A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF NOVICE TEACHER RETENTION IN TWO RURAL MIDWEST SCHOOLS

A Dissertation by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my work on this dissertation to my family. Thanks for the support given to me by my wife Karen who stood by and encouraged me through the process. Thanks to my three girls for being patient with “Daddy” while he needed to spend weekends writing and working.

Thanks to Dr. Dierksen for providing leadership, support and encouragement for the completion of this paper. Thanks also to my mom (Dr. Jane Anderson), brothers (Steve “Chip”, Larry and LeAnn) for believing that it was possible for me to reach this goal.
There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses--only results.

-Vince Lombardi
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ABSTRACT

This purpose of this study was to conduct a qualitative study using the theoretical framework of organizational trust to determine the factors that novice teachers felt were most important to their retention. This qualitative study utilized data gleaned from 8 novice teachers from two rural secondary schools. The novice teachers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of organizational trust through carefully designed research questions. Data collection methods included: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis. The data were grouped by themes through the use of inductive, intuitive reasoning to decide which themes fit the research questions.

Collectively, the findings revealed the magnitude of the effect of a school’s ability to retain novice teachers based on factors that support organizational trust. Factors included the importance of administrative trust: trust through the mentor relationship, and trust from students, parents and faculty.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction/Background

A consistent problem in public education is teacher attrition, which is defined as teachers leaving or not entering the teaching profession upon completion of a teacher education program (Grissmer, 1997). Beginning as early as the 1970's and 1980's, research began to reveal teacher attrition to be an issue. According to Heyns (1988), a follow up report of the National Longitudinal Study of 1972 indicated 25.2% of those who completed teacher education programs never entered teaching in elementary or secondary schools. As reported in the National Center for Education Statistics’ Schools and Staffing Surveys, attrition rates for American public school teachers increased from 5.6% between 1987-88 and 1988-89 to 7.4% between 1999-2000 and 2000-01 and to 8.0% between 2007-08 and 2008-09. A very small percentage of those ‘‘leavers’’ left teaching involuntarily. For example, in 2003, among the 269,800 public school teachers who left teaching (8.0% of the public teaching force), only 5.3% of them left teaching due to termination of contracts (Keigher, 2010). Ongoing research has given the issue of teacher attrition increasing importance and urgency (Ingersoll, 2003).

The majority of teachers who leave the teaching profession do so within the first three years (Whitener, Gruber, Tingos, & Fondelier, 1997). These teachers, whom I term as novice teachers (teachers who have been teaching from 0-3 years), are of the most concern when looking at overall teacher attrition. Because of their exodus from the profession, qualified teachers are becoming difficult to obtain and retain (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991; Petty, 2007). Efforts to address this issue have focused on increasing the number of teachers entering the profession. Although these efforts address the quantity of the teaching
force, they do not ensure that retention of quality of teachers remains high, especially in the long term.

Reasons for teachers’ leaving at this early career stage are not difficult to discern (Odell, 1990). Novice teachers are frequently given the most difficult assignments with classes populated by unsuccessful or unmotivated students. Having large numbers of students and multiple classes to prepare for with little or no support puts novice teachers at risk for early departure from the profession. Odell further stated novice teachers often under-conceptualize what teaching involves. Almost 40 years ago, Lortie (1975) stated it best by saying novice teachers spent many years in an ”apprenticeship of observation” (p. 62), but watching what teachers do is not sufficient training for knowing why they do it. Novice teachers demonstrate their effectiveness when they are able to articulate the purpose behind their behaviors (Hussar, 1999). Effective teachers are able to explain to students, parents, and school personnel not only why the content they teach is important but also why the methods they use are appropriate. They understand the connections between what was taught yesterday, what is taught today, and what will be taught tomorrow and are able to see how individual lessons fit in the greater curriculum picture. Unfortunately, novice teachers reported feeling a sense of isolation as they attempted to develop their teaching effectiveness and address the complex demands of teaching (Britzman 1991, Lortie 1975, Rosenholtz 1989). It was therefore important to investigate the problem of novice teacher retention.

**Research Problem: Novice Teacher Retention**

The goal of retaining novice teachers once they enter the profession is to develop and maintain qualified teachers. Currently, public schools are not retaining enough qualified novice teachers interested in the teaching profession (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999). Research
supports that 50% of novice teachers’ reportedly leave within a 0-3 year window of teaching in the classroom (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Recent data shows 20 to 30% of teachers leave the profession within the first three years of teaching in public school systems, and at even higher rates in economically disadvantaged and rural settings (Berry, 2004; Bradley & Loadman; 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Policymakers, educators, and education stakeholders are increasingly being challenged to acknowledge staggering statistics related to novice teacher retention (Berry, 2004; Billingsley, 2004; Bradley & Loadman, 2005; Brown, 2003; Dove, 2004; Hunter & Kiernan, 2005; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Johnson 2005; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kajs, 2002; Woullard & Coats, 2004). The consequences associated with the inability to retain novice teachers include inadequate educational experiences for students, reduced student achievement levels, and insufficient competence level of graduates (Billingsley, 2004). According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, (2008) recruiting and retaining highly qualified novice teachers will continue to impact whether or not students learn and achieve higher academic standards.

However, in spite of these statistics on novice teachers leaving the profession, there are those who choose to remain. Factors for job satisfaction and thus retention are supportive administration, supportive guidance within the school (Gonzalez, 2004), feeling empowered (trusted) to make decisions and have influence, and feeling like a valued part of the school community (Woods & Weasmer, 2002). Still another approach to understanding teacher job satisfaction combines affective and cognitive elements from the perspective of interpersonal relationships. Research has suggested that teachers derive their job satisfaction from their relationships with students, colleagues, and administration (Dinham, 1995).

Teaching is a demanding and stressful job, especially for novice teachers just entering the
profession. Often, after only a few days of district and building orientation, novice teachers are thrown into a classroom and expected to perform all the same functions as experienced, veteran teachers (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Receiving help is often difficult because these novice teachers have not yet had a chance to learn about the school culture and become part of the school community (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson & Hoke, 2002; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). This acculturation process can be more of a challenge in the teaching profession than in other professions because of the amount of time most new teachers spend in the classroom, overworked and isolated from the colleagues who could provide assistance and support (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; McClure, Red, & Hammer, 2003). As policymakers and educators have identified teacher turnover as a problem, they have begun to focus their attention on improving working conditions. A study by the Center for Teaching Quality looked specifically at this problem and found a correlation between better-quality working conditions and decreased teacher turnover. They have also found a link between better working conditions and higher student achievement (Center for Teaching Quality 2007).

Interpersonal relationships are considered the main sources of novice teacher job satisfaction. Furnham (1992) further described interpersonal relations as being a main contributing factor in working conditions. The presence that gives such satisfaction is called organizational trust. Theories of organizational trust (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) and relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) will serve as the broad framework for this study.

**Theoretical Framework: Organizational Trust**

This section provides an overview of the general construct of trust, and then discusses organizational and relational trust. Hargreaves and Fink (2007) stated trust is evident when
people come to rely on one another and when relationships have coherence and continuity. This study focused on organizational trust and associated variables as perceived in the school environment by novice teachers. From an internal organizational perspective, related research (Hubbell & Chory-Assad, 2005; Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001) has suggested that certain variables associated with employee views of the work environment may affect employee perceptions of organizational trust. Atkinson and Butcher (2003) defined trust as:

The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party, based on the expectation, that the other will perform a particular action important to the person trusting, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. (p. 199)

Willingness to be vulnerable and to take a risk implies there is something of importance to be lost (Mayer et al., 1995). Different definitions and models of trust focus on features such as integrity, competence, openness, vulnerability, reliability, and positive expectations (Kramer, 1999; Rousseau et al., 1998; Jones & George, 1998; Huemer, 1998). These features refer to trust as a positive expectation that another person will not – through words, actions or decisions – act opportunistically. As an individual attribute, trust has been defined as an individual's trust in the motives of others and on individual characteristics associated with being perceived as trustworthy. Trust describes a belief, attitude, or expectation concerning the likelihood that the actions or outcomes of others will be acceptable or will serve the interests of others (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). To Cook and Wall (1980), trust was the extent to which “one is willing to ascribe good intentions to, and have confidence in, the words and actions of other people” (p. 39).

Trust can be viewed as an individual attribute, a behavior, a situational feature, and an institutional arrangement (Sitkin & Roth, 1993).

Conversely, mistrust has been cited as the primary obstacle in employer/employee
relations (McCune, 1998). For instance, if novice teachers feel betrayed or mistrusted they may engage in destructive organizational behaviors such as not engaging fully in important staff meetings. They may also withhold information regarding student needs (Gilbert & Tang, 1998). Research has suggested that a lack of predictability and safety in organizational relationships results in low organizational performance (Cox, 1993). Lack of predictability and safety could have a profound effect on novice teacher retention. Culbert and McDonough (1986) described the importance of trust in the following way: “without trust and trusting relationships even the most perfectly conceived plans can fail” (p. 171). Mistrust results when information is withheld, resources are allocated inconsistently, and employees have no support from management (Cook & Wall, 1980). Without trust, novice teachers might not risk disclosure of feelings, opinions, and attitudes (Mishra & Morrissey, 1990). Therefore, one could argue that organizational trust and relational trust are vital to the success of novice teachers.

**Organizational Trust**

Organizational trust is foundational to all social exchange relations (Gilbert & Tang, 1998; Mishra & Morrissey, 1990) and a critical component in well-functioning organizations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For this study, organizational trust refers to novice teachers’ perceptions of the trustworthiness of an organization, including their feelings of confidence in and support for the systems in the organization. Systems in the organization refer to the organization's policies, rules, regulations, and procedures (Gambetta, 1988; Gilbert & Tang, 1998; Moye, 2003). Organizational trust is also related to variables such as perceived support for the organization that affect the organization as a whole. Organizational trust is important for novice teachers to feel assured about their expectations and future success. It also helps to
mitigate the perceived risk involved in forming trusting intentions. Organizational trust is important because it can facilitate an environment conducive for novice teachers to be successful and perhaps also reduce novice teacher turnover.

**Relational Trust**

Like organizational trust, relational trust has been identified as significant to organizational factors such as job satisfaction (Cook & Wall, 1980; Cunningham & MacGregor, 2000; Driscoll, 1978) and organizational effectiveness (Cunningham & MacGregor, 2000; Mishra, & Morrissey, 1990). Relational trust is built between people through day-to-day social exchanges in a school community (Bryk & Schneider (2002). For purposes of this study, relational trust refers to the extent to which novice teachers are confident in others and willing to act on the basis of words, actions, and decisions within the school structure (McAllister, 1995). Relational trust can be viewed as a key reason why novice teachers stay in the teaching profession. Argyris (1976) argued that a climate of relational trust is an essential element of effectiveness in an organization and is important for superior individual performance. Superior individual performance is the most efficient governance mechanism and a critical component for success in a dynamic and turbulent environment, such as a public school.

Finally, both researchers and practitioners have observed the importance of trusting leadership in organizational trust (Argyris, 1998; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Organizational trust refers to novice teachers’ faith in goal attainment and organizational leaders as a whole and to the belief that organizational action will prove ultimately beneficial for them. It also includes the belief that organizational leaders will be straightforward and will follow through on commitments (Gilbert & Tang, 1998). In addition, trusting leadership affects the availability of timely and accurate information and resources to the organization and
facilitates cooperation among novice teachers as they work together and share responsibility for the organization’s best interests (Taylor, 1990). Without trust in leadership, an organization like a school may fall short in achieving its intended purposes.

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Hoy and Miskel (2008) suggested that organizational trust is important in building effective relationships in schools. For this study I focused on understanding the role organizational trust had in developing an environment that increases novice teacher retention. The following research questions guided my study.

1. What attributes of organizational trust do novice teachers describe are important reasons to remain in the profession?
2. What characteristics of the school environment do novice teachers describe that contributes to them wanting to stay in the teaching profession?
3. What relationships within the school environment do novice teachers describe as important to their decision to remain in the profession?

Chapter 2 presents the current context and recent research to understand the issue regarding novice teacher retention. Chapter 3 details the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of the study resulting from interviews, focus groups and review of documents. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and implications of the study.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter defines and identifies topics important to novice teacher retention in schools. In a review of the research it was important to define “novice teacher” along with discussing important factors that predicted teacher retention. These three factors were school environment, the effect of administrative support, and teacher induction/mentoring on novice teacher retention. These topics will be addressed in this section.

A number of studies have addressed the definition of novice teachers (Borko, Eisenhart, Brown, Underhill, Jones & Agard, 1992; Drake, 2000; Huberman, 1993; Leinhardt, 1989; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Shealy, 1994; Shealy, 1995; Sherin & Drake 2000; Wilson, Shulman, & Richert, 1987). For purposes of this study, these articles support a definition of novice teacher as one with 3 or fewer years of teaching experience.

School Environment

According to Johnson (2001), teaching has been a career in which those with the least experience face the greatest challenges and most difficult responsibilities. This helps substantiate the belief espoused by national, state, and local educational leaders that beginning teachers need a quality support system in order to achieve success. For years, educational researchers have identified novice teachers’ professional environments and support systems as predictors of retention and attrition (Greene & Puetzer, 2002; Inman & Marlow, 2004). Schein, a longtime leading expert in the field of organizational environments, describes environment as a relatively stable pattern of organizational behavior that lies outside the immediate awareness of the organization’s members and reflects the shared behavioral, emotional, and cognitive learning the group has undergone over time. As an organization evolves, the behaviors of the
organization’s members develop a consistent pattern based upon its shared assumptions (Schein, 1992). Espoused values, group norms, habits of thinking and acting, personnel behavior, are among the more readily understood elements that Schein (1992) believes represent the organization’s environment. These patterns not only evolve over time, they are shared or handed-down over time to succeeding generations within an organization. If the norms are congruent with the mission of the school, the school flourishes. If the environment is incongruent or even toxic, the school cannot flourish. Hopkins (2001) described environment as the observed patterns of behavior, the norms of working groups, the dominant values espoused by the school, and the unwritten policies and procedures that new members to the school learn. Therefore, when teachers decide whether to continue teaching or to leave, they report school environment plays a significant role. Kelly (2004) found that undesirable working environments, referred to as the process of schools, were related to increased attrition. School process is often referred to as the “software” of a school, defined as the interpersonal relationships and how supportive the environment is that a novice teacher experiences in schools (Lehman, 2004). The establishment of an environment that supports and empowers new teachers and values the ideas and experiences of all its members is necessary if school leaders are to retain and develop quality teachers.

