participant was assigned a pseudoname for anonymity in the interview sessions.

A series of three interviews were conducted for verbal sharing of ideas in a dialogue with mentors and mentees to capture their authentic language about their mentoring relationship. I followed the designated interview guide for each session. The interview protocols are included in Appendices A through F. The interviews were conducted on different days with each participant during a span of 7 weeks. The average length of time spent in the total sessions with the mentees was 29 minutes and 40 minutes with mentors in the study. In addition, I also took notes to gain insight and understanding of the viewpoints of the mentoring participants in this school division.

Each participant's interview session was audio taped with two tape recorders to check verification and integrity of the recording process and transcription purposes. Pseudonyms were used during the taping and transcribing. The transcripts were typed verbatim and forwarded to the interviewees for review and corrections to ensure accuracy and credibility. The interview schedule for alternate route teachers is shown in Table 3. The interview schedule for veteran teachers is shown in Table 4. The average length of interview sessions for mentees and mentors is shown in Table 5.

Access to all data was limited to study personnel. All personal identifying information was kept in password-protected files until deletion at the end of this investigation. Other records such as tapes, transcripts, listings, and notes were kept in a locked file cabinet until destruction at the completion of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

The statements of the interviewees were synthesized to focus the study on the research questions and areas of interactions, expectations, and roles in mentoring relationships for alternative route teachers. The theoretical approach to the study was the constructivist perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) assert, "The constructivist paradigm assumes relativist ontology—there are multiple realities" (p. 21). This perspective allows for the exploration of various viewpoints, belief systems, and interpretation of situations. The participants can share their stories as they see them (Charmaz, 2000).

The data were analyzed using the features of the constructivist model to understand the interactions and to gain meaning of the mentoring experiences (Paul, Graffam, & Fowler, 2005).

Table 3

*Mentees' Interview Schedule*

Alternate route teacher	Interview session	Interview date	Interview location
A	1	1/24/11	School
B	1	1/27/11	School
B	2	2/1/11	School
C	1	2/1/11	School
A	2	2/7/11	School
D	1	2/8/11	School
C	2	2/9/11	School
A	3	2/22/11	School
D	2	2/23/11	School
D	3	2/28/11	School
E	1	3/1/11	School
B	3	3/3/11	School
E	2	3/7/11	School
E	3	3/8/11	School
C	3	3/8/11	School

Table 4

*Mentors' Interview Schedule*

Veteran teacher	Interview session	Interview date	Interview location
F	1	1/31/11	School
H	1	2/2/11	School
G	1	2/3/11	School
F	2	2/7/11	School
I	1	2/10/11	School
J	1	2/16/11	School
F	3	2/17/11	School
H	2	2/17/11	School
H	3	2/22/11	School
G	2	2/23/11	School
G	3	2/28/11	School
J	2	3/2/11	School
J	3	3/7/11	School
I	2	3/8/11	School
I	3	3/15/11	School

Table 5

*Average Length of Interview Sessions*

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Interview session	Mentor (minutes)	Mentee (minutes)
1	9	5
2	17	12
3	14	12

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Total	40	29
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This paradigm was useful to frame and interpret the adult interactions to explore personal and professional growth opportunities.

The transcripts were read and reread in the analysis process. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue that “most methods of analyzing qualitative data require a procedure called coding” (p. 125). Each participant’s response was assigned a code in the study based upon emerging themes. In addition each interviewee’s transcript was duplicated on a specific shade of paper for further organization purposes. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) contend that “findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of grounded theory or patterns theories” (p. 21). An inductive analysis provided an opportunity to summarize patterns and concepts about mentoring aspects on the interview guides. The data were then categorized to group topics related to mentoring of alternative route teachers. I focused on the description of five major themes for this study. The relevant demographic traits such as grade level or content assignment, school level, work history, teaching experience, and teacher preparation were integrated in the theme interpretation.

The credibility and authenticity of the taping and transcribing process was promoted with the interviewees’ correct identification and description of word-by-word responses in transcripts. In addition, I reviewed the transcripts, audio tapes, and notes. I also utilized pseudonyms and then initials during the data analysis process to provide additional confidentiality for participants. Each teacher participated in three individual interview sessions. The transcripts and tapes were compared for a complete review of the interview sessions in this study.

### **Virginia Commonwealth University Institutional Review Board**

This research study was approved by the Virginia Commonwealth University IRB in accordance with the consistent rules and regulations of the institution. The Virginia

Commonwealth University consent and school confidentiality guidelines concerning the study were explained to the teachers. Each teacher agreed to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

### **Delimitations**

The research aim pertained to providing evidence concerning the mentoring initiative for first-year alternative route teachers in urban school systems. It was significant to delimit the results to the population in this investigation. The data represented a sample of first-year urban teachers in elementary, middle, and secondary schools for a metropolitan school division in a southeastern state. The data were specific to first-year urban alternative route teachers and their mentors during the academic school year of 2010-2011. The data were exact for only first-year alternative route classroom teachers. Lastly, the data were precise for trained mentor teachers.

### **Limitations**

There were limitations in this study concerning school division records, principal accessibility, teacher screening, and researcher's communication. Additionally, the data were limited to five mentoring teams consisting of 5 mentors and 5 mentees, respectively, for the 2010-2011 academic school year.

The sample was selected based upon the available school district databases regarding the confidential employment documentation and licensure status of the teachers. I was required to rely on the human resources and professional development departments concerning the accuracy of their databases for potential candidates in this investigation.

I was provided the names and school locations of teachers and principals. The principals of these participants engaged in a discussion with me concerning the study. The principal

component was included to gain information about the mentoring team for the screening process. The teachers were contacted only after the initial contact with the building principal. The teachers were screened after their principals' conversations with me regarding the study to confirm the classification of these new teachers as first-year alternate route teachers and to verify completers of the district mentor training program regarding the veteran teachers. The teachers in a location without principal accessibility were not contacted by me.

Next, there was a limitation related to my communication. The prospective participants were contacted through telephone calls for screening purposes. The participants who responded to my telephone calls were screened for the study. The teachers were invited to participate in the study upon completion of the selection criteria.

Additionally, in regard to communication, I established rapport with the interviewees to foster trust and opportunity for in-depth interviews; however, even though the sessions were brief the participants provided rich data through genuine comments. I reflected on my flexibility for the interview approach and made efforts to engage and probe the participants more; however, there was a limitation regarding the participants' elaboration in the sessions.

Furthermore, the 10 participants were selected due to their willingness and availability for multiple face-to-face interviews. Each participant participated in a three-interview series on different days during a 7-week period. There were 30 interviews completed in multiple locations and at various times after school dismissal. The individual interview sessions were the only data source. The design of the study included interviews conducted to provide the opportunities for open-ended responses and discussion about natural occurrences in a school setting. The method

was to promote freedom through candid responses of each individual rather than team answers regarding mentoring interactions in the relationships.

I was very organized, conscientious, and focused on following the interview guides specifically. I covered the listed questions on the interview guides strictly and this created a limitation in the duration of the interviews. The inclusion of broad question areas for open discussion was lacking and limited the expansion of conversations.

