TEACHER INDUCTION: EXPLORING THE SATISFACTION, STRUGGLES,
SUPPORTS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF NOVICE TEACHERS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This research study investigates the experiences of four novice English teachers as they transitioned from their first to their second year teaching. Data were obtained through one-on-one interviews, a focus group discussion, observations, and document review. It was found that although these teachers graduated from the same teacher education program and taught in the same state, they had very different induction experiences; they taught in varying school contexts; and they had diverse needs as novice teachers.

Much can be learned from the individual experiences of novice teachers. Because their needs and experiences vary, induction programs should be flexible and responsive. The most important needs for the teachers in this study pertained to curriculum and instructional practices. They especially appreciated meaningful collaborative opportunities and supportive administrators. They found that positively interacting with students through extra-curricular activities, no matter how demanding, contributed to their satisfaction.

These teachers' experiences also can inform teacher education programs. This study showed that this teacher education program's focus on issues of diversity had an impact on these four graduates; they felt comfortable and confident teaching a diverse student body. The participants agreed that they needed more preparation focused on teaching their students difficult works of literature. The lack of cohesion between field placements and university coursework was another concern for the teachers in this study.

Overall, these case studies support the claim that it is critical for novice teachers to receive the induction support that they need. Novice teachers should not be left to work in isolation or struggle without support during their first years in the profession.

To my parents, Pat and Sandi, and to James. Without your sacrifices, none of this would have been possible. Words cannot express my gratitude

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Definition of Terms

Case study   "The study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (Stake, 1995, p. xi).

Case study report   Written description of the case study

Cooperating teacher   The K-12 teacher with whom the preservice teacher is placed during a field experience

Induction   "Support, guidance, and orientation for novice teachers during the transition into their first teaching job" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 681).

Instructor   Any person who teaches courses at the university. An instructor may be a tenure-track professor, a graduate student, clinical faculty, etc.

Field experience   Time preservice teachers spend in K-12 classrooms. In some cases, I include student teaching in my discussion about field placements, but sometimes I write only about student teaching.

Novice teachers   Teachers who have three years of experience or less

Preservice teacher   Undergraduate student in a teacher education program

Student teaching   The experience, typically a semester long, that usually occurs immediately prior to graduation in which a preservice teacher takes great responsibility in a K-12 classroom. The task of the preservice teacher usually begins with observation and gradually leads to full takeover of the class.

Supervisor   The person charged with supervising field experiences. This may be a tenure-track university professor, a clinical instructor, a graduate student, the cooperating teacher, or another person hired by the university to evaluate the preservice teacher during field placement.

Teacher education program In this case, a university undergraduate program preparing preservice teachers

University   I use university to describe any institution of higher education that trains preservice teachers. In this dissertation, I am referring to all

institutions that offer teacher education as an undergraduate degree, ranging from small, liberal arts colleges to large, state universities.

Chapter One

Introduction

Teacher quality is often cited as the most important factor in student learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Futrell, 2008; Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Ukpokodu, 2007). The importance of teacher quality makes the work of teacher education and novice teacher induction programs especially critical. This dissertation explored the experiences of four novice teachers as they transitioned from their first to their second year teaching. The findings of this study can help inform the work of teacher education instructors and those who support novice teachers.

Novice Teacher Induction

"We must transform the way we bring our newest educators into our schools. It is critical to the success of our schools, to the development of teaching as a learning profession, and to the achievement of our students" (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012, p. iii). In order to "transform" the way we induct novice teachers into the profession, we must better understand the individual needs, experiences, and perspectives of novices. This study is important because it shares four novice teachers' unique experiences in their first two years of teaching.

The quality of induction is especially critical because comprehensive induction leads to teacher retention (Goldrick, et al., 2012). Between 30% and 50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of their career (Curran & Glodrick, 2002; Herbert & Ramsay, 2004; Ingersoll, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2006; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; NCTAF, 1997), a statistic some consider to be a "national crisis" (Brown & Schainker, 2008, p. 10). This attrition is cause for concern because usually novice teachers are less effective than their more experienced peers (Hanushek, Kain, O'Brien, & Rivkin, 2005). Providing novice teachers with the necessary

supports leads to retention (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004); keeping teachers in the profession is a critical component of student achievement (Goldrick, et al., 2012).

Improving teacher retention should be a goal of everyone in the education community. The human and financial costs of attrition are high. In Illinois, the cost of each teacher who leaves the profession is between $17,000 and $22,000 (Presley, White, & Gong, 2005). When teachers leave, the schools struggle to sustain improvement, and the students are hurt from the influx of new teachers (Help Illinois New Teachers).

Even though the important role of induction is clear, there are signs in the literature that it is not being taken seriously enough. For example, one of the most impactful, yet rare, induction supports is requiring novices to teach fewer classes than their experienced peers (Smith, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In his induction study of over 60 middle school math teachers, Smith conducted focus group discussions with their principals. Smith found that principals considered some supports, such as fewer classes to teach as "fanciful" and reported that principals literally laughed at the suggestion. The principals explained that other teachers in their school would not support the reduced workload. Plus, if novice teachers received such privileges, the principals asked how they know if the novice teachers would be able to handle a full course load their second year? These principals' attitudes demonstrate that although research shows the importance of induction, novice teachers may not, in reality, be receiving the support they need and deserve.

In a review of all U.S. state induction policies, Goldrick, et al. (2012) found that no single state provided the comprehensive, multi-year induction necessary to adequately support novice teachers. In Illinois, where this research study took place, induction is sporadic. In years past when the state was in better financial shape, some induction programs were funded; however, no

monies are currently budgeted for induction programs. The result is an unfunded mandate that all

first and second-year teachers receive mentors. It is unknown how many Illinois schools actually

provide mentors to their novices. Assigning mentors, however, is only a small component of

induction. Illinois does have induction program standards and a continuum to guide programs'

development. Such documents are helpful for new and existing induction programs.

Unfortunately, with no state monies designated for induction, the support novice teachers receive

is hit or miss, which is evident in the data I report in subsequent chapters.

Illinois is not alone. Goldrick, et al. (2012) reported, "Our analysis of state policies on

teacher induction suggests that there is much work to be done by state policymakers to construct

high-quality policies supporting comprehensive new teacher induction" (p. iv). States must make

induction a priority if student learning and budgets are concerns. Research shows that supports

novice teachers receive are instrumental in improving their teaching, they accelerate novices'

growth into the profession, they are a positive return on investment, and they improve student

learning (Goldrick, et al.). Overall, there is a clear, positive impact of novice teacher retention

when strong induction programs are apparent (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011); however, there is still

much work to be done:

> State induction policy is best considered as a work in progress. Our collective challenge
>
> is to dramatically improve state policy to truly meet the needs of our newest educators
>
> and their students—and to fully embrace the power of comprehensive, multi-year
>
> induction programs to accelerate new teacher development as part of an overarching
>
> human capital and teaching effectiveness policy. (Goldrick, et al., 2012, p. iv)

Teacher Education Programs

Teachers' learning does not begin when they enter the profession; their teacher education programs play a critical role in their learning. My participants graduated from a traditional teacher education program. The strengths and weaknesses of that program affected their needs and experiences as novice teachers, so this research study touches on the participants' perspectives of their teacher education program and examines their inservice induction experiences.

When Levine (2006) studied the quality of teacher education programs in the United States, he found that "there was less interest in 'truth telling' by those interviewed than in defending their positions" (p. 6). It may be natural for students to defend the quality of a program from which they have graduated. I believe the participants in my dissertation study were forthcoming about the strengths and weaknesses of their teacher education program. I knew the participants well and had trusting relationships with them because they were in my classes during the fall and spring semesters of the 2008-2009 school year. Based on the candid feedback about my class that they offered, I feel they answered questions about their teacher education program critically and honestly. I acknowledge that the power structure between a professor and students may prevent candid, critical discussions. While I cannot be certain about their honesty, the power dynamics between a first-year teaching assistant and students is likely to be less imposing than between a professor and students. Based on my close relationship with the participants coupled with their willingness to offer critical comments about the program, I believe they honestly discussed their feelings about their teacher education program. Of course, all of this is grounded in the knowledge that we are always filtering what we say to others, and language itself is uncertain and requires interpretation.

Data collection for this study began one year after they graduated, so their teacher education experiences were fresh in their minds. And they had over a year to reflect on their education and try out what they learned in their teacher education program.

This Study

The research questions I explored include:

- What were the induction experiences of the four novice teachers in this study?

- What supports were most meaningful for the novice teachers in this study?

- What changed for the teachers in this study as they moved from year one to year two?

The induction experiences of my four participants varied as did the contexts of the schools in which they taught. This study is important because it shares the experiences faced by these novice teachers, providing readers with specific, unique perspectives. Experiences such as theirs should inform our work in induction and teacher education. These cases can provide essential information to principals, induction coordinators, mentors, novice teachers, veteran teachers, and teacher educators.

These cases remind principals about the important work they do as school leaders and how their leadership can impact novice teachers. Induction coordinators are reminded of the most important supports in their schools, which for these teachers were related to curriculum and instruction. Mentors can see that these participants appreciated having someone to talk to, in general, but the more critical role of mentors may be to provide critical feedback for novice teachers. Novice teachers can relate to the teachers in this study and realize that they are not alone. Learning to teach is complicated and takes time. Reading these case study findings may comfort novice teachers who do not have novices in their schools with whom they can connect. These cases remind veteran teachers of the important roles they play in school culture; forming

relationships with novice teachers can help ease their transition into teaching. Further, these cases remind teacher educators that the work they do is incredibly important. Their graduates benefit from the strengths of their teacher education programs while the weaknesses leave a lasting affect as well.

Upcoming Chapters

To situate my participants' experiences in the literature, I review the relevant topics in Chapter Two. This chapter delineates the benefits and critical aspects of induction. The teachers in this study referenced their teacher education program often, so in Chapter Two I also review the literature related to teacher education programs.

In Chapter Three I discuss the methods for this study. I conducted case studies to answer the research questions. Through one-one-one interviews, a focus group discussion, and observations, I was able to understand my participants' experiences as they transitioned from their first to their second year teaching. This chapter illustrates the specific steps I took to collect and analyze the data.

Chapter Four includes my case study reports. This is where the reader learns about the particular experiences of my participants. The case study reports highlight the unique nature of my participants' transitions into teaching, the supports and experiences they found the most helpful, and the difficulties they faced.

I present cross-case comparisons in Chapter Five. These comparisons are important to understanding the experiences my participants had in common and the ones that differed. The similarities and differences of their cases can help us think about novice teachers' experiences more generally.

I complete the dissertation report in Chapter Six by explaining the significance of this study. I summarize the themes of my research and how they connect to the literature. Based on my participants' experiences, I make recommendations for novice teachers, teacher educators, and those who support novice teachers. I then recommend future areas for research. I conclude by discussing how my findings will impact my teaching and work in induction.

Conclusion

Sharing the experiences of these novice teachers is one way to bring attention to issues related to novice teacher induction. Because the induction experiences of my participants varied quite dramatically, these cases show the effects of adequate induction supports as well as teachers who are left to "sink or swim." Studying the experiences of these teachers is helpful in constructing an argument for the necessity of induction for novice teachers. My study adds to the literature that highlight the induction needs of novice teachers so that it will receive the attention and funding it deserves.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This study explored the experiences of four novice teachers. Understanding novice teachers' experiences can lead to the improvement of teacher education and induction. The novice teachers in this study graduated from the same teacher education program, and although they all taught in Illinois, the induction they received varied greatly. The literature on novice teacher induction and teacher education can help us understand the experiences of my four participants.

This literature review serves two main purposes:

- To review the characteristics of quality teacher education programs. The literature helped me understand my participants' experiences in their teacher education program and how its strengths and weaknesses affected their first years teaching and were related to findings in the literature.

- To review the features and importance of novice teacher induction. This literature helped me understand my participants' induction into the teaching profession.

Investigating these areas provided the foundation for my study and helped me better understand my participants' experiences and situated my findings in relation to the published literature.

Characteristics of Quality Teacher Education Programs

With teacher quality cited as the most important factor in student learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Futrell, 2008; Levine, 2006; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Ukpokodu, 2007), the pressure is on teacher education programs to ensure the quality of their graduates. Teachers, who in the past were tasked with preparing students to become low-skilled industrial workers, must now prepare students to think critically, be inventive, and to compete globally (Darling-

Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999; Futrell). With changes in workplace and societal demands, education must also change; teacher education, too, must change (Darling-Hammond, et al.; Futrell; Moore Johnson & Kardos).

Too often, veteran teachers feel their teacher education programs did not prepare them for the reality of day-to-day classroom experiences (Darling-Hammond, et al., 1999). However, the quality of teacher education programs varies from program to program. This variance is due, in part, to the size of teacher education programs, goals, policy and political contexts, type of university setting, field placement arrangements, and program structures. Multiple program structures exist such as 4-year programs, 5-year integrated programs, 5th-year graduate programs, and alternative programs (Morey, Bezuk, & Chiero, 1997). Levine (2006) pointed out that there is no such thing as a "typical" teacher education program and the "diversity is extraordinary" (p. 7). Even with the variations in program structure, the literature indicates clear factors that contribute to strong teacher education programs.

University Classroom Experiences

The importance of learning about topics such as human development, foundations of education, classroom management, evaluation, and pedagogy is agreed upon by most researchers. However, researchers do not always agree on some components of teacher education programs (e.g. the quality of and time spent in local schools; the value of theory versus practice; program length). This range of disagreement is likely due to the complexity of learning to teach, the variability of teaching contexts, and an increasingly diverse student population.

Some authors use the following question to prompt thinking about the classroom experience in teacher education: "What do teachers need to know and be able to do?" (Darling-Hammond, et al., 1999; National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education,

2005). Most of what the experts argue that future teachers should know fall under the following three branches:

- Knowledge of *learners* and how they learn and develop within social contexts

- Understanding of the *subject matter* and skills to be taught in light of the social purposes of education

- Understanding of *teaching* in light of the content and learners to be taught, as informed by assessment and supported by a productive classroom environment (National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education, 2005, p. 5).

It is important to note that none of these branches stand alone; rather, they are interdependent.

When considering what preservice teachers must learn in the classroom, one must not ignore the vast skills and tools that teachers need. Included are conceptual tools that will help guide their decisions about teaching and learning such as theories of learning, instruction, and motivation along with the philosophies of education (Grossman, McDonald, Hammerness, & Ronfeldt, 2008). Equally as important, teachers must have the practical tools, which "encompass the kinds of practices, strategies, and relationships that teachers can enact in classrooms as they strive to accommodate the needs of students and challenge them with intellectually rigorous content (Grossman, et al., p. 245). These practical tools and skills may be routine (e.g. creating seating charts), but they can also be extremely complex (e.g. making split-second decisions about individual student needs). Lipcon (2008) posited that teachers play various roles, ranging from cafeteria monitor to mentor. While teacher education programs can prepare their preservice teachers for initial demands of teaching, they must continue to develop throughout their careers.

Content area. Researchers agree that preservice teachers must have in-depth knowledge in the content area they will teach (Darling-Hammond, et al., 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001;

Futrell, 2008; Gollnick , 2008; Goodwin, & Oyler, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Ingersoll, 2008; Morey, et al., 1997; National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education, 2005; Zeichher, 2003; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). In fact, a long line of research indicates that, in certain subject areas, teachers who have strong, in-depth knowledge of their content area produce higher outcomes in student learning (Howard & Aleman, 2008). This content-area knowledge must be deep-rooted and must go beyond the foundations; moreover, teachers must understand how to teach their content (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling Hammond, et al., 1999; Futrell, 2008; Kumashiro, 2008; Morey, et al., 1997). For example, to teach mathematics, a teacher must understand how children understand numerical concepts so they can help them develop mathematical reasoning and operational strategies so children can apply the concepts later. This goes beyond knowing how to "do" math (Darling-Hammond, et al.).

Having deeply rooted subject knowledge and understanding how to teach it in a way that impacts students is often referred to as *pedagogical content knowledge* (Berliner, 2000; Morey, et al., 1997; Shulman, 1987). Morey et al. explained that pedagogical content knowledge "enables one to manipulate, organize, and reorganize the informational content of the discipline; to intentionally restructure it; to generate analogies, metaphors, and illustrations within it; to appropriately associate examples with representative generalizations; to investigate hypotheses; and to formulate theories" (p. 8). Teacher education programs must ensure that their students graduate with deep-rooted content knowledge and understand how to make the content accessible to all students (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Futrell, 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 1990; Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). That includes understanding what students deem confusing and creating alternative teaching methods to alleviate confusion (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

In order for preservice teachers to have in-depth content area knowledge, instructors in teacher education programs must model good teaching. When instructors don't practice what they preach or the content is too superficial or abstract, preservice teachers reinforce their feelings that the real learning occurs during field placements or student teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Cohesion. Cohesion is a critical aspect of teacher education; however, it is an area of weakness in many programs, especially in programs preparing secondary teachers. Because future middle and high school teachers generally earn their majors outside of the education department and in the area they will teach, they experience a disconnect between content area and pedagogy. Morey, et al. (1997) explained, "More often than not, academic majors are developed with little thought given to their appropriateness for the preparation of prospective teachers" (p. 17).

Cohesion must also exist between education classes and field placements, including student teaching (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, Doone, 2006; Capraro, et al., 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Goodwin & Oyler, 2008; Morey, et al., 1997; Ryan & Healy, 2009; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2010). For example, instructors, cooperating teachers, and supervisors must have a shared vision and values that guide planning and implementation in the preservice curriculum. In fact, everyone who interacts with preservice teachers should share the same vision (Sleeter, 2008). In a pilot study at the University of South Florida, researchers found that when they took steps to create a more cohesive coursework/field experience for their preservice teachers, their preservice teachers moved "from theory to practice in real-time rather than abstractly, as is usually the case with traditional [teacher education] courses" (Allsopp, et al., 2006, p. 23).

A key component for a cohesive program is to pair preservice teachers in their field experiences with cooperating teachers who share and model the values of the education program. For instance, if an education program places a strong emphasis on inquiry-based learning, preservice teachers must be placed with cooperating teachers who emphasize an inquiry-based approach. Additionally, preservice teachers must be placed with strong classroom teachers who believe in the mission of the education program and mirror the type of instruction endorsed by the education program (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Morey, et al., 1997).

Creating cohesion between coursework and field experiences can be challenging. Contributing to this weakness is the lack of incentives for tenure-track faculty to work with students in field placements. Often, graduate students, clinical faculty, or adjuncts are left to observe preservice teachers in the field. Graduate students and adjuncts tend not to know much about the vision of the teacher education program or the content taught in courses. Additionally, few incentives exist for cooperating teachers with whom preservice teachers are placed. Minimally paid or offered free or discounted university courses, cooperating teachers may not deem the incentive worth the time, energy, and added responsibility required to take on preservice teachers (Zeichner, 2010). With the current emphasis on high-stakes testing in K-12 schools, cooperating teachers may feel uneasy having a preservice teacher instruct the class, especially in subjects tested on state or district-wide standardized tests. Further, most cooperating teachers do not receive the necessary formal training or mentoring, so even those who are dedicated to the work may not model promising practices. Finally, some teacher education programs are too large for the size of the K-12 schools. Programs are forced to place more than one preservice teacher with a cooperating teacher or preservice teachers are placed with weak

teachers because, frankly, they must be placed with someone. This problem contributes to a lack of cohesion as well as a poor field experiences for the preservice teachers.

Field Placements and Student Teaching

The quality of field placements and student teaching experiences is another critical component of teacher education programs. Field experiences take many forms and may include tutoring, working in after school programs, observing, or teaching in small or large group settings. Typically, as preservice teachers progress through the program, they become more intensively involved in working with classroom students, with student teaching being the culminating activity occurring just prior to graduation. These practical experiences are highly regarded; preservice teachers view student teaching as the most valuable part of their training (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Goodwin & Oyler, 2008). Merely participating in field experiences or student teaching does not, however, ensure positive results as specific pieces must exist for the experiences to prove successful (Capraro, et al., 2010).

In order for field placements and student teaching to be positively impactful, preservice teachers must be placed in classrooms with strong teachers who model good teaching and help preservice teachers connect theory and practice (Capraro, et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Futrell, 2008). Cooperating teachers must provide preservice teachers with strategies for using tools such as curricular materials and texts. Preservice teachers also need explicit, direct guidance in instructional techniques such as cooperative learning, classroom set-up, planning activities, and reflecting on lessons. They need to be guided in analyzing student work, analyzing individual students' learning, analyzing good teaching, and analyzing their own teaching. Preservice teachers need help learning about the communities and families from which their students come and then transforming these aspects of daily lives into resources and treasures.

While this intense modeling, teaching, and guidance takes place, preservice teachers need the space to practice the ideas, concepts, and strategies they are learning (Allsopp, et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Preparing Preservice Teachers to Teach All Students

Much of the literature indicates the importance of preparing preservice teachers to teach *all* students (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond, et al., 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Futrell, 2008; Gollnick, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Liston, 1990; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2003). The popularity of this topic is not surprising considering the need for high quality teachers who are prepared to teach all children and the sometimes inadequate work of teacher education programs in preparing preservice teachers to teach in diverse settings (Howard & Aleman; Ukpokodu, 2007). Teacher education programs must focus on training preservice teachers to teach non-mainstream students such as the poor, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, English Language Learners, and those in special education (Darling-Hammond; Darling-Hammond, et al.; Feiman-Nemser; Howard & Aleman; National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education, 2005).

Preservice teachers must learn the importance of understanding the backgrounds, prior knowledge, and social capital of students (Gollnick, 2008; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998). Preservice teachers must learn the importance and value of using their students' community's cultural and social resources (Howard & Aleman; Grossman, et al., 2008). Affirming the backgrounds of their students will help preservice teachers teach more effectively, which in turn makes students more academically successful. This type of teaching, Ladson-Billings (1995) termed "culturally relevant pedagogy," looks very different from assuming that students come to school with homogeneous values, behaviors, and

knowledge. When preservice teachers learn the importance of tapping into and building from students' personal, racial, and cultural knowledge, their students can achieve success.

Delpit (2002) provided specific ways that teachers can enact culturally relevant pedagogy to engage African American students. Hair braiding and styling can be used to study patterns, symmetry, asymmetry, and chemistry. Appropriate for the social sciences, students can interview hair stylists to determine the cultural significance of patterns, their backgrounds or information about their home countries, and students could create a linguistic map of Africa based on the interviews. Nasir, Hand, and Taylor (2008) reported the positive impact of using dominos and basketball to teach mathematics and statistics to African American students. Culturally relevant pedagogy validates the histories and backgrounds of students and works with students from all walks of life. Culturally relevant pedagogy assists students in becoming critical of the ways in which their cultural heritage and histories are not part of the mainstream school curricula. It is crucial for preservice teachers to see such lessons modeled and for them to engage in related discussions so they see the importance and meaning of such activities.

Some argue that that the opposite is occurring in teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Ukpokodu, 2007). Darling-Hammond reported that too many teacher education programs are preparing teachers to use low-level material, unstimulating teaching methods, teacher-directed instruction, and workbooks. Too often, preservice teachers do not learn about how factors such as ethnicity, race, language, and social class are integral aspects of life in the United States. Preservice teachers must understand that part of teaching all students well is being change agents for them and helping them to be change agents for themselves (Howard & Aleman). Preservice teachers must understand that all students

can work at high levels, and they must learn how to create and structure activities so students can complete highly-stimulating, challenging work.

Novice Teacher Induction

Once preservice teachers graduate, they are usually given the same responsibilities as veteran teachers. Too often, they do not receive the support that beginners need, yet they are expected to teach as effectively as teachers who entered the profession long before they did. Teacher induction is a critical component to novice teachers' success, especially because some elements of teaching cannot be taught even in the best of teacher education programs. According to Feiman-Nemser (2003), novice teachers have much to learn "that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the contexts of teaching" (p. 26).

Induction is defined as "support, guidance, and orientation for novice teachers during the transition into their first teaching job" (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, p. 681). Mentoring, the personal guidance provided to the beginning teacher, is a critical and popular element of induction. The importance of induction was realized in the 1980s to help curb teacher attrition, which tends to be higher than the attrition in other professions (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll). Before 1980, there was only one state mandated induction program (Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille, & Yusko, 1999), but currently induction is widespread, with over 30 states mandating it in some form (Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll). Even though induction has become more popular, it is clear that considerable work must still be done to ensure that every novice teacher in the United States receives the support they deserve. In their analysis of the 50 states' induction policies, Goldrick et al. (2012) reported that "no single U.S. state has perfected its induction policy to ensure the provision of high-impact, multi-year induction support for all beginning educators" (p. iv). In fact, only half of the

states mandate that all novice teachers receive induction support. Unfortunately, comprehensive induction is the exception rather than the rule (Weiss & Weiss, 1999).