Teacher Empowerment and School Environment

One factor related to school environment important for novice teachers is being accorded the prestige and empowerment they feel they have earned and deserve. Empowerment has been defined as a process whereby school participants develop the competence to take charge of their own growth, resolve their own problems, and fulfill their needs to effectively participate in the workplace (Robinson, 2000). Bandura (1997) defined empowerment as allowing for “people’s
judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances” (p. 391). Wood and Bandura (1989) expanded the definition of empowerment, stating, “empowerment refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands” (p. 408). The fundamental premise of empowerment is that behavior is strongly encouraged by self-influence (Kanfer, 1987). Therefore, empowerment for novice teachers has a high degree of importance as a basic element of individual growth in the work environment (Bandura, 1978). Further, empowering novice teachers involves helping them take ownership so they obtain a personal interest in improving the performance of the school (Byham & Cox, 1992; Fullan, 2001). Boglera (2004) stated that empowerment influences teachers’ perceptions of their profession and therefore their satisfaction with the profession.

Empowerment has been found to enhance performance and productivity, improve self-esteem, morale, and work efficiency; resulting in more trusting attitudes. Empowered teachers are satisfied teachers, demonstrating a greater retention rate (Boglera & Somech, 2004; Muijs & Harris, 2003). It is also essential that schools create an environment that supports novice teacher empowerment and one that encourages all endeavors toward their empowerment (Bolin, 1989; Mullen & Sullivan, 2002; Terry, 1995). Empowering teachers as leaders has been seen as a way to retain good teachers in education, attract new teachers, and reverse a trend toward treating them as employees who do specific tasks planned in detail by other people (Erlandson & Bifano, 1987; Macpherson, Aspland, Brooker, & Elliot, 1999). Terry (1995) pointed out that successful schools enabled novice teachers and veteran teachers to apply their creative energy toward constant improvement. In order for schools to create an environment for learning and growth, they must recognize that the goal of improvement is an important aspect of growth for novice
teachers and staff in the school (Combs, Miser, & Whitaker, 1999). Combs and colleagues (1999) claimed in school cultures where individuals are rewarded merely on competition and autonomy, many teachers including novice teachers do not like to be singled out for their achievements for fear their colleagues will perceive them as arrogant, sucking up, or better than others.

It is vital that schools assist teachers in remaking the education profession and establishing an environment in which they are seen as fully empowered partners in shaping policy, creating curriculum, managing budgets, improving practice, and improving education for children (Fullan, 2001; Troen & Boles, 1993).

**Administrative Support and Novice Teacher Retention**

Administrative support is vital to a healthy learning environment. Over time, the principal’s leadership will shape the school, positively or negatively. Without high-quality leadership, high-quality schools cannot exist (Valentine 2004). An understanding of the concept of school culture is important if leaders are to influence both culture and achievement. An instructional leader helps create the school environment by supporting the self-improvement of novice teachers (Smith, 2004). Self-improvement is modeled as the principal follows a personal professional development plan (Norton, 1999) and strategically promotes the ongoing professional growth of novice teachers (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). Overall, teachers are more satisfied with teaching as a career when they are empowered through supportive learning environments and they receive support from administrators (Thornton, 2004; Whiteford, 1990).

**Supportive learning environments.** Principals create distinct working environments within schools, and these environments are highly predictive of novice teacher satisfaction and professional commitment (Anderson, 1991). Inman and Marlow (2005) stated that
administrators influence teacher retention when they promote a well-managed, safe, and orderly school. Improving the work environment involves administrators being accessible and interacting with the faculty and staff about day-to-day happenings in the school on a continuous basis (Niece, 1983). Robertson (2006) suggested that teachers understood administrative support as the degree of assistance offered them by the school administration. Assistance involved taking the responsibility to create the capacity for staff to learn, to explore, and to match teachers’ needs with high quality professional learning opportunities across a variety of venues (Gerstsen, 2001). Researchers found evidence linking novice teachers’ commitment to the school with quality administrative leadership (Firestone, 1988). While all teachers need to feel supported, this is especially true for novice teachers. It is this group of novice teachers who comprise the vast majority of educators engaged in leaving the profession (Wong, 2004). Establishing a school environment where learning and change can occur is a strenuous task for school principals. Schools where everyone, including novice teachers, is seen as a learner are places where people can grow, learn, change, expand, and find joy in discovery (Bolin, 1989; Combs, et al., 1999). Successful schools are those where administrators and teachers work together to create a culture of learning modeled for their students. School administrators who go beyond merely involving teachers in decision-making processes provide a supportive environment that encourages novice teachers to examine and reflect upon their teaching. Administrators encourage these specific behaviors by facilitating reflective practice and making it possible for novice teachers to implement ideas and programs that result from reflective practice (Perie & Baker, 1997; Terry, 1995). Through the daily schedule administrators encourage novice teachers to reflect and work with experienced teachers. Administrators help direct discussion around identification of problems, and possible solutions. For example, administrators guide responses
to organizational problems by focusing on the solutions (Bolman & Deal, 1991). A key to creating a supportive environment is providing novice teachers with the freedom to teach in the manner they feel is most appropriate. However, they do have to justify their methodologies to their colleagues, share their ideas, and create team structures for collective responsibility (Black, 2000; Bolin, 1989; Terry, 1995).

Supportive administration. Supportive administration is a critical component of retaining novice teachers. In a study Stockard and Lehman (2004) conducted, their findings showed that novice teachers were satisfied with teaching when they felt they had supportive leadership. A poor relationship with administration and lack of principal leadership are leading reasons novice teachers leave the profession (Ahorn, 2008; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). Principal support is critical to all aspects of teacher job satisfaction (Gersten, 1995). It is the focus of district and building administration to support and guide novice and experienced teachers as they implement instructional programming for students. Administrative personnel are viewed as the top instructional leaders of their schools and also help guide the academic path for all students and instructional personnel (Gersten, 1995). Overall, across all academic educators, higher job satisfaction is associated with greater leadership support, work involvement, and lower levels of role conflict and stress (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). According to Brownell (1997), administrative support is enhanced by improving the work environment for teachers, which then leads to reducing attrition among novice teachers.

Teacher Induction and Mentoring

One way to keep quality novice teachers in the profession is through beginning teacher induction and mentoring (Breaux & Wong, 2003). There is much confusion and misuse of the words mentoring and induction. The terms are not synonymous, yet they are often incorrectly
used interchangeably (Wong 2003). Induction is a comprehensive, coherent, and sustained professional development process organized by a school district to train, support, and retain novice teachers and to seamlessly progress novice teachers into a lifelong learning program (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Wong (2003) differentiates induction from mentoring by describing mentoring as an action that is part of an overall induction program. A mentor is a single person whose basic function is to help a new teacher. Typically, the help is for survival as opposed to sustained professional learning that leads to the novice becoming an effective teacher. Mentors are an important component of an induction program, but they must be part of an overall induction process aligned to the district’s vision, mission, and structure (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). If schools are to succeed in retaining and developing novice teachers to become quality teachers, then educators must also ensure that quality induction and mentoring programs are effective foundations of their school district.

**Teacher induction.** During the past twenty years, many schools have established teacher induction programs in an effort to initiate and retain high-quality teachers. The intent of induction programs is to transform a novice teacher into a competent career teacher. The use of orientation or induction has long been a common practice in many occupations allowing new employees to adapt to the work environment, to understand job requirements and expectations while working, communicating, and interacting with fellow employees and supervisors with appropriate and acceptable behaviors (Hussar, 1999). In some occupations, new employees are assigned to veteran employees as apprentices or trainees as they learn and develop the skills required to perform their jobs with competence and confidence. Until recently, this has been a missing component in the teacher profession.

If the goals of induction programs are to promote the personal and professional support of
beginning teachers in the culture of the school system, then it is important to understand their first-year experiences. Because personal and professional support is important, “it is reasonable to suggest that principals plan their school-based orientation, mentoring, and induction activities with these goals in mind.” (Hope, 1999, p. 54). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) said it best, “Historically, the teaching occupation has not had the kind of structured induction and initiation processes common to many white-collar occupations and characteristic of many traditional professions” (p. 28). A positive induction experience for new teachers can be the beginning of a successful and confident entry into the profession. It can decrease the number of teachers who leave the profession early by orienting them to the school and the principal’s expectations while helping them build collegial relationships that enhance professional development.

**Effective induction programs.** In a review of exemplary international induction programs, Howe (2006) stated: “The most successful teacher induction programs…include opportunities for experts and novice teachers to learn together in a supportive environment promoting time for collaboration, reflection, and acculturation into the profession of teaching” (p. 287). Research conducted by Lawson (1992) supports this perspective: “The strongest induction programs will expend time and resources to prepare mentors for their new role as communicators of their knowledge and experience” (p. 6). To meet this need, school districts are arranging for experienced teachers (mentors) to guide novice teachers through the difficult and demanding induction period. The mentor plays a vital and unique role in the development and training of one new to the profession.

Studies of effective teacher induction programs have revealed they are well designed and well implemented and have several attributes or elements in common. These programs provide novice teachers with an organized orientation to the district and schools, including well-trained
mentors and time to work with those mentors; professional development in a variety of areas including instructional practices, assessment, classroom management; and the opportunity to work in a supportive, collaborative environment. Other significant elements in effective induction programs include guidelines and expectations, information sharing, and ongoing learning and evaluation. Other common elements shared by effective programs are the use of and input from beginning teachers in the design of program practices (Beaux & Wong, 2003). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that induction programs offering several different types of support and providing participation opportunities and collaborative activities had the most significant effects in reducing teacher attrition.

**Mentoring.** Many induction programs emphasize mentoring as a significant component in assisting novice teachers’ successful entry into the profession. Research has revealed, “the early part of the teaching career has the soundest empirical base in terms of what novices experience and how mentoring can help them be more satisfied with their work” (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 98). A good mentor is a skilled teacher, is able to transmit effective teaching strategies, has a thorough command of the curriculum being taught, can communicate openly with the beginning teacher, listens well, is sensitive to the needs of the beginning teacher, understands that teachers may be effective using a variety of styles, and is not overly judgmental (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Studies have shown that other desirable qualities in a mentor include wisdom, caring, humor, nurturing, and commitment to the profession (Hardcastle, 1988; Kay, 1990; Odell, 1990).

The goal of an effective mentor is to establish a relationship of trust over an extended period of time and to support and aid the novice through his or her evolution and development (Tillman, 2000). A number of studies have found that well-designed mentoring programs for
new teachers include improving their attitudes, feelings of efficacy, and instructional skills (Darling-Hammond. 2003). Another important component is the assistance and guidance new teachers receive from peers especially during their vulnerable first years. Novice teachers grow professionally when they seek out peers for dialogue and then turn to each other for constructive feedback, affirmation, and support (Graham, 1997).

Because novice teachers need preparatory experiences to help them develop a professional classroom identity (Liston et al., 2006), potential mentor teachers and their protégés need to be provided with opportunities to understand the mentoring process through small talk, conversation, dialogue, reflection, and idea and resource sharing (Pitton, 2002). It is through shared experiences with experienced mentors that novice teachers develop explicit practical knowledge (Perry & Power, 2004). In fact, in many of the induction programs, the mentors are the trainers of the other components and therefore need to be aware of the mission and goals of the district.

**Effective mentoring programs.** An effective mentoring program is one that keeps novice teachers teaching and improving while meeting the current demand for highly qualified teachers and requires strategies that support teacher learning (Brownell et al., 2004; Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Kajs, 2002; Sharpe, 2006; Wong, 2004). A meaningful program has elements that include the following (Johnson et al., 2004; Saphier, Freedman, & Aschheim, 2001): (a) mentors are carefully selected and matched with their mentees, (b) mentors are given training in effective communication and peer coaching, (c) greater concentration on following up is given to the beginning of the school year when novice teachers feel initially exhausted and overwhelmed, (d) regular contacts and meetings between mentors and mentees are scheduled throughout the school year, and (e) assistance in acclimating beginning teachers to the school community is provided.
Programs are considered model or exemplary when they provide opportunities for experienced and novice participants to learn together in a supportive environment that promotes time for collaboration, reflection, and acculturation in the teaching profession (Howe, 2006). Other effective induction programs provide support and training and help new teachers acculturate to the school community and profession (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). These programs involve new members in a learning community that builds ongoing commitment to professional learning for all staff members (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Moir & Bloom, 2003). Effective programs are comprehensive by design, starting with orientation before teachers begin and providing training and support to beginning teachers through their second or third year (Beaux & Wong, 2003).

**School district benefits.** Effective beginning teacher induction programs have been shown to increase student achievement, teacher satisfaction, and teacher retention (Beaux & Wong, 2003). Through collaboration with peers, novice teacher mentoring programs open doors to interdependency (Bruffee, 1999), impart the realities of and assign meaning to teaching (Kilburg & Hancock, 2006; Van Huizen et al., 2005), and lay a foundation for personal satisfaction and organizational productivity (Kajs, 2002). Offering novice teachers sound mentoring experiences is an effective means of providing professional development for veteran teachers and is one that instills passion for their school (Moir & Bloom, 2003). Schools with structured effective induction programs that successfully inculcate new teachers saw positive consequences for student achievement and attendance as well as overall staff morale (Fetler, 1997). As Fetler pointed out, schools with effective induction programs are more attuned to specific pedagogical cultures, and therefore have higher student achievement rates and more collegial atmospheres, leading to positive staff morale. Some school districts have induction
programs in place that have been proven effective in attaining their objectives in improving teacher retention, quality, and effectiveness.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3 describes the research design and includes the research methods and analysis of the data. This study employed a qualitative design to investigate what factors selected novice teachers with one to three years of teaching experience identified as important for them to stay in the profession. Qualitative research involves direct investigation and description of the phenomenon as experienced by participants (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Patton (2002) further explained that qualitative research designs “are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p. 39).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), qualitative inquiry refers to research about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings. This type of research calls for getting into the field and trying to find out what people are thinking and doing, to attempt to understand the meaning or nature of their experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) wrote that qualitative research allows one to capture a “slice-of-life” (p. 21).

A qualitative study does not require large numbers across diverse contexts. Instead, the focus is on the meanings of behaviors, including cultural and individual differences, and recognizing the importance of context in natural settings (Patton, 2002). Therefore, this study took place in two rural school settings with novice teachers who intended to remain in the profession. My study included all teachers from the high schools of two school districts who fit the criteria for being a “novice” teacher (0-3 years teaching experience) and was willing to participate in the study. Teachers were contacted through e-mail and asked to fill out and return a consent form before engaging in the study; the form is included in Appendix A.
Research Context

This study took place in two rural Kansas high schools. The selection of the two high schools was based on the highest number of novice teachers employed in those districts within the nine counties who are members of a local athletic league. Districts in Kansas are identified by a classification system, which is represented by high school enrollment numbers rather than total district enrollment count. Athletic leagues are formed through the cooperative agreement of participating schools (KSHSAA, 2011). Novice teachers were selected from two school districts located within the nine counties comprising the athletic league. This is consistent with Denzin and Lincoln (1994) who stated the qualitative researcher needs to select a site according to some underlying principle, such as access and the characteristics of possible participants.