## **CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS**

The focus of the study was to explore the relationships of urban first-year alternate route teachers and their mentors. Mentoring programs exist to support, assist, and orient alternate route teachers to the profession. This research was necessary to examine dynamics in building a mentoring relationship through awareness and understanding of the needs of alternate route teachers. This chapter presents findings pertinent to the following two research questions:

1. What are the experiences of first-year urban alternate route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year urban alternate route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship?

The interview data were analyzed and grouped in terms of teachers' viewpoints of mentoring situations in the relationships. The analysis of the participants' responses to interview questions revealed the emergence of five themes: (a) shared ownership, (b) importance of differentiated training, (c) perspectives on teaching practice, (d) mentee and mentor rapport, and (e) communication habits

### **Shared Ownership**

In this study, the mentors and mentees articulated beliefs related to acceptance of the roles, tasks, and involvement in the mentoring team. These ideas were conveyed as the commitment to learning opportunities for mentors and mentees. It is noteworthy that these

teachers shared viewpoints related to responsibilities and expectations in the mentoring relationship.

### **Mentee Beliefs About the Mentee Role**

These statements by mentees offer examples of their responsibilities and contributions to the mentoring relationship. Mentee B shared insight in regard to responsibilities as “. . .open to the knowledge that your mentor has, willing to ask for help even when you don’t want to, and I would say the willingness to know when you’re wrong” (BN, 1). This mentee discussed how transparency reveals area needs and promotes exploration of ideas and solutions with the mentor. The sense of flexibility and receptivity were noted personal-social features to attain input for the relationship. In this example, Mentee C commented:

Just like the students in my class, learning never stops with me. Because I am an instructor of students, that does not mean I’m incapable of learning new information or skills. And those things are definitely vital to me becoming a more successful and a better teacher. (HP, 1)

Mentee C focused on the continuous learning aspect with colleagues as a focus of the mentoring relationship. Mentee A stated the following:

I feel like I’m somewhat of a trainee in training. I know that it is my–my responsibility in the end to do what I need to do. That’s pretty much it. . .yeah, do what I’m supposed to do and–and just be in training and also absorb any knowledge and skills that I can from a mentor. (FS, 1)

Mentee A identified the mentoring relationship as an opportunity to gain information from a veteran to improve abilities and skills. A sense of obligation develops between the mentor and mentee to embrace and connect teacher learning experiences.

### **Mentee Beliefs About the Mentor Role**

The mentees spoke about their expectations of mentors in the mentoring relationship. Here are examples of the remarks. Mentee A shared:

Availability in terms of being able to help, you know, if you call. Not, you know, Johnny on the spot, but being flexible, being available, and just be ready to give guidance and assistance and to, uh, just try to communicate with that mentee because I think any first-year teacher is going to be [sic] some trials and tribulations for that first year. (FS, 2)

The accessibility and preparedness of the mentor is believed to facilitate the development of the mentees' gaining teaching skills. Smith and Evans (2008) contend, "In addition, schools must allot time for teachers to actually enact their roles as mentor teachers" (p. 273). In this depiction, Mentee D expressed the following:

However, there are situations where you are placed in a mentee/mentor relationship. And, to me, if that is the case, I think the mentor is driving, in a sense, that relationship. It appears to me that the school system has more of that kind of a situation. And when I say that, I don't absolve the mentee from responsibility, but I think it's up to the mentor to establish their expectations with regards to that relationship. So, like I said, it can go both ways. (KM, 1)

Mentee D stated that asking questions to gather information is probably a joint effort in the mentoring relationship to meet expectations; however, it was believed that the mentor should

demonstrate leadership through setting the guidelines. The recognition of a mutual interest by both parties is a component of the relationship.

Mentee E mentioned, “I believe the characteristics of a good mentor is one that is, of course, responsible, caring, sociable and respectful” (DO, 1). The mentor’s human relation attributes can set the tone for approachability and foster the mentee’s capacity to ask questions. Rowley (1999) notes, “Good mentor teachers recognize that each mentoring relationship occurs in a unique, interpersonal context.” (p. 21). It appears that attention and consideration fosters productivity through the mentoring relationship. Mentee B described the characteristics of a good mentor as “dependability, knowledge, trustworthiness, and, I would say, friendly” (BN, 2). In this illustration, Mentee B noted the value of a mentor’s competency and reliability as important qualities to support the learning options and eventual professional autonomy of a mentee. Moir (2005) declared that “mentoring knowledge and ‘best practices’ are now recognized as necessary for an effective induction and mentoring program” (p. 98).

In this instance, Mentee D noted expectations and impressions of her current mentoring experience:

A mentor, to me, is someone who is helping to groom you for something, possibly another level. You know again. . . possibility to help you with areas of weakness. But they don’t, you know, in this situation, they don’t know enough about you to mentor you.  
(KM, 2)

Mentee D expressed concerns regarding the mentor’s knowledge about the first-year alternate route teachers’ competencies as important for the relationship. Koballa et al. (2008) contend,

“When conceptions of mentoring held by new teachers and their mentors are discordant, the experiences can be challenging and even ineffective” (p. 47)

### **Mentor Beliefs About the Mentor Role**

The mentors provided illustrations related to their responsibilities in the mentoring relationship. For instance, Mentor J said:

A mentor, in my opinion, has to be patient, knowledgeable in terms of, I would say, content, not necessarily the content that the person they’re mentoring has to teach in, but general content support with general information, if need be, a good listener. (TE, 1)

This mentor teacher shared that the emphasis of the mentoring relationship begins with the mentor’s embrace and guidance of the mentee in the right professional path as a fellow colleague. Schwille (2008) commented, “Good mentors link forms of mentoring to the immediate needs of the novice as well as to a broader end they have in view—helping the novice learn” (p. 160). There is an importance to convey information, techniques, and ramifications regarding learning. Mentor F also noted:

It’s really funny, because when you are helping your mentee, at the same time you tend to help yourself because it makes you aware of the things that you are doing because you know that somebody else is actually looking at you and looking at what things you might be doing right or what things you might be doing wrong. So it actually helps you to be a better person and a better person at your job. (SA, 1)

This mentor talked about the reciprocal learning process through awareness, desire, and revelation. It seems that the mentor and mentee became equal stakeholders in teacher modeling to meet professional needs and objectives. Koballa et al. (2008) comment, “The conception of

mentoring as co-learning supports a working partnership for the mentoring pair” (p. 45). This simultaneous learning experience allows for sharing of situations to benefit mentors and mentees.

Interestingly, Mentor J expressed the acceptance of responsibility as a personal and professional obligation to promote the learning of others with this statement:

Even though I am providing guidance, I feel like this person is looking to me to be a role model. So I need to be on my Ps and Qs with everything I say and do and my interactions with my colleagues. (TE, 2)

Due diligence to the teaching profession and respect for colleagues became part of the character development for this mentor. The notion of dual responsibilities was also recognized in the mentoring relationship for the improvement of teaching skills. This idea should serve as the professional and personal goal for a good mentor and mentee in the relationship.

Moreover, Mentor F also shared, “If I didn’t have the answer, he knew that I would be, you know, be able to try to find somebody who did know the answer and try to get back with him as early as I could” (SA, 2). There was an existence of a mutual understanding that the mentor would seek out resources and information on behalf of the mentee as necessary.

Mentor F expressed satisfaction with the resolution of issues and answers to questions in the mentoring relationship as positive aspects.