Induction participation varies widely depending on the state, district, and school (Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008 Weiss & Weiss, 1999). In Illinois, where this study took place, induction has been adversely impacted by the state's financial struggles. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provided funding for 62 induction programs in 2010 (Brady et al., 2010). At that time, ISBE knew how many novice teachers and mentors participated and what types of supports the 62 programs provided. Even then, it was largely unknown what type of support was given to novice teachers outside of those 62 funded programs. The state stopped funding induction in 2011, so many formally funded programs have been forced to forgo their novice teacher induction. It is unknown how many novice teachers are formally inducted into teaching in Illinois.

As participation in induction varies, the content and characteristics of programs vary widely (Brady et al., 2011; Clift et al., 2009; Clift et al., 2008; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Smith, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss & Weiss, 1996). Some induction programs solely include an orientation day for their novice teachers while others provide several structured activities throughout the year such as seminars, time to network with other novice teachers, time to meet with administrators, opportunities for novice teachers to observe master teachers, and release time for novice teachers and mentors to meet.

Programs also vary according to how many and who they serve. For example, districts that face high turnovers may serve hundreds—or even thousands—of novice teachers each year, while others may serve only a handful. Some districts serve any teacher who is new to the district while others serve only those new to the profession. The ways in which mentors and novice

teachers interact also differ (Clift, et al., 2009). Some mentors must keep logs documenting what they see and discuss, while other program leaders consider informal meetings sufficient. Some induction programs require mentors to meet weekly with their novice teachers while other may not dictate the number of structured meetings that take place. The conditions under which mentors are able to provide services also differ. Some are full-release mentors, meaning they mentor full-time, and others mentor in addition to their teaching positions (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss & Weiss, 1996).

Knowing how much induction programs vary, Smith & Ingersoll (2004) conducted a study involving 3,235 novice teachers to determine the most popularly enacted features of induction. They found that mentoring, collaboration, common planning time with other teachers in the same subjects, and seminars for novice teachers were most popular. Less popular features of induction were a reduced teaching load, fewer classes for which to prepare, and having a teacher's aide in the classroom. Smith and Ingersoll found that teacher retention was directly related to the number of quality induction services provided for a beginning teacher.

Key Features of Induction

The best induction programs are those that are integrated into a collaborative culture of support. In such a culture, all affiliated with the school support the novice teachers, and the novice teachers have easy access to help (Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008). One of the best induction features is common planning time during which novice teachers can collaborate with others who teach the same subject. Observing master teachers is another critical component of comprehensive induction (Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Moreover, novice teachers must have the space

and encouragement to try new or innovative teaching strategies (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force).

In an attempt to make the transition to teaching easier, novice teachers should have lighter teaching loads, fewer classes for which to prepare, and novice teachers should never have to travel from one class or one school to another (National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2008). It should be noted, as described earlier, that having a lighter teaching load and fewer classes for which to prepare are among the rarer induction supports offered to novice teachers (Smith, 2012; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Mentoring. According to the literature, mentoring must include certain features to produce the maximum benefits (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The best matches are mentors who have experience teaching the same subject and grade level as the beginning teacher (Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll). Mentors should conduct structured, purposeful meetings with their mentees that focus on reflective practices, promising teaching strategies, and classroom management (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Moore Johnson & Kardos). In their interactions with novice teachers, mentors should go beyond emotional support (Evertson & Smithey, 2009) and should help novice teachers move from "safe" instructional practices to "best" practices (Feiman-Nemser, et al., 1999). Mentors should help novice teachers understand the school and community in which they teach, and together they should explore how to best serve students in the school (Moore Johnson & Kardos).

Important to note, even the best mentors do not naturally know how to mentor, so mentors must be trained before and during their tenure. In fact, Feiman-Nemser (1996) claimed that what mentors do with novice teachers is more important than having the perfect mentor/beginning teacher match. Like novice teachers, mentors should have a network of new

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teachers to talk to, and they should have time to network with other mentors about best practices. In order to engage in meaningful interactions with novice teachers, mentors must learn how to collect meaningful data during beginning teacher observations, and they must receive support emphasizing observation feedback skills (Coppenhaver & Schaper, 1999). Some advocate for mentors to use state or national professional teaching standards when observing and conversing with novice teachers (Coppenhaver & Schaper; Feiman-Nemser, et al., 1999). Such standards can help novice teachers see where they need to go, and mentors can help them think about teaching and learning in a way that will help them get there.

In Evertson and Smithey's (2009) experimental study using a control and a treatment group of mentors, they found that mentors who received four days of training were more successful at supporting novice teachers than those who received a one-day orientation. Participants in the control group, or those who received a one-day orientation, learned about the basics of supporting new teachers. Their orientation focused on district policies and the evaluation of probationary teachers and the resources available to them. The treatment group received a four-day workshop:

> They were encouraged to examine the new role they would be assuming as mentors to teachers entering the field. The prepared mentors received content and engaged in guided inquiry activities related to the nature of the mentoring role, the needs of novice teachers, and the mentoring process. (p. 295)

The treatment group practiced peer conferencing, giving feedback, and explored their roles as mentors. All novice teachers, whether their mentors were part of the control or treatment group, received the same training.

In this study, Evertson and Smithey (2009) found that treatment mentors applied what they learned in workshops to working with novice teachers. Treatment mentors gave more specific feedback and advice whereas the control group gave non-specific advice. For example, one control mentor gave the following classroom management advice, "You need to relax a little bit more" (p. 299). On the other hand, those in the treatment group tended to offer very specific strategies for improvement. The novice teachers who were matched with trained mentors benefited greatly. When compared to the novice teachers matched with mentors in the control group, they created physical spaces more conducive to learning, provided more rationale for lessons, were better at pacing and formative assessment, and they pushed students to analyze and reflect. They established rules and procedures and did a better job motivating their students, intervening when students appeared off-task or disengaged. These novice teachers produced better student behavior and facilitated a climate more conducive to learning.

Mentors cannot be solely responsible for the induction of novice teachers. It is clear that one-on-one mentoring is just one piece of the comprehensive induction package (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Supportive principals. School principals play a critical role in inducting novice teachers (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Roberson & Roberson, 2009). Principals can directly influence school culture by supporting collegial work including teachers in the decision making process, efficiently providing resources, modeling high expectations for all, and providing guidance when needed (Bickmore & Bickmore; Brown & Schainker, 2008). In their study, Bickmore and Bickmore found that principals played an instrumental role in the induction process, "Principals' personal interactions with novice teachers seemed to enhance a sense of competence, respect, belonging, confidence, autonomy, and self-esteem and provide

needed emotional support" (p. 465). Principals are often the focal point of schools (Roberson & Roberson), and a lack of adequate administrative support is a major factor in novice teachers' decisions to leave a school (Ingersoll & Strong).

Benefits of Induction

Even with all of the induction variances that exist, the literature commonly refers to the value and benefits of induction. The most regularly cited benefit is increased teacher retention (Evertson & Smithey, 2009; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss & Weiss, 1996). Teacher attrition places costly financial burdens on districts, and students suffer when they are taught by inexperienced teachers, which is an effect of high attrition at a given school. Although some attrition is healthy, too much attrition is costly, and it hurts stability, coherence, and morale (Smith & Ingersoll).

Further, the research indicates that novice teachers who participate in induction gain improved teaching capabilities, are more effective early in their career, and are more committed to teaching (Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss & Weiss, 1996). Those who benefit from comprehensive induction are able to move beyond classroom management concerns and focus on student learning earlier in their careers. Higher morale and higher degrees of satisfaction are other benefits of induction (Smith & Ingersoll; Weiss & Weiss).

The benefits of induction do not stop with the novice teachers. Mentoring is a critical component of induction, and research shows that mentors benefit as well. Through guiding the novice teachers and discussions with other mentors, mentors who teach report a reignited passion for teaching. Additionally, novice teachers, usually fresh out of college, share innovative

teaching strategies with their mentors. K-12 students also benefit from the increased instructional effectiveness of their beginning and veteran teachers (Weiss & Weiss, 1996).

Conclusion

After reviewing the literature on teacher education programs and novice teacher induction, I better understood the topics, and I was equipped to better understand my research participants' experiences. The participants shared their reflections about the teacher education program from which they graduated and experiences from their induction into the teaching profession. Their first years teaching were complex and varied, and the literature helped me understand their experiences in light of the research.

Chapter Three

Methods

My dissertation study provides richly textured cases of four teachers and their beginning experiences as they transitioned from year one to year two. This study is important because it provides an intimate look at four novice teachers whose experiences and school contexts differed greatly. The data I gathered can help inform the work of those who educate and support preservice and novice teachers.

Case Study Methodology

I chose to use case study methodology to help me better understand the experiences of my participants. Stake (1995) defined case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" (p. xi). In this dissertation, I focused on four participants, which Stake considered "collective case study" (p. 4). The purpose of case studies is not to generalize, but much can be learned from case study research. According to Stake:

> Single cases are not as strong a base for generalizing to a population of cases as other research designs. But people can learn much that is general from a single case. They do that partly because they are familiar with other cases and they add this one in, thus making a slightly new group from which to generalize, a new opportunity to modify old generalizations. (p. 85)

Stake distinguished between two types of cases: intrinsic and instrumental. Intrinsic are the cases that we choose because we want to learn more about a specific case, usually because the case is important on a personal or local level. Instrumental case studies, on the other hand, develop because "we will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general

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understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case"

(p. 3). I consider these case studies to be a blend of instrumental and intrinsic. They are intrinsic

because I know my participants well, and understanding their experiences was personally

important to me. I am also interested in understanding the lives of novice teachers, in general,

which applies to the instrumental case study definition. This interest goes beyond the experiences

of my four participants. I hope that by understanding their unique experiences, I can apply what I

learned to improve my instruction of preservice teachers and add to a better understanding of

how to support novice teachers more generally. This need for general understanding points to the

instrumental aspect of case study research.

In this dissertation, I worked to know each participant's unique experiences as a novice

teacher. I then wrote the case study reports in a way that I hope will provide insight about their

experiences. There were many ways in which their experiences were similar and different, and

my dissertation explores these.

Research Questions

As the research progressed, I modified my research questions accordingly. My original

questions were:

- What do teachers perceive they need as they enter their second year in the classroom?

- How do teachers see their second year of teaching differently than they saw their first?

- To what degree do second-year teachers get the support they need at the beginning of
  their second year?

- How does the presence or absence of support contribute to their desire to remain (or not
  remain) in teaching?

Upon concluding my data collection, I knew I would have to modify my research questions. My original questions focused on the perceptions of teachers during the beginning of their second year and how those perceptions changed from year one. Based on my interviews, I discovered that the support needs and perceptions of my participants did not change. For example, Emma wanted curriculum support during her first year, and she continued to have the same need during year two. For these participants, if their needs were not met during year one, they were not met during year two. Sofia's case was the exception, and it took a job in a different school for her perceptions to change. Additionally, it seemed that the support, or lack thereof, did not play a role in my participants' immediate intention to remain in teaching. My original research questions did not turn out to be useful. Nevertheless, I had unique and interesting cases and data, so I developed new research questions:

- What were the induction experiences of the four novice teachers in this study?

- What supports were most meaningful for the novice teachers in this study?

- What changed for the teachers in this study as they moved from year one to year two?

Participants

In qualitative research, the relationship between the researcher and those being studied is critical (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The participants of this study were four teachers, Emma, Sofia, Maya, and Kurt. I was their instructor for two teacher education courses, which they completed during consecutive semesters of their junior year in 2008-2009. The courses were focused on teaching secondary students from diverse backgrounds the English language arts. I chose Emma, Sofia, Maya, and Kurt for a few reasons. I had continued contact with the four of them after they graduated. Emma and Maya updated me on their professional lives occasionally through emails. Sofia sought my assistance when she struggled during her first year, and I drove

to her school to provide feedback about her instruction. Kurt taught in the same town in which I lived, so we ran into each other occasionally. I thought my relationships with them would help me gain honest, thoughtful responses during my data collection. I also thought I could observe these four participants without intimidating them, which I suspected would lead to useful data. I did not think these four would alter their teaching because of my presence or knowingly censor out information from our interviews. I also chose these participants because they taught in varying school contexts, and their experiences during their first year provided variety. Finally, the current job market in Illinois is grim for English teachers. A fairly small number of my former students have obtained full-time teaching jobs, so I did not have a large number of former students from which to choose participants for this study.

Situating Myself

Because of my role as these participants' former instructor, I find it appropriate to discuss my position in this study. These participants were members of the first cohort I taught at the undergraduate level, and they were in my class for two consecutive semesters. The classes I taught for them focused on teaching the English language arts to secondary students (grades 6-12) in a diverse society. I was a teaching assistant who did not have a faculty member directing my lessons, choosing my readings, or creating my assessments. I did work closely with an adjunct faculty member who had taught this methods class for seven years. I appreciated that she shared her syllabus and lesson plans with me. We spoke weekly about our plans and debriefed often. Prior to beginning my teaching assistantship, I had spent six years teaching the English language arts at the middle and high school levels. While I was confident in my teaching abilities, my induction into the undergraduate teaching world was helpful.

I now know that this group of students was unique, something I did not realize at the time because they were my first cohort. With 25 students in the cohort, this class was at capacity. As a whole, they were a high energy group. For example, a requirement in my class was for members of the cohort to teach lessons in front of their peers. Once, a group assigned their peers to respond to a reading by writing an interpretive rap song. In addition to writing the rap, the students energetically rapped in costume while utilizing props. I did not realize it at the time, but this cohort embraced such assignments differently than cohorts I have taught since. They were not afraid to be active, and even act silly. Even at 8:00 am, the start time of our three hour class, they were peppy and alert, also a bit of an anomaly. Many from this cohort remain in close contact with each other, and they currently are planning a reunion. Their energy, their creativity, their relationships with each other, and even their silliness made this cohort unique and exciting to teach.

Data Collection

I collected data in the following ways:

- Email

- Focus group discussion

- In-depth interviews

- Observations

- Document review

The data collection and analysis adhered to the informed consent process as approved by the Institutional Review Board. The participants' risks were minimized by steps such as using pseudonyms and safely securing data. The details of my data collection are highlighted below.

Table 3.1indicates how data sources helped answer each research question. Table 3.2 shows the

timeline for data collection and analysis.

Table 3.1

Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Questions	Email	One-on-one interviews	Focus group	Document review	Observations
What were the induction experiences of the four novice teachers in this study?	X	X	X	X	X
What supports were most meaningful for the novice teachers in this study?	X	X	X	X	X
What changed for the teachers in this study as they moved from year one to year two?	X	X			X

Table 3.2

Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

Dates	Data Collection	Analysis
May-June, 2011	Emails	Coding began immediately upon receiving emails.
May-June 2011	One-on-one interviews	Transcribing and coding began after each interview
June 27, 2011	Focus group discussion	Transcribing and coding began after discussion
September-November 2011	Observations	Observation data used to support interview data
September-November 2011	Follow-up one-on-one interviews	Transcribing and coding began after each interview

Emails. To initially explore my participants' perceptions of their first year of teaching, I

asked them to answer the following questions on email:

- What has been the most positive element about this school year?

- What has been the most challenging element of this school year?

- Do you feel like you've had the support you needed during your first year of teaching?

- What types of support have been the most helpful?

In late May and early June, Emma, Sofia, and Maya sent me emails responding to the questions I had posed. Kurt did not respond. I used Atlas, a qualitative data analysis software tool, to assign codes and analyze their responses. The codes I identified from their email responses included: students, stress, school or district culture, classroom management (time management and organization), discipline and classroom conduct, colleagues, and administration. My goal in analyzing their email responses was to get an initial understanding of the types of experiences the participants had their first year. I used their responses to help formulate the interview questions I asked during the first one-on-one interview.

Initial interviews. Using the coding of the email responses, I created questions to use for the first one-on-one interview, which took place in late May and early June. To further encourage my interview participants to express themselves freely and openly, I asked semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix A). This approach allowed me the flexibility to respond to situations, ideas, and topics as they arose and take into account the worldviews of the participants (Merriam, 1988).

I conducted Sofia's, Maya's, and Kurt's interviews face-to-face. To accommodate both of our schedules, I conducted Emma's interview through Skype. Each interview lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. I began transcribing the interviews, using Express Scribe, immediately after the interviews concluded. After transcribing all four interviews, I organized the data within each of the interview questions. For example, I looked at each participant's response to question one and identified codes for the answers to that question. I did the same for the remaining interview

questions and found this strategy to be helpful in organizing the data. I assigned codes to the data using Atlas.

To guide my analysis, I looked for patterns, trends, and themes in the interview data (Krathwohl, 1998; Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 2009). I also identified contrasting and contradictory information (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Krathwohl, 1998), and I identified information that seemed counterintuitive or unexpected (Krathwohl). I paid close attention to phrases or comments that were commonly mentioned in the interviews. Corbin and Strauss suggested specific words that I looked for such as sometimes, never, and always. During my analysis, I also looked for words that indicate time (e.g. when, after, before, if), similes and metaphors, and negative cases. Similes and metaphors are notable because they can be loaded with meaning. 'Negative cases' are instances that do not fit the pattern (Corbin & Strauss).

I double coded some interview statements. For example, some statements related to both classroom management and students. In that case, I assigned both codes. Additionally, I noticed early on in my coding that it was helpful to differentiate between the participants' positive, negative, and neutral statements. For example, if a participant complained about his or her administrator, I assigned two codes, administration and negative. When a participant spoke highly of an administrator, I assigned the codes administrator and positive. When a participant made a statement that was neither positive nor negative, such as, "My administrator was my direct supervisor," I assigned the codes administration and neutral. Making these distinctions helped me organize my notes in a way that was helpful to begin writing, and it helped in the cross-case analyses.

I used the following codes to help identify themes across the four cases:

Theme One: Participants have high expectations for themselves and want administrators to have high expectations for them.
Theme Two: Participants want more feedback on their teaching.
Theme Three: Having supportive colleagues is critical. Participants valued the professional and personal support provided.
Theme Four: Participants want direction and support for refining and developing their curriculum.
Theme Five: Classroom management, even when discipline issues are minor and few, is on the mind of these participants.
Theme Six: None of the participants plans to leave education. They plan to pursue degrees that will help them improve their teaching.
Theme Seven: Participating in extra-curricular activities was a critical component of three participants' satisfaction levels.
Theme Eight: Even when participants considered their first semester of teaching to be particularly rough, the second semester was much easier and was critical to increased satisfaction levels.
Theme Nine: Participants did not feel they had enough time to do all they wanted to do, and they spent significant time outside of school hours planning and grading.

Identifying these themes early on in my data collection served several purposes. The themes gave my adviser and me some data to discuss; they helped me know that I was getting enough data and that I would identify meaningful findings. From the themes, I decided that observations would be the best next course of action. The themes guided my research by helping me begin to think about the similarities and differences across the cases. The themes also guided my next steps, particularly by helping me formulate focus group questions and think about my upcoming observations and follow-up interviews.

Focus group discussion. All four of my dissertation participants participated in the focus group discussion, which took place on June 27, 2011. The goal of the focus group was to bring

four different viewpoints into a group dialogue (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As the moderator, I asked questions (see Appendix B) that promoted a discussion about the participants' first year of teaching. All of the questions were open-ended so that I could probe or ask follow-up questions to clarify responses. As the moderator, I knew the importance of creating an environment that encouraged personal, honest reflections (Kvale, 2007). It is important to note that the participants knew each other quite well, and two of them (Emma and Sofia) were close friends. We did not have to spend time with introductions or questions designed to break the ice. The discussion flowed well, and the participants spent the 75 minutes sharing stories from their first year and connecting to each other's experiences. As the moderator, I did little to keep the conversation going, but I did have to re-orient the conversation a couple of times when the participants strayed too far from the questions.

I approached analyzing the focus group the same way I analyzed the one-on-one interviews. I used Express Scribe to transcribe the discussion and Atlas to assign the codes. After analyses of the data were completed, I was able to begin writing the case study reports. The reports begin with the participants' reflections about year one, and I used both the one-on-one interview data and focus group data to write the early sections of the reports. Writing the first pages helped me think about the areas in which I wanted to focus my observations and follow-up interviews.

Observation. The observation schedule is outlined in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

Observation Schedule

Participant	Observation Dates

Table 3.3 (continued)

Emma	September 14-15, 2011
Sofia	September 27-28, 2011
Maya	October 13, 2011
Kurt	November 2, 2011

The goal of the observations was to better understand the experiences of my participants (Stake, 1995). I also looked for instances that confirmed what the participants talked about in our interviews. Before I began each observation, I developed an observation plan. The plan included points of interest that I developed based on the participant's initial one-on-one interview. I used the points of interest to help focus my observations. For example, Maya talked about the support her co-teacher provided her during year one, so I made a note to pay special attention to the collaboration between Maya and the co-teacher while I visited Liberty. While I created observation plans to guide my work, my observations were not confined to my guide. I attempted to remain flexible and responsive. As Bresler (in press) advised, "The commitment to be responsive to what is encountered during data collection requires the ability to identify emergent directions and relevant contexts for inquiry."

The notes that I took during my observations focused on the communities, schools, classrooms, instructional methods, and interactions between my participants and other faculty, staff, students, and administrators. Here I have provided a sample from my observation notes:

- Maya: "Building of Fluency" section. Maya, "When I call on your row, read the phrase: 'Built up and becomes Pete.' Maya reads it two ways. "Raise your hand if it was better the first time I said it. Second time? The goal is to read smooth, just like when you're talking." The whole class reads: "Built up and becomes Pete." Then Maya reads it, the whole class reads, then one row reads. Maya: "Jordan, I want you to read it fluently.

Jackie, I want you to read it non-fluently. Everyone, say it three times really fast." ☺ SHE REALLY SPICES THIS SCRIPTED STUFF UP!

- Sofia: Every class was silent and appeared ready to start class. Sofia greeted every class with an enthusiastic "Good Morning" or "Good Afternoon."

I used the observation data to provide context and examples in my case study reports. For example, in our interviews Maya spoke about her struggle in the school's adoption of the scripted curriculum, so I took ample notes focused on the scripted curriculum, the students' responses to it, and Maya's approach to teaching it. I used that data to frame her discussion about the curriculum.

The observation data were helpful in my understanding the communities and schools in which the participants worked. It also helped me put into context the interview data I had collected. I was able to get a first-hand feel of the school climate and the professional lives of my participants. A good example of this was with Emma. I noticed that we went through almost the entire day without an adult entering her classroom. When I asked her about it, she talked about her feelings of isolation but noted that the isolation was a part of the culture of her school. By year two when I spoke to her, she had accepted that she was solely responsible for her students' learning and others in the school cared little about what occurred in her classroom.

Follow-up interviews. During the week I observed each of my participants, I also conducted follow-up interviews. Unlike the initial interviews in which I asked each participant the same questions, the follow-up interview questions were tailored to the individual participants (see Appendix C). The questions followed-up on what the participants said in their initial interviews, the focus group discussion, and the observations. I tweaked and added questions as I saw the need, based on my observations. For example, when I observed Sofia, I attended an induction meeting for novice teachers. Based on the meeting, I asked Sofia questions that were

not originally part of my plan. The follow-up interviews lasted from two and one half to three and one half hours. I approached the analysis of follow-up interviews the same way I analyzed the initial interviews.

   Document review. By reviewing documents, I gained insight not possible during other modes of data collection (Stake, 1995). Document review poses fewer limitations in that documents "are usually produced for reasons other than research and therefore are not subject to the same limitations. They are, in fact, a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator" (Merriam, 1988, p. 104).

   I reviewed documents relating to each of my participants. For example, I reviewed the scripted curriculum that Maya used and the induction binder provided to every beginning teacher in the school district in which Sofia worked. In Maya's case, reviewing the scripted curriculum allowed me to understand how much she strayed from the script. In Sofia's case, reviewing the induction binder helped me understand the interactions she had with her mentor and the induction requirements of the school district. Reviewing the documents added to my understanding of the participant's experiences and helped me to write descriptive case study reports.