Research Participants and Selection Process

Participants for this study were selected from information provided by administrators about the number of novice teachers in the schools that make up the athletic league. The schools and names of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Two schools with the highest number of novice teachers were selected: Liberty Junior/Senior High School and Johnson Junior/Senior High School for a total of 8 novice teachers. Liberty reported having three novice teachers and Johnson reported having five. All the novice teachers from those schools were asked to participate in individual interviews and collectively in a focus group at their respective school. They were asked to share information regarding their experiences as novice teachers, along with information regarding their desire to remain in the profession.
Data Collection Plan

This section described the methods used to collect data for this study. Included in this section are descriptions of semi-structured interviews and focus groups and how they were used. Data were collected during the spring semester, 2014. Questions were written to determine what factors have kept teachers in the teaching profession. Even though questions and procedures for this study were defined and developed, adjustments were made throughout the research, as a key aspect of qualitative research is emergent design. Emergent design allows for the process to change once the researcher starts to collect data. An example of the change included altering the questions based on responses given (Creswell, 2003).

Other data obtained was information regarding each school’s procedure for new teacher induction. The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) statute specifies districts must provide an entire year of opportunities for new teachers to receive induction. This is a mandate from the Kansas State Department of Education that has been in place since 2001 (KSDE, 2013). Districts were provided with some funding to pay stipends to mentor teachers, which was discontinued after the 2010-2011 school year.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to have participants identify reasons for staying in the teaching profession. The interviews were guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, that left the researcher with the flexibility to change some of the wording or the order in which the questions are asked (Merriam, 2009). The questions focused on ideas or topics related to the research questions. Questions and protocols were set up in advance (see Appendix B for the interview protocol and sample questions). I contacted each teacher who fit the category
of novice teacher in the participating schools and got a signed consent form to participate in the study.

Interviews were conducted in a designated conference room away from distractions and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Face-to-face or personal interviews are labor intensive but can be the best way of collecting high quality data (Mathers, Fox and Hunn, 2002). Time spent for the individual connection helped me build rapport for the follow-up focus groups (Wasserman & Clair, 2007). The interview protocol and questions are included in Appendix B.

**Focus Groups**

A follow up focus group was conducted with the novice teachers separately in the two buildings. A focus group is an interview that involves a small group, usually 6 to 10 people (Patton, 2002). Protocols and questions were prepared based on the responses from semi-structured interviews and allowed novice teachers to talk while being part of a relaxed atmosphere. The three novice teachers from Liberty school participated in the focus group that took place in a conference room near the front office. The focus group lasted approximately 45 minutes. The five Johnson Junior-Senior High School novice teachers met in the high school band room with the focus group lasting approximately 50 minutes.

The questions for the focus group allowed the novice teachers to expound on questions from the interviews related to relational and organizational trust. The novice teachers were exposed to information culled from the individual interview and were given the opportunity to add to or clarify the information they provided in the interviews. The relaxed atmosphere of the focus group allowed the novice teachers to feel comfortable about sharing their stories in a group setting. By hearing the stories of others, the novice teachers were able to add their own opinions,
which included similarities or differences. An audio recorder was used to capture all information gathered. The focus group protocol and questions are included in Appendix C.

**Data Analysis**

Because qualitative research is used as a way to deeply interpret the data through a reflective process (Stake, 2010), I evaluated and re-evaluated data as a way to continuously synthesize it in order to reach a point of saturation. Data saturation occurs when the researcher is no longer hearing or seeing new information. Unlike quantitative researchers who wait until the end of the study to analyze their data, qualitative researchers analyze their data throughout their study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). All of the audio recordings were listened to before they were transcribed. After transcription, the recordings were listened to again to help deepen knowledge and understanding of the information. I reviewed each transcript to search for patterns in the data.

Data collected from the interviews and focus groups were sorted into segments or units of data. The segments or units are answers or partial answers given that fit the research questions, a process called unitization (Merriam, 2009). I unitized the data by sorting information into segments containing single ideas. Specifically, I developed a template that used a participant pseudonym, a code for gender, subject taught, and specific year in teaching. I interpreted the data using Organizational Trust as the theoretical lens. Principles of the theory were considered as I sifted through the data to discover possible connections between the ideas in Organizational Trust, participants’ comments, and my observations.

As this process deepened, the data provided for the identification of relationships across themes (Patton, 1990). The data were grouped by themes through the use of an Excel spreadsheet. In analyzing themes, I used inductive, intuitive reasoning to decide which themes
fit the research questions. Finally, I looked for relationships among the themes and the research questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The primary goal was to discover as many themes as possible. A cutting and sorting technique was used to group themes.

**Research Quality**

Maintaining quality while conducting the research was an integral part of this study. The quality of the research was improved through attending to credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each of these is described below.

**Credibility**

According to Merriam (2009) credibility deals with the question of how congruent the findings are with reality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have argued that ensuring credibility is one of most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. Credibility depends on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher (Patton, 2002). The standard of credibility, much like internal validity, is applied to test the integrity of the data. Methods used in this study were member checking and triangulation.

One strategy used in this study to maintain credibility was to conduct member checks (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003; Merriam, 2009b; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Riessman, 1993). Member checking throughout the collection of data allowed me to verify the accuracy of the responses given by the participants. I took my preliminary analysis of data from the individual, semi-structured interviews back to the group of participants during focus groups. This was my interpretation of the data but participants were able to recognize their contributions and provide suggestions if necessary that would better capture their perspectives (Merriam, 2009a). This was an important part of ruling out the chance of misinterpreting the meaning of participants’
comments (Merriam, 2009a). My responsibility was to present the material in a manner that could be understood and applied as chosen (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A second method used to enhance credibility of the findings was through the application of triangulation. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) explained, “Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously” (p. 8). Multiple data sources came from the teacher participants from the two schools in the study. Also multiple methods were applied in the form of focus groups and interviews. Procedures of triangulation were applied through data comparison (interviews, focus groups, field notes, and documents related to induction processes) within an individual dataset.

**Ethical Considerations**

The reliability and validity of the study depends in large part on the ethics of the person conducting the investigation because ethical dilemmas can arise at any step in the process (Merriam, 2009a). Recognizing the spirit of ethics exists in my own accountability, it was imperative to consider the ethical issues that permeated the research process (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). I made myself aware of ethical issues related to the study and the research proposal was reviewed and approved by the University’s Institutional Review Board (Creswell, 2003).

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form before engaging in the study. The form ensured the rights of the participants were appropriately protected during the collection of data (Creswell, 2003). Research with human participants demands careful deliberation and respect for the individuals contributing to the study. Participants were made aware that all participation was voluntary and withdrawal from the study would be granted if requested. Extreme care was taken to protect the confidentiality of participants by not attributing comments
in the findings that would identify a participant (Merriam, 2009b; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additionally, pseudonyms were used in the study. Not only was care taken to protect the identities of the participants who contributed to the research project, but just as important was the research quality and the accurate representation of the findings. A copy of the results was made available upon request of interested participants.

**Researcher’s Position**

Since I could not separate myself as a person from myself as a researcher, and since being a person brings with it bias, what I dealt with in my research was how to minimize this bias so that it did not interfere with the data in a way that corrupted or invalidated the study. There is no way I could have the illusion of objectivity in the collection of data, for my ultimate goal was to add to the body of knowledge so that I may do my job as an administrator better. My desire was to understand what organizational factors support novice teacher retention. As Creswell (1998) pointed out, qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain worldview that guides their inquiries. This is not an objective process, even after attempting to bracket out researcher experience and bias.

An additional area of potential bias comes from my knowledge of education and my background of being a teacher and administrator. I have been in education for nineteen years either as a teacher, assistant principal, or principal. Currently, I am a principal at a small 2A school and have experiences working with novice teachers. I had the unique position of being familiar with the positions of people I worked with in my study at various levels. Another way I dealt with potential bias was to share my collected data through a process of debriefing with a trusted professional who shared the same similar situation and context. I asked for feedback and perspective regarding how I may be interpreting the data. This fits with Schwandt’s (2007)
definition of peer debriefing where a researcher confides in trusted and knowledgeable colleagues and uses them as a sounding board.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

The analysis of the data acquired in this research study was designed to give insight into novice teacher retention from two rural Midwest high schools and what sustains them to continue in the profession when most leave within 3-5 years. For this study, novice teacher was defined as a teacher who has 0-3 years teaching experience. Interviews, focus groups and review of teacher induction procedures from both schools provided data for this research.

In this chapter, I first provide details regarding the demographics of the schools and the teacher participants. I then discuss the themes that came from my analysis of the data, which were teacher induction, supportive administration, faculty trust, and support from parents, students, and community.

School Demographics and Teacher Participants

The interviewed conversations were collected from eight novice teachers from two different school districts. The privacy and confidentiality of each participant was maintained, to the extent possible, throughout the study. In order to protect the confidentiality of the teacher participants from both schools, I have given the schools and the participants pseudonyms: Larry, Loren, and Lyle taught at Liberty High School. Jack, Jill, John, Jeff and Jason taught at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School. Having those names will hopefully help the readers connect the names with the schools. L=Liberty names, J=Johnson names. No identifying information about the participants, schools, or school districts were included within any of the documentation. The following provides a brief description of each school and participants in the study.
Liberty High School

Three of the novice teacher participants taught at Liberty High School, which is located in the town of Liberty. Liberty is largely a farming community with 337 families residing in the city limits. Liberty High School had 264 students in grades (9-12) during the 2013-14 school year. Ninety-eight percent of them were Caucasian with only 2% of the students considered minority. Liberty High school staff consisted of a principal, an assistant principal/athletic director and twenty-nine full time teachers. Of those 29 teaching positions, three teachers fit the criteria of novice teacher. Retention of teachers for Liberty has been fairly stable over the past five years with six teachers leaving. One teacher retired, one took a job as an administrator in a different district, one took a job as a counselor in a different district, two moved to other states, and one teacher left due to a reduction in force.

Liberty High School’s Novice Teachers

Larry. Larry was a foreign language (Spanish) teacher in his mid twenties who had been at Liberty High School for three years. This was Larry’s first teaching assignment. He described himself as a Latin American whose parents were native to Kansas. He is a graduate of a large high school in western Kansas. He attended Wichita State University graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in Secondary Education in 2010. He lived just outside of Liberty commuting ten miles one way each day. He coached middle school boys’ basketball in the winter. He shared that his biggest adjustment was coming from a large high school, where he had friendships with many students of his same culture and ethnicity, to a small rural predominately white farming community. He was single, and expressed satisfaction with his current teaching position.

Loren. Loren was an agricultural education teacher. She is a graduate of a small school district in northeast Kansas. She earned her Bachelor’s degree at Fort Hays State University and
was in her third year of teaching at Liberty High School. Loren teaches agricultural education and her class is part of a career and technical education pathway course. Career and Technical Education (CTE) are classes offered to students that are part of a career pathway, where students can receive industry-recognized certificates for completing a pathway of courses. This has been her only teaching job since coming out of school. She also works closely with students in an organized school club called Future Farmers of America (FFA). She explained the goal of FFA was to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agriculture education. Loren said the connection with FFA gave her a unique opportunity to work with students in and out of the classroom. She is a white female in her mid-thirties, married with two children and has enjoyed working at Liberty.

**Lyle.** Lyle is a white male in his upper twenties who has taught at Liberty High School for two and half years. He is originally from Pennsylvania. What was initially striking about Lyle is his large stature. It was no surprise that he attended school in Kansas on a football scholarship while earning his Bachelor’s degree in Secondary English Education. He enjoyed being in Kansas and had no problem with his current teaching situation, but planned to leave after this year and return to Pennsylvania. He shared that he misses his family and has found it increasingly difficult to stay in Kansas because his sister in Pennsylvania just had a baby and he is starting to miss important events. He was single and coached baseball and football for Liberty. He described himself as unorthodox because his deep passion for the arts contrasted with what people expected based on his physical appearance.
Johnson Junior-Senior High School

Johnson Junior/Senior High School was located in the community of Johnson, which covers approximately three square miles and had a population of 3,800 citizens. Johnson Junior/Senior High School consisted of grades 7 through 12 with an enrollment of 282 students for the (2013-2014) school year. Student demographics were 85% Caucasian, 13% Hispanic, and 2% Black. The staff consisted of one principal, one assistant principal/athletic director, five support personnel, and 27 full time teachers. Another three part-time teachers are shared within the district, those who teach music, band, and foreign language. Of those 30 positions, five were considered novice teachers. Retention for Johnson Junior-Senior High School has been stable with 5 teachers leaving within the past five years. Three of the novice teachers involved in the study were replacements for teachers who had retired. One teacher left Johnson because her husband took a job in another town. One teacher was added to the existing staff due to a new program.

Johnson Jr.-Sr. High School’s Novice Teachers

Jack. Jack is a white male in his mid-thirties and a second year teacher at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School. He is married and has two children. He taught computer science, having received his Bachelor’s degree from Emporia State University. He also coached football in the middle school. This was his first year teaching at a public school. His prior teaching experience was in a private all boys’ school. Before he became a teacher, he spent 11 years in the Army reserve as a military police officer. Jack was responsible for maintaining the school’s website and helped with the yearbook classes.

Jill. Jill is a white female in her mid-thirties who has taught instrumental music at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School for two years. Prior to working at Johnson, she spent three years
working in another school district. She worked in both the junior and senior high school buildings for the Johnson school district. She has a military background and played in a military band before obtaining her Bachelor’s degree in Music Education at Emporia State University. She enjoyed having the opportunity to work at Johnson Jr./Sr. schools and appreciated the support she gets from the community regarding her instrumental music programs. She was married with two children and her husband was deployed in Iraq at the time of the study.

**John.** John is a white male in his mid-twenties and is in his first year as the business administration teacher at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School. He is a Winfield native and graduated from Winfield High School. He attended Cowley County Community College for two years where he majored in Business Management. He then transferred to Emporia State University where he recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree with a minor in Marketing. Johnson was his first teaching assignment. He enjoyed the classroom, but admitted that student teaching was a grind. He disliked not having complete control of his classroom and was trying teaching for his first year to test the waters. When I interviewed him, he had only been teaching for six months.