### **Mentor Beliefs About the Mentee Role**

The mentors shared expectations related to the mentee role and professional growth. Mentor G expressed the following comment:

Well, personally I love for the people to kind of add to the culture of the school and bring their particular expertise and passion to it, and. . .does that. . .I don't know if I'm supposed to say. . .but my mentee does that. And then, on a professional basis, I like to see the growth of a person. . .because they are a career switcher. . .taking some of those skills and talent sets from that life and applying it to this life. (LF, 1)

Mentor G described how the mentees' passion in the other field has overflowed into the school setting and embraced opportunities for growth. Simmons (2005) contends, "The professional developer must ensure that the learner's beliefs and prior experiences are acknowledged and engaged at some point in the learning process" (p. 43). Mentor G expressed an acknowledgement and appreciation of the alternate route teacher's professional repertoire and connection to education as valuable to the relationship.

Mentor J commented:

I'm also expecting the mentee to grow professionally by trying to learn from or to connect with other persons or other colleagues that may share the same content or passions that they share that will support the students academically. And really just be independent and not lazy and sit back and want things to be given to them, to seek opportunities, to be of service, and to gain more information. (TE, 3)

The level of support and responses to questions and follow-up were important aspects of the mentoring relationship. Mentor J shared that the mentee should be active and take the initiative to seek out information in the learning process. Additionally, Mentor J expected the assigned mentee to exhibit confidence and utilize decision-making capabilities.

Mentor F offered the following comment concerning the expectations in the mentoring experience:

Like we try to keep on the terms of positive rather than negative. Like I wouldn't call him out on all of his negative stuff. I would really focus more on his positive. At the same time we both let each other know that criticism is not necessary a bad thing. It is positive and negative towards criticism and that we shouldn't take it personally. (SA, 3)

Mentor F explains the openness in the relationship that allows for support through openness and sensitivity.

Furthermore, Mentor J stated, "I would expect the mentee to be very in tuned to their surroundings and to grow from experiences they see that are great and ones that aren't so great." (TE, 3) The awareness and involvement with other teachers and students could be useful for the mentee's professional growth in the classroom. Mentor I suggested as well that, "My expectations of my mentee is to make sure the classroom management is where it should be. And if that is an issue, my expectation is that she will come to me and ask for assistance" (VR, 1). Mentor I shares that the mentee's judgment prevails regarding requests for support. It looks like mentees could initiate conversations in the relationships to gain information to promote their independence as teachers.

### **Importance of Differentiation of Training**

The interviewees identified training as an area of concern. The teachers shared their thoughts regarding the mentoring program training. Overall, the alternate route teachers reported valuable training experiences for teacher performance; however, it was apparent that the mentors and mentees had divergent training expectations and experiences. These quotes depict the

training experiences for first-year alternate route teachers and for mentor teachers. The training was conducted to provide new alternate route teachers with teaching strategies in this favorable response. Mentee E asserted the following:

The school division provides new teacher orientation. I'm not sure if that's the same thing. But if you're asking, I mean, and I guess they're calling it—they refer to us as mentees, so I guess the answer is yes. They have us meet every month for an orientation. Not an orientation, but a workshop where teachers or administrators within the system provide data and different types of helpful information with regards to things they think we may face, maybe some approaches we can look at differently. So we do that every month. (KM, 3)

The training provided an opportunity for mentees to hear presentations on teaching and learning. The concepts of orientation and training were interchanged; however, Mentee E characterized the sessions as helpful. There was a chance for self-assessment of teaching techniques.

Training was conducted to provide new teachers with classroom techniques and this information seemed useful for Mentee A. For example, Mentee A explained the following:

We have classes that we go to at least once a month. At those classes all the new teachers are invited. It's a mandatory meeting, actually, so you have to attend. At the trainings we go over scenarios . . . usually they'll have like a lesson plan just like a teacher would. One of the last ones we did were [sic] classroom management. So we discussed that and different techniques that we may could [sic] use in the classroom. So they are pretty helpful. (FS, 2)

Mentee A also described the district training sessions as positive periods to learn various teaching strategies for instructing students.

Furthermore, Mentee B noted:

So one of the challenges I have—I've had over the past couple of weeks—is when it comes to writing. . .I. . .all of the paperwork involved being a special education teacher. And the one challenge I'm seeing is that as a mentee new teacher, there is not a great deal of training, whether it be in classroom, or tutorial, or something that says here's the process. Here are the things you will need to complete every year as a special education teacher and here's the process, whether it be a flow chart, or an outline, or something that is given to you to say as a new teacher, here you are. Go through this, read through it, and then get back with your mentor to determine where you lack or what you're missing.

(BN, 3)

Mentee B described the district training and procedures as inadequate and insufficient for new alternate route exceptional education teachers. This mentee also expressed concerns regarding the provision of written resources. Mentors offered these illustrations related to mentor training.

Mentor F expressed, “We have certain sessions that we have to do a couple times a year” (SA). This veteran mentor expected periodic training events. Mentor I, as another veteran mentor, voiced: “We receive training as to how to work with our mentee in terms of school policies, in terms of children/student and teacher relationship” (VR, 2). Mentor I also acknowledged that sessions are provided regarding salient areas. Mentor J explained:

Yes, we talked about situations that the teacher would face throughout the school year starting in September where they would have what they call an excited feeling about

entering into the school system and their ideas about what they wanted to happen. Then we talked about the mid-school year. (TE, 4)

The assertion indicated that the training seemed insightful for the mentor pertaining to the stages of teacher development during the year. The phases in the year of a new teacher include periods of positive and negative experiences that a good mentor should be trained and prepared to address appropriately.

Mentor H described the training as:

It was really a lecture, but, like I said, it was a role-playing seminar, but it wasn't as informative as I thought it should be. I feel like they should have separated it maybe seasoned mentors—seasoned mentors and first-year mentors. And then maybe the first-year mentors could have gotten a deeper seminar versus the seasoned mentors maybe just could have got a refresher on, you know, how to be a good mentor. (MG, 1)

Interestingly, Mentor H is a novice mentor who mentioned that tailored sessions would be helpful for asking questions about roles and improving skills to help new teachers. Moir, Barlin, Gless, and Miles, (2009) remark, “In fact, the traditional concept of buddy mentor can be an obstacle to conceptualizing and performing the new role of instructional mentor” (p. 52).

Generally, there was some dissatisfaction in teacher comments regarding this theme. Some participants felt that mentors and mentees require diverse training for the respective of roles. In particular, mentee exceptional education training was limited concerning procedures and guidelines. In addition, the mentors could benefit from differentiated training to either introduce mentoring and build strategies for novice mentors or broaden techniques to extend expertise regarding instructional strategies for veteran mentors.