General Analysis Information

   About qualitative data, Stake (1995) advised not to rely on "mere intuition and good intention to 'get it right'" (p. 107). By using various means to collect data, such as observations, document review, focus group and one-on-one interviews, I satisfied the requirements for data source triangulation (Denzin, 1984). I did member checking by giving the participants the case study reports. The participants had the opportunity to review the reports and verify that I accurately represented their words and ideas (Stake, 1995).

Conclusion

The data collected for this case study research included various kinds of data: email correspondence, interviews, a focus group discussion, observations, and document review. These data points provided me with in-depth knowledge of my participants' experiences as they transitioned from their first to their second year of teaching. By collecting data through various means, I can confidently report my findings in the following chapters.

The case study reports (Chapter Four) and the cross-case comparisons (Chapter Five) provide insight into the lives of my participants. Such insight can provide a way of thinking about the experiences of these novice teachers and experiences they may encounter. We cannot generalize from these cases. However, the richly texturized reports can help us understand these four teachers, which can help stakeholders in education support and understand the perspectives of novice teachers.

Chapter Four

Case Study Reports

This chapter reports on the analysis of the case study data that focused on the experiences of four novice teachers in Illinois: Emma, Sofia, Maya, and Kurt. I have written individual case study reports for each of the four teachers, and in chapter five, I present a cross-case comparison. The four individual case study reports address the following research questions:

- What were the induction experiences of the four novice teachers in this study?

- What supports were most meaningful for the novice teachers in this study?

- What changed for the teachers in this study as they moved from year one to year two?

I collected data through one-on-one interviews, a focus group discussion, observations, and document review. Based on the analysis of the one-on-one interviews and a focus group discussion, I assigned the following codes: administration, stress/workload, colleagues, curriculum, school culture, community culture, formal mentor, students, classroom management, homework, discipline, parents, resources, expectations, instruction, professional improvement, extra-curriculars, assessment, past experiences, and future plans. I also labeled each statement I coded as positive, negative, or neutral. The codes helped me organize my case study reports and were instrumental in helping me identify cross-case comparisons. Table 4.1 lists a representative sample of the codes with select quotes from interviews.

Table 4.1

Codes with Sample Quotations

Code	Quotation	Participant
Classroom management/positive	I feel more comfortable managing my classroom, like behavioral and procedural things of that nature.	Maya

Table 4.1 (continued)

Colleagues/positive	We'll get together as a young teacher group and go out for drinks. When we have meetings we'll go out together and hang out. We check in to see how our lives our going. It's really nice to have peers who you can talk to.	Emma
Administration/School climate/negative	The discipline issues were hard to handle without the actual support of an administrative staff because the students knew that the principal wouldn't do anything about it.	Sofia
Extra-curriculars/neutral	I'm very involved. I serve on district level committees and building level committees and department level committees.	Kurt
Formal mentor/positive	When I finally got a mentor, she was a science teacher, so she was really nice just to talk to, and she knew the area, knew what was going on, understood what I was going through. So that's when I started to feel better.	Sofia
Future plans/neutral	I do I do know one thing I'd like to do it write a novel.	Sofia
Students/negative	I get to know them really well, but they're not kids that I would particularly love. They're not those kids who are super fun and interesting to talk to. They're the kids who have the problems.	Emma
Community culture/negative	What was frustrating was seeing how that [life out of school] was impacting them as learners and them not being able to see it. I think that's frustrating.	Kurt
Assessment/neutral	We have lots of testing this year. We have lots of fluency tests and comprehension checks, math application, math computation.	Maya

Prior to presenting each of the case study reports, I include a short summary, in bullet point format, of the case. The case study reports are fairly long, and I hope that summarizing the highlights will provide a guide for readers.

I begin each case study report with the participants' reflections about their first year of teaching. I learned about their first years during one-on-one interviews that I conducted in late May and early June. All four teachers also participated in a focus group to discuss their first year

experiences in late June. After sharing their experiences from year one, I describe observation data and one-on-one interview data that I collected at the beginning of their second year teaching. These observations and interviews took place on dates in late September through early November. Reported chronologically, readers will encounter data from our initial one-on-one interview and focus group discussion first, then they will read about data collected through my observations and follow-up interviews. Each case report is written separately; I do the cross-case analyses in Chapter Five.

Table 4.2 gives an overview of the school contexts in which my participants taught during their first two years.

Table 4.2

Participants' School Information

Pseudonym		School Pseudonym	Student Population	% of students receiving free or reduced lunch	Race and ethnicity
Emma		Ashland High School	433	22.6%	96% White 1.8% Black 0.7% Hispanic 0.9% Asian/P.I. 0.2% Multiracial
Sofia	Year One	West High School	360	47.2%	87.8% White 2.8% Black 5.6% Hispanic 1.4% Asian/P.I. 2.5% Multiracial
	Year Two	Truman High School	652	7.2%	92.6% White 0.6% Black 4.9% Hispanic 0.2% Asian/P.I. 0.2% Native American 1.5% Multiracial

Table 4.2 (continued)

Maya	Liberty Junior High	467	76.7%	41.8% White 36.6% Black 11.8% Hispanic 2.1% Asian/P.I. 7.7% Multiracial
Kurt	Riverview High School	1,399	34%	54.4% White 31.8% Black 4.4% Hispanic 9.1% Asian/P.I.

Note. The information in Table 4.2 was retrieved from 2010 school report card data.

Emma's Case

- Found it difficult to be a liberal in a conservative, rural town and school

- Felt supported in general areas (classroom management, getting to know the school)

- Wanted more curriculum support

- Wanted more feedback on her teaching

- Did not find value in participating in extra-curricular activities

- Worked largely in isolation

Reflecting on Year One

In a tough economy in which teaching positions can be difficult to obtain, Emma was offered two positions teaching high school English after she graduated with her Bachelor's Degree. Although she found the urban location of one job offering most desirable, the school's rocky climate and its questionable future led Emma to accept a position in a rural school located in Central Illinois. While the town was too conservative for her liking and she wished to be closer to her parent's home in Northern Illinois, her experience at Ashland High School was positive. After her second year of teaching, however, Emma planned to leave her teaching position to relocate to a more liberal, urban setting. When she leaves, Emma would like to take

Ashland High School, along with her administration and colleagues, with her. Even in her first year at Ashland, Emma felt welcomed, "[My colleagues] were always very kind to me and always treated me like I was part of the family, which I think is why I like my school so much because I felt like I had joined a little family."

With fewer than 450 students, the student population at Ashland was 96% White and about 23% qualified for free or reduced lunch (Illinois Interactive Report Card). Emma indicated that the culture at Ashland was quite different from what she was accustomed. Emma admitted that "there's a complete societal change" in the Ashland area, which she considered "Southern," even though it is nestled close to the center of Illinois. She spoke of the drastic difference between Northern Illinois and "Southern" Illinois and appreciated that when she entered her second year of teaching, she would have a better understanding of the local culture and the way of life with which her students identified.

While Emma said that she often felt like the only liberal person in the area, her concerns ran deeper than politics. To explain, Emma mentioned a fellow teacher who did not believe in sex before marriage, the widespread use of the word "retarded" among staff and students, and the bigotry associated with homosexuality. Some students must have sensed Emma's open-minded attitude. During her first year, two students confided in her about their sexual orientation. While she appreciated their trust in her, she was sad to report that one of the boys dropped out of Ashland to be homeschooled. The ridicule he faced in school made regular attendance too difficult.

Further, she spoke at length about the racism she witnessed, both at school and at her second job as a shoe salesperson. She mentioned specific "snide" remarks she had overheard in conversations with adults and instances of insensitivity among her students.

To begin to address the issue with her students, she taught the novel *A Lesson before Dying,* which explores issues of race in the U.S. South in the 1940's. Emma incorporated lessons about racism and stereotyping, but she did not feel as though her students were affected. Emma said that her students thought it was okay to judge someone based on their race. She expressed her frustration:

> They have these preconceived notions that are really hard to break at this age. For me it would be awesome if we could get into deeper discussions about it, but I get so much anger and hatred from all of my students when we discuss race. I have none that would even take a moment to consider a different point of view. They really need to move away to understand better what their community is like.

Even with the conservative nature and bigotry she experienced, Emma felt surprised that her first year of teaching was easier than she expected. She considered her student teaching experiences in two Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to be "super, super hard." In the focus group discussion, Emma spoke about the most surprising element of her first year, "I braced myself for the toughest year of my life, and it wasn't really as hard as I thought it would be." When I questioned whether student teaching in an urban environment prepared Emma for teaching in a rural school, she replied "absolutely" and explained that teaching in a tough, urban school can prepare a person to teach anywhere. While in Chicago, she taught students whose misbehavior was not deterred by consequences, such as being sent to the administrator's office or having a teacher call home. She also spoke of the harsh realities for her students who lived in the urban setting, such as gang violence and high rates of teen pregnancy and said that most of her students in CPS had difficult home lives. Ashland students did face challenges at home but not on such a large scale. Further, they feared the consequences of misbehavior in school: "My kids now are

afraid that I'm going to call their parents. They're afraid to be sent to the office. They get upset if

I give them a detention."

Year One Supports

Emma was assigned two formal mentors for her first year, one English teacher and one

math teacher, and Emma found both to be helpful. Emma considered the math teacher, who was

a Golden Apple winner and had been teaching "forever," to be a "mother figure" and "the nicest

person you could ever meet." Emma felt she could go to the math teacher with any question and

she would know the answer. For example, she asked her about their insurance policy and other

questions Emma considered "random." On the other hand, Emma went to the English mentor

teacher, who had been teaching for three years, "all the time" to talk about specific students and

curriculum questions. When the English teacher mentor went on maternity leave in April, her

absence hit Emma hard.

Emma also spoke of being a part of a new teacher cohort. As one of four new teachers in

the building, Emma appreciated the relationships she formed with others who experienced

similar situations. According to Emma:

> It was nice to have people at the same age and at the same level that I was at. They could
>
> understand it a little bit more, and I could see what they were doing. We could compare
>
> the failings we were having together.

All of the new teachers shared the same mentor teachers, so it was customary for Emma to meet

with her mentors and the other first-year teachers at the same time. Because the new teachers

taught a variety of subject matters, the group's conversations did not focus on specific

curriculum or instructional strategies; rather, they discussed more general topics such as

classroom management and procedural items (e.g. school-wide testing schedules and procedures,

updates about the highlights and lowlights of teaching). Even so, she explained that having a cohort of teachers who were near her age and shared the same relationship status (single) made a big difference. Having young teachers to "blow off steam with," have drinks with after school, and watch movies with was a contributor to Emma's satisfaction her first year. While the new teachers talked about professional issues, she seemed to appreciate their friendships as much as she appreciated their professional relationships.

More support needed. Overall, Emma valued the camaraderie of her new teacher peers and the support of her mentors, but she mentioned several areas in which she needed additional support. She especially wished she would have had more direction about what to teach. As the only English teacher of juniors, she was unsure about what content to teach and what literature to use. There was no time arranged to talk to the other three English teachers about curriculum in the other grade levels. According to Emma:

> No one ever sat me down and said 'this is what we do this year, and this year.' We don't
> have a set lesson. They were sort of like, 'Yeah, you can do whatever you feel like.' I'm
> sorry, but that's too open. That's not enough to help me.

She considered her approach to figuring out which instructional materials to use as "hit or miss." Due to the lack of direction, Emma spent most of the first semester relying on the literature textbook because she knew that her colleagues were not using the same textbook; thus, she did not have to worry about duplicating material that had been taught freshman or sophomore year. At the time of our first interview, Emma had one year of experience under her belt and felt like she knew more about what content the other three English teachers taught. To find out what the other teachers taught, she relied on her students to tell her what they learned in their previous English classes. She also initiated conversations with the other English teachers about their

curriculum to make sure she was not duplicating materials they used. Armed with knowledge about the other English classed, Emma felt more comfortable as she prepared to enter year two.

Emma also indicated that she would have liked more support that was focused on lesson plan feedback. During year two, she would like someone to tell her ideas are strong or if they could be improved. She would like to know if there is a more appropriate assessment for specific lessons. Because she was the only teacher of juniors, her colleagues were not naturally concerned with Emma's lesson plans. The other English teachers focused on teaching their grade levels, and they seldom showed interest in what the other teachers did in their classrooms. Emma said that she could really push to get someone to look over her lesson plans, but hesitated because she knew it would add to someone's workload. Rather, Emma sought out input when she had lesson plan questions, but gathering consistent lesson plan support did not occur.

Emma would also like more feedback on her teaching. She was observed only by her principal, who saw her teach twice, during her first year. About her second year, Emma said:

I would like someone to come in and give me a little more feedback about what's good and what's bad and what I can improve on as I go along. I'm not sure I'll even get that my second year. I'm actually thinking I'll even have less of that.

Emma would be happy with casual, informal feedback similar to the feedback she received from her cooperating teacher during student teaching. When asked if her mentors could observe her to provide informal feedback, Emma indicated that there was no money in the budget to provide substitute teachers, which would allow her mentors the time to observe their mentees.

If Emma's desire to be observed more did occur during year two, she would ask for more critical feedback. During their post-observation debriefings, Emma's principal told her she was "excellent." The constructive feedback he provided focused on classroom set-up, not curriculum

or instruction. Emma understood that her principal thought she was excellent for a first-year teacher, but she wanted him to have higher expectations. "I'm a first-year teacher, but I know I could be doing so much better. I know that I'm not where I should be. You know, I'm hard on myself. I know that I have more potential." She found the lack of feedback to be the most dissatisfying aspect of her first year.

Her colleagues tended to echo Emma's principal's sentiment, and their positive impression of Emma began before she even started teaching. Emma said that they had another teacher in mind to fill the position that Emma ultimately accepted. According to Emma, "Literally, that same day that I interviewed, they called me and said, 'You need to come back and sign. We want you.' I don't know what I did, but they absolutely loved me. I blew them away." While Emma was looking for critical feedback so she could improve her teaching, she found a consistent flow of positive sentiment. A veteran English teacher of seniors took a liking to Emma: He "always told me I was doing an amazing job. Every day. I would be wrong, and he would be like, 'But you're doing so well. I'm so impressed and I'm so happy they hired you.'" While Emma noted that the praise was uplifting, it was not helpful in improving her instruction.

Discipline Concerns

Emma's primary concerns during year one focused on planning, instruction, and assessment. Although discipline issues are often cited as a concern for novice teachers (Veenman, 1984; He & Cooper, 2011), Emma's discipline issues were few. However, she admitted that she would approach discipline a bit differently in year two. Emma spoke at length about her discipline policy her first year, specifically her verbal warning policy, as being the "joke of the century." Emma displayed her rules and consequences prominently in her classroom. Students' first rule offense led to a verbal warning and a second offense led to a

detention. Emma laughed as she conveyed part of the story in our interview that took place at the end of her first year:

> [The students] were counting how many verbal warnings they could get! They were making fun of it. They would shout out, 'Oh, this is a verbal warning. That's a verbal warning.' They would make fun of it in other classes. It was the worst!

When I asked her how she handled being the center of the jokes, she indicated that it was a tad funny that her students were disciplined enough to get an official verbal warning, yet they would stop their misbehavior immediately at that point. As a result, Emma rarely had cause to issue detentions. To combat the verbal warning issue, Emma began speaking with students individually in the hallway and conveying her disappointment. Emma said the students then felt bad and attributed their immediate change in behavior to them being "good kids." Even so, Emma spoke about the verbal warning debacle as being "the worst" and "awful." However, when pressed and after I pointed out that she laughed through much of the story, Emma explained, "It wasn't that bad, but it was the joke of the junior class. I mean, it wasn't like they did it in a mean way."

As a result of her experience during year one, Emma planned to change her verbal warning policy for year two. Specifically, when a student initially misbehaved, she would not explicitly say, "You have a verbal warning." Instead, she would address the behavior by saying something like, "Please don't talk when I'm talking." If the behavior continued, Emma would issue a detention. Throughout our one-on-one discussion about her discipline "problem," Emma mentioned several times that her students were good kids and that their misbehaviors were few and were rarely mean-spirited.

Looking Toward Year Two

Emma looked forward to beginning her second year of teaching and was relieved to know more about the students, the school, the parents, and the community. She planned to create lesson plans over the summer, especially focusing on areas in which she considered herself weak. For example, she sometimes struggled with in-depth knowledge in certain areas, especially in her classes containing the highest achieving students, because she did not have time to do the "intellectual research" to be as prepared as she wanted:

> I needed to do so much more intellectual research on the books I was doing. I just didn't have the time for that. That's a bad thing to say, I have to admit. I wish I would've had more time for it. This summer I'm focusing on *The Great Gatsby*. I have a flapper book I'm reading. I'm researching. I'm hoping to do a lesson where I'm dressed as Zelda Fitzgerald. I have a flapper dress, and I want to act her out and let students ask her questions. Then I want to teach them how to Charleston. I have a friend who's a dancer. I've asked her to teach me how to Charleston so I can teach my students the dance. I want to do something fun and interactive like that, and I think I can do it. It just takes a lot of planning. So this summer, Zelda Fitzgerald is going to be my new life goal.

Visiting Ashland

When I visited Emma during September of her second year, I discovered that the town had more to offer than I expected. The town was home to just over 4,000 residents (www.city-data.com), and it housed some chain and non-chain restaurants. With a fire station, two auto repair shops, a grocery store, small convenience stores, and a few bars, residents could find much of what they need without leaving Ashland; however, they also had the option of driving 15 miles to a larger city.

The residents of Ashland appeared to avidly support its high school football team. At the town entrance stood a sign that read, "How do you want to be remembered?" and was followed by a small sign reading "Go Ashland!" Several local shop owners hung window signs supporting the team.

While there, I had to take my car in for some exhaust work. In front of the mechanic shop stood a sign that read "We love our boys," which referred to the football players. I found the auto repair men, like other locals with whom I interacted, to be courteous and kind. I embraced the news that the auto workers found pipes in the shop that they could weld to my exhaust, saving me the expense of ordering parts. When I picked up my car after it had been repaired, a repair man escorted me to my car to make sure the exhaust was quiet enough for my liking. After making sure I was happy with their work, he sent me off with a "Thank you, ma'am. Have a nice day, ma'am."

Ashland High School

Upon entering Ashland High School, I immediately noticed the spotless, polished floors and the freshly painted, bright blue lockers. Like the town, the school overtly celebrated its athletes. The side entry foyer housed jam-packed trophy cases. From the ceiling hung large, laminated, paper volleyballs that listed the players' names. Walking down the hall, I noticed that athletic plaques lined every inch of the upper portion of the hallway wall. The plaques of different sizes and shapes were hung straight and no dust was visible. A twenty foot banner reading "Destroy the Eagles," Friday's football foes, hung in the main entry way and was surrounded on both sides by full trophy cases.

Observing hallway wall decorations reminded me that I was in a small school. Individual pictures of each student who had graduated from Ashland since 1922 hung in the halls. Each

faculty and staff member's picture was posted. Under their pictures contained their names, their role in the school, and the higher education institutions from which they graduated. A bulletin board directly outside of the principal's office featured pictures of the students, faculty, and staff members who celebrated birthdays that month.

While class was in session, noticeably absent from the halls were students. In fact, I saw no more than one student in the hallway at a time. When I did encounter students in the hall, I noted their politeness. Student were quick to smile and exchange greetings with me. They also held the door open for me when the opportunity arose. When I encountered students in the hallway during passing time and the halls were crowded, students excused themselves when they approached me or bumped into me. Like the students, faculty and staff at Ashland were welcoming and polite. For example, they invited me to keep my lunch in the main office refrigerator, they caught me up on conversations at lunch when I needed background knowledge, and several, including the principal, told me to let them know if I needed anything during my time at the school.

I appreciated the sense of community I noticed at Ashland. I was surprised when Emma and I would leave her classroom without locking the door, even though we both left laptops in clear view. I noticed clothing, textbooks, and agenda books sitting on a bench outside of the main office, and I later discovered that the bench housed "Lost and Found" items, and no staff monitored it. When I mentioned to Emma the clean halls and restrooms, she said she had not thought about it, but she suspected the cleanliness could be attributed to a few things: the custodial staff is a part of the school family; the schools is so small and students know there is always someone watching; and the school is small and easy to keep clean, especially with the great custodians at Ashland.

Emma's Classroom

At one time, Emma's classroom was part of a larger room that was used as a study hall. When the school abandoned study halls, the larger room was divided into three parts. Although fairly small, Emma's classroom was roomy enough for her classes, which ranged in size from 12 to 18 students. As students milled into the classroom my first morning at Ashland, students greeted Emma and were seated and quiet before the bell signaled class to begin. The morning announcements focused on Homecoming, volunteer opportunities, extra-curricular announcements, reminders to meet specific deadlines, and daily birthday shout-outs. After announcements, students read a few pages of *The Scarlet Letter* then completed corresponding questions on their reading guides. During the last 30 minutes of class, students worked in groups to create a short script, using modern language, that captured the tension and intensity that Hawthorn created in the novel. In some classes, the students had time to act out their scripts and in other classes they acted out the scripts later in the week.

I was struck with how quickly students transitioned from working individually to working in groups, how they immediately got on task, and how diligently they worked in their groups, ignoring their peers outside of their assigned groups. Rarely did I hear any off-topic conversations or grumbling about the assignments. I was consistently impressed with the students' respectful and hard-working nature, including the class after lunch which Emma considered to be her "worst." Emma indicated that she did not engrain in them the way she expected them to behave in groups or during transitions; instead, they just seemed to behave that way as a result of school-wide norms. She acknowledged that not everything was quite as smooth during year one and that this group of juniors was particularly nice and diligent.

Not all of the credit could be given, however, to the students. I immediately noticed the relaxed atmosphere of the classroom, so I worked to identify Emma's actions and responses that contributed to the classroom culture. For example, within minutes of assigning chapters for students to script, one student asked, "What chapter do we do?" Rather than getting frustrated by the lack of attention during chapter assignments, Emma replied, "What chapter did I tell you to do?" The student responded, "Five?" Emma agreed, "Five sounds right then." Emma also set the tone for the class when she helped a group working on their script. A student outside of the group became impatient while waiting for Emma's help. The student began grunting and clicking her pen repetitively. Emma calmly said to the student, "I see you." In another class, Emma was working with a group, and a student interrupted her to ask if he could go to the gym to get dodge balls to use as props for his group's skit. When Emma did not grant him permission to leave the classroom, the student whined, "Awww, the gym's right down the hall." Emma responded, "You can go to the recycle bin and get paper to crumple up into balls." At that point, the student proceeded to the recycle bin to retrieve paper for his group's skit. Another memorable moment occurred when Emma was reviewing reading guide questions with an afternoon class. She asked the whole group a question when a student from a morning class poked his head in the room and blurted out the answer. Emma responded, "Thanks, Connor." By that time, Connor had continued on his way. The students in the class giggled and wrote down the answer Connor provided, and instruction continued as if the interruption had not occurred.

At the end of my first day at Ashland, Emma asked me for some feedback on her instruction and for my thoughts on her classes. I told her how I observed that she set a calm tone for her classroom by her laid back presence. Because she hadn't mentioned it in our interviews, I was caught off guard when she told me that she was really was working on creating a more

relaxed learning atmosphere during year two. She said that her responses during year one were "snippier" and she sometimes responded unnecessarily harshly to situations. I told her that I felt her laid back presence seemed to set the tone for a classroom in which students worked diligently, were respectful, and transitioned quickly and quietly. Emma was delighted to hear that some of the changes she was putting into place seemed to be paying off. I should note here that I did not provide her with critical feedback about her instruction when I visited Ashland. She did not ask me for it, nor was it a focus of my observations.

Year Two Reflections

In retrospect, year one was harder than Emma indicated during our initial interview, which took place at the end of her first year. At that time, she compared her experience at Ashland to her experience student teaching in Chicago. She sensed that her perceived ease was a natural progression of learning to teach, and the beginning of year two was considerably easier than the start of year one. Emma reflected on several aspects of year two that were different from year one.