**Jeff.** Jeff is a white male in his mid-twenties who is in his second year teaching at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School. He was a graduate of Emporia State University. He went to a small 1A high school, and was grateful to have the opportunity to teach in a small rural school, as this is what he feels comfortable doing. He was single and admitted that the first year of teaching was a difficult adjustment. He has been asked to coach, but wants the time to adjust to his new job and getting comfortable in the community before taking on that responsibility. He enjoyed the students, and said that Johnson Jr./Sr. High School has the same look and feel of his own experiences in high school as a student.
**Jason.** Jason is a white male in his mid-twenties who is in his third year teaching physical education at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School. He attended a small Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference (KCAC) college where he competed in football and basketball. He professed a great love for young people and sports. He desired to encourage youth to remain healthy and active and to see the benefits of staying active and healthy into adulthood. He was married with a young daughter and he enjoyed teaching at Johnson Jr./Sr. High School.

The following contains the resulting themes of this study, which were teacher induction, supportive administration, faculty trust, and support from parents, students, and community. Information came from the interviews, focus groups, and materials obtained regarding both schools’ induction process. These themes cut across both schools as a result of responses formulated from the eight teachers interviewed individually and in small focus groups. Administrators in both buildings were helpful in providing information regarding the induction process in both schools. This allowed a framework for understanding what teachers experienced in the induction process and also insight into the important mentoring component of both induction programs.

**Teacher Induction**

*One way to keep quality novice teachers in the profession is through beginning teacher induction and mentoring (Breaux & Wong, 2003, p. 42).*

When novice teachers enter a school culture, they are expected to participate in a community of practice where engagement results in the development of meaning, a sense of community, and where learning can take place. Simply speaking, teacher induction programs are designed to support novice teachers with instructional skills, understanding school procedures, and supporting the transition from being a novice teacher to becoming a veteran teacher. The
The intent of a teacher induction program is to provide a structure of support for novice teachers. The novice teachers interviewed believed that navigating through the complexities of learning how to become good teachers started with being supported in the initial phases of their work. This started with their school’s induction program and how they were designed to support novice teacher growth.

During data collection, I met with the Johnson school principal (personal communication, January 20, 2014) and the Liberty school principal (personal communication, February 14, 2014). Both were helpful in providing a copy of the induction resources used in handling novice teachers. In both school buildings, the novice teacher induction programs were already well established, having been in place for at least 10 years. The principal of Liberty school indicated that the mentoring/induction program had been in place since 2000, which was the year before the state mandate went into effect. When I spoke with the principal of Johnson school he indicated their induction/mentoring program had been in place since 2002, which was a year after the state mandate for new teacher induction and mentoring.

It was clear from the examination of the induction programs of both schools the philosophy was for novice teachers to have an established system in place designed to assist in professional growth. In my review, the induction programs for each building utilized an assigned mentor teacher component that helped support the training and orientation of the novice teacher. The induction began immediately with novice teachers participating in formal meetings with a mentor. The novice teacher, as well as the mentor, was aware of the expectations and processes of the induction program. In both cases, there was a large emphasis on novice teachers gaining procedural knowledge. Descriptions of both schools’ induction programs are as follows.
Liberty’s Induction Program

Liberty school’s induction program used a checklist to guide mentor teachers through the process of working with novice teachers. The induction program lasted one year, and each month there was a list of items the mentor teacher discussed with the novice teacher. For example, the month of September included items such as how to generate progress reports for students, preparing for parent/teacher conferences, and understanding activity eligibility for students. There was an expectation that the mentor teacher follow the protocol regarding meetings the school year. Throughout the month of August there was to be some form of communication between the mentor teacher and novice teacher each day. During September and October, the mentor was to meet with the novice teacher 1-2 times a week. From November-May, the mentor teacher met with the novice teacher as needed. The mentor frequently met with the novice teacher during the fall semester and those meetings tapered off as the school year progressed. What were not specifically spelled out in the mentor guide were discussions regarding instructional practices within the novice teachers’ classroom.

At the end of the school year the district required the mentor teacher and novice teacher to sign the checklist and submit it to the principal of the building. It was not clear in the document how much oversight the administration had over the process. When I asked the principal, he said that once a month he touched base with both the novice teacher and the mentor about how the process was functioning.

Johnson’s Induction Program

Johnson school’s induction program was for one year and consisted of an overview of program components and goals used to drive the process of novice teacher induction. The program included goals, components, and roles of the program. The stated goals were:
1. To provide support for teachers who are new to the district

2. To provide formal and informal interactions to establish a working relationship between the mentor and novice teacher based on trust and commitment

3. To improve effectiveness of both the mentor and novice teacher

4. To reinforce the focus on student learning

The components of the program included:

1. Novice teacher meetings with school and district administration

2. Release time to meet with mentor teacher

3. Comprehensive list of new teacher orientation topics used to guide mentor teacher in monthly discussions.

The roles and responsibilities of the program were separated into mentor teacher and administration. Both were required to oversee the novice teacher and to provide support throughout the induction year. Included in the document were resources to use that discussed how often the mentor should meet with the teacher. It also included sheets to document meetings and topics to be covered. Each month the administration would meet with the new teacher and mentor to discuss progress of the induction process.

Novice Teacher Orientation Practices at Both Schools

When I examined the novice teacher orientation practices for both schools it included two main components: the assignment of the novice teacher mentor and novice teacher mentor meetings. Both provided the beginning teacher with opportunities to work closely with and learn from a veteran teacher, and monthly mentor/new teacher meetings that involved checklists of topics to be covered to ensure the new teacher was properly oriented to the school. Both schools had induction programs in place and followed a systematic progression that involved the
assignment of the novice teacher mentor and specific information regarding novice teacher meetings.

**Novice teacher mentor.** The induction procedures from both schools were used only with incoming novice teachers. A critical part of the induction program at both schools was the assignment of the mentor teacher. It was the responsibility of the administration to assign a mentor to teachers who were new to the profession so they could receive personalized support through their first year of teaching. Mentor teachers were required to meet with novice teachers on a monthly basis to go over a checklist of information and provide ongoing support of the new teacher throughout the school year. Not all novice teachers had mentors assigned that were from their same teaching discipline. This was discussed in the interviews and focus groups.

**Novice teacher meetings.** One of the requirements of the induction process was the meeting times that mentor teachers had with the novice teachers. The expectation of the mentor teacher was to have regular and ongoing discussions with the new teacher to provide encouragement and support. There were checklists of items that needed to be covered monthly with the mentor as well as monthly meetings with the administration. Administration was to provide release time for the mentor teacher and novice teacher during the school day to meet and discuss checklist items for the month. The novice teacher was expected to communicate questions and concerns to the mentor, use the mentoring program as an opportunity for professional growth, and work collaboratively with the mentor to follow established meeting times and monthly checklist items.

**Novice Teacher Perceptions of the Induction Program**

Novice teachers in the study considered the support of the induction program truly essential for their first year of teaching. Novice teachers talked about the support of the program
from three main viewpoints: the structure and framework of the induction program, administrative involvement in the induction process, and how the induction program laid the groundwork for developing a relationship between novice teacher and mentor. Aspects discussed regarding the relationship between novice teacher and mentor included: (a) mentors as trusted resources, (b) mentors helping novice teachers connect with staff, and (c) having a mentor from the same teaching discipline.

Structure and framework of induction program. During the interviews, the novice teachers agreed the induction program at their school helped them learn organizational procedures and processes. The induction program also helped the novice teachers learn how the school operated so they would understand what to expect. Loren mentioned Liberty had a checklist of items the mentor would cover with the novice teacher on how to find information and from which person. She said that some of the other supports the induction program provided were things like “learning all of the policies and procedures regarding students and teachers.” Jack said that he appreciated being given a list of items to cover at Johnson school and noted the checklist helped to spark ideas about other questions he had regarding building procedures or classroom expectations.

The organization of the induction program at both schools was reportedly helpful in establishing a sequence of events to enable novice teachers to become comfortable with their new environment. Loren mentioned again in a focus group the most helpful part of the program was having an expected list of items to go through that would assist in the first years of teaching. The novice teachers talked about how beneficial it was to be involved in this aspect of the induction phase. Jeff described it this way, “I felt like it was good for getting general knowledge about how things operate. Things like, where to get certain things.” Jason said, “Having the
mentor checklist helped me know what was expected regarding building procedures and classroom expectations.” Lyle commented, “We learned things like how to find certain things. The mentor also helped facilitate giving you ideas about how to approach students by looking at your rosters and giving you information.” Many of the novice teachers believed the organization of the induction process helped them feel comfortable within the building. Jill said she used her mentor for figuring out procedures around the building and other general questions. Several teachers mentioned the importance of the organization of the induction program and the involvement of the administration. They liked how it provided clear expectations for them as new teachers.

**Administrative involvement in induction program.** The novice teachers interviewed appreciated how the induction programs in their schools were organized by the administration. Before being assigned to a mentor, novice teachers initially met with the building administration, who, as Loren said, “started walking us through all of the building procedures and then through all of the paperwork that involved my responsibilities.” It was a way for the administration to begin the induction process and then allow the mentors to cover the novice teacher’s responsibilities that Loren mentioned. Jack explained how the novice teachers at Johnson school “were required to have two meetings a month with our mentors, and document what we learned. The principal gave us a syllabus of things that we needed to cover with our mentors.” The syllabus and the documentation helped the administration gauge the progress each month as they met with the novice teacher and mentor. According to the novice teachers, the administration’s organization of the induction process helped them transition comfortably to their new school environment. In terms of the organization of the induction program, John from the Johnson school said, “I thought that it was very beneficial. We started out having weekly meetings with
our mentors covering different topics. These meetings moved to bi-weekly and then to once a month.” Jack confirmed this view, “It is organized in such a way that a novice teacher is given the assistance they need without overloading them with information they may not need right away.” Jason, also found Johnson’s induction process to be thorough and well organized, noting, They assigned me a mentor teacher. She came in and had a list of criteria developed by the administration to go over. It was well planned and organized because it touched on a lot of things that I wouldn’t have even thought of. It gave you a good road map of what you need to cover with each other. Larry, referring to Liberty’s induction program, stated, “I appreciated the organization of the program.” He described how comfortable it made him feel knowing what to expect. A systematic approach to induction ensures that new teachers have the resources and supports they need to be effective in the classroom. Every teacher interviewed spoke about what they considered to be the most important component of the induction process, which was the relationship developed with their mentor teacher.

**Relationship with mentor teacher.** Novice teachers described several facets of their relationship with the mentor teacher they believed were important to their success in adjusting to the profession. These were having a mentor teacher to go to with questions, the mentor teacher being the bridge between the novice teacher and the other faculty members, and the mentor teacher becoming a valued colleague and trusted resource. They also talked about the importance of having a mentor teacher from their content area.

For these novice teachers, having someone to rely on to ask questions about school processes was critical to the mentor relationship. For example, Jason from Johnson school
expressed that it was important for him to know that he was assigned to someone who was expecting to be approached with questions. He said,

You know you don’t want to bother somebody. You don’t want to look stupid either. I was able to go to her about anything from discipline to curriculum to just how to handle parents or anything. That was encouraging. We covered a lot of things. She was very supportive.

Jeff shared that having his mentor guide the meetings and go over specific things made him feel comfortable with the process. Novice teachers described having a mentor as a way of gaining self-confidence by just knowing that there was someone who they could turn to for help or to share ideas. John talked about his mentor from the Johnson school giving him ideas for his classroom, acknowledging, “It helped to have someone to bounce ideas off of and get some good feedback.” The connection that the novice teachers made with the mentor teacher helped with ideas in the classroom, but also the mentor acted as a sounding board for situations the novice teacher may be struggling through. For example, Jack said, “It helped to have time to decompress with your mentor.” He also reported that it was “helpful to bounce ideas off of each other as teachers” in regard to understanding and resolving more difficult situations. Novice teachers found it helpful to have someone to talk through issues with and someone with experience who knew how to handle difficult situations. Mentors also played a role in helping to bridge the relationship with other staff in the building.

**Mentors help novices connect to other staff.** Novice teachers described their mentor as someone who helped them connect with other staff in the building. Jack described it this way; “It helped bridge the transition from being a novice teacher to becoming an established part of the school community.” He and his mentor teacher developed a “very good relationship both in
and out of the classroom.” Having a mentor teacher who was an already trusted and established part of the teaching culture affirming him and then helping him to develop relationships with other teachers was “the most important part of his teaching experience.” Larry at Liberty school valued the time with his mentor teacher and felt she was a “conduit” for getting to know the other staff in building. Loren discussed how being on maternity leave made it difficult at first for her to make connections with other teachers in the building. She said it took about two years, but now that she has been around on a more consistent basis, her communication with teachers has improved. She felt a little lost in those first years and believed having a bond with a mentor was important for her as a new teacher.

**Mentors as trusted resources.** Novice teachers often talked about the process of meeting with their assigned mentor and how this individual became a valued colleague and trusted resource. Jack from Johnson school discussed the importance of choosing the correct person to be a mentor. He felt having the right mentor was “key” to really helping a new teacher get off the ground. He said, “It is up to the administration to link you with someone who has the necessary skills to be a good mentor for a new teacher.” He said, “The person needs to be comfortable with giving really good feedback to another teacher.” Larry, when asked about getting help from his mentor teacher responded, “I would go to my mentor teacher first if I had questions or concerns.” Lyle talked about how important the mentor teacher was in regard to feeling like a valued and trusted part of the school faculty. He described having a mentor was vital to his growth as a teacher and reported that he would meet with his assigned mentor teacher and they would begin the meeting with going over a checklist of things. He said that going over this information opened up dialogue, which further helped him connect with his mentor. Lyle said, “I can’t imagine what it would be like to try to just feel your way through without help.”
He described a situation where he was having a really hard time with a particular class. His mentor teacher subbed in the difficult class one day while he was gone. He reported that the mentor teacher must have had a conversation with the class regarding their treatment of him. When he returned, he never had another problem with that class. He talked passionately about this experience and described how this support from another teacher helped him feel like a trusted and cared for part of the school community.

Gaining trust also came from mentors providing novice teachers with good feedback regarding ideas and areas for improvement in the classroom. For example, John said, “It was helpful to get good ideas from my mentor regarding classroom ideas.” John also talked how stressful the first year was and he trusted his mentor teacher to give him good feedback regarding how to handle classroom situations. Mentors also gave novice teachers suggestions on improving classroom management. Lyle said, “If I was having a rough day, my mentor would be a great resource and could offer some great suggestions.” Jason at Johnson school shared a similar experience with his mentor teacher, “My mentor gave me some great tips on how to handle a couple of difficult kids in my class.” For Jack, it was about making sure the person assigned to a new teacher was not afraid to give feedback that may be difficult to hear. He also felt there was a need for balance, and noted the critical feedback “needs to be balanced with feedback that is encouraging.” Mentor teachers needed to be comfortable with offering constructive criticism.