### **Perspectives of Impact on Teaching Practice**

The respondents expressed various notions regarding the category of teaching practices. The mentors and mentees were asked various questions about their teaching experiences and the best practices for instruction and learning in schools. There were contradictions regarding the perceptions of the mentees and mentors. These mentor quotes present examples of the impact of mentoring on teaching practice. Mentor J offered the following comment concerning the mentoring relationship and teaching practice:

I don't think it did, because I feel like she came in with a good understanding of what the expectations were of her in relation to teaching. And I feel like she's been consistent all year. I don't think that's ever been a concern for me, her capacity to teach or skills in that area. I do feel like her advocacy in terms of working with her students with exceptional education has grown. (TE, 5)

Teaching practice was reported unchanged due to perceived competency throughout the school year. An additional benefit was noted related to this mentee's use of best practices and appropriate considerations and decisions for special needs students. In the following, Mentor I remarked about her mentee, "Initially, she did have a difficult time because it was, here again, we're talking about a different playing field. She's coming from a private sector" (VR, 3). There was recognition at the onset of the year there was a concern for the mentee because of the mentee's previous experience in a corporate setting versus the school as a new work environment. There was identification regarding the needs of adult learners in comparison to children. Mentor F said:

Definitely I would have to say, yes, because while I wouldn't discourage him from using his own teaching practices. I would definitely suggest alternative, you know, practices. For example, I know a lot of our students are audio/visual learners, or they are very hands-on learners, or they need to use manipulatives. So I encourage him to incorporate stuff like that into his lesson plan. (SA, 5)

Interestingly, the mentors expressed that mentees required information on what works and how to deliver instruction due to different professional backgrounds. Newman and Simmons (2000) contend that "good instructional practice is at the center of improving student achievement" (p. 12). In the previous comment Mentor F supported diversified teaching practices to accommodate learners. The mentor also embraced freedom and reflection in the mentoring relationship related to the mentee's practice. In addition, Mentor F noted this observation regarding his mentee's teaching practice as follows:

Classroom management has definitely changed. You know, the students are more focused. And because they're more focused he tends to have less referrals. In fact, I haven't heard him speaking about a referral anytime recently. So I guess we're working on this point now where we wouldn't have any down time during our classroom. We are already preplanned, so we know what we can use for any sort of down time and so we wouldn't have any reason to have our students to be rowdy or have a reason to be defiant. (SA, 6)

The mentoring relationship provided opportunities to address classroom management through the development of proactive strategies to maintain student's time on task during teaching. Mentor F feels this teaching practice reinforced structure to increase achievement and

decrease discipline concerns. Mentor I mentions an observation regarding the teaching practice of assigned Mentee D and the mentoring relationship as, “I think it may have enhanced it for her by giving some tips on different things that may work within the classroom setting for her, but she is doing a fantastic job” (VR, 4). The mentoring relationship promoted learning how to expand current strategies to address academic and behavior situations in the classroom.

Mentor G explained the following: “If you are coming from a business background, not everything that pertains to that arena would fit. And especially if you are dealing with children who have specific learning disabilities” (LF, 2). Mentor G cautions that the previous work experience of alternate route teachers may be applicable to the classrooms; however, not all aspects. The adjustment to the setting was evident in instruction, behavior, and federal document preparation. In regard to teaching practice and the mentoring relationship, Mentee D notes, “Some good feedback, advice with regard to how to get. . . how I can kind of cut down on some of the talking and some of the behavior issues that I’ve had” (KM, 4). Mentee D noted that teaching practice only in the area of discipline was changed through ways to improve classroom management and implementation because of the mentor’s recommendations. Stronge (2007) suggests, “Indeed, reflective practices are crucial to lifelong learning and a professional necessity” (p. 31).

These mentee statements depict instances of the impact of mentoring on teaching practice. Mentee C provided the following impression:

It really hasn’t changed my teaching practice. It just makes me feel that, you know, sometimes, just like the students, they don’t want to do some things, but you have to

continue to work at relationships or the skill to get better. So it just makes me want to do it a lot more. (HP, 2)

Mentee C shared that improvement of skills should be a professional and personal aim; however, this mentoring relationship had no bearing on teaching practice. Mentee B also voiced a similar observation regarding the mentoring relationship and teaching practice:

No, it has not changed my teaching practices at all. I would say I still continue to teach in the normal format that I've always taught. Nothing has changed in that manner. What has changed, I would say, is the process I go through in completing my IEPs. (BN, 4)

The routine regarding the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) changed but the same instructional methods were implemented in the classroom. The mentee's viewpoint indicated that the mentoring relationship did not transform this teacher's teaching or lessons in the classroom. The case manager acknowledged IEP compilation and creation as the noted area of change but not instruction in conjunction with the process. There was no mentoring relationship impact on teaching practice according to this teacher.

### **Mentee and Mentor Rapport Building**

The domain of rapport deals with the interactions and cooperation of mentors and mentees in regard to the mentoring relationship. The teachers were asked to discuss their informal and formal exchanges concerning one another. These following quotes portray ideas related to rapport building in the mentoring relationship. The majority of the participants discussed positive encounters for building rapport. Mentee E commented about her mentor:

During the morning, she always asks me, you know, do I have any questions from the previous day and at the end of the day she always comes back and asks me, is there

anything you want to talk about, anything that you felt didn't go right, what can I do. So she always briefs me in the morning and then in the afternoon before we go home.

(DO, 3)

The mentoring relationship allows time for the mentee and mentor to converse exchange ideas and ask questions for clarification. These periods allowed opportunities for the mentor and mentee to bond. In regard to mentoring and rapport, Mentee D said: "She's good at what she does. It's just that we don't do the same thing. But interesting, we have some of the same students, so there is a connection there for us, as well" (KM, 5). Smith and Evans (2008) found that "the literature on AR and induction mentors recommends that beginning teachers be assigned an official mentor in the same subject area" (p. 263). These mentoring team members created the opportunity to set goals and devise strategies based upon commonalities in area of classroom management and discipline of student behavior. In this illustration, Mentee D acknowledged an awareness of limitations concerning relevant content feedback. An absence of meaningful answers to inquiries can present difficulties in terms of teacher development.

In this example, Mentee B talked about the rapport as:

I would say very open. No stringent strictness, we must meet at this time, we must do this at that time, which is a little bit of what I need. . .is very open and very. . .kind of casual and laid back, not so much a dictator, but kind of letting us freestyle a little bit.

(BN, 5)

This leadership style of the mentor has enhanced the team's flexibility, relaxed encounters and integration of professional assets. This team appeared to function on the levels of comfort, trust and respect for one another as professional to handle tasks and duties accurately and effectively.

The mentor connected with the mentee early and followed through again to embrace the relationship, find answers and learn together. The realm of collegial support was also emphasized to form a partnership. The cohesiveness of the team existed for these members.

Mentee A offers this assertion:

I don't know if we necessarily built a rapport. We knew what our duties were and. . .that's pretty much what it was. It was not really a relationship that goes outside of school. It just stays in school and that's it. Pretty formal, if I would say. (FS, 3)

Jones and Pauley (2003) note, "Both parties need ample time to develop a rapport, and to make a decision, from both a personal and professional standpoint, as to whether or not they feel the mentoring relationship will be productive" (p. 24). There is a realization of informal and formal boundaries and experienced separation of professional and personal aspects in the mentoring relationship.

The following mentor remarks illustrate the aspect of rapport. In the realm of rapport, Mentor G expressed:

Well, I initially introduced myself, prior to actually knowing I was going to be the mentor, at our general back to school when the new staff and old staff come back in August. And then after that, I understood I was assigned to her so I reintroduced myself. So basically establishing a relationship. (LF, 4)

Mentor F also expressed insight and asserted the following:

One way I've learned that you could do something like that is, you know, having basic conversations with your mentee, just finding out what he likes, what he

doesn't like, how he feels about, you know, certain aspects of the job. (SA, 7)

A professional link was established regarding reliability and meeting the needs of a new teacher.