Classroom management. Emma felt she struck a balance of the strict classroom management approaches that she desired while maintaining a fairly relaxed classroom environment. As a result of student teaching in Chicago, Emma had a skewed view of discipline influenced by a challenging urban context. She eased up on her strict classroom management approach early during year one because she did not feel discipline was an issue. With a year of experience under her belt and a better understanding of Ashland's school culture and expectations, she knew that students' abundant chatting and off task behavior was viewed as a discipline issue at Ashland. Because her students' behavior was exemplary compared to her

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students in Chicago, Emma did not realize that her Ashland students considered themselves to be acting badly for her. On her new perspective, Emma said:

> That has to do with knowing my students and knowing the community. I expected bad like in Chicago, and their bad is at a different level. So now I know where their bad is and I can say 'You're behaving badly.' Before I was like, 'You're not dealing drugs so you're fine.'

During our first interview, Emma reflected at length about the changes she would make to her verbal warning policy. When I spoke to her six weeks into her second year, I learned Emma did make the changes: "I don't ever tell kids they have a verbal warning. Instead I tell them to stop whatever they're doing, like 'stop talking.' Honestly, I haven't had any problems at this point in time. I'm starting to see problems beginning to occur."

The problems to which Emma spoke referred to her 5th period class, the highly energized group after lunch. She explained:

> They are very talkative. Obviously it's not a bad thing, but they're so different from my other classes. My other classes, for some reason, are not talkative unless I tell them to talk, and even then they're sometimes not talkative. I've had to adjust my instruction for 5th period a little bit. We can't do their reading guides out loud together as a class. They cannot handle that activity. They have to do it together in small groups. I ask them for the answers once they've written them down in their small groups. Otherwise I would stand there and they would talk over me the entire time we did it. I would lose my mind and I'd like to keep it. So I had to restructure their class so I could be sane and patient.

Emma also spoke of some "disrespectfulness" in the group. In order to further combat the issues that were beginning to sprout up in 5th period, Emma mixed up groups often and changed the

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seating chart when necessary. While I did notice that 5th period was quite bit chattier than Emma's other classes, I noted that much of their talking was related to *The Scarlet Letter*. Emma had assumed that their talk did not focus on English content, so she was pleasantly surprised when I told her about my observation. She had always assumed that their conversations were about social issues and events, such as upcoming weekend activities.

Emma also changed the way she documented discipline issues during year two. Using a school issued agenda book, she wrote down when she encountered a problem, such as excessive chatting or cell phone use, with a student. Using the agenda book allowed her to organize the infractions, noting the students' behaviors and the dates they occurred. Emma told me that the week before I visited, for example, she documented that a few of her 5th period students were not paying attention, and she was concerned that it may impact their quiz grades. Emma anticipated that if parents questioned her about their children's progress or their lack of understanding, Emma could be specific about the incidents that may have contributed to their lower than expected grades. Emma was happy with her new documentation system and planned to continue this approach.

Emma also changed the way she began class. During her first year, Emma used "bell ringers" to ensure her students had a task to complete each day when they entered her classroom. Her bell ringers were similar to journal entries and usually related to the book they were reading or to current or life events. For example, at the beginning of the year, Emma asked students to write about their dreams in life. When independence was a thematic focus of a book they read, Emma asked them to reflect on their greatest freedom. Emma abandoned the bell ringers for a few reasons. They got the students off topic because they would "get all excited about what the bell ringer was. Then they would share, pass, and talk about it." Their excitement led to the

activity taking longer than it should have. Also reading and providing feedback for the bell ringers took Emma longer than the activity was worth. Plus, Emma asked her students to complete course feedback forms at the end of year one, and several indicated that the bell ringers were not meaningful and Emma agreed. Occasionally during year two, Emma's students completed bell ringers, but they generally were structured, short grammar activities. However, usually Emma jumped right into the day's lesson when the bell rang. I noticed that students were seated and attentive when the bell rang to signal the start of each class, so Emma's new approach seemed to work as she intended.

Feedback and isolation. At the end of year one, Emma said she wanted to receive more critical feedback during year two. When I talked to her in September of her second year, Emma doubted that she would be observed any more or receive more feedback than she had during year one. She expected her principal to observe her three times, but she wanted more feedback, observations, and collaboration. She said, "I'd love it if people popped in my room or at least had more conversations as an English department about what were are doing in the classroom." Because she was the only English teacher of juniors, she got the sense that "no one else cares really about what I'm doing except me."

Emma believed that the best way for her to improve her instruction was to get meaningful feedback from other professionals. Because she did not expect to receive any more feedback, she was left to improve her instruction by reflecting individually on her practices. After each lesson she thought about how it went and asked herself how the students did. She reflected on *The Scarlet Letter* activity I observed:

Overall it was an okay activity and it gave them a little bit of fun. We'd been reading for a week and a half now. They needed a break. It was a good break for them. It gave them a

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chance to look back at the text and review what happened. I probably could have

organized it a little bit better. If I did the activity again, I'd give them more time. This is

my first time teaching *The Scarlet Letter*, so I'm making everything new again, like last

year.

I asked Emma what circumstances might help her to receive more feedback so she

wouldn't feel like she worked in isolation. She replied that she could "really make a stink about

it" in order to receive more feedback. Apart from that, however, she said that only a different

school environment would change the amount of feedback she received. Occasionally, Emma

sought out feedback on a specific lesson plan or approach, but if she did not proactively seek it,

no one would know what occurred in her classroom. Emma said:

It makes me a little bit nervous. Are the kids really learning what they should be

learning? I mean, I'm a second-year teacher now, and I don't really know if I'm preparing

them correctly. Is there a better way to prepare them for what I'm trying to do? So that's

definitely tough.

Emma did talk about Lorrie, an art teacher, whom she had befriended and occasionally

provided her with tips. They became friends over the summer between year one and two and

spent time hanging out and drinking together. Emma considered her to be "really helpful in

telling me general information about the school, the students, and the teachers." Although not an

English teacher, Lorrie provided Emma with ways to implement technology and helpful hints for

record keeping. For example, Lorrie suggested that Emma take two lesson planning books

instead of one at the beginning of the year. That way, Emma would always have an extra,

allowing her to plan over the summer for the following school year, even after administration

had collected her lesson plan book in May. Emma added, "She's really been super helpful in

making sure I'm okay and making sure I understand everything. She's always there." This support seemed especially beneficial since Emma did not receive formal mentoring support in her second year. Her two mentors from year one had taken the responsibility of mentoring the newest cohort of first-year teachers at Ashland.

I told her that I noticed the isolation when no adults entered her room during my first day at Ashland; in fact, her only interaction with other adults occurred at lunch. She agreed that her job was "really isolated." She added that she tried to touch base with other English teachers to exchange ideas but it did not happen regularly. During her planning time she worked in the library because her classroom was used by another teacher. Teachers sometimes gathered in the library, and Emma appreciated the camaraderie, noting that they talked about "life and fun stuff" as opposed to lesson plans. Emma added, "It's pretty typical to be in seclusion. I don't think it really affects me too much. It was even more isolated last year [during year one] because people didn't really know me."

Additional challenge: Lack of time. While Emma seemed to have grown accustomed to the lack of feedback and isolation, she did encounter a new challenge during year two: lack of time. She picked up a second job over the summer and continued to work "too much" during the beginning of the school year. During August and September, Emma found herself working three or four nights during the week and almost every weekend. Beginning in October, she planned to cut back to two or three nights during the week and work every other weekend. Due to her busier schedule, she had made adjustments to her teaching:

I've tried to make it work best for me so my kids don't have very much homework because I literally cannot grade it all. We do reading guides in class out loud then I come around and check them when they're listening to the next chapter. It's just participation

points because I could not feasibly grade every single reading guide. We do a lot more in-class activities where I'm going to check understanding, then they take a quiz on the reading every Friday. I grade those.

Emma felt like she had plenty of time during year one, so she thought that picking up a second job would be a smooth transition. Working the second job was more intense, time consuming, and emotionally draining than she expected. She found it difficult to stay on top of everything with both jobs and at home. Emma added, "I've had a few break downs already from just the load of work, not sleeping, and trying to get runs in (Emma was also training for a half marathon). I've not been sleeping enough, and I'm running myself ragged."

Emma picked up the second job to help finance a long-planned trip to Europe with a friend. She explained, "It's so sad that I don't feel like I get paid enough to do everything that I want to do or be able to save money as quickly as I'd like to save." She added, "I always kind of thought that once I had a full-time job I wouldn't have to work a second job." Emma talked about how having a second job affected her teaching:

I think I could be a better teacher if I wasn't spending so much time doing another job. I think I could make *The Scarlet Letter* a little bit better, a little bit easier for my students. My plan was to make my own reading guides. I just didn't have time to go through and answer all the questions. So I had to go through and pull other teachers' reading guides and kind of combine them and put them together but not spend the time to actually make them. I definitely could have done a better job with this novel if I would have had more time to work on it. So, I mean, it affects my job, it affects me, it affects my students, and if I got paid a little bit more here, I wouldn't have to pick up that second job. And I could be a better teacher.

Emma's second job also prevented her from doing as much work as she had hoped over the summer. In our first interview, she indicated that she wanted to do "intellectual research" in order to have more background knowledge when she taught novels. While she was able to do "a little bit" over the summer, working 40-50 hours per week at her second job made researching and planning for year two difficult. Even though she was not able to research over the summer as much as she had planned, she researched *The Scarlet Letter* before she began teaching. She indicated that her research "has made a huge difference" in how she communicated with her students and it helped them understand the novel. She planned to spend time over winter break preparing for *The Great Gatsby*.

Teacher education disconnect. Emma spoke of specific ways in which her teacher education program could have prepared her better for the realities of teaching. Emma would have liked more training focused on the practical side of teaching methods. While she took methods courses for three semesters, she felt the focus of the courses was not aligned with the expectations of the secondary schools. For example, many of the books used in her methods courses were high-interest, young adult fiction, many of which had themes and content (e.g. homosexual relationships) that Emma did not feel comfortable introducing as a novice teacher in a conservative school district. Plus, the books used in the methods courses were newly published. Emma found the books to be personally interesting, but her school would never actually provide class sets of the books she read in the methods courses. On the contrary, Emma felt that the expectation in public schools was to teach canonical literature, something she did not feel prepared to teach when she graduated. Although she read the canonical works in her English classes, she did not know how to help students tackle the difficult language found in the works:

When I taught *The Great Gatsby*, I realized how hard the language is. I had no idea how to teach it to my students. I decided to put the tough words on a vocab wall, so I guess I knew a little bit, but I didn't know nearly enough to be able to really look at the content and say, 'Okay, what way would I teach this?' I would have liked to be able to discuss books that you'd literally teach in a high school class. In the teacher education program, we read a ton of books, but they're not actually books you teach.

Growth. Emma noticed the most growth from year one to year two in her confidence. She talked to her students more easily, and she had an easier time adopting a teacher mindset. For instance, she stopped having mental lapses that were common after lunch during year one. She explained,

I would forget what I was saying. I couldn't remember what we had done. It was always in 5th hour. It was always bad. The kids got to kind of not respect me because of it. It was bad. It was really bad.

Emma thought the mental lapses during year one were caused by having lunch and her planning period back-to-back, which was a fairly long break in the middle of the day. She had an easier time focusing during her second year. She also attributed these improvements to having her first year in the profession under her belt, adding that the transition from full-time student to full-time teacher was tricky. For example, her schedule as a college student was stressful at times, but it was more flexible and included more breaks than her full-time teaching position.

To continue her professional growth in the future, Emma would like to pursue National Board Certification, and she would like to become a mentor teacher. She would also like more opportunities to participate in professional development sessions. Emma would also embrace teacher leadership roles. She referenced her mother, an elementary school teacher, who became

acting principal when her school principal was out of the building. Emma thought such opportunities would enrich her experience and expertise as a teacher.

Sofia's Case

- Did not have the necessary support at the beginning of year one

- Year one: no curriculum or guidance about what to teach; unsupportive administration; struggled to relate to students who lacked motivation; critical of parenting in the community and negative school culture during year one

- Found a new job after year one

- Felt supported and happier during year two

Reflecting on Year One

Sofia's first year of teaching had a rocky start. She attributed the challenges to a variety of factors: weak administration, an overwhelming course load, a lack of curriculum and materials, school-wide low expectations for students, and an overall lack of support for novice teachers early in the school year. Although her experience improved as the year progressed, Sofia looked forward to teaching at a different high school her second year.

Sofia spent her first year at West High School, located in a rural community of about 6,000 residents (www.city-data.com). The school was home to about 360 students, most of whom were White (87.8%), and about half of whom qualified for free or reduced lunch (Illinois Interactive Report Card). Sofia grew up in a Chicago suburb and had a difficult time adjusting to life in a rural community. She found it difficult to form authentic friendships in the small town in which everyone seemed to know everyone. Even online dating proved difficult since Sofia did not want to list her current residence fearing everyone in town would talk about the fact that she was looking for a relationship. She admitted that feeling isolated from college friends and family

contributed to her dissatisfaction with teaching. In fact, during her first semester she traveled to visit friends and family almost every weekend, which hampered her ability to find her niche locally.

Lack of Supports

Contributing to her dissatisfaction were the lack of guidance and lack of materials she received. According to Sofia, "I had to do everything from scratch. [The members of the English department] had to create a whole curriculum from scratch while teaching four preps each." The materials available included some textbooks and books but many were out of print. The English teachers were unsure about what books should be used to teach the different grade levels. There were no materials, not even textbooks, for the senior English classes. Sofia said that during the first quarter of the school year, the English teachers had to "wing it." The West English teachers contacted English teachers in other schools and asked them to share materials, ideas, and unit plans. The students must have sensed that the teachers were struggling: "They didn't care. They didn't. They thought our class was a blow off." With no curriculum coach or mentor and insufficient materials, Sofia felt she did not have sufficient support in creating the curriculum. The English department consisted of two other teachers, and Sofia appreciated their informal support, but both being in her third year of teaching, they were fairly inexperienced as well.

Her administration did not provide the support Sofia felt she needed. She said, "The discipline issues were hard to handle without the actual support of an administrative staff because the students knew that the principal wouldn't do anything about it." Some students wanted to be sent to In-School Suspension where they were allowed to listen to music, use their phones, talk to friends, and sometimes watch TV in an adjacent room. Further, being sent to the principal's office was like visiting a buddy for some students.

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Sofia looked forward to her first formal observation by her assistant principal because she wanted feedback to help improve her instruction. Instead, his advice focused on her wall decorations, and he provided her no instructional assistance. At one point during first semester, she told her assistant principal about a specific class she struggled with and asked him to observe that period:

He said 'no' because he thought I would lose credibility among the students. Which at the time, you know, I kind of understand, but I'm a first-year teacher. I needed help, and so it was very disappointing to hear.

That experience with her assistant principal coupled with the general lack of support contributed to her emotional breakdown in September. At that time, she questioned whether or not she had chosen the right profession and wondered if she would be able to survive the year.

Shortly later, Sofia began to receive the support of two business teachers and a math teacher. Their support focused on curriculum and her emotional well-being:

The math teacher provided a lot of emotional support and help adjusting to the community. She took me out for dinner. She'd come sit down with me and talk to me about the students I was having issues with that she knew. She even talked to a couple students for me. And after that it definitely turned around. The business teacher was a good person to talk to, but I needed his help on the career research paper I wanted to assign. I wanted [students] to create a budget. He found all this stuff for me he went through it with me to make sure I had it down before I taught them. The other business teacher, right across the hall, who teaches computers, was good with helping me with technical problems. She was good with just to talk to as well.

In November, Sofia was assigned a formal mentor. A science teacher, her mentor helped with Sofia's instruction by reviewing the standards with her and focusing on Sofia's instructional delivery. Sofia's mentor observed her three times, and they attended a conference together that focused on analyzing student work. Sofia explained another way her mentor helped her:

She just definitely challenged my expectations of students because I had to realize that not to have any expectations would be wrong. But I had to realize where [the students] are. I needed to readjust the way I approached them. With the type of clientele that we were working with, I needed to really rethink my expectations. It was definitely disheartening at the time, too, because you want to think that everyone can be at a college level, that everyone can work really hard, and that everyone can become good writers.

When I asked Sofia why she was not assigned a mentor until November, she indicated that her principal decided that he was uninterested in the district-wide, state approved mentoring program. Instead, he wanted to create and implement his own mentoring program. Sofia said that someone spoke up for the novice teachers and got them involved with the state-approved mentoring program in November.

Sofia's experience improved slightly after she was assigned a formal mentor, yet she continued to experience difficulties relating to the student population at West High, especially with those who lacked motivation. Her frustration with the students showed:

Some of the students, no matter what they do, they don't care. They ask the teachers, 'Can you put in a zero in the gradebook [for a specific assignment] and see how that will affect my grade in the class?' I mean, I've never really seen that many people not care about grades at all.

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Sofia felt that the students' disinterest in school was a result of the community members' disinterest in exceeding in school. Sofia's perceived that few people from the community earned college degrees, so the high school students did not see the value in an education beyond high school. As a result, students' primary interest was earning grades high enough to graduate from high school; earning As and Bs was not a priority for most.

Sofia seemed to have an easy time coming up with specific examples of behaviors that she felt exemplified the negative culture and disinterest in schooling of West High. She talked about the students in her sophomore English class:

> The freshman last year had a teacher who didn't do anything, so they got away with anything. They were doing their nails in class. They didn't read. They told me they didn't read. They would have two weeks straight of reading in class. That's it. And not even talk about it. I was well aware of that. I think they were shocked when they found me. And so in the beginning they didn't respect me. They didn't take me seriously and there was a lot of talking, talk back, and just being very disrespectful in the classroom.

To address the disrespect that Sofia experienced in the classroom, she sought advice from the Driver's Education teacher, who Sofia perceived to be "well respected in the community and in the school." He told Sofia to "lay down the law" and "give them a speech that the atmosphere is going to change in the classroom and this is their final warning. If not, they're going to have detentions." Sofia heeded the Driver's Education teacher's advice:

> I told them that when I'm talking, I expect them to listen. When someone asks a question, I expect them to listen. It's something they have to know. Just because I'm not talking to you, does not mean you need to talk to someone else. I said that 'the next person that talks without raising their hand or without being allowed to will be given a detention. Do

you understand?' I made everyone nod their heads. Ten minutes later, someone talked, so I gave him a detention. Then someone else. I ended up giving out 10 detentions out of 22 students that day. So I emailed and called home. I called every parent of a student that I gave a detention to.

Sofia received a "nasty" email response from one of the student's mothers. Sofia summarized the email message she received from a parent, "The email basically said that they [the students] shouldn't have to worry about discipline in the classrooms. They don't respect me, and I have to think about the way I'm teaching. If they're not listening, it's because I'm not interesting enough." Sofia was unsure about how to handle the email, so she approached the assistant principal who told Sofia that she should not have given out the detentions and she should have narrowed the detention receivers to two students. Sofia struggled with his advice:

The problem is, with that class, it was not just two students. It was everyone. The whole atmosphere of the class needed to change because it was something they weren't used to. Before they were used to walking all over the teacher, and I needed the support. He told me to respond to the angry parent email by saying, 'Thank you for your support' because apparently she had talked to her son about it, and that was how I was supposed to respond. That was so disheartening because it was quite obvious that she did not support me.

The lack of support Sofia felt she received played a role in her perception of the school culture. When Sofia talked about the negative culture of the school she explained:

I've never quite been around a school [like that]. I even observed at [name of a small, urban school], and I know there were some really tough situations there. Students would tell me that they were court mandated to go to school, and I've never seen quite as much

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as I've seen here. We had a substitute who has subbed at every school in the area and

came to ours and said that here are the worst attitudes he's ever seen.

When I asked Sofia who was to blame for the school culture, she replied "parents and administration." She elaborated, "I know a lot of people blame it on the teachers. It really comes down to parenting as well, and the parenting here is quite different."

Increased Satisfaction

Sofia seemed to take the necessary steps to have a successful first year. She sought out guidance from administrators, her peers, her cooperating teachers from student teaching, her informal and formal mentors, and an instructor from her undergraduate program. While some of their support helped improve Sofia's experience, she still struggled during year one, especially during the first semester. When I interviewed her at the end of year one, I asked to rate her satisfaction level of her first year. She said her satisfaction level during first semester was a one out of five, the lowest rating. Her experience improved drastically in the spring, which Sofia attributed most to beginning her role as assistant softball coach. Working with students outside of the classroom and being associated with the team made a huge difference for Sofia. For the first time that year she felt "active and happy." Also contributing to her improved satisfaction was the increase in collaboration with other English teachers. This led to a decreased workload because the English teachers took turns planning units and shared their daily plans with each other. Sofia also limited visiting friends and family on the weekends, and staying in the community relieved the stress of traveling.

When she attributed her increased satisfaction to her involvement in softball, the increased collaboration, and the limited travelling, I pressed her. I wondered if her happiness was partially due to knowing in March that she had a new job for year two and did not have to return

to West. Sofia said that knowing she was leaving may have helped. Plus, the last month of the school year was far less stressful for the school's teachers because they knew their principal, who the school board asked to leave although he was in the middle of a contract, would not be returning the following year. She found herself happier knowing that her colleagues would have a fresh start the next year.

Planning for the Future

Even with her rocky initiation into the teaching profession, Sofia planned to remain a teacher for the long haul. She liked working with students and enjoyed that teaching provided for diverse experiences with no two days being the same. In the next five years, she planned to earn her master's degree in an area that will help her improve her instruction, such as English, reading, or writing studies.

Sofia had high expectations for year two, when she will teach at Truman high, located in an outer suburb of Chicago. She was excited to work with the Curriculum Director to plan her curriculum; in fact, the planning would begin two months before the school year began. Based on what she had heard about the school, she expected a collaborative, collegial culture in which the veteran teachers take novice teachers under their wings. She expected a formal mentor and a more comprehensive induction program than she experienced at West. She looked forward to participating on the Response to Intervention committee and coaching softball. She anticipated having more people observe her to provide meaningful feedback. Sofia indicated that the students at Truman were known for their high levels of motivation. Sofia also expected the administrators to hold high expectations of students and teachers, and she looked forward to working in a school with high expectations.

Visiting Truman High

The town of Truman, which was populated by about 5,500 residents, was considered an outermost suburb of Chicago (www.city-data.com). With its cornfields, its vastly spaced houses and businesses, and green pastures, I thought Truman seemed rural and far removed from Chicago. Housing prices spiked and the population grew from 2000-2009 although the increases had slowed in the past two years, according to the Truman High School principal. If the population boomed again, Truman High was ready. Its newest expansion provided space for 1,200 students, but the 2011-2012 student population was under 700, most of whom were White (92.6%) with only 7.2% receiving free or reduced lunch (Illinois Interactive Report Card). Additionally, the district bought a sizeable piece of land during the economic boom with intentions of building another high school if it became necessary in the future. The district is well-funded, Sofia explained, by a nuclear power plant and cooling center located near Truman.

When the principal escorted me to Sofia's classroom on my first day there, he pointed out the parts of the school that were original and the parts that were constructed during the two additions. The newest part, which was recently finished, was not fully used as the school was much larger than necessary for the student population. Based on the paint colors and floor types, it was easy to tell which parts of the school were original and which had been added. All portions of the school were well-kept, but the paint on the original school walls were dull beige and the walls of the newer parts were brighter and incorporated bright green.

I observed that students and teachers seemed to have ownership of the wall decorations. Large spaces of the hall ways were decorated by student groups and teachers. One set of decorations read "Character: It's how you live when nobody is looking." Another showed how much money one can save by choosing environmentally friendly ways of life, such as hanging

laundry to dry and riding a bike. A large portion of one hall was dedicated to science lab safety while another portion of the wall displayed the theme of the 2012 yearbook and pictured the members of the yearbook staff. A sign reading "We're feeling HOT, HOT, HOT" was still hanging from Homecoming week. Sofia said that teachers and students were encouraged to decorate and update the wall space. Outside of every teacher's classroom hung a sign that listed what book the teacher was reading in his or her spare time. As a visitor, the decorations gave me a sense of the school community and what teachers and students valued.

Sofia's Second Year

In our email correspondences that led up to my visit to Truman, Sofia made it clear that she was much happier at Truman than she had been at West. During my visit, I asked her to compare how she felt in October of year two compared to one year prior. She noted a drastic difference:

> This time last year, I was having a panic attack, not even knowing whether or not I even wanted to be a teacher. I was working from six a.m. to about midnight every day. I was alone, living on my own, not in the best environment. This year, I feel as though I am able to make the better connections with my students because I am personally happier. I feel as though I'm better prepared. I do feel more confident as a teacher, not so panicked. I'm working hard, just not as insanely as I was last year.