Other novice teachers shared similar comments about how the relationship with their mentor teacher was important to their success in the early years of their career. Jill said her assigned mentor from Johnson was very good and described the induction process as “very helpful” being a novice teacher. She said, “My mentor was a great resource for me. We were
able to have pretty good dialogue. Most of the stuff was new information.” Jeff described how the relationship with his mentor teacher developed over time, “At first it was about the required meeting times. We were given a syllabus of topics that we had to discuss each week. We had to write down and document about things we were talking about in our meetings.” For Jeff it did not end there, however, as the mentor experience did much more for him. He described his mentor as being a personal and professional resource for him as their relationship changed over time. He commented, “In the beginning, it was mostly novice teacher stuff. But, as time went on, it was more of a dialogue on classes, students, and how to handle different things.” He thought the induction process was important for new teachers. Jeff went on to say that he could not survive without having someone he could trust to ask questions regarding the building or his classroom. Jill shared that her mentor teacher was supportive and encouraging and was someone she could go to for help with better understanding her students. She provided an example, “My mentor teacher helped me with a difficult student by giving insight on situations that may be going on behind the scenes.” Jill went on to say, “This was very helpful in relating to the student better, since I had some idea about what was going on with them outside of my classroom.” Larry said in a focus group regarding the importance of mentor teachers to the success of novices:

I think it is so vital to be assigned a mentor teacher. I think it is important to have that one person you know that you can go to for not only just general questions but also provide some insight on the inside workings of a school building.

Novice teachers reported that it was important for them to not be afraid to ask questions. It was clear from the discussions they valued having a mentor teacher available to bounce things off of and share ideas as well as concerns.
**Mentors from same teaching discipline.** Novice teachers also discussed the importance of assigned mentors coming from the same teaching discipline. This added meaningful assistance to them on issues related to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom management. In addition, it helped for the mentor to be knowledgeable about the subject matter and curriculum being taught by their mentees.

Novice teachers enter their careers with varying degrees of skill in instructional design and delivery. One aspect of the mentor relationship the teachers felt was important was the teaching background of the mentor assigned to them. Novice teachers spoke about how helpful it was for the mentor teacher to be someone from the same teaching background or curriculum area. For example, Loren from Liberty school talked about the importance of being linked to a mentor who was another career and technical education/career pathways (CTE) teacher. She described the process as the mentor walking her through all of the building procedures and paperwork involved in the CTE courses. Loren felt it was very helpful, but she emphasized the importance of having been mentored by another CTE teacher, “I would have been lost if I would have not had another CTE teacher to help me with my classes and how they fit into the CTE pathway of classes.” The other reason she liked having a mentor in her teaching area was it provided a person she could go to who acted as a sounding board. The mentor was a person she described as a short-term intermediary between the teacher and figuring out “best practice” in the classroom. John also reported having a mentor teacher who was in his content area and how it was a great experience for that teacher to come into his classroom and offer suggestions on how to change lesson presentations or delivery techniques. He said,

> We had regular weekly meetings where we would discuss things that went on in the classroom. Anytime I had questions about my classroom, my mentor was helpful in
offering great ideas. I could not think of a better way to help a teacher in the first years.

My mentor also came and observed some of my more difficult classes and gave me some
good suggestions. John felt this helped him with getting off the ground in dealing with students in classes and felt
the mentor teacher was an invaluable part of his early growth in the classroom. Jack also pointed
out the importance of having the assigned mentor be someone from the same curriculum area, as
it could limit the support novices needed from the mentors if they did not understand the needs
of their department or classes. Overall, the novice teachers felt the mentor teacher relationship
aspect of the induction program was a vital component of their survival and ultimately their
success as a new teacher.

**Supportive Administration**

*An instructional leader helps create the school environment by supporting the self-improvement
of novice teachers (Smith, 2004, p. 156).*

The novice teachers at both schools first and foremost talked about having a supportive
administration as important to their desire to remain at the school and in the profession.
Descriptions included administrators who were available and visible, provided support in the
classroom, supported them with parents, ensured they had appropriate resources, and who were
organized leaders.

**Administration was Available and Visible**

Having the administration available and visible in the building was discussed often in the
interviews and focus groups at both schools. Novice teachers consistently defined a supportive
administrator as someone who was available to them and visible throughout the school. For
example, Jason said about Johnson’s administration, “I really liked seeing my administration in
the hallways joking around with the kids and checking on teachers during passing periods.” This was important to Jason because he associated visibility in the hallways with the administration’s availability, which helped him feel comfortable approaching administration if he had a need. Larry said, “I liked having administration pop into my room from time to time or having them visible in the hallways. I liked having the access to them and it would give me an opportunity to catch them to ask questions or if I had a concern.” His new teacher experience was enriched knowing the administration was visible and that he did not have to go search for them in order to talk to them. Having the administration visible helped reinforce the notion that novice teachers could get support from their administration when needed. For example, during a focus group John said, “I always see the administrators in the hallways. That is important for me to see the administration being visible. Seeing them approach kids and teachers in the hallways makes me feel like that I can talk to them if needed.” Larry concurred with the importance of the visibility of administration in the school by sharing a situation he experienced before coming to Liberty High School. He described an administration that he never saw in the hallways and felt this contributed to the lack of communication between administration and teachers. He talked about how difficult it was in his old school for him to feel comfortable approaching the administration if he had a problem. He shared that this had a dramatic effect on him feeling like a trusted employee. He said, “I knew this was not the place for me” and quit at the end of the school year.

It was clear that the perception of approachability was tied to novice teachers seeing their administration in the building, making an effort to talk with teachers in the hallways, and sending the message of being available if they had a need. Lyle defined administrative support at Liberty as availability, knowing that the administration “had an open door policy” in the building. He reported the administration often told him if he had a question to stop by anytime. This helped
him feel comfortable in situations where if he had a question or needed support in a classroom, he could go to the administration. Jack described a similar open door policy at Johnson when he shared, “My administrator creates a climate where it is ‘open door’ and he is always reassuring us that if there are questions we can always come to him and work things out.” Loren also talked about the support of Liberty’s administration by describing how they would stop by from time to time to check on her, without giving her the feeling she was being checked up on. She shared, “It is not on a day to day basis to the point I feel like they are micro-managing. But definitely, if I had a question I knew they were making an effort to be visible and available.” Loren later commented in an interview regarding the support of administration when she said, “If I felt like I was doing the right thing with my kids in the classroom and I wasn’t getting the support from my administration, then I think it would be very deflating.” For Loren, the administration’s attention to her classroom showed support for her as a novice teacher. For these novice teachers the effort made by administrators to be approachable through making themselves available, stopping by classrooms, and inviting them to their office was important for feeling supported.

**Supporting Novice Teachers in the Classroom**

Novice teachers also talked about the importance of feeling supported by the administration when it concerned their work in the classroom. Throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, this became a significant aspect of novice teachers feeling comfortable in the teaching environment. The novice teachers used the word “support” to mean if they had issues in the classroom that administration was willing to back them. Jill said she felt the support from Johnson’s administration was good. She explained, “If you come in with an action plan on how to solve an issue, they were very supportive.” She talked about having some trouble with an administrator she worked with at the middle school. Jill was a music instructor and described the
problem was the administrator not trusting her decisions. Again, this became a point of conflict for her not feeling like the administrator was supportive of her decisions. She said it came down to her needing to prove to him that what she was doing in the classroom was working. She reported, “Once this administrator saw how I was handling situations, then things seemed to turn around.” She attributed the turn around to the administrator being convinced she could handle situations in her classroom appropriately. She talked about the difference and how it made her feel “unsupported” when he questioned her or behaved as though he was uncomfortable with her decisions. Lyle made a similar observation about Liberty’s administration not second-guessing the decisions he was making in his classroom, saying, “I felt that the administrator had my back.” During the interview Lyle described a situation that involved the discipline of a student. There were some phone calls made from the student’s parents and the principal showed his support for what Lyle was doing in the classroom regarding the situation. Liberty’s principal came down to Lyle’s classroom and affirmed his course of action with the student. Lyle said, “I felt supported” and this was significant to him as a new teacher. The feeling of support for Jack came in the form of how he viewed Johnson’s administrators paying close attention to his development in the classroom. When asked about the support of his administrator he indicated that it was positive. Jack felt the Johnson school’s principal had the entire staff’s best interest in mind. He said this was accomplished by “not handing everyone the same path for improvement.” He went on to clarify this made him feel supported because the feedback was specific for his needs. It was not a cookie cutter approach and it gave Jack the sense that his principal cared about the direction he was going and what areas he would need to improve as a new teacher. Jason also felt Johnson’s administration’s support was “great” in regard to his classroom. To him, the principal and assistant principal were highly supportive. Student disciplinary issues always went through the
assistant principal who took time to gather Jason’s perspective on the situation. In front of
students and parents, the assistant principal was always supportive of Jason’s decisions.

Showing support also meant that administration was consistent with the support
regardless of the responsibility of the teacher. If an administrator showed consistent support in
the classroom but not in other roles outside of the classroom, this could cause some confusion for
a novice teacher. Larry at Liberty explained it this way, “Showing support means being
supportive of the person, not just what they do.” He said an inconsistent show of support would
tell him that he was not being trusted to handle different responsibilities.

Supported with Parents In and Outside the Classroom

As was evident in the previous section, novice teachers appreciated being supported by
administration when it came to dealing with students’ parents. They also spoke about how
important parental support was to them as teachers. In a focus group, Jason, Jeff, and John from
Johnson school described times when administrators showed support for them by refusing to
allow parents to be disrespectful. Jason recalled,

I was in a parent conference where we had a problem with a student, and the parent really
started to berate me and started getting loud. My principal at the time totally cut that
parent off and explained that we do not talk to each other in this kind of way. He
explained to the parent that we show respect. We may not like everything that is
happening, but we use a different manner to express it.

This was a significant moment for Jason, and he followed with, “I really felt like he was backing
me up, not because of the decision I made, but because of the way I was being treated.” Novice
teachers at both schools felt the principal would not allow parents to mistreat them. Jeff
confidently stated, “My principal would immediately stop a parent conference, if a parent in any
way acted inappropriately.” He reported the principal was really good about defending him in public settings and if anything needed to be said, the principal waited until private meetings to give other directions.

Having the principal’s support when dealing with parent complaints was important for these novice teachers. To illustrate, John shared a story about how the Johnson school principal had his back when a parent complained to a school board member about a book he was using in class.

There was a time when I was teaching a particular book in my class. A parent had a concern about what I was teaching and called a board member. My principal called me to the office, informed me of the complaint, and we discussed it. My principal asked me if it was a requirement in my curriculum, and I told him it was. He then assured me that I would not hear another word about it, and I never did.

John felt reassured because the principal took time to find out what was going on in the classroom and supported what he was trying to do. He later commented, “I have always respected and felt trusted by my principal for the support he has given me in the classroom.” John further stated, “I know he is trying to support my decisions and come to a correct course of action regarding situations that may arise in my classes.”

Novice teachers with coaching responsibilities often had different types of interactions with parents than those who did not coach. Having the administration support them in whatever role they were in was important to these teachers. Larry said that being a new teacher and a coach gave him different opportunities to interact with parents, as he had little interaction with parents in the classroom. During parent conferences he reported that only two parents came in. However, it was different for him when it came to coaching. He said, “It’s sad but true…”
parents seem more interested in what is going on in athletics then in the classroom.” He felt Liberty’s administration was supportive and has had few problems dealing with parents while coaching. Larry also reported if he did not feel supported in coaching it would affect in the classroom. Jason also felt Johnson’s administrators were supportive of his work with kids in coaching. He said that he has had few issues, but believed if something came up the administration was ready to back him. He said that if they were unsupportive of him outside of the classroom working with kids that “this would make me wonder about their confidence in me inside the classroom.”

**Support for Classroom Resources**

For novice teachers, administrators’ showing support also included ensuring they had the resources necessary to be successful in the classroom. Resources included classroom materials, technology, and ongoing support to attend in-service training. The premise was that support for obtaining classroom resources made it possible for teachers to facilitate effective teaching interventions. For example, John mentioned the support provided by the Johnson administrators, “The administration has been very helpful. I tried to do some different things in my classes regarding technology and I felt like the administration was working to try to get me the necessary materials for my class to be successful.” When asked what else would help to understand what it was like to be a new teacher, Loren spoke to the importance of not having to be concerned about access to the necessary classroom resources. Larry talked in a focus group about how “in tune” Mr. N (principal of Johnson) was in regard to his needs as a foreign language teacher. He described how during teacher professional development days allotted by the district; he would spend time observing teachers in other schools. He appreciated how his principal was aware of his need to grow professionally outside the school by observing other teachers in his field.
Again he said, “Mr. N does a great job with helping me find good resources for my classroom. That was extremely helpful.”

Novice teachers did express some concern that the process for getting necessary resources was not always clear. They had concerns, worries about this. There did not seem to be a budget or expectation for planning for future needs. Loren said having adequate resources available in her classroom at Liberty was something that worried her. She was quick to say that her classroom requests had been met but wondered about planning and having available resources in the future to continue what she wanted to do in her classes. Larry talked about it this way, “It was important that the principal was having meetings and talking with us [new teachers] about the resources we needed in our classrooms.” He shared, “When it comes to classroom resources, I think teachers really worry about what is available. I think that is one thing that all teachers worry and wonder about. I have had my classroom needs met really well. That is important!” When asked about being a new teacher in his building, Jeff offered this about Johnson school regarding classroom needs:

I wasn’t given a budget, so it was interesting how we worked that out. I asked a couple of other teachers if they were given budgets and they said no. I would like to see that done, so I could know where I could begin to plan.

For Jeff, the process at Johnson school was to “just ask the administration and they would decide if it could be done or not.” He saw this as frustrating and felt he could do a better job of planning and managing his program if he knew what his budget was from year to year.