### **Communication Habits**

The majority of teachers indicated the existence of positive and functional systems concerning communication. Veteran and new alternate route teachers discussed their opinions related to communication in the mentoring team. Here are some quotes to illustrate the comments of mentors. Mentor J took an assertive stance toward communication:

I remember initially just walking up to her and letting her know that... I would be her mentor, and that I would answer any questions she had if she could find time throughout the day before school or after school if she needed me to talk with me about any of her concerns. . . . gave her my telephone number and email and just started from there. (TE, 6)

This approach allowed the relationship to evolve naturally through the extension of the first greeting. The friendly welcome conveyed the message that the mentor was available and ready for the mentoring relationship. Mentor I remarked:

We communicate via telephone, e-mail she emails me at home or I email her, or we just sit down and have conversations after school in terms of how her day has gone and how she feels she's doing based upon. . . .in terms of reaching the children (VR, 5)

This team found a system of options to connect with each other. In the category of communication Mentor H asserted the following:

I was introduced to her and basically that was it and then we just kind of, you know, during our grade level meeting we just talked. Well, her first week here, she didn't start teaching the very first week, she just came and observed. So, you know, that was good

So she could see our learning styles and see how I taught so she could probably take notes and see where she needs to go. So that was an indirect way of me mentoring her informally by her having to sit in and watch how my day goes and how I run my classroom. (MG, 2)

Mentor H set a foundation for future dialogue regarding learning in the relationship through allowing the mentee to observe an experience and reflect. There were chances for discussions and observations about teaching and learning. Jones and Pauley (2003) remark, “Mentors must be good communicators who are respectful of the mentee and their beliefs regarding educational practice and theory” (p. 24). These mentee quotes depict the remarks of mentees regarding the communication process in their mentoring relationship. For instance, Mentee B said of her mentor:

When she needs to catch me and ask me a question, or if I need to catch her and ask her a question, is [sic] I catch her walking down the hall and she comes in and helps me out, or I’ll go over to her room and kind of lightly tap on the door and go and get some assistance then. (BN, 6)

These informal interactions seemed to be the preference to obtain information and discuss issues. Mentee B mentioned impromptu encounters as accepted practice due to close room proximity. Mentee D also noted, “I don’t feel a level of discomfort in my conversations with her” (KM, 6). These personal and professional moments of sharing and caring emerged as valuable times for this team. In addition, Mentee A said:

I do have his cell phone number to call him if I do need assistance. I haven’t done so, but I can, and I also have his email address, as well, in terms of communication. We will see

each other in passing in the hallways and we will see each other in the exceptional education department. Like I said, it could be better, like I said, if we had. . .we taught on the same grade level. (FS, 4)

Mentee A expressed that the same teaching assignment area could increase the potential learning opportunities and multiple communication options. Mentee E stated, “We talk face-to-face, on the phone, anytime we get a chance we are talking.” (DO, 4). There seems to be an interest in maintaining contact between this mentor and mentee pair to share ideas.

## CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This qualitative study described the experiences of alternative licensure teachers and their mentors. This chapter includes a summary and conclusion, interpretation of findings, leadership implications, and suggestions for improvement. Recommendations for further research are also included. The purpose of this investigation was to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of first-year alternate route teachers and their mentors in the mentoring relationship?
2. What are the perceptions of first-year alternate route teachers and their mentors of the mentoring relationship?

Alternative teacher licensure programs can produce new recruits for our public schools. These candidates have worked in other occupations and followed an interest in teaching (Shaw, 2008). The hiring of second-career teachers meets the goals for personnel recruitment and the addition of skilled professionals who relate work experiences to education in schools (Resta et al., 2001). However, there is an assumption that first-year alternative route teachers share the same needs as their new traditionally trained colleagues. Thus, the primary focus involves beginning teacher support through induction and mentoring programs. Simmons (2005) asserts, “It is possible that the mentoring process of alternatively certified teachers is of even more importance than that of traditionally certified teachers” (p. 40).

### **Summary of Findings**

This research study examined information from the ten participants concerning their experiences and perceptions. The key findings for this discussion address the areas of mentoring partnership, mentee and mentor preparation and classroom instruction.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The andragogy adult learning theory was scrutinized thoroughly and seemed to lack usefulness to describe and interpret the particular data for this study. The findings in this investigation revealed minimal to no impact of the mentoring relationship on teaching practice and performance in the classroom. The features of andragogy were impractical to frame these mentoring interactions and adult learning experiences for teacher performance. Moir et al. (2009) assert, “Adults learn while on the job and therefore are likely to be much more engaged learners when the new ideas or strategies are directly linked to their professional success” (p. 80).

A constructivist lens was employed to analyze and understand data in this qualitative study. The theoretical approach allows the researcher to listen to participants and determine how this person understands the world and experiences (Paul et al., 2005). The interview data were analyzed in terms of situations, experiences and perceptions for first-year alternate route teachers and veteran teacher mentors. This paradigm features ontology, epistemology, and values as the focal points to examine the experiences and perceptions of the mentoring relationships.

### **Ontology**

Ontology enables the researcher to listen to the participants’ view of the world or what the individuals’ believe to be true and real for them (Paul et al., 2005). Mentors and mentees

noted that difference in opinions about relationship and productivity could inhibit the mentees' professional autonomy. First-year alternate route teachers and teacher mentors formulated meaning concerning encounters according to how situations made sense to them based upon their background and previous experiences. Erdem and Aytemur (2008) contend, "Satisfaction with a mentoring relationship depends on the nature of the interaction between mentor and protégé" (p. 560). The identification of capabilities of the new teacher and linking this background knowledge would be insightful for improvement and team concerns. Feiman-Nemser (2003) states that "the goal of new teacher learning should define the mentor's role and practice" (p. 28).

The mentors and mentees also shared their opinions of the relationships and teaching practice. The mentoring impact on teaching did not change the classroom instruction for these teams.

### **Epistemology**

Epistemology is defined as the nature of knowledge and guides the researcher to employ the approach the participant uses to acquire and seek information (Paul et al., 2005). The mentees and mentors recognized that learning requires requests for information to meet learning goals. Bullough and Knowles (1990) report, "Some second-career beginning teachers may have a limited understanding of the available roles as well as the responsibilities of teachers" (p. 111).

Mentor F expressed insight and asserted the following:

I got to understand where my mentee is coming from in terms of his level of experience, in terms of, you know, maybe he was in a former job, you know, a career switcher, so I've got to be familiar with what he knows or what he doesn't know. . . .(SA, 7)

Schwille (2008) contends, “The focus on practice moves us beyond role definitions to conceptions of what mentors actually do to support and guide novice’s learning” (p. 143). This mentor also said, “If you could figure out where he is at right now, you could figure out where, you know, there might be need for improvement and you could work with him to help him to get to that point.” (SA, 8)

In regards to mentoring preparation, a mentee shared feelings regarding leadership and partnership in the learning and mentoring experience. Mentee E is an exceptional education teacher assigned to a novice mentor this year who provides materials. This mentee stated a weakness existed with her mentor in the mentoring relationship in this area. She made the following comment:

I would say the weakness is. . . that because of the work that we do is like I know that she sometimes wants to give me all the resources, but she cannot because if she does then I won’t learn it on my own. (DO, 5)

It appears that Mentee E desires independence to grow in the relationship while there is a perception that the mentor prefers the new teachers’ dependence in the experience. Schwille (2008) asserts, “Conceptualizing mentoring as professional practice that requires knowing your learner and the subject matter and how to connect them through educative experiences means that mentoring practice must be learned” (p. 165). The interview participants discussed their learning experiences and the impact of the mentoring relationship on their professional growth as mentors or mentees. Moir (2005) declared, “Mentoring knowledge and ‘best practices’ are now recognized as necessary for an effective induction and mentoring program” (p. 98).