I noticed Sofia's optimistic demeanor during the days I spent with her, and she provided me with multiple concrete examples of why her satisfaction was much higher than it had been one year prior. The examples she provided are described below.

Induction

Before she began her second year of teaching, Sofia participated in Truman's new teacher orientation. The orientation was required for any teachers new to the district, even if they had prior experience teaching. At the orientation, the new teachers toured the district's school buildings, received specific instructions for their interactions with their mentors, and learned about the requirements for earning continuing education credits. The binder Sofia received at the new teacher orientation included information about developing a classroom management plan, creating a folder for substitute teachers, setting up a personalized voicemail message, and setting professional goals. Much of the binder focused on the interactions that should take place with mentors throughout the year and for each month a checklist of activities for new teachers to complete. Types of activities to complete with mentors included the following: review midterm procedures, prepare for student-teacher conferences, discuss standardized testing procedures, review parent communication process, discuss strategies for maintaining student focus and direction until the end of the school year, and participate in community activities. Mentors were also required to recommend a peer for the beginning teacher to observe, and mentors were required to observe their mentee during the year. Sofia appreciated the detailed binder and enjoyed the time she spent with her mentor completing the monthly checklists.

In addition to the new teacher orientation, Sofia participated in two days of orientation for all teachers. She attended classes and meetings, she met with her mentor and the teachers in the English department, and she had time to set up her classroom. During those orientation days, Sofia felt supported:

I didn't feel as though I was being thrown in by myself. I had people coming in and helping me with my classroom. I was given guidance, not teachers telling me what to do but letting me know that they are here for me. That made me feel so good."

Additionally, meetings for novice teachers took place every six weeks during the school year, and I had the opportunity to attend one while I was at Truman. Led by the Curriculum Director on a Wednesday morning before school started, the meeting lasted 30 minutes. New teachers, about 15 total, from all four of the district's schools attended. Sofia guessed that about half of the teachers new to the district had prior teaching experience. In fact, the Curriculum Director modified the requirements for some new teachers, based on their level of prior experience. For example, Frank, a teacher new to the district, was not required to create a classroom management plan with his mentor, a man who had less teaching experience than he.

At the novice teacher meeting I attended, the Curriculum Director reviewed some items in the induction binder and reminded teachers to make contact with parents often. Then each teacher was asked to share "how things were going." Some teachers discussed challenges. For example, one teacher spoke of the frustration of spending too much time planning and grading and staying at school until at least 7:30 every evening. The Curriculum Director, after mentioning that she had known the teacher since she was a child, kindly reminded her that "education is a tough place for perfectionism" and that she had to "take care of herself first." Several teachers raved about their students saying they "had the best students ever." When it became Sofia's turn to share, she talked about struggling with some students' apathetic behaviors. She also mentioned that she was happy that she did not have to deal with the behavior issues she did at West. To that statement, the Curriculum Director replied, "That's because you

were in a war zone last year." Because Sofia had been vocal about her year one experience, the Curriculum Director was familiar with the struggles Sofia experienced at West.

Curriculum Support

One of the biggest contributors to Sofia's dissatisfaction during year one was a lack of curriculum support. In reflecting about her first year she said:

> I was just told, 'You have sophomores, juniors, and seniors.' I had no idea what books they read or what my expectations should be. I had no idea what they learned before they came to me. There were no set standards. I did print off the state standards but I kind of forgot about them because I was just trying to get through every single day.

In contrast, immediately upon being hired at Truman, Sofia received an email from the district's Curriculum Director, Sandra, inviting her to participate in curriculum writing for two weeks in June. Sofia enthusiastically agreed. By the end of June, Sofia and another teacher, Lauren, had re-written the Common Core Standards, breaking them down into smaller pieces to make them more accessible to them and their students. They also created tentative instructional plans and pacing guides and wrote summative assessments and rubrics to gage if their students had mastered the standards. Sofia and Lauren submitted their work often to Sandra, who provided feedback and suggestions for revisions. About Sandra's support, Sofia said:

> I really, really appreciate her help. She was a tremendous help in the summer when we did curriculum work. She's always making us think about how we're connecting what we're doing in the classroom to the standards. Are our lessons relevant? Are we hitting all the standards? If we're not, what changes should we make?

Sofia and Lauren's curriculum work was not a one-shot deal. In fact, they already had plans to make modifications to lessons and assessments the summer after Sofia's second year, based on what worked and what did not work in their classes.

Sofia felt as though she and Lauren, who was a first-year teacher, had sufficient support from Sandra and the other Truman English teachers during their curriculum writing. Sofia felt guided, not confined, by the curriculum she and Lauren set, "Lauren and I are trying to stay on the same page, but things will be slightly different because we're two different people." Sofia appreciated teaching a curriculum that she knew was supported by her peers and the administration. She knew the curriculum she taught ninth graders would be built upon by the teachers of older students. A vast contrast to her experience at West, Sofia could name each book that the ninth graders would read, the types of essays they would write during each unit, and the assessments she would use to determine her students' mastery throughout the year. Being able to outline her plans for the entire school year seemed to provide Sofia with confidence.

Observations and Critical Feedback

During my first day at Truman I inferred that teacher observations were customary when the school principal entered Sofia's classroom and his entry did not seem to faze the students. They acted as though they saw administrators in their classes all the time, something Sofia confirmed. The day I was there, Sofia said her principal was "doing a walkthrough," and he stayed in her class for about 25 minutes. In a meeting with the Curriculum Director, I learned that administrators from the district's elementary and middle schools would also observe teachers in the high school building, and vice versa. According to her, this was to ensure that the highest level of instruction was occurring at each of the district's schools.

The week prior to my visit, Sofia had her first formal observation. Conducted by the vice principal, "who's very, very tough," she told Sofia that she needed to do a better job at modeling and to be more formal when she addressed the students by not using "you guys." Sofia agreed with most of the feedback she received but noted that the vice principal nitpicked portions of her lesson and "missed the point" of one of her approaches. Sofia indicated that she did not score badly, and she was going to take the vice principal's suggestions and make changes, then not let the criticism bother her. Initially the feedback Sofia received did bother her as she recognized that the critical nature of the feedback was difficult to hear. In fact, after her post-observation meeting with the vice principal, Sofia became "overly emotional and started crying a bit" when she discussed the feedback with her mentor. Sofia added, "Once that day was over, I just let it go. So I was able to move on. It's valuable to have an outside perspective." Comparing year one to year two, Sofia said:

Going from last year, having no one come in or rarely come in, stay for 15 minutes, interrupt my class, then leave, I'd rather have people come in. Even though it's nerve racking, I'd rather have them come in. It's part of the learning process.

Her observations did not stop with the school's administrators. In the week following my visit, Sofia would be observed by her mentor and by Sandra, the Curriculum Director. Sofia asked her mentor to observe the way she was teaching *Romeo and Juliet* with her first period, a quiet class who Sofia had difficulties motivating. Sofia appreciated that her mentor's observation findings would be kept confidential. It seemed as though Sofia's mentor provided positive feedback, which Sofia needed. While she still acknowledged that she also needed the critical feedback, she added, "I need to hear the positives just as much. I know I need to work on things. I'm not perfect. This year I'm making sure that I do talk to someone to hear the positives."

Sandra scheduled time to observe all novice teachers in the district, and Sofia looked forward to the feedback she would receive from her.

Sofia contrasted the number of observations she received at Truman and at West. At Truman she said adults entered her classroom to observe her "weekly, if not daily, because they care." At West her principal entered her classroom two times during her first year. She did not receive feedback from him; rather, he "walked in for maybe two seconds, interrupted my class, then left." The consistent flow of adults entering her room put added pressure on Sofia, but she appreciated being in a school that held high standards for their teachers.

Collegial Support

Sofia expected a collegial culture at Truman, and she was not disappointed. I witnessed the collegiality at lunch, in Sofia's classes, and after school. For example, a special education aid was assigned to students in two of Sofia's classes. The aid not only helped the students to which she was assigned; she acted as a second teacher by circulating during seat work and addressing questions and issues of all the students in the classroom.

The reading specialist assisted Sofia during the school's designated Response to Intervention time. Sofia enlisted the help of the reading specialist to help set up interventions for her students. I saw the reading specialist explain the reading program to the students, get them started with their programs, and then work with Sofia to make sure she understood how the intervention worked so that she felt comfortable facilitating it when the reading specialist could not be there. Sofia said that the specialist was in the high school every other day, and "she's more than willing to come in and help when you ask. She's kind of running around trying to work with everyone, so I can't have her every day." The assistance from the reading specialist was a support that Sofia sought out, one which was unavailable to her at West.

Every day after school, Sofia and Lauren, who teaches the same grade levels at Sofia, met to debrief about the day. They discussed what worked, what did not work, and the plans for the following day. Lauren seemed to be more comfortable with the way she approached grammar, and Sofia appreciated her insight. Sofia was more experienced, and Lauren seemed to value the help Sofia provided pertaining to reading and writing approaches. They discussed and delegated what they would work on during their planning periods, and they shared resources daily. For example, Lauren created the grammar worksheets, and Sofia spent her time creating reading guides and graphic organizers. They systematically and strategically made sure they lightened the load for each other. I noticed that they did not always take the other's resources and work without thinking critically about it. For example, Sofia told Lauren that she thought the packets she created on adjectives and adverbs were too in-depth and complicated for their students. Sofia added that she would look at the final unit exam to determine how much the students had to know, make modifications to the packet, and send it to Lauren. Lauren seemed to appreciate Sofia's feedback.

Sofia's collaboration went beyond Lauren. When she struggled with getting her students interested in *Romeo and Juliet*, she approached, Ken, a ten year veteran English teacher. Ken told her to skip the scenes that were not critical to the story and to acquire an audio version of the play to help with the students' understanding. Sofia said that such advice helps with her planning and instruction and that she felt comfortable approaching any member of the English department for advice. While she was friendly with the English teachers during year one, the teachers at West were "stressed and overwhelmed." The teachers at Truman were experienced and had the time to provide Sofia often with helpful tips and insight.

School Culture

Sofia struggled with the school culture at West and contributed the negativity to administration, parents, and students. In speaking about most of the students at Truman, Sofia discussed high motivation levels and a willingness to learn. While they did not all work to their capabilities, most students will "attempt and try to learn and listen, even if they don't like it."

I saw a snapshot of the school culture in a program called Leaders. During the 40 minute Intervention period, in which students typically work on improving their reading, two students involved with Leaders spoke to Sofia's students. Both seniors were well-known by the student body for their athletic and academic success, the boys talked to the ninth graders in Sofia's class about the importance of being successful. They facilitated two interactive games, which were designed to show the ninth graders that practice makes work easier and that reaching out for help encourages success. Then the Leaders discussed the multiple interventions and supports that Truman offered to assist students who struggle. They seemed to deliver an important message:

> Be sure to pass your classes. Ask your teachers if you have questions. Check online for your grades and for missing assignments. Pay attention. The teachers offer tutoring programs. They are making your life easier so you don't have to go home and struggle and do homework. You can do your homework here after school. Then when you get home you can hang out with your friends.

When I told Sofia that I was impressed with the Leaders' interaction with her ninth graders, she replied, "It is okay to be smart here."

Another aspect of school culture that Sofia spoke about and that I noticed in my time at Truman was in the number of parent contacts Sofia received. Our interviews were interrupted several times by email alerts and phone calls. Sofia initiated much of the parent contact, and she

received emails and phone calls to make sure students were turning work in. Sofia said that in the first 24 hours that I was at Truman, she had received at least five phone calls or emails from parents and one email from a student's private tutor. This was a "huge contrast" from year one when she had regular contact with only two parents, one of whom was a school board member. Even though maintaining parent contact was time consuming, Sofia found the extra effort to be worth it. She appreciated knowing that the parents were informed well before parent teacher conferences, which would take place later that month. She said, "At least if I start making contact and they're making contact with me, we've set up some sort of relationship. That's what I've always been told to do."

Personal Changes

While Sofia benefitted from Truman's school culture, she also made some adjustments to the way she approached teaching, which led to positive changes during year two. She admitted that she struggled with her perfectionism during year one, but during year two Sofia was not as hard on herself when lessons did not go smoothly. For example, she and Lauren planned for intricate multimedia project to kick off the school year. According to Sofia, "It blew up in our faces." She decided that for the following year she would assign a modified multimedia project during second semester when she would be more familiar with her students' technology proficiency. Sofia was disappointed with the results of the multimedia project, but she "shrugged it off," and noted modifications she would make for the following year. She realized that the students learned something from the activity, and she adjusted her grading approach accordingly. When I asked her how she would have responded during year one when a lesson did not go as well as planned, she indicated that her reaction would have been very different, "Had it been last

year, I probably would have made them redo it and then cause more stress for myself. I would have made my life even worse by trying to fix it right then and there."

Sofia was happier in her personal life during year two. As opposed to living alone in a community with which she felt little connection, she was living at home with her parents. She did not mind the 45 minute commute to Truman, and she appreciated having the opportunity to save money. Even while living outside of the school community, Sofia attended school and social functions, something she rarely did while at West because she lacked the desire and the time. Sofia still put in long days at Truman, arriving at 7:15 a.m. and leaving at 5:00 p.m.; however, knowing what to teach, having the support when she had questions, having fewer classes for which to prepare, and having an 80 minute planning period every day made a big difference. She said that at West, she did much planning and grading at home, but during year two she got much of it done at school. While she set aside time on the weekends to work, her weekends were not consumed with school work.

Challenges Still Existed

Even though she was much happier at Truman than she was at West, Sofia did still encounter challenges. Moving from a traditional school day at West to Truman, in which classes lasted 80 minutes, meant that Sofia had to plan differently. Sofia enjoyed block scheduling but was still adapting to the change.

Teaching grammar, which Sofia indicated was a challenge during year one, was still a challenge during year two. In fact, when I was there Sofia was teaching students to differentiate between the different types of verb phrases. She was frustrated that the students did not seem to understand the lesson, and she thought her approach was ineffective. At the end of the day, we sat down and brainstormed a different approach to teaching verb phrases for the following day.

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Satisfied with one of the solutions we developed, Sofia worked that night to adapt what she taught through a worksheet the first day to a game the second day. The change in the students' enthusiasm was clear. On day two, they enjoyed playing the "Swat Game" in which team members raced to swat with the fly swatter the correct verb label. Sofia interjected mini lessons and asked students to explain their choices often. Sofia was able to see which students understood the verb phrases and could identify which classes needed further review before their scheduled quizzes. Sofia reflected on her adaptation, and was happy about the changes she made.

Sofia's biggest challenge during year two was dealing with student apathy. Compared to teaching at West when students "whined and they shouted and they spoke back to me," students at Truman "simply sit there and just don't do the work." She found her first period to be particularly apathetic:

> They forget to turn things in. They give me excuses that I know are lies. That's the class where 10 of them didn't return a take home quiz. It's just amazing what they choose not to do, even if I give them time in class. They still choose not to write or they still choose not to do certain things. That is something that I've always had a hard time with. Not that I've been teaching that long, but how do you motivate them? You try different things but, I don't know. I'm still trying to figure that out.

Sofia attributed her students' "bad habits" to having a teacher the previous year who had low expectations for the students. She thought that may be why "that whole first period hates English."

A Happier Sofia

Even though working at Truman meant higher expectations and higher stakes for Sofia, she was much happier during year two. She discussed her satisfaction in our interviews, and I

witnessed it in my observations. It is important to note that the change in environment rejuvenated Sofia and reaffirmed her decision to become a teacher. I found this especially interesting because Truman was known as a school that is not afraid to fire its teachers. According to Sofia, administrators expect teachers to constantly improve, to be involved, and to be effective, and "they will look for reasons to fire you." Even with the added pressure, Sofia had no regrets about her move from West to Truman:

> I'm closer to my home and closer to my friends. I'm in a friendlier environment, so I can start making relationships with other teachers. I have a bigger support system than I had last year. No regrets at all. I'm glad I'm out of West. I needed to be out.

Maya's Case

- Felt well supported during her first year; did not feel like she needed support during year two

- Would have liked to be observed more often

- Positive experiences with co-teachers

- District pushed her into a leadership position (literacy leader) her first year

- Critical about the scripted reading curriculum adopted by school for second year

- Enjoyed writing lesson plans and making instructional decisions

- Thrived on extra-curriculars and attending after school events

Reflecting on Year One

Liberty Junior High School, located in a rural community in Illinois, housed fewer than 500 students, yet it was racially and ethnically diverse with about 77% of its students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (Illinois Interactive Report Card). Maya, an eighth grade teacher at

Liberty, was fairly comfortable with the school, its faculty and staff, and the students as she was "lucky enough" to be hired to teach at the same school in which she student taught.

Year One Supports

Maya felt well supported during her first year of teaching. While Maya was not assigned a formal mentor, her cooperating teacher from student teaching informally mentored her and "looked out" for her. Maya explained the role her informal mentor played:

She'd always email me, 'Did you remember to send in your literature leader stipend? Don't forget there's a meeting on Friday morning. Do you know how to do this form of assessment?' Just things like that. And when ISATs came around she made sure I knew how to go about doing all of that. That was nice. Things that I wouldn't have really thought to ask someone or thought to do on my own. She kept me under her wing, but she was not overbearing in any way. She was always there, which was good.

All eighth grade teachers' classrooms were located in the same hallway, and their close proximity enabled Maya to ask her peers questions as they came up. Overall, Maya found her colleagues "helpful and really nice." Maya appreciated the Curriculum Coach (CC) because "she knew what she was talking about." The CC formally observed Maya twice during the year. She used an evaluation form, which was used for Maya's personal growth but did not play a role in re-hiring decisions. The school had adopted a specific literacy curriculum at the beginning of the year, and the CC's observations and corresponding evaluation form "was to make sure that were following [brand name of curriculum], and that we didn't have any questions or we weren't struggling with that." Maya felt like the CC offered more instructional support than her other colleagues:

She actually offered to bring [beginning teachers] materials, or bring us ideas, or to teach a lesson in our classes and have us observe it for different techniques. She offered to co-teach with us. She was really open to anything.

Maya emailed the CC frequently about questions and said that she helped her find some good resources for one unit. Maya indicated that she could have received additional assistance from the CC, but she did not seek it out. Maya explained that her CC was more of an elementary school expert. Moreover, Maya felt comfortable and confident lesson planning and found it to be one of the most enjoyable parts of her first year. She said lesson planning was a focus in her teacher education program plus she planned all of her own lessons during student teaching, and both of these factors contributed to her comfort level. Maya appreciated the creative aspect of lesson planning.

Maya was assigned the same co-teacher, a special education teacher, all year long and found her presence invaluable. Maya's co-teacher joined her for two of five classes at the beginning of the year and joined her for four of five classes second semester. Maya's co-teacher seemed to increase her confidence, "I knew she was respectful of me and my decisions. There was always someone on my side in the room." Maya also appreciated the co-teacher's "very, very strict" discipline approach. Maya's co-teacher's primary task was working with students who had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Maya gave her daily lessons to the co-teacher, who would help her with instruction. Maya found that the co-teacher's presence made a big difference. The one-on-one attention that the co-teacher provided to the students with IEPs helped keep them focused, freeing up time for Maya to work with her other students. Maya also indicated that the co-teacher helped her navigate through some mistakes that Maya attributed to her inexperience. For example, Maya assigned a paper the week before grades were due to be

submitted. Even though it was beyond her scope of work, the co-teacher graded some of the papers so Maya would meet the grading deadline.

Supports needed. When asked what support she would have liked to see increased, Maya indicated that she would like to have been observed more often by the principal, who observed her once, for about 20 minutes, during the year. The observation occurred in January, and the post observation meeting did not occur until March. Maya deemed her principal to be the most helpful in giving feedback about classroom management techniques. Maya "really liked" her principal and sought him out in the beginning of the school year when she struggled with discipline issues in her study hall. Unknown to Maya, the students in her study hall, which was during the final period of the day, were expected to be silent. She allowed her students to work together during the study hall. When her principal stopped in, he explained to Maya the expectation of the silent study hall, but at that point the students were accustomed to talking quietly and working together. When Maya was unable to get the students to work silently, she asked the principal for advice. He provided her with tips and stopped in her classroom to support her and reinforce her rules in the transition to silent study halls. She explained one instance, "He came in one time and was like, 'I don't know why you're talking when she told you to stop talking.' He said it in the meanest dad voice ever. They were so quiet for like four days." As the year went on, she felt that students needed some leniency because working in groups benefitted them. She went to the principal who allowed her to lighten the silent rules a bit. The principal recommended to Maya, "Put on really quiet music, and if you can hear [the students] over that, then say something." Overall, Maya appreciated the principal's practical classroom management tips.

Maya also would have liked opportunities to observe colleagues teach reading or language arts lessons. The goal of her observations would be to look "not so much for teaching techniques, but more for classroom management techniques." When I pressed Maya about the types of classroom management decisions she pondered during year one, she referenced questions from students for which she was unprepared that caused her modify her policies throughout the year. For example, she told me a student's question that prompted policy change in her classroom: "If I'm in your reading class and your writing class, can I use my bathroom passes from reading to go to the bathroom in writing?" Maya said that she did not always know how to handle such questions and told her students that she would think about the answers and get back to them. Maya knew that taking extra time to think about students' questions was not a bad approach, but she was happy to have more context and experience, allowing her to confidently answer students' questions more quickly.

Extra-Curricular Involvement

A highlight of Maya's first year stemmed from her involvement in extra-curricular activities. She rated her satisfaction level of her first year at 4.5 on a 5 point scale. She attributed much of her satisfaction to her involvement as co-sponsor of the National Junior Honors Society and her tendency to observe her students in athletic activities after school. These activities helped Maya find her "niche" in the school. According to Maya:

> When you're involved in anything extra-curricular, then you know those students at
> another level too and that always helps when they're in your classes. And you see them
> all the time throughout the day. That really helps. I liked being involved in things like
> that.

Maya's enjoyment of her advisory role surprised her. Not all teachers were responsible for advisory, a 25 minute first period that Maya suspected she was assigned because she was a new teacher. She explained that she was not happy to be assigned an advisory period, and Maya's responsibilities for the advisory period were not explained to her well. She initially understood that it was a period in which students could ask teachers questions and seek academic assistance. As she discovered more about her responsibilities, she found the workload to be more than expected:

> When they get to school they come to your room. You take attendance, you take lunch count, they go to their lockers. But you're also in charge of keeping track of every time a student is tardy, calling the office, giving detentions, and calling home for their absences.

The students in Maya's advisory were not necessarily in her language arts classes, yet she was responsible for tracking her 13 advisory students in their academic classes. She was responsible for scheduling their parent-teacher conferences and keeping track of their tardies, absences, and grades. Once she came to a better understand her advisory responsibilities, she liked her role as adviser, "I ended up liking it because I knew those kids really well because they came every single morning, so I had a really good relationship with them."

Maya also enjoyed her role as Literacy Leader. Her responsibility included representing the eighth grade teachers at monthly meetings with other school Literacy Leaders, the Reading Specialist, and the Curriculum Coach. She was then charged with reporting about the Literacy Leader meetings and "helping [the eighth grade teachers] with their planning and making sure they don't have any questions about it since I was at the meeting." Maya was also responsible for learning literacy skills specific to the brand of the curriculum used at Liberty, teaching the skills to other eighth grade teachers, and then making sure they followed through. Maya found that part

of her responsibility "daunting" and admitted that she did not always feel comfortable helping

teachers who "probably knew more than [she] did." She felt like school leaders, in general,

should not require a novice teacher to take on such a big responsibility. The responsibility

worked out for Maya because of the positive, welcoming school culture at Liberty. She looked

forward to her responsibility as Literacy Leader during year two because she enjoyed "being a

part of the decision making process," and she knew her colleagues better and knew they would

not take offense to what she said. She anticipated feeling more comfortable about the role during

year two. When I asked Maya why she was chosen to be the Literacy Leader, even though she

was a first-year teacher, she explained that she believed the district aimed for grass-roots change.

Other first-year teachers were assigned similar roles as teacher leaders. Maya thought that the

responsibility would have been burdensome had she been in a less supportive school than

Liberty.