**Organized Leadership**

Another theme that came to the surface in discussions with novice teachers was the organizational skills of their administrators. It was important for these novice teachers to work
in an environment under leaders who modeled organization. Doing so helped novice teachers feel secure in their new environments. These novice teachers consistently reported that working under someone who demonstrated good organizational skills taught them to see how classroom effectiveness could be enhanced through organization. For several novice teachers, being organized meant the principal was task-oriented in meetings. For example, Larry described how his principal at Liberty would come into faculty meetings with an agenda and he felt the meeting was very focused. From how the meetings were conducted he knew the principal had spent time thinking through what was important information for teachers based on the time of the year. Larry interpreted the organization of the meetings as working for a principal who demonstrated support of all teachers being successful in their classrooms. Watching his principal be organized in meetings helped him feel secure because the administration paid close attention to detail. Larry went on to say that his principal provided a sense of knowing that if he had a problem there was support in place. Jason described it this way, “How can you trust an administrator to give you direction on how to best handle your classroom who is not organized?” Jeff also saw the importance of organized leadership in terms of watching his principal on a daily basis, noting, “It seemed he had a progression of things he would go through during the day that gave me the impression that he was organized.” Later in the discussion, Jeff described how in meetings, programs, concerts, and even times where he would catch his principal in the office, it appeared he was efficient and on task. This made Jeff feel secure and it reinforced the notion that the principal was consistent in his expectations and behavior. Jeff also stated, “This made me want to work hard and it gave me a secure feeling of knowing that in situations where I would need support that my principal would be consistent and attentive.” Jill also spoke about how Johnson’s principal organized faculty meetings, “around certain topics regarding what was
needed for all teachers.” Jill went on to explain, “The principal wanted us to report back to him about these discussions in order for him to ensure that the discussions were meaningful.” Jill liked how meetings were structured because it gave her the impression that administration was paying attention to what was going on in the school and to teachers’ needs. This made her feel secure in knowing the administration cared about what support she was getting. Jill shared that in a previous job the administrator always seemed hurried and disorganized, and this bothered her. She explained, “I was in a situation one time where I was meeting with a parent. The principal came in late offering no inclination of what was going on and ended up leaving the meeting before it was over.” She later commented, “It was an awful feeling and it made me think that he did not care. He did not bother to come by and ask about the meeting later and it just gave me a sense that he was not very supportive.” For Jill, the principal appearing to be disorganized, distracted, and hurried made her feel unsupported. She said this incident had a huge impact on her feeling she was not important enough for his time and she eventually left the school. Jason, during a focus group, reflected on his principal being organized and efficient, “My principal was very organized and had a checklist of things that we went over during the orientation phase of my coming to Johnson.” I asked him how he perceived this and he said, “Mr. N (principal) being organized about what I was experiencing and learning showed that he was really concerned about my experiences as a novice teacher.” How novice teacher’s interpreted positive experiences in a new school largely came from their perceptions of the administration’s organizational skills.

Another way that the novice teachers perceived support was by gaining trust from other faculty. It was important for novice teachers to have veteran faculty trust them in their new roles.
For the novice teachers interviewed, trust was not just a feeling they had but it was an experience they perceived as they began working in their buildings.

Faculty Trust

*Relational trust is built between people through day-to-day social exchanges in a school community (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p.22).*

Factors that novice teachers pointed to as significant for building trust with other faculty were (a) the mentor relationship, (b) being trusted in their classrooms by veteran faculty and administration and (c) how teacher meetings were conducted. Novice teachers discussed these aspects as aiding in establishing trust with other faculty, which contributed to their satisfaction and desire to remain at their current schools.

The Mentor Relationship

Novice teachers valued the mentor relationship and related it to faculty trust because of they had a connection with another teacher who could provide them with encouragement, feedback, and support. Building trust involved mentors focusing on forging the relationship of trust and not engaging in direct instruction with a novice teacher or making specific demands. Mentors did not impose their knowledge and skills, but rather helped novice teachers view things from different perspectives. The trust was established by making available the immediate connection in the building. The mentor became a friend, a guide, a supporter, and an advocate looking to provide encouragement and unbiased opinions. Mentors supported novice teachers by offering ideas and suggestions or lending sympathetic ears as novice teachers struggled with the complexities of teaching. For example, John appreciated how the Johnson administration treated the mentor teacher experience because it provided the initial step in establishing trust with other faculty members in the building. He said, “I really liked knowing that I had a person I could
trust in the building.” The administration made sure John and his mentor were meeting and that he was getting the necessary support. Novice teachers felt trust was established by their mentor and built by the day-to-day connections they were making with other teachers in the building.

Novice teachers talked about the stress of being a new teacher and the potential for it to be overwhelming. However, mentors and novice teachers were encouraged by the mentor process to accept each other and work through the difficult times, just as in any trust relationship. Larry talked about not feeling he was just being “thrown to the wolves.” He appreciated being assigned to someone who was encouraging and genuinely cared about him. He felt the nonjudgmental, accepting approach created a supportive environment that helped novice teachers manage stress. This professional friendship developed through the mentor and provided unconditional emotional support and understanding for the roller coaster of emotions that novice teachers experience during their first year of teaching. This was an important part of the mentoring relationship and became a critical aspect discussed by the novice teachers.

**Trust in the Classroom**

Novice teachers expressed how being a trusted member of the faculty meant they felt trusted in their classrooms by the administration and other faculty. Larry appreciated how the faculty and administration at Liberty school demonstrated they trusted what he was doing by asking him about his classroom in a non-threatening way. Questions from both the administration and veteran teachers were about how they could support the work he was doing in his classes. This made him feel part of the established teaching community.

For other novice teachers, trust was feeling they were valued and accepted as colleagues and part of the school organization. For example, Lyle described it this way: “It was cool to be able to stand out in the hall between classes with other veteran teachers and feeling like I was a
part of their group.” He said they did not seem to pry too much about how things were going in his classes. He laughed and said, “I guess that is a good thing.” Not being asked about his classroom made him feel like the other teachers trusted him. When probed further, John said, “Yes, I don’t think I could work in an environment where I didn’t think that my fellow colleagues trusted what I was doing in classroom.” It was apparent that being trusted by their faculty colleagues was a meaningful aspect of novice teachers feeling supported. In another example, Jason said not feeling supported by fellow faculty members would be a “real deal breaker” for him if he were working in a different school. He felt a lack of trust among the faculty would cause him to leave and look for a more comfortable and trusting environment. When asked about faculty trust at Johnson school, John said, “overall the faculty relationships are pretty good.” However, he said there were some teachers who preferred to isolate themselves in their classrooms and did not want to establish relationships with anyone. He saw these teachers being close to retirement and not interested in “connecting” with other staff.

Novice teachers would like to have stronger relationships with colleagues outside of the school day, but many teachers do not live in the community. To illustrate, Jason said, “We are close at school, but we really don’t see each other outside the building.” Lyle talked about how spending time together outside of school could improve his relationships with the other teachers in the building. From his perspective, building trust outside of one’s job could help develop relationships on the job.

**Trust Built in Meetings**

Novice teachers frequently talked about how the administration of their schools organized established meetings with teachers gathering to discuss school issues. Novice teachers
discussed and agreed that relational trust was established by how the faculty meetings and professional development sessions were organized and managed.

**Faculty meetings.** The development and organization of teacher meetings set by the administration made an impression on the novice teachers as it concerned establishing faculty trust. Novice teachers at both schools attributed the trust developed during faculty meetings to administration. Jason said the Johnson school administration would not try to “hover over us.” Instead, he saw how the faculty meetings were designed to give teachers time to dialogue among themselves and learn from each other. He interpreted these actions as the administration showing novice teachers they were valuable and worthy of trust by not separating them out during meetings. Jason thought the administration’s equal treatment of all teachers was helpful in feeling that he was trusted. Jason went on to say, “This was an expectation that filtered down to all of us.” Jack described Johnson faculty’s philosophy toward novice teachers this way, “Hey they are competent enough to go to school and get a job…so they should be trusted enough to handle their responsibilities.” Jill added, “This makes it easier for new teachers to become acclimated to the environment.” That she was trusted to handle responsibilities was crucial to her and made her think, “This is why the trust for each other works.”

With regard to the Liberty administration and veteran teachers’ treatment of novice teachers, Loren observed, “This just makes it a part of how you just work in a building.” She went on to describe how everyone was treated like they were on the same playing field. She did not think teachers treated each other differently based on how many years they had been in the building. Larry described a situation that he reflected on later was important for him regarding trust and teacher meetings. On the first day of reporting back time for teachers, they were to meet in the library. He walked in and was expecting what he thought would be little groups of
teachers sitting together in “cliques.” Instead, everyone was sitting together in one big group and he could not tell who taught what subject at first. The teachers proceeded to invite him to take part in the discussion, making him feel apart of the overall group. He said this was a big step for him feeling like he was part of a trusting environment.

Professional development meetings. Professional development meetings were another important time for novice teachers to trust building, as they were able to connect with the rest of the staff in formal and informal settings. Loren described how trust was built with Liberty’s faculty during their time in professional development meeting days. The administration would set up time for small groups of teachers to meet and discuss how things were going in classes. She said, “I think the time on professional development days has a positive impact on how well we all get along.” Jack liked Johnson’s staff development meetings and said this was a time for everyone to discuss issues important to them as teachers. He said, “I just think it helped to see people really trying to help each other out and it is an established understanding amongst staff.” Jason said staff development days helped to develop a “cohesive” group among teachers as they worked toward similar goals. Doing so helped develop trust as the staff talked about their mutual goals. The composition of the professional development days was important to novice teachers. The significance for them was through their experiences they felt treated as part of the staff community. Being treated as a part of the established working staff made a positive impression on them.

One last theme that surfaced in discussions with novice teachers was the perceived support from stakeholders, which included students, parents and community. It was clear in my interviews and focus groups that novice teachers saw the importance of making positive connections with students, parents and members of the community.
Relationships with Students and Support from Parents, Community

Organizational trust is foundational to all social exchange relations

(Mishra & Morrissey, 1990, 16.).

Two of the interview questions posed to novice teachers involved their perceptions of relationships with students and support from parents, and the community. For some novice teachers, developing relationships with students came from interactions with them outside the classroom. The novice teachers’ need for support from parents had varying levels of importance depending on their feelings about parents and their role in the school. Community support was meaningful to some novice teachers, but was less important to others. Some novice teachers talked about their connection to the community through coaching sports. Other novice teachers perceived community support was important for the overall stability of the schools. The questions put to the novice teachers were to gain an understanding of how these relationships fit into organizational trust.

Relationships with Students

Building a healthy relationship with students was a significant aspect of retention for novice teachers and their discussions centered on gaining students’ respect and establishing a healthy connection. The novice teachers described relationships with students meant being able to strike a healthy balance between relating to students as a new teacher and maintaining professional distance. Jason talked about maintaining a professional relationship with students saying, “I am careful, so I probably come across more professional in my interactions with students than other teachers.” Jill, Johnson’s music teacher, also spoke about attaining that balance,
Overall, I feel like I have built a good relationship with the students that I work with. They are meeting my expectations. They know that I am here to teach and not be their friend. But, I am also here to listen and help them work through things.

Relationships with students for the novice teachers also meant gaining respect and having students actively participate in what they were trying to accomplish in the classroom. For Jason, it was about finding an appropriate way of dealing with students in his classes that encouraged healthy boundaries. As a physical education teacher and a coach; it took time for Jason to develop relationships with students. He explained, “I think the delay was I was asking a lot of the kids to get out of their comfort zone,” as far as what he was trying to accomplish in his classes and out on the football field. It was not as though the students resented him or did not like him. Instead, he felt it was more about students getting to know him and understanding the rigorous expectations. Jason went on to say, “I think I have had a lot of kids buy in over time to what I was trying to accomplish.” He said making a connection with students was important but it had to be for the right reasons. Lyle, who taught physical education at Liberty, expressed it has taken him a little while to develop relationships with students. Like Jason at Johnson School, Lyle felt it took some time because he too was “asking kids to get out of their comfort zones in his physical education classes and work.” He said, “It wasn’t like they resented me, but I don’t think they like being pushed so much at first.” Lyle pointed to the small size of the school and the numbers of students in his classes as having a great deal to do with easily relating to students. He did not feel “lost in the system” and thus had an easier time building relationships students. Larry suggested a different perspective on relationships with Liberty’s students. Being a new and younger teacher helped him in the classroom because kids saw him as more approachable. Since he was just out of college, high school students wanted to talk with him and had questions
regarding his college experiences. Larry said, “I enjoyed getting to talk with them about that, and I felt like I was able to help a few seniors with some of their decisions regarding college choices.” He enjoyed feeling like students trusted his experiences and advice, which translated into him feeling like a trusted member of the school environment.

**Student relationships outside the classroom.** Novice teachers also talked about developing relationships with students outside the classroom through student organizations and activities. They described this opportunity to develop relationships with students being strengthened by the opportunity to interact with them outside the classroom setting. Novice teachers described this as being a critical aspect of feeling a part of the school community. John his relationship with Johnson students “has been positive” because he had the opportunity to work with a student organization that supported the school. He reported that his time working with kids in Student Council (STUCO) was helpful in building a good relationship. Meeting with kids and working with them in STUCO helped him to build a solid relationship with students outside of the classroom. Sponsoring a student organization was a good way to become connected to the school and was helpful in developing relationships with the students. Loren also expressed that it was important for “other teachers to see her working with students in an appropriate and positive manner.” Being a career and technical education (CTE) teacher at Liberty school opened up an opportunity for Loren to sponsor a student Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization. She shared, “I was meeting with and working with students outside of class time.” Loren thought it was helpful to developing relationships with students because she was able to work and connect with students in a different role. For Lyle, his unique connection to students as a coach at Liberty allowed him to provide opportunities to bridge gaps in the classroom. He acknowledged how this was important as a novice teacher, noting, “it may
be important to find ways to get involved with students outside of the classroom.” Developing relationships with students helped novice teachers gain confidence in what they were trying to accomplish in their new roles. Novice teachers also shared about gaining support from parents.

**Support From Parents**

When asked about support from parents, some novice teachers reported having parent support helped in developing relationships with students in the classroom. For Jill, working as a music teacher, parent support was especially important. She commented, “I am a music teacher and I need to know that parents support what I do. I depend on parents in a different way than normal classroom teachers.” She talked about how she needed to know that parents would get their students to various events on time, have the necessary resources, and hold their kids accountable by encouraging them to practice outside of her class. She said, “The way I know that parents are on board is through seeing them come to my events and supporting their student practicing their music outside of school.” Jill shared about being in a different district two years ago that was completely different. She said, “I had very little support from the parents, and I could not wait to get out of that situation.” In her role as music educator, the support from parents was crucial to what Jill was trying to accomplish in the classroom. John again suggested the work he was doing with STUCO students gave him a unique connection not only with the students, but also with their parents. He said, “I spend a great deal of time with these kids - that ended up with me having to spend time with these kids’ parents.” He enjoyed the association and felt it was crucial for him to develop into a trusted member of the teaching community. Lyle talked about parent support at Liberty by saying about three-fourths of his parents would do “just about anything that I would ask them to do.” Parents made sure their kids were doing well in his classes by communicating with him through e-mail. It helped him to know they were holding
their kids accountable at home and encouraging them to do well in his classes. Lyle wondered if this had to do with his coaching and the special bond he shared with some of his students. He felt this contributed to the relationship he had with parents. Loren said in a focus group that parent support was crucial to the success of her work with students outside of her classroom. Loren believed she was in a unique situation because of her FFA activities. This created a situation where she spent a great deal of time with her students outside of class. She liked the connection she had with students, as it gave her a way not only to connect with students but also with their families. She liked the interaction with parents and said it made her feel more “connected” to her students knowing more about them outside of her classroom.