## Values

The concept of values directs the researcher to explore the belief system of participants regarding their engagement with others (Paul et al., 2005). The study participants conveyed their viewpoints concerning positive and negative aspects of their mentoring relationships and value of a collegiality program for educators. The participants desired equal involvement in the relationships. Lipton and Wellman (2005) suggest that “with clear understandings of expectations and intentions, mentors and protégés can shape their interactions to balance mutual goals and needs with their personalities and preferred approaches to adult learning” (p. 149). Mentee E expressed, “I believe my role is if I have any questions, I can always go to my mentor and ask her especially because we are working in the same field” (DO, 6). The mentor and mentee can rely upon one another for assistance. Feiman-Nemser (2003) remarked that “before novices begin teaching, they go through an initial phase of learning” (p. 26). The respondents discussed their feelings and encounters in the designated roles and how this contributed to their fulfillment of expectations and ownership in the relationship. Mentor J described the relationship with her mentee in this comment: “I think we’ve come a long way, that she is able to at this point come to me with ideas about the academics and advocacy instead of me just putting so many things up front and doing the work for her” (TE, 7). Koballa et al. (2008) argued:

Interpretations of mentoring may be based on portrayals in movies and television shows, interactions with adults during childhood, or mentoring roles ascribed to novices and experts in the private sector, in addition to those derived from participation in school-based mentoring experiences. (p. 45)

In addition, Mentor F explained the intent as a way to support each other professionally. The mentor explained, “So both of us had that kind of . . . mentality about us whereas we listen to each other” (LF, 4). This mentor and mentee are recognized as individual professionals with unique contributions. In this study, Mentee D voiced this opinion in reference to the mentor and interaction with others:

I was just saying that we initially spoke and if I had questions, you know, I would make a note of things that I could ask her but then a lot of . . . a lot of it fell to a colleague with whom I work very closely now because she was. . . she dealt more with my subject area. (KM, 7)

This mentee experienced no value in the relationship concerning adjustments of teaching practices. A minimal worth was placed on the mentors’ contribution to changes in professional techniques. Smith and Evans (2008) argue, “All educators who work in schools—not just official mentors—should be prepared to support the needs of AR teachers” (p. 273).

### **Significance of Findings**

The significant findings of this study are in the areas of mentoring partnership, mentee and mentor preparation and classroom instruction. These topics are relevant to the andragogy model components as goals and purposes, individual and situational differences and core adult learning principles. In particular, a connection of these andragogy features regarding the themes (a) shared ownership, (b) importance of differentiated training, (c) perspectives on teaching practice, (d) mentee and mentor rapport, and (e) communication habits will be addressed in the discussion.

The area of mentoring partnership involved the acceptance of responsibilities. The mentors and mentees assume roles in the mentoring relationship. The veteran and alternate route teachers embrace obligations as stakeholders and contribute to the partnership. Mentoring partnership relates to the shared ownership theme in this study.

The theme of shared ownership emerged as a focus for mentors and mentees through engagement in the mentoring relationship. The andragogy feature of goals and purposes is relevant to the theme of shared ownership and addresses the aspects of individual and institutional growth. The aim of the mentoring program is to promote teacher development individually and as a school division. The mentors and mentees accept responsibility to strive toward this purpose through mutual participation in the mentoring model and relationship.

Additionally, the andragogy domain of individual and situational differences also relates to the shared ownership theme. The mentors and mentees conveyed a commitment to fulfill expectations regarding the roles to meet expectations individually and for the team despite various teaching assignments and backgrounds. A consideration of the backgrounds of alternate route teachers may provide insight concerning ways to better meet the individual needs of mentees in the mentoring relationship.

Next, the area of mentee and mentor preparation revealed differences regarding training expectations. The concern for tailored training experiences emerged for new and veteran mentors. The designed training could address opportunities to expand the skills of the veteran mentor and provide the essential knowledge for the novice mentor. Mentee and mentor preparation connects to the importance of differentiation of training theme for this study.

Moreover, the andragogy core adult learning principles of prior experience of the learner and self-concept of the learner pertain to the importance of differentiation of training theme. These core principles of the andragogy model focus on the context for learning. The recognition concerning the needs of mentors and mentees and motivation to promote learning for each other to builds a foundation for learning in the mentoring team. The mentor becomes a facilitator in the mentoring relationship to establish the context for the mentee's learning. The overall emphasis is the mentee's acquisition of skills for growth as a new teacher; however, a meaningful experience for mentors as learners also requires expansion of mentoring practice for veteran mentors.

In addition, in the area of mentee preparation exceptional education mentees desired customized training to provide specific information on compliance and regulation issues. The core principles of the andragogy model also focus on the context for learning for these mentees. The alternate route teachers perceived that they would actively seek information for their readiness in the learning process. The mentees desired personal initiative to determine their adult learning requests for information to meet their needs in the mentoring relationship.

An absence of meaningful answers to inquiries can present difficulties in terms of teacher development. The new exceptional education teacher requires a foundation of information to promote the development as a self-directed learner to support the attainment of skills. Exceptional education mentees desired training improvement regarding guidelines.

Lastly, there is the issue of classroom instruction. The emphasis on student achievement and an understanding of pedagogy in regards to classroom instruction is an area of interest. Mentees are required to acquire and demonstrate teaching competency in the classroom. Their mentors accept the task of modeling techniques, sharing resources and utilizing effective

teaching strategies for new alternate route teachers. This finding of classroom instruction relates to the theme of perspectives of impact on teaching practice.

Furthermore, the andragogy realm of goals and purposes is relevant to the theme of perspectives of impact on teaching practice. The aim of the mentoring is teacher development for effective teaching strategies in classrooms and student achievement. A challenge develops when the teacher development goals for the school division and schools as institutions and the mentors and mentees differ in the growth process. The mentees in this study perceived that the mentoring relationship had minimum to no impact on their teaching practices. The mentees perceived a primary emphasis on classroom management, behavior issues, clerical tasks and school procedures rather than feedback on instruction in the mentoring relationships.

The andragogy principle of individual and situational differences is also relevant to the theme. There is a consideration of different responses to teaching situations based upon background experience of veteran mentors and competencies of new alternate route teachers. The mentees appeared to desire autonomy and independence concerning their skills and knowledge for classroom instruction. Perhaps the mentees preferred to focus on the mentoring relationship for a social connection in the realm of collegiality rather than a professional growth opportunity. The development of these new alternate route teachers through their mentoring may impact the promotion of best instructional practices to produce successful educators and students in our classrooms in the future.

Finally, the andragogy component of individual and situational differences is also germane to the themes of mentee and mentor rapport building and communication habits. The mentors and mentees established interaction and cooperation based on the needs individually.