Looking Toward Year Two

While Maya did enjoy her first year of teaching, she did not look forward to her second

year. In fact, at the time of our interview, which took place immediately after her first year

concluded, Maya planned on applying for an opening at the local high school. Maya's desired

change stemmed from the district's adoption of a new and highly scripted literacy program that

would be implemented her second year. The district abandoned the literacy curriculum model

used during Maya's first year, which Maya appreciated because it guided, but did not dictate her

literacy instruction. The newly adopted program required teachers of students who read below

grade level to read a specific script for instruction. While Maya had not yet gone through the

training, she understood that there would be no flexibility in timing, instruction, or assessment.

Readers who were labeled "on-level" would receive a partially scripted curriculum, and only

teachers of the highest level students would have the freedom they were accustomed to receiving regarding curriculum choices. Maya was skeptical of the newly adopted curriculum and its effectiveness but noted that she would know more after going through the training. While Maya was so unhappy about the curriculum change, she was seeking a new position, she perceived her co-workers to be happy about the adoption: "I think a lot of the teachers are happy because we don't really have to plan. And there's a lot of online assessment, so we don't have to create any."

While Maya was apprehensive about year two, she enjoyed her first year of teaching more than she expected:

> I had low expectations and it turned out being so much better than I thought it was going to be. Everyone told me it was going to be so scary, so awful, and I'd just fight to get by. But I really did like it and I'm excited after that.

Visiting Liberty

While Liberty Junior High showed its age in the olive green, burnt orange, and black tiled classroom floors, the fresh paint and tidy appearance helped give the school an updated feel. In an attempt to create a more energy-efficient school, renovations over two summers resulted in new heaters in each classroom that allowed teachers to control the temperature and tinted windows in each classroom.

The trophy cases in the halls were empty, and the hallway walls were mostly bare. The exceptions were intermittent signs, made of construction paper, advertising the school's Halloween Dance and the upcoming Spirit Week. Additionally, several signs listed the "Responsibility of the Week": They read:

What: Be respectful. Be responsible

Where: Restroom

How: Flush and wash your hands

When I checked out the restrooms, I realized that the environmental initiative and cosmetic renovations that took place during the summers did not include the restrooms. The toilets, sinks, soap dispensers, and dryers appeared to be original. To remind students of the "Responsibility of the Week," in each stall hung a sign that read "Stop, turn around, flush."

The reminders to be responsible did not stop with restroom signs. On the morning announcements, the students heard, "Be ready, be responsible, be respectful. We're representing our parents, our families, and our communities when we're at school and on our way to school." School procedures and responsibility reminders were designed to limit troublesome behavior at Liberty.

The structure of the school day had been changed at the beginning of Maya's second year, and the school's low test scores drove the changes. In 2010, the percentage of eighth graders who met or exceeded standards in reading, math, and writing were 77%, 71%, and 49%, respectively. Liberty's 2010 school composite scores listed those meeting or exceeding standards to be 10% lower than the state-wide average (Illinois Interactive Report Card). In an attempt to raise test scores, Liberty transitioned to block scheduling and formed teams. Maya's daily schedule included the following:

20 Minutes: Advisory- Teachers took lunch count, students went to their lockers, and announcements were read. On Mondays, teachers reviewed the "Responsibility of the Week" during this time.

40 Minutes: Planning Period- Maya's team of teachers, which included a math teacher and a social studies teacher, had planning period during this time. These three teachers shared the same

students. During planning, Maya's students attended Physical Education class daily during first semester, and during second semester they would enroll in Health in lieu of Physical Education.

85 Minute Blocks- There were three 85 minute block classes during which Maya taught language arts or reading. Students would attend language arts and math for the full year. They attended science and social studies for one semester each.

40 Minutes: Lunch- Maya ate lunch with the members of her team. Students were expected to silently and quickly move through the lunch line, but they were able to whisper to their peers sitting at their lunch table. The cafeteria was too small to accommodate the student body, so students were able to go outside for recess after they finished eating their lunch.

45 Minutes: Homeroom/Study Hall- Students returned to their morning advisory classrooms unless they participated in Liberty's band. In homeroom/study hall, they were expected to complete their homework. Maya indicated that this time would eventually become a period designated for reading and math interventions.

With the exception of band, which was optional, and Physical Education, which only lasted for a semester, students seemed to have little time to expend energy or to escape core classes. When I asked Maya about the lack of options for students to participate in elective courses such as art, foreign language, theater, or home economics, she said that there was a vacated room where home economics was formally held, although she was unsure of how long ago. She acknowledged the lack of options for students and attributed it to an emphasis on raising standardized tests scores. She also mentioned that when she observed students playing at recess, they seemed to use that time to expend energy.

Maya's Classroom

The first person I met at Liberty was Maya's co-teacher from year one. When I told her former co-teacher that I was studying the transition of novice teachers from year one to two, she responded, "I didn't ever think of Maya as being a novice teacher. She seemed to have an innate quality that can't be taught. She was a natural." I was intrigued by what the co-teacher said, and I looked forward to seeing Maya in action.

Judging by the enthusiastic "hellos" Maya received as she greeted her students at the door as they entered her classroom, I sensed that students did not dread language arts class. I immediately noticed the positive approach Maya used when interacting with her students. When a student asked Maya if she could move to the front of the room to read the board, Maya replied, "Yes you may. Thank you for asking." When students worked in groups, Maya told them, "I really appreciate you being on task." Other examples I noted of talk that may have contributed to a positive classroom environment were the following:

- "I know I only asked for one person to share, but you're doing a really good job at explaining your answers and I don't want to cut you off. Does anyone else have anything they'd like to say about the plot?"
- "You did an awesome job with descriptive writing. Now we're going to transition into narrative writing."

I noted the following examples of Maya re-directing undesirable behavior:

- "I can't tell if you're listening if your eyes aren't on me."
- Maya: Your group doesn't seem to be paying attention.

  Student: He took my pencil.

  Maya: That's not an eighth grade problem.

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The positive way Maya approached her students was exemplified in her interaction with a student, Kyle, who had Asperger's Syndrome. On the day I observed his full-time aid was replaced by a substitute, and Maya indicated his behavior was "more off than normal." After Kyle tried to shout out answers four times at the beginning of class, Maya softly, yet firmly said to him, "You're supposed to raise your hand if you want to share your journal. We're going to have a good day, right?" Kyle nodded his head and caused no further disruptions. When we debriefed, Maya told me that Kyle had a tendency to cause major disruptions in his classes and had gotten into a physical altercation with a teacher already that school year. In her class, his behavior was typically good, and she took steps to facilitate his behavior, such as letting him work with a specific student and engaging in positive talk with him.

I noted that the overall positive talk may have led to a trustworthy, positive classroom culture. At the beginning of each class, students wrote about one of three prompts Maya posted. After ten minutes of silently writing, some students chose to read their journal entries aloud to the class. The day I observed, most students wrote about the scariest moment of their lives. Stories were shared about topics such as bats, ghosts, cancer, and car accidents. About 1/3 of the students in each class chose to read their entries aloud, and their peers, unprompted by Maya, clapped. Maya responded to frightening moments shared with responses such as, "I'm glad you're okay! I would have been terrified too" and "Is she okay now? I'm glad you were able to help her through that tough time!"

An instance that caught Maya off-guard but that exemplified the classroom community she facilitated occurred when a student shared his scariest moment aloud to the class. The student described waking up to his father beating him and the internal bleeding and broken bones that resulted. He went on to explain how he had to go to court to testify against his dad and how he

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felt bad about not being able to see his dad or his dad's family since that event happened four years ago. Maya stood next to the student as he shared, wondering how to respond to the student's story. When he finished sharing, Maya touched his arm and said, "You don't have to feel bad about that. We'll talk about it later." The following day, Maya followed up with the student and he told her "I thought you were going to cry when I told you that yesterday." Maya reflected on that experience:

> My kids will tell me about anything. They tell me about their home lives a lot. They're not good or they're not always ideal. Some of them have great home lives. I don't mean that. Some have a set of parents. It's amazing. I think it's part of the area's culture. They're not afraid or ashamed of anything, but it's so different from how I was raised. Just the openness of saying what's on their minds is so different. I feel like I'm more of a private person. When they tell me about personal problems, I'll feel bad but it doesn't shock me as much as when they tell the whole class. There's not a right answer for how to respond to something like that.

Reflecting on the Beginning of Year Two

Maya expected year two to be a little bit easier than year one, and in a way, her expectations were met. It was easier because she already had classroom expectations and some procedures set up. She was familiar with the student body and was less surprised by some of the situations she encountered. Maya did indicate that adjusting to some of the building-wide changes, including the adoption of new curriculum, block scheduling, and new interventions, had been difficult; however, the related challenges she experienced were experienced by the entire staff. She still enjoyed teaching and was still excited about the profession.

Confidence in Lesson Planning

During our first interview, Maya indicated that she felt comfortable and confident planning lessons. With Liberty's adoption of new curriculum and change to block scheduling, I followed up to find out if she still had the same level of confidence. Even with 80 minute classes, Maya still felt confident with lesson planning. Further, she felt like she accurately gaged when a lesson worked and why it was or was not a success. When I pushed her to explain how she knew when a lesson was a success, she said that receiving positive feedback from co-teachers led to her confidence. Additionally, other teachers asked Maya to share her lessons with them. She explained that if her lessons were not good, people would not ask to see them, and she believed they would have told her if her lessons were "no good." Also adding to her confidence was her role as Literacy Leader during year one: "I don't think they would have let me make model lessons for teachers if they thought I was terrible at it." With the adoption of the new curriculum, the role of Literacy Leader was dissolved. Even so, teachers often asked Maya to share her lesson plans during year two. Maya's confidence in lesson planning also stemmed from the informal feedback she received from her students. For example, after she taught *The Tell Tale Heart*, her students were really excited and begged her to teach more Edgar Allen Poe. Judging by her students' interest, Maya assumed that the lessons were engaging.

Maya attributed her confidence in lesson planning to her experiences in teacher education courses and student teaching. She commented on the lengthy lesson plans that were required of her in her coursework. She said, "We had so much practice writing lesson plans. When I graduated, I knew how to make sure my lessons were meeting all the standards and to reflect on my lessons." She also discussed how she was expected to create all of her own lesson plans during student teaching. Her cooperating teachers told her what content to teach, but Maya was

on her own to decide how to best teach the content. Obtaining a job at the same school in which she student taught also supported Maya's confidence in making curricular decisions and lesson planning as a novice teacher.

Scripted Curriculum

When I spoke to Maya immediately after her first year, she told me she planned to interview at the local high school because Liberty would adopt a scripted reading curriculum. Maya did return to Liberty for year two. Of the three language arts classes she taught during year two, one was scripted. When I observed her teaching the scripted curriculum, I was surprised at how engaged her students seemed, especially given the basic level of instruction and the highly scripted nature of the curriculum. To explain the "teacher proof" aspect of the curriculum, Maya said: "It tells me what to say, what the answer is, when to say the answer, and what to point at on the board."

On the day I observed, students learned about the prefixes "re" and "un" through exploring the meaning of words such as "reread," "retake," "unpaid," and "unsealed." After discussing the meanings of "re" and "un," they quickly moved on to the next portion of the lesson, which was designed to help students become familiar with words they would read in the two page non-fiction text they would tackle next. With the pre-reading lesson, Maya said a word, students repeated it, the class spelled the word together aloud, and then the class repeated the word, which was printed in the students' booklets. A couple times during the lessons, students did not say or spell the words as enthusiastically or loudly as Maya liked, so she said, "Wait, we can do better than that!" and the students repeated the word in a more energetic fashion. Maya expanded the lesson by asking students to connect the words to their lives. For example, when the students learned the word "diet," Maya asked, "Tell me what your diet consists of." For the

word "cool," Maya asked, "If I wanted to cool something, where would I put it?" Asking probing questions seemed to keep the students engaged as over half of the students volunteered to answer the questions Maya asked.

The final part of the reading curriculum I observed was intended to improve students' fluency skills. The fragment "Built up and becomes Pete" was the first focus. Maya read it in two different ways, one which was fluent and the one which sounded choppy. After the class discussed the most appropriate way to read the statement, rows of students took turns reading each statement. To create a more interactive lesson, Maya diverged from the script and by asking a student to read the statement fluently and then ask a different student to read it non-fluently. At one point, she asked a student to say a statement fast three times, and the student's attempt added good-hearted humor to the seemingly mundane lesson.

The scripted lesson progressed to study more vocabulary words following the same process as before, but this time the students were required to write the word and its definition, which were already written on the PowerPoint slide, in their "vocabulary log." They were able to use their creativity when they used the word in a sentence that was different from the sentence written on the PowerPoint.

Although the curriculum was scripted, Maya spiced up the class as much as she could. I noted her high energy level and voice inflection which seemed to help keep the students engaged. Although the script instructed teachers to write words on a whiteboard, Maya created Power Point slides. On the slides, Maya included the words as directed by the script, and she added pictures to correspond with the words. According to Maya, the students "don't have a lot of background knowledge to make connections to and the pictures seem to help."

According to the curriculum writers, the scripted curriculum should only take Maya 45 minutes each day. However, it usually took Maya about 80 minutes because she added elements to engage the students. The other portion of the 80 minute block was supposed to focus on writing instruction, which was not part of the scripted curriculum. Typically, Maya taught the reading curriculum for about 45-60 minutes, and then shifted to writing instruction. Whatever reading curriculum she did not finish for the day, she completed the following day.

When I asked her about the flexibility she employed when teaching the scripted curriculum, Maya indicated that the curriculum was too boring the way it was designed. If she did not help students make personal connections, she felt as though she was torturing her students. She did not enjoy teaching the scripted curriculum, but she understood that the school needed to adopt a formal intervention because of the high number of students reading below grade level at Liberty. In fact, the scripted curriculum was designed as a small group intervention, intended for ten students or less. At Liberty, so many students read below grade level that entire classes were assigned to the scripted curriculum. Scripted phonics instruction, which was the focus of the other eighth grade teacher, was even more basic than the curriculum Maya taught.

Maya identified the biggest flaw in the curriculum to be the lack of writing. She did not feel the scripted curriculum left her with sufficient time for writing instruction, and the curriculum completely ignored writing instruction. She explained why the students needed writing instruction:

They have a really hard time getting their thoughts on paper. When I ask them questions in class they know the answer, but they cannot write it down. There's a really big disconnect. They need to learn to write at some point. I feel like they're working so much

on their reading fluency, which I struggle with. I think about how often they are going to

have to read out loud versus write something down. I feel like we need to work on them

being able to read silently and write something down based on what they read.

Maya felt as though the teachers needed some guidance for reading and writing

instruction, but the intensely scripted nature of the adopted curriculum went overboard. She said,

"I don't like the curriculum we have in place, but something wasn't working before. We didn't

have a curriculum before, so letting teachers do whatever they wanted wasn't working either. It

did the students some kind of injustice." Maya did not offer an alternative to the scripted

curriculum and understood that her students needed to learn the basic skills taught through the

curriculum. She was surprised at the low level of the curriculum for middle school aged students.

She thought the curriculum would "crash and burn" because of the simplicity of it, specifically

referencing how her students were required to spell aloud a word that was written in front of

them. She said, "They must need to know these skills but isn't there a different way to teach

them? Maybe not. I don't know."

I asked Maya if she felt bad for the students in the scripted curriculum class because it

was such a vast contrast to her the exploratory, hands-on approach of her other language arts

classes. She responded:

They don't get to do anything fun. The texts are supposed to be interesting and they do

like them. I can spice it up if I get ahead. Well, I don't know if I am supposed to. I do add

things, but I never let it take longer than a little part of a period or a day at the most.

The other teachers that Maya talked to seem to like the scripted curriculum "because it's

easy" and Maya didn't "know many teachers who really like to plan." Maya acknowledged that

while she spent time reviewing the curriculum and creating slides before she taught the lessons,

it would be easy to look at the script for the first time while teaching it. Because the scripted curriculum was a small part of her day, Maya planned to stay at Liberty. However, she said that if she had to teach any more than one scripted curriculum class, she would actively look for a new job. She enjoyed the creative part of lesson planning and the scripted curriculum did not allow for much creativity. The joy of her work would be drained if she was forced to teach more scripted sections.

Testing and Interventions

The scripted curriculum was an intervention adopted by Liberty to help raise test scores. To examine students' growth and determine if interventions, such as the scripted curriculum were working, Liberty implemented a rigorous testing schedule. Maya told me about the reading tests to be administered to every eighth grade student:

> There are built in fluency and comprehension checks every so often. The classroom teacher conducts fluency and comprehension probes three times per year. And then we pull out students who aren't doing quite as well to give them more frequent probes. That's during class. In addition, we're using [brand name of testing software], which is a fluency and comprehension check. For that, there are two tests that are benchmarked three times per year. It's a very similar test as the fluency and comprehension probes we conduct in class. It charts and graphs the data and tells us which students test in the lowest ten percent nationally so we can provide them interventions.

Maya worried about the effect of all of the testing on her students. "We test them to death, which I'm sure is terrible for the students."

Maya's eighth grade team included three students who scored in the lowest 10 percentile nationally, and the other eighth grade team included about 30 students who scored in the lowest

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10%. Those numbers did not include students with Individualized Education Plans. According to Maya, "that's a lot of students who need interventions" and teachers were trying to create the interventions to put in place during homeroom time.

In order to implement the interventions, Liberty established two teams at each grade level. This occurred during Maya's second year, and it was the first time since opening that Liberty had structured itself in teams. Maya's team included the students reading at the higher levels; reading scores determined the group in which students would be placed. Maya and her colleagues believed that leveling made a positive impact on the students' comfort levels. Students who were unlikely to participate in class before felt more comfortable participating. Maya thought their added comfort was a result of being surrounded by students at a similar skill level. She explained, "They aren't as lost as they would be, I don't think. I think that helps. I think they're getting more out of the class they're in."

The effects of leveling went beyond benefitting some students. The other eighth grade team experienced more discipline issues than Maya's team. Maya said

> I feel bad for the other team because there's always going to be a connection with the students who are low performing and the students who have behavior issues, I think. I think they have behavior issues because of frustration. Like we said with the interventions, almost all the students in the other team need intensive interventions, and their students are getting almost all the referrals. I mean, we have select students who are getting a lot of them, but overall they have the more daunting task.

Overall, Maya was unsure about the impact of leveling and interventions when I spoke to her. She had anecdotal evidence that her students were learning and seemed comfortable in class, but she hesitated to make bold claims until receiving test results to back up her statements.

Meetings

A big change Maya encountered during year two was a lack of time due to an increased meeting schedule. Meetings were held often to discuss the possible interventions for students. Liberty had a late start two Wednesdays each month when the entire faculty would meet or they would break off into grade level teams or groups based on subject area taught. Much of their meeting time was spent talking about what math and reading interventions students might need; whether or not the interventions had been proved to be effective based on research; what resources Liberty already had that they could use; how the teachers went about teaching the interventions; and the scheduling possibilities for implementing interventions. In addition to creating and discussing interventions for students achieving below grade level at the meetings, the Liberty teachers were required to create enrichment activities for students who scored above national averages, but Maya admitted that creating enrichment activities was secondary to creating interventions. Maya said the workload was difficult, and even though they made progress at the meetings, there was still so much more to do because "so many students are really in need."

In addition to the Wednesday morning meetings twice per month, Maya's eighth grade team was required to meet at least two times per week during their planning period. They typically met on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The goal of the meetings was to "talk about students who are at risk and what we're going to do for them and how things are going with our team, what could make it better, and/or worse." Maya indicated that the meetings were not very productive and many were spent talking about an issue that may have only affected one teacher or one student on the team. For example, if a teacher had concerns about his or her classrooms, the 40 minute meeting will focus on that one classroom issue. Maya acknowledged that it may be

helpful for that teacher, but she didn't think it was the best use of their cumulative time for 40 minutes. One entire meeting was spent talking about the noise level in the hallway during passing time. Maya said, "We talk about the issue but we don't make a lot of changes with the 40 minutes and then we discuss something totally different at the next meeting." Maya felt frustrated that she was forced to sacrifice two planning periods each week to unproductive meetings. Adding to the brutal meeting schedule were faculty meetings held every Friday before school. With only three uninterrupted 40-minute planning periods per week to plan for three 80 minute classes per day, Maya felt busier during year two than she had during her first year.

Observation Opportunities

Maya's meeting schedule and the overall busy nature of year two prevented her from observing other teachers like she said she would like to during her second year. Due to the team set up, it would be logistically possible to observe the other eighth grade language arts teacher during her planning time. This would not have been possible, due to scheduling, during year one. While possible, Maya asked, "Do I really want to give up the precious time that I have to plan?"

If she did take the time to observe other teachers, she said she would look for two things. First she would observe someone teaching the scripted curriculum to see how other teachers were deviating from the script. Second, she would "observe teachers who I hear have really good classroom management." When I spoke to her at the end of year one, she also spoke of observing for classroom management techniques. I told her I found it curious that she seemed so focused on classroom management even though her class flowed in such a structured and seamless manner. She explained:

Last year, though, I had more questions about my classroom management. My students were louder last year. I think they're quieter because of the leveling, and I have the higher

level. Also, I think that it doesn't bother me as much if they're talking. Things like that don't make me as nervous now. Last year I thought that if they were doing group work and they got a little loud I was worried that it would get out of hand. I feel a little bit more comfortable now. Just because they're loud doesn't mean that they're not on task.

Classroom Management

Classroom management was on the minds of Liberty teachers and the topic was discussed often in meetings. Maya said that lesson planning issues were ignored in favor of discussing classroom management and discipline, because "the referral rate at Liberty is huge." Maya added, "There's an insane amount of students who get sent to the office every day. Constantly." Examples of common referral worthy behaviors were fighting, swearing, and refusal to complete work. Since administrators gave priority to the most severe discipline offenses, such as fighting, Maya felt that behaviors such as swearing or insubordination should be handled in the classroom. She understood that employing consistent classroom management strategies and mainlining high academic standards in her classroom were keys to achieving that goal. She also acknowledged that her interest in classroom management may be a result of the dynamics at her school.

I pushed Maya to explain the high referral rates at Liberty. She hypothesized that poor attendance, much of which was due to transiency, contributed to the problem. Students' high rates of absenteeism led to unfocused and frustrated students upon their return to school. Maya also told me that few of her students lived with both parents, and I pressed her to talk about that being a contributor to the discipline issues at Liberty. Her response was, "I don't want to make assumptions on their behavior based on their living situations." She did go on to explain the living situations faced by many of her students:

A lot of them don't live with their parents. They live with their grandparents or other family members. A lot of them move a lot. Constantly. They'll bounce around between different family members. This week they might be living with their mom, then next week they might be living with an older sibling and then an aunt. We have students who, I don't think you're supposed to do this, but they'll travel from [a city 15 miles away] because they're living there with another family member. We have a lot of tardy issues because they're coming from other areas.

Maya acknowledged that the instability could play a role in their behavior:

I'm sure that they're more focused on their day-to-day needs than on school. A lot of them go home and babysit their siblings, so maybe they're really childish at school because they have a lot of responsibility at school. I don't know.

Maya spoke again about how open students were about the instability they faced. She said it was common for students to report that their power had been turned off or that they were kicked out of their homes due to missed payments. Of course, their living situations impacted their lives at school, "They enroll then they leave then they re-enroll, then they leave over and over."

Support Providers

During year two, Maya did not rely on the support providers that she had during year one although she still felt she was a part of a supportive culture. The interaction with her cooperating teacher from student teaching was limited to their positions as co-sponsors of National Junior Honors Society. Maya was comfortable with the change, "I feel like she helped me transition very well and now I can do things on my own." Her interaction with the Curriculum Coach was limited to occasional emails Maya sent to ask questions about the scripted curriculum. She was assigned a new co-teacher during year two, who, like her co-teacher from year one, was

incredibly helpful. She still enjoyed having a co-teacher in her classroom during year two. Because much of the support she needed during year one focused on procedural issues, that kind of support during year two was mostly unnecessary.