Not every novice teacher interviewed felt the support from parents was crucial. While in a focus group discussing parental support, John offered this perspective:

The parents I have dealt with have been supportive. I have had to conduct a couple of parent conferences with kids that have had some behavioral issues. For the most part, parents have been supportive of strategies to maintain an appropriate environment in my classes. I haven’t had any negative things with parents but I am sure it will eventually come the longer I teach. I am prepared for it and know that complete support from all parents is not necessary for me to be a good teacher.

Larry said support from parents was important to him but thought the support was limited in areas. He was quick to say there were “some parents out there trying.” He also felt that if parents were not supporting him it was not a negative for him as a novice teacher. He was just disappointed in the lack of involvement or concern parents seemed to demonstrate regarding his students. He said, “I don’t see a great amount of parents coming in or contacting me about their students.” He did not take it personally as a novice teacher but wished support from parents had
been better. Jason shared how the lack of involvement from Johnson’s parents sent a message of “lack of support” for him. He said, “We don’t get a great deal of parent involvement and support. Even if I reach out and ask parents for help, I don’t get a great deal of response.” This was difficult for him at first, and it took his mentor teacher to help him understand that it was not personal. Jason’s mentor teacher told him that if he was not getting complaints from parents and kids were being successful in his classes, then that was the best he could expect. His mentor encouraged him to understand that parents were busy and that his focus needed to be on what he could do to help students in his classes.

**Rural Community Support**

Small, rural community schools and their educational mission have always been central to the community. Overall, novice teachers saw the rural school environment as positive and they had a desire to live and teach in such a setting. For them, the school was an extension of the community as the school was their center, their place to go for social and athletic activities. Community support was important for some of the novice teachers interviewed. But, for others, it was not as critical for their work in the building. John said about community support for Johnson school, “Coming into a rural area, I see much greater support from the community about the activities that are going on in the school.” This was important for John because he had previously taught in a large school district in a large metro area. He said the students were not very engaged and it was difficult to “get community to care about what was going on in the schools” because there were so many other distractions. For Jill being a music teacher, having community support was extremely important. Like John, she talked about the lack of support in other situations in other schools and communities, noting, “Compared to other situations I am aware of... [at Johnson] it is wonderful.” She went on to enthuse, “The community is supportive.
of my music program and that makes me feel like they know and appreciate what I do.” Jill also talked about how this made her feel like a valued and established part of the small, rural community. She expressed that not developing a “successful” program would translate into her not feeling like the community trusted what she was trying to put together. Larry also came from a larger city and went to a good size college before relocating to the rural community of Liberty. He observed, “Coming into a rural area I see much greater community involvement.” He saw this in relation to the difference in the kids and parents. The community seemed more connected to what was going on in the school district. He liked how the events at the schools brought the school closer to the community. He shared, “You get to see your students’ parents at the events and allow them to see you as a valued person in their student’s life.” As a new teacher, this really helped him feel closer to his students and provided a unique perspective regarding what some of his students were experiencing outside of school. John also talked about how the relationship with Johnson’s parents enhanced the trust he experienced as a new teacher, helping him feel secure and connected. He said that in a smaller community setting “the word gets out” about who you are and your work in the school.

Community support through coaching. Some novice teachers noted community support could be gained outside the classroom through sports, which are central to the life of a small town. There were some variant layers to the perspective of community support from novice teachers. The small rural community school can provide a greater opportunity for student involvement, which leads to more support from community. Not all of the novice teachers experienced or interpreted community support in the same manner. For instance, Jason noted the Johnson community will support its high school sports teams, but there was less emphasis on academics. He said, “We get a good number of kids involved in sports, but there doesn’t seem to
be a great deal of accountability from home. If we reach out and ask for help, we don’t get a lot of response.” Again, this did not seem to bother him much as a coach in regard to his work in the school and being a valued teacher. He tended to shrug it off by saying, “I know that what I am doing is not about the parents anyway.” Lyle, who coaches baseball at Liberty school, said he gets “some support from a few parents for my baseball program.” He went on to say, “As far as getting support overall, I do have parent e-mails and I can contact them if I want.” But, he was not sure that this constituted support. He chuckled when responding to this question, realizing that he would not consider parent contact via email “a completely open conduit of support.” He did not seem upset or concerned about the situation regarding his work with students. He said, “What I do in the classroom is far more important, and I feel like from my interactions with parents that the community appreciates me being here.” For Larry, coaching a middle school sport was important for him to connect with the community. He felt that parents were “concerned about how their kids are doing.” He said the added connection to kids in sports helped with his relationship with the community. Parents seeing him work with their kids outside of the classroom was important in establishing trust with the community. Some parents e-mailed him and asked, “Is there anything that I can help out with?” Again, he felt supported by the community based on the contact he had with parents through athletics. This was significant in regard to him feeling like a trusted and supported part of the school. Novice teachers also described the important connection between community support and stability for schools and teachers.

**Community support brings stability.** Novice teachers articulated the importance of sustaining community support by describing from their own experiences how small rural schools retained graduates in the community. Jack took the question about community support and
responded this way, “There seems to be a great number of former students staying in the community and continuing to support the school by putting their own children back into the school district.” Lyle said, “For me, it goes back to the community demonstrating support by retaining the population. I am still learning the connections in the community.” Being a new teacher out of college, it spoke to the stability and trust the community puts back into the school, as Lyle said, “Kids are having great experiences and wanting to put their own kids back in the schools.” Jeff reflected on the comments in the focus group and added, “I see the value of former students returning to the community.” For Jeff, seeing former students return to the community spoke to the positive experience that students must be having in the schools. This made him feel good as a teacher knowing the families of those students returning are having the same experiences. Jason interpreted the community support by saying, “By the students returning or staying, it was saying to him that they supported us” as novice teachers. That was obviously important for him as a new teacher.

Providing support for novice teachers depended on the type and the number of supports received. Novice teachers felt that affirmation from the administration, faculty, and key stakeholders was important for their work.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusions/Implications

The dominant areas of research regarding novice teacher turnover have focused on the reasons teachers leave the profession. Poor working conditions, lack of supportive learning environments (Gonzalez, 2004), no formal teacher-mentor program (Darling-Hammond, 2003), and lack of administrative support (Ingersoll, 2001) are all reasons given for the inability of schools to retain novice teachers. However, few studies have focused solely on the reasons novice teachers stay in the teaching profession in an attempt to decrease teacher turnover.

In an effort to answer these questions, I utilized research uncovered through the literature review to create constructs to guide my questioning in the interview setting. As noted in my research design, the information was gained through interviews and focus groups with novice teachers in two rural Midwest high schools that were conducted over a two-month period. As part of my research, I examined internal documents on the schools mentoring program and had informal conversations with administration.

In this chapter, the findings of the study are examined through the lens of organizational trust theory as a framework in order to draw conclusions about what encourages novice teacher retention. Considerable theory and research has focused on identifying the bases of trust within organizations (Cox 1993, Gilbert & Tang 1998, Cook & Wall 1980, Mayer et al 1995, McCune 1998). The goal was to pull the findings of the study through the theory of organizational trust to determine what conclusions can be drawn for novice teachers wanting to stay in their teaching profession.

Organizational trust refers to novice teachers’ perceptions of the trustworthiness of an organization, including their feelings of confidence in and support in the organization (Moye,
Organizational trust is foundational to all social exchange relations (Gilbert & Tang, 1998; Mishra & Morrissey, 1990) and a critical component in well-functioning organizations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Conclusions

The teachers in the focus groups as well as in the individual interviews provided rich sources of data about their perceptions, which provided valuable insight into novice teacher retention. I will discuss the conclusions and implications of this study with a focus on understanding the role organizational trust had in developing an environment that increases novice teacher retention.

Building Relational Trust Environments with Administrators and Colleagues

According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), relational trust is built between people through day-to-day social exchanges in a school community. A recurring theme, which emerged in the study regarding organizational trust, was that novice teachers placed great significance on building trusting relationships with administration, mentors, and faculty. Novice teachers believed their schools helped support and facilitate relational trust and they were experiencing positive growth as a result of deliberate trust building experiences. Novice teachers described trust in relation to becoming connected to the teaching community and demonstrating competence in their ability to work in their buildings.

Administrative trust. Administrators have significant influence on teacher retention (Inman & Marlow, 2004). The interviews and focus groups pointed to the importance of administrators (principals) being actively visible and available to assist with the needs and concerns of novice teachers. Novice teachers saw this as evidence of administrators’ trustworthiness. Administrators being visible throughout the school facilitated novice teachers
building relationships with and trusting them. These administrators also used communication skills that reflected an open style where questions and concerns are welcomed. It struck a chord with the novice teachers when they observed administrators making an effort to be visible and available in the building. Many of the novice teachers interviewed commented on the approachability of the administration and saw their visibility as an important attribute toward establishing trust. Novice teachers believed administrators’ visible support created an environment of relational trust.

Research has repeatedly shown the importance of forging trusting relationships as relates to creating effective organizations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Kramer, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2001, 2004). Mayer (1995) supports this idea of trust building by saying that trust evolves over time based on a series of perceptions based on interactions. Also, the novice teachers talked about the “open door” style of leadership, which further created a level of trust and comfort with getting their questions answered and needs addressed. This obviously had a positive impact on their perception of the approachability of the administration, thus creating a safe environment where the novice teachers felt they could gain needed support. This is consistent with the literature that points out trust is established by the administration in those relationships. First and foremost, highly regarded principals demonstrate honesty and commitment to follow through in all interactions with faculty, support staff, parents, and students (Barlow, 2001; Blase & Blase, 2001; Sebring & Bryk, 2000). Although teachers’ honesty and integrity in interactions with the principal are important, it is the responsibility of the principal, the person with more power in the relationship, to set the stage for trusting relationships with teachers and other school staff. Therefore, it is clear the more a person trusts, the more confidence the person will take part in the activities of the object of trust, which in this case is the administrator (Das and Teng, 1998).
This is important for administrators to understand regarding novice teacher retention. As Singer (1993) noted, novice teachers are twice as likely to leave the profession than veteran teachers, expressing that additional attention and support for new teachers may be justified in relation to retention.

Novice teachers felt it was important to establish a positive and trusting relationship with the administration in the building. Many of the novice teachers interviewed felt this was one of the most important aspects of them feeling comfortable and accepted in the school environment. The school environment represents the accumulated perception of a group; the ways of thinking, feeling and understanding the trust level of the organization (Schein, 1999). Novice teachers needed the assurance that administrators trusted their work in the classroom and supported their decisions. A poor relationship with the administration has been documented as a leading reason for novice teachers leaving the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). One novice talked about a negative personal experience she had with an administrator. She considered it a “deal breaker” for her and did not return to teaching in that building.

**Novice teacher mentoring builds trust.** Novice teachers in the study spoke positively about the attribute of having a mentor teacher as they began their teaching career. They discussed the importance of having someone they could approach to get questions answered and to get insight on daily activities in their buildings. Literature supports a mentoring program for novice teachers can contribute to organizational trust. Tillman (2002) stated the goal of an effective mentor is to establish a relationship of trust over an extended period of time and to support and aid the novice through his or her evolution and development. Moreover, research suggests that a school system's commitment to an ongoing, comprehensive mentoring program could go a long way toward achieving the goal of better retention of novice teachers. The novice
teachers identified three positive aspects of the mentoring corroborated in current research regarding the beneficial effects of mentoring.

The first is mentoring provided an immediate supportive resource for the novice teacher to gain understanding about the school’s policies and procedures. It was important to novice teachers that consideration was placed on the mentor’s qualifications. A good mentor is a skilled teacher, is able to transmit effective teaching strategies, has a thorough command of the curriculum being taught, can communicate openly with the beginning teacher, listens well, is sensitive to the needs of the beginning teacher, understands that teachers may be effective using a variety of styles, and is not overly judgmental (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). This immediate resource also spoke to the support they felt as new teachers. The focus is on helping novices to overcome challenges and feel comfortable in the teaching profession. Mentoring within a situated apprentice perspective emphasizes adjustment to the school culture and the prevailing norms of teaching, and supports the development of techniques and skills necessary in a particular context (Little, 1990). It is important for novice teachers to feel they are receiving the support they need when they come into a new situation. Novice teachers leave the profession due to lack of support from administrators, colleagues, students, and parents (Ingersoll, 2001).

The second is the bridge the mentor teacher provides to connect the novice teacher to the rest of the staff. Odell (1990) identified the importance of trust built through mentoring, where the novice teacher is encouraged to develop self-efficacy and to come to terms with personal and professional needs, while utilizing the mentor as a relational bridge to the rest of the staff. This trust building, which occurred through an apprenticeship model of learning where the mentor was a key resource, was helpful for the novice teachers. Byrk and Schneider (2002) described
the process of mentoring as increasing relational trust through the day-to-day social exchanges in the school community.

Lastly, although there is evidence supporting that informal mentoring occurs for novice teachers from veteran teachers, a formal mentoring relationship requires considerable thought and effort from the mentor teacher and administration (Little, 1990). Many of the novice teachers interviewed spoke of the importance of being mentored by teachers from the same teaching discipline. Even more importantly, mentor teachers need specific skills in how to help novice teachers move out of the first-year survival and socialization mode and begin to grapple with deeper-level learning around subject matter and instructional problem solving (Huling-Austin, 1992).

**Trust from faculty.** Novice teacher respondents reported the attribute of being trusted and supported by other faculty in the building was important to their experience and their desire to remain in the profession. This is an aspect described in the literature as a factor of retention for novice teachers as it relates to school environment. Kelly (2004) found that undesirable working environments (i.e. those characterized by lack of trust) were related to increased attrition. The quality of teachers’ experiences as they work with one another contributes to the overall sense of what matters in the school. Because a school environment overlaps with so many other factors, researchers have not yet agreed on a specific definition of environment. Johnson (2012) studied school environment and found it was a predictor of teacher satisfaction and teacher turnover. It was defined as the extent to which the school environment is characterized by mutual trust, respect, and openness within the faculty. Others have investigated specific components of school environment as independent predictors of teacher turnover (Boyd, 2005).
Novice teachers in the study talked about having opportunities to discuss important school functions in meetings with other faculty and having the support of other faculty as they began their work in the classroom as important. For novice teachers the need to feel accepted and part of the school community (faculty) was an important part of what novice teachers experienced. Hopkins (2001) described environment as the observed patterns of behavior, the norms of working groups, the dominant values espoused by the school, and the unwritten policies and procedures that novice teachers learn when coming to a new school. Novice teachers from both schools felt the faculty were accepting and supportive of them as novice teachers. Novice teachers felt there was an effort to create a welcoming and supportive environment in the building.