There were relaxed and flexible encounters that consisted of formal and informal sessions. The mentoring teams utilized positive and functional systems that worked for the members to include openness and multiple communication options in their experiences. The team members exchanged information through impromptu classrooms visits, hallway encounters, cellular phone conversations and e-mail sessions.

### **Implications for Leadership**

There are significant implications at the central office and school levels concerning mentoring relationships for first-year urban alternate route teachers. First, the development and implementation of a systemic mentoring program is an important initiative for central office administrators. Successful mentoring programs must be created to produce capable future mentors of alternate route teachers. Schwillle (2008) comments, “Good mentors link forms of mentoring to the immediate needs of the novice as well as to a broader end they have in view—helping the novice learn. . . .” (p. 160). There must be an understanding of the purpose for the induction program and a discussion of specific expectations for mentees, mentors and role definitions.

Second, the design and organization of mentor training to develop these teacher leaders requires consideration. Distinct differences appeared for novice and veteran mentors regarding training requests and school mentoring experiences. The differentiation of training to meet their needs is necessary to promote the productivity and effectiveness of the mentors in supporting new alternate route teachers. Diverse training has been used generally in the area of professional

development; however, new and veteran mentors could benefit from this approach for the mentor program.

The training sessions should include a variety of presentations and content to prepare mentors for their role based on their level of mentoring experience and work with adult learners. This design could provide opportunities to expand the techniques of the veteran mentor. The novice mentor could gain the essential knowledge to build skills as someone new to this role. Overall, the veteran and new mentors could be better prepared for the professional and potential social and emotional aspects that may emerge in a partnership with a first-year alternate route colleague.

Next, the school administrators must carefully consider veteran teacher selections for mentors and pairings of teams for successful collegial experiences. The mentoring assignments should promote the goals of teacher development and student achievement. Leadership styles and competencies along with the features of rapport and communication have paramount importance in these mentoring relationships. The team members need to establish a rapport to ensure that mentor and mentee share information and communicate the needs and expectations of the partners. The pairings should reflect the strengths and knowledge each member can offer to become a cohesive team for the professional development as educators.

In addition, the building administrators must become an active participant in the mentoring relationship with the veteran mentor and first-year alternate route teacher. This endeavor is necessary to monitor progress of the new teacher and to offer professional guidance for the mentoring team. The participation of the principal in the mentoring relationship could convey that the administrator is interested and committed to the success of the new teacher and

the mentor. This engagement also provides an opportunity for the school administrator to identify if the mentoring pairings require changes.

Finally, the area of teaching practice should be a focus for professional development and the induction for first-year alternate route teachers. Classroom instruction is critical in particular. Shank (2005) asserts that “through collegial support and challenge, novices and experienced teachers can learn to be open about their practices and grapple with the complexities of teaching” (p. 81). The collegial support is the opportunity for mentees as leaders to frame conversations around student achievement and teacher performance. The alternate route teachers in this study demonstrated few if any changes in terms of pedagogy and instructional delivery due to suggestions of mentors. The area of emphasis for the new teachers involved primarily classroom management and professional responsibilities such as clerical duties. The mentoring actions in the relationships may focus on other areas for alternate route teacher support instead of academic concerns. Therefore, professional development opportunities for these teachers should be an ongoing initiative for educational leaders to ensure that new alternate route educators reflect on instruction and teaching practices in the classroom.

### **Suggestions for Improvement**

These are suggestions for improvement of mentoring relationships for first-year alternate route teachers. First, the mentoring programs must present unambiguous goals related to the purpose and outcomes for mentors and mentees. The mentors and mentees must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and expectations and the nature of the mentoring relationship. This is necessary to promote teacher development in the program. The mentoring program must incorporate a monitoring component related to team and individual planning to

guide the direction of the relationship toward professional growth. The mentoring program must recognize formal and informal opportunities for mentors and mentees to evaluate and convey if special needs are addressed regularly.

Second, the mentor training must address the divergent requirements of novice and veteran mentors. The differentiation of training for mentors requires implementation. The new mentors need an introduction to mentoring to establish a foundation of knowledge and strategies to navigate the relationship successfully. In contrast, the seasoned mentors could benefit from opportunities for reflection on the mentoring as a craft through exploration of strengths and weaknesses to expand their repertoire. Due to the different stages for these mentors their training should reflect this distinction and relevance.

In addition, the teaching practice must focus on instructional discussions and strategies to improve student achievement through professional development and beneficial mentoring support. The mentoring relationship must serve as an open forum for dialogue related to rigor and best practices. Teachers must become involved in several components such as classroom management, assessment, organizational tasks, clerical responsibilities, grading, and parental communication. However, the primary focus in each classroom must be instruction. New alternate route teachers may become preoccupied with all the classroom responsibilities and underestimate the impact and importance of daily reflection on teaching practice. Thus, leaders have to use creativity and assertiveness to lead the instructional discussions for mentors and towards pedagogy expertise for teaching practice due to possible absences of field experiences for the new alternate route teacher.

Next, the principal must engage in the mentoring relationship with alternate route teachers and their mentors. Administrators identify mentors for these new teachers and complete the pairing usually due to similar grade level, subject area, or location in the school. However, pairings of mentors for first-year alternate route teachers on different grade level or content areas impacts opportunities for conferences, observations, and plans to discuss instruction and practice. A formal introduction may occur or the teachers may handle this step sometimes. The initial meeting is a critical beginning step in the relationship for the teachers but signals the end of the principals' participation. The engagement of the principal in the mentoring relationship illustrates a direct link to the mentor and the first-year alternate route teacher as another level of support in the induction and professional development process. School leaders need to engage in the mentoring relationships to ensure that the new alternate route teachers acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for teaching and learning. The involvement of the principal signifies the commitment to the alternate route teacher's success, confidence in the mentor, and high expectations for teaching and learning in the school. Vairo, Marcus, and Weiner (2007) contend, "The building level administrator should function as the head teacher" (p. 84). School principals are responsible for the establishment of a successful learning environment for teachers and students. Extensive opportunities are necessary to evaluate teachers and observe lessons to provide support.

Lastly, first-year alternate route exceptional education teachers require improvement regarding training and resources. These alternate route teachers would benefit from a formal introduction to exceptional education regulations and the implementation of programs in this district and schools. This cadre of teachers previously worked in corporate settings and the

military; therefore, education practices must be learned and particularly thorough explanations of complex federal exceptional education mandates are necessary. Simmons (2005) suggested, “With the current No Child Left Behind emphasis on testing and specifically the achievement of special education students, an understanding of special education is imperative for this group of teachers” (p. 39). The need for intense experiential training, extensive procedure manuals, and frequent monitoring of the delivery of services for exceptional education services are significant.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This study examined the dynamics of mentoring relationships for first-year alternate route teachers. It is crucial for mentoring programs to provide beneficial induction to meet the unique training needs for alternate route teachers along with differentiated training for their mentors. Central office leaders and building administrators must design and implement systematic and comprehensive mentoring initiatives to support alternate route teachers in urban schools. Clear definitions and understanding of mentoring roles, expectations and obligations are necessary for functional mentoring teams and teacher development. Diversified training for novice and veteran mentors is necessary. Specialized training for exceptional education teachers is critical. Building administrators must carefully consider assignments of mentors for first-year alternative route teachers.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

There are some recommendations for further research. First, this study was comprised of six exceptional education teachers as mentors or mentees. The exceptional education mentees indicated that training and resources were necessary to meet their expectations for job

performance. A comparison of alternate route teachers and their mentors regarding exceptional education training would be beneficial to explore the impact on teaching practice and efficacy.