The state adopted a new evaluation format for teachers, and her principal followed the new guidelines when he observed Maya in October for a full 80 minute class period. She found the new evaluation system to be helpful which focused on the principal's concrete observations and her own reflection, which she discussed with her principal the day after the observation. Maya asked her principal to focus on specific ways she approached the scripted curriculum because she was unsure if she was straying too much from the script or adding too many side components. I asked why she felt comfortable discussing with him the innovative approach she took to the scripted curriculum. The administrators, at the beginning of the year, told the teachers "that they don't expect the new curriculum to be amazing the first few weeks or months. Do it the best that you can." Maya added, "I think they assume that eventually it will fall into place. They're good and supportive." While Maya was unsure if she was working within the boundaries of the scripted curriculum by adding components and taking longer on each lesson than was designed, she felt comfortable asking her principal for advice on the topic.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Like year one, Maya enjoyed her role as National Junior Honor Society co-sponsor at the beginning of her second year. She also enjoyed being an advisory teacher, a responsibility that she began to appreciate as her first year one progressed and she began to better understand her advisory responsibilities. While she had looked forward to her position as Literacy Leader when I spoke to her at the end of her first year, the position dissolved with the adoption of the scripted

curriculum. However, she did begin a new extra-curricular role as Assessment Manager, a position she "really dislikes."

During the summer before her second year Maya, along with seven other teachers, was asked to accept the position of Assessment Manager. When she agreed to take the position, Maya thought she would be trained as an Assessment Manager over the summer then would be required to share what she learned with her peers and teach them to use the assessment website. Once the school year began, she thought her position would formally end other than an occasional question from a fellow teacher. After the school year began, Maya discovered that her responsibility would last through the school year.

As Assessment Manager, she became quite busy during benchmark testing time, and a substitute teacher taught her class for three days during each benchmark testing season. During those days, Maya tested each seventh grade student's reading fluency. In addition, she had to grade each seventh and eighth grade student's reading tests. Even with the substitute teacher, she fell behind in her own classroom duties, and grading the assessments took a considerable amount of time. While she enjoyed her other extra curricular responsibilities, she considered her position as Assessment Manager to merely be "extra work." She did not feel gratification like she did in her other extracurricular roles where she impacted students through interacting with them and in forming and enhancing relationships with them.

Maya took on another new role, tutor, during year two. Tutoring students after school allowed her to form relationships with students, and she enjoyed this extra-curricular responsibility for the most part. Students who attended tutoring received math and reading interventions for 45 minutes, and then they ate a snack before playing basketball or volleyball. Early in the year Maya helped students with reading stills but had transitioned to working in the

computer lab while students worked on their typing skills. In the computer lab she mostly monitored the students, and she felt like she "had lost a lot of the personal meaning and connections" compared to her work helping with reading. However, when she tutored students with reading and worked with them one-on-one, she found this meaningful.

With less planning time, more meetings, and two additional extra-curriculars, I asked Maya how she felt she was handling her responsibilities and pressures during year two. She replied, "It makes me nervous. I'm glad it's not my first year. I'm glad it's not last year." Although she felt overwhelmed when she got behind in her grading or her lesson planning, and wished she had more time for everything, she enjoyed her teaching job and the elements of her extracurricular activities that allowed her to bond with students.

Teaching for the Long Haul

When I spoke to Maya at the end of year one, she expressed her desire to remain a classroom teacher for her entire career. She still had the same desire at the beginning of year two. In fact, the longer she taught middle school students, the more she enjoyed teaching that age group and could see herself staying at the middle school level. She explained that her initial hesitance to remain a middle school teacher stemmed from the transition from student teaching upper level high school students then going back to the middle school level when she began her job at Liberty. She explained, "I had to get used to being back at the middle school level. I'm used to it. Last year I thought they were so immature. It's just the age they're at. They're kind of cute and endearing a little bit now. It took a bit to get used to it."

If Maya ended up finding a different teaching job in the future, she would like to remain in a school like Liberty. She appreciated the diversity at Liberty and seemed to recognize that she worked well with the students there. To make for an enjoyable career, Maya said she would like

continued workshops and professional development to enhance her skills. She found the professional development opportunities provided to the teachers at Liberty helpful, but she said many teachers there did not value them like she did. She explained, "Maybe after you've been teaching for a long time you don't appreciate them as much, but I really like them." Maya also expected to begin her master's degree, perhaps in literature, in the next couple of years.

Kurt's Case

- 29 years old

- Past jobs included counseling juvenile sex offenders and perpetrators of domestic assault

- Needed less support than a traditionally-aged novice teacher

- Had "plenty of support" during year one and two

- Noteworthy supporters: Instructional Coach, Principal, members of English Department

- Challenges included not having a classroom of his own and co-teachers

- Chose to leave teaching juniors, which he considered to be the "ideal" grade to teach, to teach freshmen during year two

- Highly valued experiences with extra-curricular activities

- Passionate about social justice

Reflecting on Year One

Kurt took an indirect route to teaching, one that paved the way for understanding some of the struggles his high school students faced. Kurt was an "awful high school student" and "an unhappy teenager" who got in trouble for drinking at school and who commonly resisted authority. After high school, Kurt dropped out of community college "many" times. He worked at a gas station for three years before volunteering with a prevention group for teenagers. His volunteer work connected him to a local social services agency that ended up employing him. His social work experiences included facilitating intervention groups for adult perpetrators of

domestic violence and juvenile sex offenders. He also worked with teenagers with a variety of behavioral, emotional, and addictions issues. Kurt's experiences in social work sparked his interest in teaching and instilled in him confidence that teaching high school was the right career choice. His experience as a resistant student led to Kurt's enjoyment and comfort in working with students who are "traditionally really hard to work with." While he believed that some first-year teachers experience anxiety about their career choice and the expectations of the job, Kurt did not experience those anxious feelings. He said, "I feel comfortable working with teenagers, but it's more than that. I'm not really scared of my high school students because I've worked with kids who have raped and murdered people before."

At 29 years old, Kurt's experience as a novice teacher was different from that of some traditionally-aged novices who lack similar professional experiences. In our first interview, which took place at the end of his first year, I asked Kurt if his age and experience influenced his first year experience. He replied:

 Definitely. I've dealt with teenagers before professionally, so the adjustment as a first-year teacher wasn't too bad. I'm 29 years old, and while this is my first teaching job, I've got a sense of who I am as a person. I think I have a sense of who I am as a professional. I wasn't re-creating my professional profile. I was tweaking it to fit into the situation I was in.

Kurt taught juniors during his first year at Riverview High School. The student population at Riverview hovered around 1,400, and the population was diverse with 54% White, 32% Black, and a combined 13.5% Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander (Illinois Interactive Report Card). Kurt taught in a district that had been plagued over the last 10 years by lawsuits proving that Black students received unequal educational opportunities compared to their White

counterparts. As a result, the district adopted a consent decree to eliminate such disparities and inequities. Shortly before I began my research, the district successfully completed the consent decree requirements, but the improvements resulting from the consent decree were still visible in the schools.

Ample Supports

According to Kurt, providing teachers with useful instructional supports was at the forefront of the restructuring and improvement efforts at Riverview during the consent decree. Kurt benefited from the supports and indicated that he had the support he needed during year one.

Instructional Coach. The Instructional Coach (IC), who Kurt considered to be the most supportive person during year one, helped Kurt develop curriculum, write lessons, identify resources, and, at times, co-taught with him. This was a service that Kurt sought out and considered invaluable. The teachers at Riverview built curriculum that focused on backward design, or creating essential questions focused on large issues then planning units and lesson plans aimed to help answer the essential questions. The IC helped Kurt "get at some of the bigger questions that [he] wanted to tackle throughout the year," most of which focused on "social justice-oriented sort of stuff." Kurt felt as though he would not have been able to do that to the degree that he did without the IC's support. Kurt talked about a specific unit with which the IC helped him:

> I think what he helped me with the most was creating really relevant units. We did one
> multi-text unit. He was instrumental in going out and getting young adult fiction that we
> used for literature circles. He helped me structure the lit circles around essential

questions. And so what we ended up with was a unit that focused on social justice issues

that used a bunch of articles as anchor texts, then novels as lit circle texts.

Kurt felt strongly that working with the IC was "a good model" and planned to continue to work

with him during year two.

Principal. Kurt also appreciated the support he received from the principal, who Kurt

considered to be an instructional leader. As a former Assistant Principal in a nearby district,

Riverview's principal was in his first year as a principal; in fact, the principal hired Kurt early in

his principalship. The principal was Kurt's direct supervisor, and Kurt felt comfortable

approaching the principal with questions ranging from instruction to classroom management.

Kurt talked kindly about the principal's leadership style and appreciated that the principal

focused so many resources on creating "useful teacher supports." The principal made sure

teachers had relevant instructional materials, and Kurt "took advantage of the supports whenever

possible." Kurt especially appreciated the current, relevant young adult fiction collection at

Riverview. He did not know he would have access to such a variety of books and especially

appreciated having support to use the texts, some of which would have been considered too

controversial to teach at other schools. About the unwavering support, Kurt said, "That shit

doesn't grow on trees. That was awesome. That really kind of changed my perspective on what

my job was and how I could do it." Kurt expanded on his relationship with the principal and his

appreciation for him:

> It seems like such a huge school but we went out of our ways to make sure we were
>
> communicating with one another what we wanted. He's totally on the level of the
>
> teachers. You know, he's a good liberal from [city name], so I like that.

Mentor. Kurt was assigned to a formal mentor who did not seem to hinder or significantly help Kurt as he received the majority of the necessary support from the IC and his principal. He considered his mentor "cool," but he did not seek out her assistance often. About his mentor, Kurt said:

> I think she recognized that I'm 29 years old and I've done other things [had other professional jobs] before. That was actually ideal. She would know things that I didn't know, and then she would be proactive about it. That was nice. She was proactive in the right ways.

Due to his previous professional experiences, Kurt did not feel as though he needed moral support during his first year of teaching. He also indicated that he probably "needed a lot fewer supports than most first-year teachers need."

English department members. Overall, Kurt found the Riverview culture to be supportive, and the collaborative relationships he built with some peers in the English department eased his transition to teaching. He collaborated with one English teacher in particular and found working with him to be "really productive." He admitted that "there were a couple people that [he] could have collaborated with and it would have not have gone so well." He was certain that he found "the right people" with whom to collaborate. He indicated that members of the English department were not overbearing, but he felt welcomed to ask questions when he needed content-area support.

Curriculum

Having the necessary supports in place seemed to be especially helpful because Kurt did not feel as though he received a lot of guidance about what curriculum to teach. During the focus group he said:

I think I was surprised at how much they didn't care about what I taught. I mean, they do have standards, there are books and ideas that we need to cover. They're working with Backwards Design, so they have the big understandings but then how I taught those ideas was really up to me.

Kurt felt that being supported while having the freedom to make curricular decisions was "empowering" and "surprising." Since in the summer leading up to year one he was unsure about the types of supports he would have available, he placed "an unnecessary burden" on himself by doing a lot of planning and reading over the summer. Once he arrived at Riverview, he realized that the veteran teachers were happy to share materials with him. Knowing about the supportive culture ahead of time would have "alleviated a lot of [his] concern" and lessened his "biggest anxiety."

First Year Challenges

Kurt mentioned a few challenges related to year one. Since Kurt did not have his own classroom, he traveled with a cart to move his instructional materials from classroom to classroom. One of his classrooms was located on the opposite end of the building from his other classes, and Kurt struggled to make it to class on time. When he talked about not having a classroom during the focus group he said the situation "sucked," and it would have been much easier to have a classroom of his own during his first year.

Kurt's second challenge was working with co-teachers who "weren't really co-teachers" but served more as unhelpful teaching aids. Assigned to work with full-time special education teachers for five of his six classes should have taken some burden off Kurt; rather, Kurt found himself fielding questions and providing directions to teachers who had much more experience than he. Kurt identified this challenge as a pattern at Riverview, noting that it seemed "kind of

backwards" and needing change. During his first year, having co-teachers was more burdensome than it was worth. One of the co-teachers was helpful, and about her, Kurt said, "It was just a good person to have on your side, someone who would really support me." The helpful co-teacher was "absolutely the exception to the rule."

Another challenge Kurt faced during year one was juggling his responsibilities. He became "very involved in non-instructional things within the building" such as Building Intervention Team, Social Action Committee, and a group that was integrating regular education kids and kids who were in special education and planning for them social activities to do together. Building-wide initiatives enticed Kurt, and he committed himself to them once he became involved. When I asked Kurt if he felt pressured to participate in the activities that he, at times, "struggled to juggle," he told me that his principal encouraged him not to take on so many responsibilities because he was concerned that they would be too much for a novice teacher. Kurt admitted that his involvement created an overload at times, but he planned to continue with his involvements during year two. He explained the benefit, "You build relationships, even if they're not students in your classroom, you better understand the peer culture of your school when you do that kind of thing. And so it just makes interacting with those specific kids more natural."

In our first interview, he seemed most passionate about the Social Action Committee he co-sponsored. Social justice was a passion in his extra-curricular endeavors and in his classroom. He talked about social justice and the role it played in his classroom and in his teaching philosophy:

> I think that education is a way to empower people, or it's a way to help people empower
> themselves. Or to recognize that they can't empower themselves. To help students realize
> that they live in ultimately an oppressive society that is going to do everything that they

can to keep them oppressed. I'm interested in those social issues and those social

questions, and I think that they play themselves out in the classroom every day.

Anticipated Changes for Year Two

Kurt initiated a change that he would experience for year two. He would transition from

teaching juniors, which he considered to be the ideal grade to teach, to teaching ninth graders. At

the time of our first interview, he would not say that he was excited about the transition, even

though he volunteered for it. A couple of factors led to his decision move grade levels. First,

ninth graders were a part of a learning community, so Kurt would work with a team of ninth

grade teachers. He looked forward to seeing what "the team thing" was all about, collaborating,

and discovering what other teachers did in their classrooms. Second, Kurt felt that teaching ninth

graders would be challenging, and he looked forward to that challenge. Specifically, Kurt

expected to "over-teach and over-structure and over-plan, to break lessons down more explicitly,

and to focus on scaffolding" when teaching ninth graders. Overall, Kurt thought that teaching

ninth graders would "round out [his] teaching approach" Although he was more interested in

teaching juniors and seniors in the long run, he felt that teaching "14 year-olds would make

[him] a better teacher of 17 year-olds."

Visiting Riverview

When I visited Riverview to observe Kurt in late October of his second year teaching, I

met him in the English Department Lounge. Once again, he had no classroom of his own, so he

stored his belongings and spent his time before school, after school, and during planning time in

the lounge. Dressed in a plaid flannel shirt, a navy blue hooded sweatshirt, and jeans, Kurt led

me to his first period class, Academic Support. First period contained about 20 students who

needed extra help in English and math. They received elective credit for the course, which was

so-taught by Kurt and a math teacher. For his part, Kurt hoped to help improve students' reading stamina and comprehension skills.

In the Academic Support class that morning and in the English classes I observed later, I noted the lack of rigid expectations and procedures in place for his students. For example, students were not expected to enter class, sit down, and complete a bell ringer. Classroom rules were not posted. There was no specific procedure for picking up books from the back of the class. When the bell rang to signal class dismissal, students left without being verbally excused by Kurt. When I asked Kurt about my observations, he agreed that he did not enforce strict procedures in his classroom. Kurt did point out, however, that he employed "really strict procedures" with individual students when necessary. For example, he talked about one student who must ask for permission to do things, such as sharpen a pencil, which other students were able to freely do. When the student misbehaved, Kurt asked him to reflect on the behavior and worked hard to keep the relationship as light as possible. Although Kurt's approach to classroom management seemed laid-back, it was purposeful and reflected his teaching philosophy. I quote at length here to give readers an authentic glimpse into Kurt's classroom.

> I guess you could use ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] language, and you could say that I want my classroom to be least restrictive. I want students to feel like they're in their own learning environment and it's hard to do that when every single day I'm throwing rules and procedures at them. That said, we do establish routines and rhythms. I just prefer it to be a little more organic. I communicate my expectations with all the kids individually, and so they're just magically just looking at each other doing the same thing. They don't understand it, but it's effective. It's just something that happens gradually and individually a lot. There's a lot of individual intervention that goes on there. There are

things that I show them again, and again, and again until they're sick of it, like what quality independent reading looks like. I guess what I'm saying is that I want to integrate those routines, but I want it to be an organic way. The other way, I think, which is not a criticism of people who do this, but the other way, I'm sensitive to it because it seems like it's very teacher-centric. They're very much there for the teacher's well-being and not so much for the students'. I think that if I can get away with not doing that, I'll do it.

I asked Kurt to contemplate if his classroom management approach would be the same if he was a traditionally aged, female novice teacher. He acknowledged that he experienced "a lot of unearned advantage that men get when they ask someone to do something and they listen." While his gender may enable him to take a less structured approach to classroom management, part of it came from his previous work experiences, which allowed him "to understand social dynamics that are in place in the classroom and recognize them quickly and react to them."

Another integral part of Kurt's classroom management style related to the way he used humor in the classroom, something he found important. At one point, he told his students about his new Apple iPhone:

Did I tell you about my new iPhone 4? It came and it broke. I was salty. I emailed about it. I tweeted about it. They told me to send it back. That's fine, but I want it now. I'm an American. I'm entitled. I'll get a new one, but not until November. The point of the story is that Mr. [Kurt's last name] is salty this week.

I also saw the way he used humor when addressing a student who continued to talk, even after Kurt asked him to stop.

Kurt: Move over there.

Student: [Complaining] Man, I swear.

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Kurt: I swear too. It's a bad habit of mine.

Reflecting on the Beginning of Year Two

One of the biggest changes Kurt expected during year two resulted from moving from teaching juniors to teaching ninth graders. Although he hoped to return to teaching older students eventually, he was happy he made the change and enjoyed teaching ninth graders more than he expected. Because ninth graders were new to the school, Kurt found satisfaction in helping them make the transition from middle school to high school. Kurt also appreciated being able to provide them with direct feedback and help them improve their literacy skills before they entered their sophomore year. In ways, his work with ninth graders felt more important than his work with juniors because they needed more intensive help to develop strong academic habits. Additionally, Kurt was able to acclimate his students with the expectations of high school, which he found rewarding.

Kurt felt as though he "created his own team" during his first year in working collaboratively with the IC and a fellow English teacher, but being on a formal team with other ninth grade teachers was enjoyable. Kurt actually participated on two different teams, one course-alike team with the other four ninth grade English teachers, and one cross-curricular grade level team, which consisted of six teachers of various subject areas. The ninth grade teachers had two planning periods each day. One planning period was designated to work with team members, and the other planning period was intended for individual work. During their three meetings per week, the cross-curricular team identified students who struggled, met with the students, and created support systems to enable their success.

The course-alike team was most beneficial for Kurt because they split the planning load for their English classes. He admitted that he worked best with one of the other three English

teachers as they had similar teaching approaches and philosophies. Because Kurt taught the

students of other English teachers in his Academic Support class, he felt like he had a pretty

good idea of what happened in other teachers' classes. The other two teachers on the course-alike

team "do things differently." For example, where Kurt aims to improve his students' reading and

writing skills, one of the ninth grade English teachers "just teaches the shit out of parts of speech

and vocabulary." He talked about helping one of his Academic Support students (who had a

different teacher for English) with an English skill:

> I think that's a little frustrating when I have to help a student figure out the opposite of
>
> parameter, like an antonym for parameter. I don't know! I mean, you could put a gun to
>
> my head and ask me that question and I would not be able to answer it. So I think that's
>
> frustrating to some degree, but it doesn't really affect me.

Overall, Kurt thought it had "been awesome" to collaborate with his peers and appreciated being

able to bounce instructional ideas off people. Even though there was not a lot of oversight from

administration, Kurt found the course-alike and cross-curricular meetings to be productive

overall. According to Kurt, "I need to do that planning anyway. Why shouldn't I do it with other

people? If I have an idea, I'll bring it and share it with them. They'll share ideas. We'll tweak

ideas. It's a good learning community." Kurt found the meetings to be positive experiences, and

he felt as though "you get what you put into it. I think most days I'm putting in a lot."

    Teaching approach. When I talked to him at the end of his first year, Kurt thought that

teaching 14 year-olds would make him a better teacher of 17 year-olds. When I spoke to Kurt in

October of his second year, I followed up with him about the topic and his approach to teaching

ninth graders. He said that he liked teaching ninth graders, but it was a "huge challenge." For

example, he found that he must get ninth graders on task quickly. If he allotted them any downtime, the students "penalize" Kurt with their difficultly to get back on track.

As for his teaching, Kurt said he envisioned lesson plans better, in part, because he found it necessary to break down the thought process in everything he taught. This was his explicit attempt to decentralize the focus away from him and put the onus on the students while scaffolding, modeling, and promoting discussion. When I asked him to tell me a specific example of decentralization, he shared the following:

> What I have that they need is some of the academic skills and some prior knowledge when it comes to content area. My job then is to model that and show them what I'm doing and how I'm thinking as I'm doing it. If I'm annotating, I'm not only reading the text as I'm writing down, but I'm also telling them why I thought what I thought. This is truly a think aloud-really truly modeling what I want them to do. But then once they have those skills I'm going to give them an opportunity to practice that independently. After that they're going to work with one another. After that, they're going to evaluate one another. Ultimately, I'm the one who gives them the feedback just because they deserve to get feedback from an expert. In that situation, it's less about me. I mean, I am grading them, but it's less about me telling them that they're bad because they didn't do it and more about me helping them see what they've been doing. The idea of decentering it that it's not me that they're focusing on. It's my thinking process about the content area stuff and then it's very quickly their thinking process in the content area stuff.

> I witnessed an example of Kurt's modeling when I visited Riverview. His students were beginning an independent reading unit, and Kurt facilitated a discussion about the expectations students should have for themselves and for each other while silently reading. One of the

suggestions a student offered was that the room had to be silent. Kurt expanded on the importance of silence and discussed what readers must do:

> Right, and silence doesn't mean no talking. It means no tapping and no noises either. I know when I read, I need a silent room, and if there's no silence, I can't read and I get distracted. One thing that I notice about myself and about my students is that it can be really, really easy to be distracted, which is totally normal. The important thing is that you refocus from time to time. What does refocusing mean? It means that I'm reading, and someone starts tapping. Then I'm like, wait, this tapping is really good. Then I start rapping over it. Then I think, wait, I'm not supposed to be rapping. I'm supposed to be reading. I need to refocus.

Kurt modeled the behavior he expected out of his students. When they read, he read. When he assigned them to write a paper, he wrote the paper and showed them what he wrote. The modeling was important to Kurt because he felt disrespected as a young student when teachers asked him to arbitrarily do anything. He found that the disrespect he felt as a student gave him "a warrant to stop working or stop learning." Kurt felt that by always doing the work he expected from his students, he took away that excuse and it showed "an ultimate act of respect." Kurt was also transparent about the facets of English that he did not appreciate as much as others. He told his students that he felt writing papers was a hassle, but by writing the papers along with them, he showed that they were worth the hassle.

Curriculum

In our focus group interview, Kurt was surprised that Riverview's school leaders did not care much about what was taught. During our October interview, I followed up by asking Kurt if he would have preferred more direction about what to teach. He laughed and said that he phrased

his answer poorly at the focus group. He corrected himself by saying that the administrators did care what the teachers teach, but they gave teachers latitude and were confident that teachers would make the right instructional decisions for students. He added that the administrators encouraged professionalism, collaboration, and were committed to providing teachers with any resource or tool necessary to support instruction.

Kurt felt empowered by the freedom, but he said that his first year would have been much easier had the administrators told him what to teach; however, Kurt was glad they did not provide him with more direction than he received. He said:

I'm glad that they didn't tell me what to teach. That's not encouraging me to be a professional. That's encouraging me to be a reciter or something. I think that when I had that lack of direction, I had to make choices. I had to start figuring things out and making mistakes in the classroom. I understand that normally when you're making mistakes at your job, you're not talking about sacrificing a student's education at the same time. And so that's not something that I took lightly. It really encouraged me to get better.

Support

Kurt felt he received adequate support during year one, and he continued to feel supported during year two. Kurt's support during year two dealt less with novice teacher support and had more emphasis on professional collaboration. He benefited from his collaboration with like-minded English department members and those with whom he worked well on the ninth grade teams. He did not receive mentoring from his assigned year one mentor and did not seem to miss her support. He did follow-up on his two primary supporters from year one: his principal and his IC.