Organizational Habits of Administrators Communicate Organizational Trust

The novice teachers interviewed in the study spoke often about the organizational skills of the administrators and how this built trust through providing them with a safe and orderly environment. For example, novice teachers would discuss how the mentor meetings were organized and appreciated how the administration was involved in helping them become more comfortable with day-to-day operations in the building. This is consistent with Schein (2002), a leading expert in the field of organizational environments, who describes a comfortable environment as one of stability and trust often outside the awareness of the organization. Schein (2004) points to trust in the environment also being established from leadership demonstrating good organizational skills. Administrators build trust by making decisions, clarifying their own thoughts, persuading others, and projecting a sense of confidence in people by effectively managing the organization.
For novice teachers organizational trust was communicated through the care that had been taken to make sure meetings were organized and included information about how to handle certain tasks in the building. They perceived this as administration trying to build trust by creating an environment built on support to ensure success. Sitkin and Roth (1993) support this notion by describing trust as a belief, attitude, or expectation concerning the likelihood that the actions or outcomes of others will be acceptable or will serve the interests of others. Also, novice teachers perceived this as the administration paying attention to what Norton (1999) described as a plan of continued self-improvement, one that begins with feeling comfortable about the basic operation of school functions. These features regarding organizational trust are what Cook and Wall (1980) describe as positive expectation that another person will not – through words, actions or decisions – act opportunistically. As an individual attribute, trust has been defined as an individual's trust in the motives of others and on individual characteristics associated with being perceived as trustworthy (Kramer, 1995). Conversely, one teacher described a negative example of administration in a former school that appeared hurried, unfocused and disorganized. To this novice teacher it was unsettling and showed her the administration did not have an awareness of the needs of the organizations members as described in the literature (Schein, 1992).

**Trust from Parents, Students and Faculty is Important to Novice Teacher Retention**

To examine the contingent nature of trust, this study included the importance of organizational trust as it relates to other important stakeholders (Zey 1998). Stakeholders differ greatly in their expectations and interests and different stakeholders will also look for different signals regarding the trustworthiness of the organizations with whom they interact (Donaldson and Preston 1995; Schneper and Guillen 2004).
**Trust from parents.** Novice teachers reported that parental support was important, but it often depended on their specific teaching discipline. For instance, it was important for novice music teachers to not only gain trust with the parents but to gain trust from the community as it concerned their program. Novice teachers with coaching responsibilities saw the importance of community trust as it related to working with students in after school sports. Often they would report initiating contact with parents in order to begin gaining that trust. Some novice teachers gained trust with parents through their involvement of academic activities outside the school day. The research has suggested that parent support and trust in novice teachers is important to retention. Lehmann (2004) saw parent support as a way of empowering new teachers through important supportive relationships. Having the support of parents helps increase ownership of desired goals, so that novice teachers obtain a personal interest in improving the performance of the school and the environment.

**Relationships with students.** Establishing positive relationships with students was important as it related to the particular working environment for novice teachers. In organizational trust this is defined in terms of the result of consistent behaviors based on mutual respect and courtesy, it considers members’ benefit, and is usually gained gradually (Taylor, 1989). Novice teachers placed importance of gaining trust from students based on mutual respect between both parties. Novice teachers were careful to say that trust was important but it needed to be gained through an appropriate student-teacher relationship. Novice teachers needed to gain trust and confidence about the work in the classroom by being able to have the freedom to gain trust from students by establishing clear relational boundaries. Novice teachers reported feeling trusted in the classroom to use their judgments and capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances (Bandura, 1997).
**Trust from faculty.** Trust is present in relationships where parties are willing and able to work together (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Novice teachers described trust in different ways, but consistently saw it significant in establishing a trusting relationship with other faculty. In this study it was important for novice teachers to know that other faculty trusted their work in the classroom. To the novice teachers interviewed trust meant having confidence in others at a personal level to trust them to be confidential, open to hearing information, and vulnerable to feedback. Second, having faculty trust meant that other faculty had confidence regarding their work in the classroom. For example, novice teachers are given professional resources from textbooks, to curriculum guidelines, to pacing guides to be successful in their classes. Each is valuable, yet the novice teachers stressed the importance of being trusted to use their professional judgment to decide how to use materials and resources based upon their students needs. Having the confidence about these decisions from other faculty sent a message of trust to the novice teachers that became a principal component of organizational trust in their buildings and their plans to remain teaching in their schools.

**Implications**

Teachers have an opportunity to improve the quality of their students’ lives through education. They have the power to create a community of learners within their classrooms every day. In order to provide optimal learning experiences for all students, administrators and policy makers must see the vital connection between novice teacher retention and organizational trust. By examining how novice teachers experience trust, the results of this study can offer administrators and policymakers a better understanding of how organizational trust relates to novice teacher retention. In turn, by providing novice teachers with trusting environments, administrators and policymakers may be able to increase teacher retention in their schools.
Roland Barth (1990) described the importance of supporting novice teachers by saying it is imperative to support, encourage, and create trusting organizations to enable novice teachers to grow and thus improve the quality of instruction, student learning, and retention.

**Implications for School Leaders**

Research suggests that school leaders are key in developing organizational trust in their buildings and that organizational trust is deliberately built. Hargreaves and Fink (2007) stated that organizational trust is evident when people come to rely on one another and when relationships have coherence and continuity. Valentine (2004) linked organizational trust in school buildings with high quality leadership. Administrators have the capacity to positively shape the school into an organized, well functioning environment built on organizational trust.

First, school leaders can benefit from recognizing the important aspect of mentoring as part of an induction process for novice teachers. Mentoring novice teachers provides a key connection in developing organizational trust in school buildings. This has important implications for school leaders who want to create a positive and supportive climate for novice teachers entering their schools. Novice teacher respondents appreciated the process of being mentored and spoke passionately about how important it was to have an initial relational connection in the building. School leaders need to appreciate the importance of helping to develop an immediate relational connection in the building through mentoring. Mentor teachers serve to bridge the organizational trust from novice teacher to other faculty in the building. This is significant for administrators who look to carefully place novice teachers with helpful and supportive mentors. Novice teacher respondents in the study also suggested that it was important for school leaders to try to pair novice teachers with teachers from the same teaching discipline. For novice teachers interviewed it provided a stronger focus on instruction and being successful
in the classroom and increased the organizational trust by having a deeper immediate connection around similar teaching disciplines. Providing instructional help by having mentors from the same teaching discipline could greatly empower them to have greater success in the classroom. According to the study findings, the goal of teacher mentoring should be to create organizational trust by focusing on establishing trusting relationships between the mentor and novice teacher with the support of school leaders.

Second, research suggests the pace at which novice teachers develop and the choice either to stay or leave the profession appear to be related to a school leaders support of beginning teachers (Glaze, 2005). As a school leader, it can be difficult to serve all stakeholders, be the instructional leader, operate as the building manager, complete the endless piles of paperwork in a timely fashion, and care for the people in their school. Nevertheless, it is important to note that novice teachers perceived support as having a trusted school leader who was available and visible. For school leaders it is vital to model support and create organizational trust by making themselves available and being visible in their buildings. The recognition that schools are a small community of people who develop trust and perceive trust through supportive relationships could make a difference in how learning takes place in the building. Gow (2006) reported that schools where teachers reported high levels of trust between faculty and school leaders reported higher scores on assessments. Being able to sustain a healthy supportive relationship with school leaders speaks to the importance that novice teachers place on their perception of a trusting environment. This is significant in regard to novice teachers feeling supported and having trust in school leaders. For instance, if novice teachers feel mistrusted they tend to engage in behaviors that take the focus off of important school reform. Additionally, by adding to the existing body of literature, more data can be used to help school leaders understand the
importance of trust in the school environment and thus increase teacher retention. Moreover, this research hopefully will aid aspiring school leaders to recognizing the significant role they play in facilitating organizational trust for novice teachers. Supporting an environment where organizational trust exists involves novice teachers feeling comfortable and perceiving school leaders as available and visible.

Finally, the literature and the theoretical framework of how trust is established in organizations supports creating structure for the organization, which contributes to system stability. The school leader is pivotal in supporting and retaining novice teachers through modeling good organizational skills. Research suggests that management matters in public organizations. Hopkins (2001) says schools cannot flourish in incongruent (disorganized) environments. Novice teachers spoke about the importance of school meetings and the mentoring process being organized. The attention to detail of meetings and the process that novice teachers experienced through meeting with mentors appeared to be very significant in how novice teachers felt supported and comfortable in the environment. This helped support Byrk and Schneider (2002) conclusion that people in a school community are relationally connected and perceive the organization of an environment as important thus making a difference in the way learning takes place in a school building. School leaders could learn from the important perception that stakeholders have in the operation of the school environment. Organizational trust can reach to the novice teacher’s confidence in the organizational skills of the school leader having a beneficial effect on the organization. Taylor (1990) discussed the importance of having school leaders model good organizational skills as it being in the best interest of novice teacher growth. Included was how novice teachers perceived the way school leaders took time to model an organized environment which supported the goal attainment of the
school and further empowers novice teachers to see the role they play in the schools belief in a positive school environment.

**Implications for Policymakers**

Policymakers have correctly diagnosed a major problem plaguing the teaching profession—high rates of teacher attrition—but have missed the mark in their prescriptions for fixing it (Ingersoll, & Smith, 2004). Retention is best understood within individual schools, and administrators of local districts are in an especially good position to think through the meaning and implications of their district’s unique retention and mobility patterns. The findings from this study, as well as comparisons with others, may be helpful for policymakers who may be considering how to promote organizational trust in schools for novice teachers. Leithwood and Jantzi’s (2005) review suggested the most critical supportive training would include: 1) providing an organized setting that offers direction by developing a consensus around vision, goals; and 2) helping novice teachers, through support, modeling, and supervision utilizing an effective mentoring program.

Policymakers can use the results of this study to provoke a deep examination of organizational trust and its effect on novice teacher retention. Results of this study are important for policymakers who plan training to support the development of school leaders and how to create organizational trust in their buildings for novice teachers. Policymakers also can support the need for training and other learning opportunities to promote and prepare future administrators for creating and maintaining trusting environments for novice teachers. The importance of providing an organized setting would support the need for policy makers to help train and develop leaders in the importance of organizational skills. Helping to provide school
leader training in effectively organizing healthy learning environments and training school leaders on developing personal organizational habits.

Reducing attrition and creating organizational trust in schools means supporting schools induction and mentoring programs. Bandura (1997) suggested that induction programs are an important element of individual growth for novice teachers and would go a long way in better supporting novice teachers’ development. Also, for mentoring and trust, Johnson (2001) reported that the best induction programs are structured around learning communities where new and veteran teachers interact and treat each other with respect and are valued for their respective contributions. Johnson (2001) also said that novice teachers are more likely to remain teaching when they belong to professional learning communities that have, at their heart, high-quality interpersonal relationships founded on trust and respect. Thus, collegial interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers. Mentoring of beginning teachers should be considered one piece of a larger focus on teacher development. Thoughtful reflection on practices by mentor and novice teacher, school and district administrator, and teacher preparation entities, can contribute to the development and continuous improvement of all teachers.

Policy makers need to continue to support schools through the development of highly organized and effective administrators. Providing the tools and resources for administrators to have mentor teachers in their building trained to work with novice teachers, and to teach schools about effective mentoring in relation to how to organize them to be effective would go along way in support of retention of novice teachers. Policy makers should see the connection of supporting novice teacher induction programs and supporting administrators in training novice teachers in the ability to balance school and community expectations. One of the many goals of induction is to promote personal and professional support of novice teachers in the environment
of the school system. A positive induction that includes mentoring with the focus of building organizational trust experiences can be the support that novice teachers need for continued confidence in the classroom and developing skills to work with all types of stakeholders.

Last, for policy makers it is important to stay current on the needs of school leaders and support novice teacher training. This involves supporting schools with the necessary funds to train quality school leaders and support induction programs to provide support for novice teachers and enhance their practice through professional development. In order to make advancements in the U.S. educational system and to effectively prepare students to compete in a global market it is important to sustain a vibrant teaching work force. This means creating, supporting, and establishing healthy schools with the focus of developing novice teachers in an environment of organizational trust.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
A Qualitative Study of Novice Teacher Retention In Two Rural Midwest Schools

Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study of novice teacher retention in a rural secondary school(s) in Kansas. I am conducting research for my graduate studies at Wichita State University (WSU) and will be working with your school to conduct a qualitative case study with certified staff. I hope to learn the perspectives of novice teachers in a small rural district(s) by uncovering reasons for them remaining in teaching. The research will be conducted in your school during the spring semester of the 2013-14 school year.

Participant Selection: You were selected as a participant in this study because you met the qualifications of being a “novice” teacher (0-3) years teaching experience. There will be 10-12 teachers involved in this study between the two schools. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer some questions regarding the study of novice teacher retention in an individual interview and a focus group with similar teachers who fit the status of novice teacher.

Explanation of Procedures: If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview to provide information about your experiences for remaining in teaching. You will also be asked to participate in a focus group with all study participants. Interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded.

Discomfort/Risks: There are no known risks or discomforts, physical, psychological, or social, connected to this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable with a question, you may skip it.

Benefits: The study seeks to provide information to help increase novice teacher retention.

Confidentiality: Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Information from the interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded. Data will be kept in a secure location and will be disposed of after completion of the research. No one other than my advisor and myself will have access to the raw data.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University or your current school. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact the following people: Bill Anderson, 308 E. Washington Sterling, KS 67579, 620-278-2171, andersonb@usd376.com or Dr. Jean Patterson at 316-978-6392. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a
research subject, you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285. You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have voluntarily decided to participate in the following activities:

___Semi-Structured Interview
___Focus Group

You will be provided with a copy of this consent form for your records.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant                     Date

________________________________________
Witness                                        Date

Request consent form be returned electronically to andersonb@usd376.com or by fax to 620-278-2171.
APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Questions

1. When you experience a problem or you need help, what are the steps you go through to get answers?

2. Describe the mentoring process since coming to this school?

3. If you are assigned a mentor teacher, what types of support are you receiving?

4. How would you describe the relationships among the faculty at your school?

5. How would you describe your relationships with students?

6. Describe the support you get from students’ parents?

7. Describe the support are you receiving from your administration at the building level? District level?

8. Describe what it is like to teach in this school?

9. Is there anything else that would help me understand what it is like being a new teacher at this school?
APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions

1. What are ways that teachers seek to solve problems in your building?
2. What are the built in support systems in your school?
3. How has the “new teacher” mentoring process been in your school?
4. How would you describe the relationships among the faculty at your school?
5. How would you characterize the climate of trust in your building among faculty?
6. Describe the support you get from students’ parents?
7. Describe the support are you receiving from your administration at the building level? District level?
8. Describe what it is like to teach in this school?