Second, another area of further interest is the principals' involvement in mentoring relationships for alternate route teachers. In this investigation, the principals participated only in the teacher screening process; however, the principals' involvement in the mentoring relationship was not examined. Administrators are responsible for high caliber teaching in classrooms to promote academic achievement. A future study could explore the perceptions of first-year alternate route teachers and their mentors and regarding the role of the principal in the mentoring relationship.

Lastly, the intent of this study was to explore the dynamics of the mentoring relationships for first-year alternate route teachers and their mentors. It would be relevant to explore the mentoring team experiences when mentors with nontraditional teacher preparation background are paired with first-year alternate route teachers in mentoring relationships.

## **List of References**

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## APPENDIX A

### Interview Guide 1

#### **Mentor (first year alternative licensure teacher or career switcher)**

1. Introduction, purpose of interview and anonymity. The teachers will be informed about the purpose of the interview and the topics. The teachers will be assured about the confidentiality of all information discussed.

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss your feelings and thoughts about the mentoring relationship. You and 19 other teachers will participate in this study.

The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' beliefs about the mentoring relationships. I will ask you questions about mentoring a first-year alternative licensure teacher or career switcher. I will ask you to discuss ideas about changes or improvements.

Your responses will be confidential. I will not share the information with any school staff member, school division employee, or any other person that could have an impact on your job. Your name or any other names that may be mentioned in the interview will not be used; neither will any other information that could identify you.

I would like to tape record the interview so that I can remember everything you say. Is that acceptable to you? You will receive a copy of the transcript for review. I will make any changes or additions that you request.

During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions I ask, please let me know. I expect the interview will last half an hour to an hour. But you can stop the interview at any point.

If you give me your permission to use this information, please sign this form. Do you have any questions before we start? Why are you meeting with me today? The interview will begin with demographic information.

## 2. Demographic Information

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your work history? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your level of education and background?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Interview Guide 1 (Mentor)**

Why did you pursue a teaching career?

Was your teacher preparation traditional or nontraditional? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the program:  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are your years of teaching experience? \_\_\_\_\_

What have been your teaching assignments?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where have you worked as a teacher?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is your current teaching assignment?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the names of your current school and division?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been assigned to the present school?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which school was the location for the mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the school division provide training for mentors?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the mentoring model for your school division.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Guide 1

### Mentee (first year alternative licensure teacher or career switcher)

1. Introduction, purpose of interview and anonymity. The teachers will be informed about the purpose of the interview and the topics. The teachers will be assured about the confidentiality of all information discussed.

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss your feelings and thoughts about the mentoring relationship. You and 19 other teachers will participate in this study.

The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' beliefs about the mentoring relationships. I will ask you questions about mentoring a first-year alternative licensure teacher or career switcher. I will ask you to discuss ideas about changes or improvements.

Your responses will be confidential. I will not share the information with any school staff member, school division employee, or any other person that could have an impact on your job. Your name or any other names that may be mentioned in the interview will not be used; neither will any other information that could identify you.

I would like to tape record the interview so that I can remember everything you say. Is that acceptable to you? You will receive a copy of the transcript for review. I will make any changes or additions that you request.

During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions I ask, please let me know. I expect the interview will last half an hour to an hour. But you can stop the interview at any point.

If you give me your permission to use this information, please sign this form. Do you have any questions before we start? Why are you meeting with me today? The interview will begin with demographic information.

### 2. Demographic Information

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What were your previous occupations? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your level of education and background?

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**Interview Guide 1 (Mentee)**

Why did you pursue a teaching career?

---

Was your teacher preparation traditional or nontraditional?

---

Describe the program:

---

What is your current teacher licensure status?

---

Describe your requirements:

---

---

What have been your teaching assignments?

---

Where have you worked as a teacher?

---

What is your current teaching assignment?

---

What are the names of your current school and division?

---

---

---

How many years have you been assigned to the present school?

---

Which school was the location for the mentoring relationship?

---

Does the school division provide staff development for mentees?

---

Describe the mentoring model for your school division:

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **Interview Guide 2**

#### **Mentor (first year alternative licensure teacher or career switcher)**

1. What are your perceptions of a beginning teacher?
2. What are your perceptions of an alternative licensure teacher or career switcher?
3. Do you feel first year alternative licensure teachers meet professional responsibilities?  
Describe your response.
4. How did you perceive your role as a mentor?
5. What were the strengths of your mentoring relationship?
6. What were the weaknesses of your mentoring relationship?
7. Did you and the mentee teach the same grade or content area?
8. Did the mentoring relationship improve the mentee's teaching performance?
9. Describe the communication process in your mentoring relationship.
10. How could the mentoring relationship have been improved?

## **Interview Guide 2**

### **Mentee (first year alternative teachers or career switchers)**

1. What are your perceptions of a beginning teacher?
2. What are your perceptions of an alternative licensure teacher or career switcher?
3. Do you feel first year alternative licensure teachers meet professional responsibilities?  
Describe your response.
4. How did you perceive your role as a mentee?
5. What were the strengths of your mentoring relationship?
6. What were the weaknesses of your mentoring relationship?
7. Did you and the mentor teach the same grade or content area?
8. Did the mentoring relationship improve your teaching performance?
9. Describe the communication process in your mentoring relationship?
10. How could the mentoring relationship have been improved?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Guide 3**

#### **Mentor (first year alternative licensure teachers or career switchers)**

1. How were you assigned as a mentor for the alternative licensure teacher or career switcher?
2. Describe the mentoring experience.
3. What were your expectations of the mentee?
4. What were the challenges of your mentoring relationship?
5. What were the benefits of your mentoring relationship?

I do not have any more questions. Is there anything you would like to add? Thank you for being willing to share your feelings and thoughts with me. I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, you will not be identified in any way with the information you have provided for me. I will provide a copy of the interview for your review so that you can make changes or additions. Thank you again for your time.

### **Interview Guide 3**

#### **Mentee (first year alternative licensure teachers or career switchers)**

1. How were you assigned as a mentee for the alternative licensure teacher or career switcher?
2. Describe the mentoring experience.
3. What were your expectations of the mentor?
4. What were the challenges of your mentoring relationship?
5. What were the benefits of your mentoring relationship?

I do not have any more questions. Is there anything you would like to add? Thank you for being willing to share your feelings and thoughts with me. I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, you will not be identified in any way with the information you have provided for me. I will provide a copy of the interview for your review so that you can make changes or additions. Thank you again for your time.

## VITA

Gwendolyn Denise Perkins was born on October 8, 1962 in Richmond, Virginia. She is an American citizen. She graduated from Marshall-Walker High School, Richmond, Virginia in 1981. She attained a Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric and Communications and Sociology from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia in 1985. She was employed for 7 years in the human services profession and health care industry. She pursued graduate studies in 1992 at the University of Richmond and completed the on-campus Career Switcher program. She earned a Master of Teaching in 1993 and embarked on teaching as a second career. She has 18 years of professional experience in urban education. She has been employed with Richmond City Public Schools since 1993 as a classroom teacher, teacher leader, teacher mentor and administrator.