Principal. During our second interview, Kurt talked more about the relationship he had with his principal. He approached the principal less during year two about novice teacher issues like classroom management, but Kurt continued to work closely with his principal, often focusing on advancing his social justice agenda. In fact, Kurt said that he "challenged the administration on a weekly basis." I asked Kurt to expand on what he meant, and he provided me with a specific example:

> My Academic Support class is explicitly for students who have good attendance in their math and English classes, a low number of DRs [Discipline Referrals] to no DRs, and are ninth graders. They've enrolled several sophomores who are late to all of their classes and who have been traditionally been huge behavioral problems. When that happens, I send emails [to administrators] and I have discussions and I say I understand what's happening here and I understand that this isn't what you intended, but this isn't right. What you're doing is wrong. What you're doing is not right for the kids who you're saying you're targeting because you're not actually targeting those students. Even though you're not trying to do that, even though in your mind it's an exception and we've got to do something to help these kids. It's coming from altruistic point of view, I think that what you're doing is ultimately harmful to the students.

Kurt said that he would meet with the principal before second semester began to develop a more appropriate academic plan for the students who were being wrongfully placed in his and other teachers' Academic Support classes. He acknowledged that to continue to be taken seriously by administration, he needed to be a solution creator not merely a problem identifier.

In my interview with Kurt, I asked him to speculate if other second-year teachers would be willing to "challenge" their building principal or even bring up such issues as Kurt discussed.

Kurt explained that he felt comfortable with his "challenger" role for a few reasons. First, the principal seemed to respect Kurt's opinion because he always had his students' best interests in mind, even those students who "traditionally are disregarded by teachers." Second, he challenged the principal in a respectful manner and his principal responded to the respect and appreciated the challenge. Third, as a native to the city in which he taught, Kurt felt entitled to have a good school district in his town, something that he felt the community had been robbed of. In his own words, "I feel like I do have a mandate that goes above and beyond what their expectations are of me as an educator because I come from this town and we, as a school district, have failed utterly in years past."

Instructional Coach. During year one, Kurt considered the IC as his most helpful support. It is important to point out that Kurt proactively sought out the IC's assistance and could have easily gone through his entire first year without interacting with the IC. Kurt felt as though his first year would have been less successful without the support of the IC because "there were things that [he] wanted to do as a teacher but genuinely on the instructional level did not know how to do." Kurt approached his collaboration with the IC as a "professional collaboration" and used the IC as a "sounding board." Kurt noted that his approach was different than asking for ideas or verification that his ideas were good or asking for his IC to tell him what to do. The work they did during year one still impacted Kurt during year two by leading to Kurt's increased confidence and improved instructional approaches.

During year two, Kurt used the IC "less intensively" because the ninth grade teams had provided Kurt with much of the professional support and collaboration he felt he needed, and he recognized that the IC was busy working with other people. They planned to work together during year two, but the focus of their work would change. The IC and Kurt planned to work

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together on modeling some teaching approaches that they would show other teachers for staff development. Kurt looked forward to the new kind of collaboration and appreciated knowing the IC was there for continued support, if necessary.

Year Two Challenges

I asked Kurt about the challenges he was facing so far during his second year of teaching. His biggest challenges when I spoke to him in October, balancing his obligations and time management, were similar to year one. He still struggled with unhelpful co-teachers, but he only co-taught two of his classes with special education teachers whereas during year one he co-taught five classes. Because the number of co-taught classes decreased for year two, the burden decreased as well. Like year one, he traveled from classroom to classroom. Although it remained a challenge, all of his classes were located in the same part of the building, so he no longer struggled to make it to classes on time, making the challenge less burdensome.

A continued challenge: Co-teachers. When I visited Riverview, I was able to witness Kurt's co-teaching experience. What I noticed immediately was the discrepancy in classroom management approaches between Kurt and one of his co-teachers, Mitch. During a class I observed, the students worked on writing an essay while getting necessary feedback from the teachers. When students got off task, Kurt said things like, "Thank you again for those of you who are working productively. I know it can be distracting when people around you are talking, and it looks like most of you are working. I'd like to see everyone writing," or "Thanks for those of you who are choosing to work and are not becoming distractions for others." Focusing on the students' positive behavior seemed effective in getting those who were off-task to work. On the other hand, when Mitch circulated, he approached students who were talking and said, "I'm

going to separate you if you keep talking." One interaction I witnessed between Mitch and students sounded like this:

> Mitch: I'm going to write a DR if people are talking.
>
> Student: We can get a DR for talking? It's freedom of speech.
>
> Mitch: But it's disrespectful and you can get a DR for disrespecting. This is time for writing.

I did not witness Mitch follow through with his threats of separating students or writing DRs during my time at Riverview.

When I asked Kurt about the contrast in classroom management approaches, he said:

> It is kind of like mommy and daddy. Daddy follows through and he's mommy. And mommy just talks shit all day long, sleeps in class, leaves class quite often, and texts in class. So that remains a challenge, but honestly in that situation I just have to make the mental shift and say, this person is not a teacher. He is an aid and just treat him like that.

> According to Kurt, co-teachers should bear 50% of the classroom responsibilities. In the case of Mitch, Kurt seemed especially frustrated. Mitch was a former school principal with several years of experience who made what Kurt estimated to be about $15,000 more than he per year. Kurt found it easy to get angry about the situation but forced himself "to get over it."

In the time I spent at Riverview, I noticed the abundance of adults in Kurt's classes and in other classes. Oftentimes the adults sat in the back of the classroom, interacting seldom with students. I had assumed the adults were volunteers or aids designated to work with specific students who were absent at the time I observed them. Kurt assured me that the adults, for the most part, were co-teachers and full-time teachers in the special education department. He recognized that my observations were accurate and verified that it was an unfortunate aspect of

the culture at Riverview. He predicted that for it to change, administration would have to challenge the entire special education department; it had not been a battle the administration had chosen to that point with so many other things on their plates.

Balancing obligations. Balancing his obligations was the biggest challenge Kurt experienced during years one and two. During year two, Kurt taught four different classes (academic ninth grade English, honors English, Academic Support, academic junior English). Planning for and grading for those classes was time consuming. On top of his teaching, Kurt was taking a graduate level writing class at the local university, had a busy social life, spent time volunteering with local organizations, and stayed busy with his extra-curricular commitments. With his hectic schedule, I asked Kurt if he was able to fulfill his commitments as well as he liked. He replied:

> I always feel like I'm not doing as well as I should be doing in certain things. I do have to prioritize and inherently I'm robbing from Peter to pay Paul. But, you know, I feel that way and I also feel like if I reduced my commitments, I don't know that my output would get markedly better. It would probably in some respects.

> To use his time wisely, Kurt aligned his extra responsibilities with his classroom initiatives as much as possible. For example, the creative writing graduate course he took informed the way he thought about and taught literature. He also found it beneficial for his students to know that he still worked toward advancing his education. Also, most of the committees on which he served connected in some way to his passion for social justice. For example, he served on the Building Intervention Team, which he described as the "last stop before expulsion" for students.

Kurt described balancing his commitments as being an important part in exploring his professional identity. He admitted that he had to make tough choices in prioritizing and "half-assed some things." He also said, "I think ultimately things that are making me have to make those decisions are really enhancing my understanding of what is to be a teacher."

Commitment to Social Justice

Kurt spoke often about his commitment to social justice, both in his classroom and in his committee work. At the heart of his committee involvement, he pushed to make Riverview a socially just environment. I asked him to talk explicitly about his social justice agenda:

> I feel like social justice has to be a part of every single unit that I teach and every interaction that I have with the students. The agenda is creating an equitable environment that doesn't arbitrarily value one group over another group. The agenda would be specifically be about creating meaningful dialogue, demanding transparency from administration, demanding transparency in the classroom between the teacher and the student, and then scrutinizing instructional practice.

As the co-chair of the Social Action Committee, Kurt worked to spread his social justice agenda beyond the confines of his classroom. It is important to note that Riverview's principal was supportive of the Social Action Committee, which consisted of students, administrators, teachers, and staff members. In only its second year, the committee was still creating and defining its initiatives, and Kurt told me about several. The committee created a monthly breakfast club to honor students for their values and achievements. The honored students and their parents or guardians were invited to school to be recognized over breakfast. The nominating teachers participated in the ceremony and spoke about the student being celebrated. In another activity designed to promote student advocacy, student representatives spoke in community

forums at the local university about issues students faced at Riverview. Noting that every committee member had an equal voice, Kurt told me about an idea that a student member of the committee suggested. Riverview students would be encouraged to document moments where they saw harassment or social injustice in the school. Then they would bring the observations back to the committee and discuss ways they could deal with them. Kurt said that there were Riverview teachers outside of the committee that were "profoundly uncomfortable with this." The committee explained to teachers that their goal was not to catch anyone doing wrong; rather, it was to raise collective awareness about issues of social justice. In discussing the teachers' discomfort, Kurt said, "That's good. That's a good discomfort to be able to create."

Now in its second year, I asked Kurt if he thought the landscape at Riverview had changed as a result of the committee's inception. Kurt thought that some people would say it was changing and attribute the changes to the Social Action Committee. Kurt had received positive anecdotal feedback, but because he did not have the long term perspective, he hesitated to make any bold claims. He did, however, say that the committee has begun to survey the students in hopes to be able to make supported claims in the future.

She gave me fried chicken: Is that racist? While visiting Riverview, I witnessed and interaction that helped exemplify Kurt's commitment to social justice. The interaction took place at the end of an English class:

Student One [to Kurt]: Do you think this is racist? The lunch lady puts fried chicken on my tray without asking me. I said, 'No. I want the sandwich.' She said, 'I figured you'd want the chicken.' Is that racist? She assumed I wanted the chicken because I'm Black.

Kurt:	Do you think its racist? Do you think it's racialized? Racial profiling? Is racial profiling inherently racist? Does it have feelings of hate? Racialization is responding in a way based on race but it doesn't have hate.
Student One:	Hmmm.
Student Two:	I think it's racialized.
Student One:	She was stereotyping, but I don't think she was trying to be mean. It was racialization.
Kurt:	I'm not saying it is or it isn't, but I'm happy to see you thinking about it.

When I interviewed Kurt a few days after visiting Riverview, I asked him about that interaction. He indicated that it seemed to be fun for his students to have a teacher who acknowledges the fact that racism and power structures exist. He contrasted his approach with other teachers with whom he had encountered who shy away from such topics and conversations. Kurt articulated his approach:

Students know that these issues of power exist, and I think that it's empowering for them to be able to discuss them while using this new language in a reflective way which makes them feel empowered. Instead of just saying that's bullshit, I encourage them to break it down. Students will throw terms like racism around, and I think that the first inclination for a teacher, and I feel it too, is to say, 'Don't talk about that! That's not polite conversation.' I think that I actively fight that and say, 'Yes, let's talk about that.' I encourage a lot of inquiry, so it's not me telling them that they're thinking wrong. If you

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want someone to stop listening to you, you tell them they think incorrectly about something. It's asking him, 'Could it be this? Could it be that?'

Teacher Education Disconnect

Kurt shared sentiments about the disconnect between what he learned in his teacher education program and the expectations in the public schools. In our interview, Kurt discussed the university instructors who taught his university courses. He said:

I think there's an enormous disconnect between the faculty I dealt with at [university's name] and what I actually saw in the classroom. I think that's a direct result of the fact that they have not been in a classroom for a really long time and don't really have a working relationship with the public schools. Now that I'm in the public schools, those people are so distant from what we are doing. It's a completely different world. I think it's absurd that those are the people who are teaching people how to be teachers. If there was some kind of ongoing relationship with the public schools, that would facilitate a more meaningful discussion in the classroom. I understand that these professors are busy and have a lot of responsibilities, but I do expect them to know what's going on in the local classrooms. Five years, things change in a school district. Ten years, things change amazingly. Some of these professors haven't been in a classroom for 40 years. Some of them have never taught.

Long Term Plans

When I talked to Kurt at the end of his first year, he indicated that he intended to remain in teaching for the long haul. He could see himself remaining in the classroom, but he realized the potential of becoming an instructional leader, saying that Instructional Coaching interested him. At the time, he was working towards a master's degree in Writing Studies and felt his

university courses helped improve his teaching. When I talked to him in October, he was taking a writing course but was playing with the idea of getting his master's degree in special education. Struggling with the dysfunction of his co-teaching situations encouraged him to see the possibilities of constructive co-teaching collaborations. Plus, with his wife working on her PhD and knowing they would probably leave the area when she graduated, he knew having a master's in special education would increase his marketability.

To make his career in education a fulfilling one, Kurt said he would like to continue to advance his education. During his second year he invited undergraduates from the local university's teacher education program to formally observe him, which provided him with tuition waivers, something he appreciated.

Also important to his longevity and happiness in teaching was having a supportive and competent administrator. He seemed to know that the relationship he had formed with his principal was special, and he thought that having a principal who was both an instructional leader and a champion for social justice may be an anomaly. He dreaded the thought of having to move away from Riverview eventually. Kurt also discussed the importance of working with competent teachers whom he could rely on. Other factors that would contribute to his satisfaction in the profession were being in a school that focuses on issues of social justice and literacy, and being in a school that gives him latitude to be a professional.

Reflections of a Novice Teacher

I asked Kurt to reflect on being a novice teacher, both in terms of what he had learned and what advice he could provide for other novices. He did not necessarily feel comfortable providing other novices with advice because he did not believe that his approaches were

inherently superior to others'; however, he did talk about his experience as a novice in light of what he saw other novice teachers experience.

Classroom management. In his time as a teacher, Kurt noticed that other novice teachers seemed afraid to be nice or have a sense of humor in the classroom. He inferred that those teachers felt that being nice or light hearted conflicted with having classroom control. He talked about advice that he and his peers received from a college professor who taught him when he was an undergraduate student:

My professor made the little joke that you don't smile until Thanksgiving. That's just stupid. This isn't a one room schoolhouse. Don't smile? What if I'm happy? Can I smile then? You, know it's just dumb to me. Teachers having to be this central authority figure even though you're being expected to facilitate a multi modal classroom, blah blah blah. There's no really good way to help teachers let go of that except for them just doing it. To just be a real person in a classroom.

Kurt found advice like that from his university professor put an unnecessary burden on novice teachers, for they felt as though they must control every student in every class at all times. The result, Kurt predicted, is teachers who write discipline referrals that could be prevented, teacher-centered classrooms, and teachers who think of themselves as the ultimate authority figures.

Kurt felt as though his experience in working with juvenile sex offenders played a role in his approach to classroom management. When he facilitated those groups, he had "super, super rigorous routines at the beginning, middle, and end of every single group." He created "very, very concrete expectations" from which he never strayed. That experience made him question how he could create the expectations in an organic way that decentralized him as the authority figure. His informal classroom structure was an outgrowth of having experience with juveniles,

which is something most novices have never experienced. Additionally, having worked with criminals, both juvenile sex offenders and adult perpetrators of domestic violence, provided Kurt with confidence in teaching Riverview students: "I know that if worse comes to worst, like if the class goes ape shit crazy, I know how to get things back." He expanded further:

> When things look like they're going crazy in the class, I can stay with that for a little while longer than other novice teachers because I don't feel like I need to be 100% in control. If I see learning coming to a screeching halt, I'll take control of it and go over and talk to the students who are doing that and say, 'refocus' and give positive reinforcement to those who are doing what I want. Sometimes I need to say, 'Hey, look, I'm seeing over 50% of you not doing what you need to do. We need to change that right now.' You know, I don't like to scream out to the class, 'Everybody sit down.' Like that's not ever an option for me and the way I handle a situation. But I think that is the way that a lot of first-year teachers might handle an unruly class. Tell them what you want them to do, which seems completely logical and effective.

Kurt said that students respond to a teacher who is genuine, respectful, and nice, but was quick to point out that showing those qualities in the classroom does not equate to being a pushover. He added that those things are secondary to creating rigorous instruction.

Empowerment and professionalism. Kurt admitted that having someone tell him what to teach during his first years would have made his job easier, but having to make difficult choices about what to teach and struggle at times helped him grow as a professional. He felt it was natural for a novice teacher to want to know what to teach and how to teach it. He attributed this desire to lack of experience, the young ages most novice teachers, and living in a culture that constantly wants feedback. Ultimately, the lack of independence prevents novice teachers from

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seeing themselves as professionals. Part of becoming a professional requires one to try out new things, determine if they worked, and modify them or abandon them if they are not successful. Kurt admitted that it can be scary to try new approaches because teachers sense that good teaching looks a certain way, and being experimental and adventurous in their thinking or lesson planning is risky and may result in "bad teaching." He had the following advice for other novice teachers:

> Be okay with destroying your lesson for that day with this really awful idea you just created. Bounce your ideas off people instead of asking them what you should be doing. Be more of an active agent in what you're supposed to be doing in the class. Use resources in a way that's respectful to that resource. It's not respectful for me to go to an Instructional Coach and say, 'What should I do today?' Instead of asking, 'Is this good or bad?' tell your plan and ask for feedback. To me, that's professional collaboration.

Such an approach prevents novice teachers from being at the bottom of a hierarchy, which Kurt compared to being a paraprofessional. The empowerment of taking risks, collaborating professionally, and struggling through decisions about what to teach is a necessary part of a novice teacher's growth.

Conclusion

Emma's, Sofia's, Maya's, and Kurt's cases provided insight into the experiences of these novice teachers. They had quite different experiences during their first years in the classroom, reflecting their different school and community contexts. For example, wide variety in the role of principals, colleagues, instructional assistance, and school culture were some themes that I identified across the four cases. In Chapter Five I provide cross-case comparisons to explore the differences and similarities in their experiences.

Chapter Five

Cross Case Comparisons

The participants in my dissertation study shared some similar experiences; they also had unique experiences based on their situations and school contexts. We can learn from their commonalities and from their experiences that differed. This chapter provides a cross-case comparison and analysis of the contrasts.

The following sections detail the supports my participants received and those they wish they received. In Table 5.1, I have provided a chart to show a visual representation of the upcoming sections.

Table 5.1

Supports Needed and Received

Support	Emma			Sofia[a]			Maya			Kurt		
Competent administration	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
				Yes	No	N/A						
Supportive co-teachers	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
				Yes	No	N/A						
Instructional help	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
				Yes	No	N/A						
Observations or critical feedback	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
				Yes	No	N/A						
Effective collaboration	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
				Yes	No	N/A						

Table 5.1 (continued)

Curriculum help	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
				Yes	No	N/A						

Note. N/A means not applicable or neutral.
[a]Sofia's top row refers to her first year and the second refers to her second year of teaching.

Novice Teacher Support

Novice teacher supports, or lack thereof, was a common theme I identified in the case study data. The importance of supports was especially strong in Sofia's case. During year one Sofia did not feel sufficiently supported. In our first interview, she specifically mentioned a lack of curriculum and direction about what to teach; not being assigned a formal mentor until November; the challenges associated with being in an English department that consisted of only novice teachers; and not feeling supported by administrators or parents. Needing instructional support that was unavailable at West, she contacted teachers at other schools and an undergraduate instructor for help. She hoped for in-house instructional feedback but was not formally observed by her principal until November, and she did not feel his feedback was helpful. Even when she sought out support from her assistant principal to help with classroom management, he indicated that his presence would undermine her authority, so he declined her request for additional observations.

As Sofia became more comfortable in her teaching position, she sought out help from her peers, who ended up providing her with timely emotional and professional support. She was assigned a formal mentor in November and began to collaborate effectively with the other English teachers in her school, which positively affected her experience. Until that point, however, she was unsure if she would be able to get through the school year at West. Even as

informal supports became available as the school year progressed, they could not help Sofia overcome the dissatisfaction that resulted from her perceived overall negative culture of the school, most of which Sofia attributed to an incompetent, unsupportive principal and the minimal value placed on education by parents and students.

Sofia experienced a dramatic change when she began her new job during year two. Her abundance of supports included a formal mentor who taught English; a supportive English department in which teachers seemed to value collaboration; time to collaborate with peers; formal instructional support; competent administrative staff who were highly visible; an approachable superintendent; and helpful guidance counselors and secretaries. Sofia's attitude toward the profession changed as a result of these supports. In her words, "I have a better sense that this [teaching] is what I want to do because of those supports." Even though she taught in a school that held its teachers to high standards, and she felt more scrutinized compared to year one, she was happy that she changed schools. The ample supports she received at Truman were paramount to her satisfaction during year two.

Supportive and competent administration. While Sofia spoke at length about the administrators' incompetence at West (e.g. lack of discipline enforcement; lack of valuable feedback; eventual firing of principal), Maya and Kurt had positive experiences related to their administrators. In fact, Kurt recognized that having a principal who was both an instructional leader and an advocate for social justice was probably an anomaly, and he considered himself, the Riverview students, and the school district in which he worked to be "lucky" to have such a competent principal. One of the biggest concerns he shared about having to find a new teaching job once his wife earned her PhD related to how fortunate he felt to have such a competent and supportive principal, recognizing that he may not have the same experience again. Maya, too,

was grateful to have a principal who she could approach with instructional (e.g. scripted curriculum questions) and classroom management issues (e.g. study hall questions). She appreciated that he was willing and able to help her with instructional decisions, and she appreciated his approachability. Maya felt like the principal was interested in her general well-being, and she respected her principal professionally and personally. This respect helped her feel comfortable approaching him about classroom issues such as being more innovative with the scripted curriculum.

Emma felt neutral about her principal, telling me that her overall experience as a novice teacher was not hindered nor significantly helped by her principal. Her principal was her direct supervisor, observing Emma two times during year one. He stayed briefly during both observations, and she did not find his feedback helpful. His feedback focused on the physical layout of her classroom and specific suggestions for setting it up differently. About her instruction, he told Emma she was "excellent," feedback Emma found flawed because she knew she had plenty of room to grow as a novice teacher. She was concerned that growth would be difficult without critical feedback. About being observed more often during year two, Emma speculated that she would be observed even less than year one. When I visited Ashland in September of her second year, Emma had not yet been observed and did not expect any upcoming observations. Emma also indicated that her principal was out of the building often, but neither his presence nor his absence seemed to influence her.

Co-teachers. Maya and Kurt had full-time special education teachers assigned to co-teach some of their classes. When I interviewed Maya at the end of year one, she spoke at length about how she hoped to be assigned her co-teacher again for year two as she found the support added "confidence" and "comfort" to her teaching. Maya was assigned a different co-teacher for

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year two, and she found her to be invaluable as well. Her co-teachers from year one and year two worked individually with students, they helped with large-group instruction, they helped enforce classroom management and discipline policies, they helped with the grading load at times, and they were helpful when Maya bounced planning ideas off them. Maya said that her co-teacher from year two approached her and asked to become more involved, so they began taking turns teaching the scripted curriculum class. Both co-teachers needed little direction and proactively helped whenever they saw a need they could fill. About the value of a co-teacher Maya said, "I've never had a bad experience with a co-teacher. I really like it and I hope I always have one."

Kurt had the opposite experience with co-teachers. As a whole, his co-teachers were more burdensome than they were worth. When Kurt needed help, he had to provide his co-teachers with specific directions about what to do, and he found himself having to "manage" his co-teachers. Given that his co-teachers had more teaching experience than he did, he labeled the trend "backward." Most of the time, Kurt's co-teachers did little to help with instruction or to provide individual students with attention. In fact, Kurt's overall experience with co-teachers was a major source of frustration and a "constant challenge." To deal with the co-teacher challenge Kurt said, "I just need to be able to compartmentalize that. Be angry about that in one part of my brain but in another part of my brain get over it."

Instructional support. Supports designated to assist with curriculum were missed if absent and were valued when present. Emma and Sofia (year one), who did not have an Instructional or Curriculum Coach, struggled with knowing what content to teach. Sofia talked about having to "create a whole curriculum from scratch" for each of the four classes she taught. It was difficult for her because she did not know what books to use for the classes she taught, and the other teachers in the English department were inexperienced as well, so they provided Sofia

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little support with making instructional decisions; they were dealing with the same challenges. Since Emma was the only English teacher of juniors and her peers did not seem to care what she taught, her major source of instructional support came from the former junior English teacher's lesson plans. While the teacher she replaced overused worksheets in Emma's opinion, reviewing his plans gave her an idea of what books she could use with the juniors. She also relied heavily on the English textbook.

Once Sofia and Emma decided on what content they should teach, they wondered if they chose the "right" instructional approaches. They both wanted feedback on their lesson plans to determine if there were better ways to approach instruction. While they had no reason to believe they were not doing a good job, they seemed to want validation that they were choosing sound instructional approaches. Their schools had no instructional supports in place for novice or veteran teachers, and the lack of support left Sofia and Emma questioning their instructional effectiveness, both wanting to improve but feeling like improvements could only be achieved through self-reflection because it was the only means available to them.

The instructional support Sofia received during year two was instrumental in her confidence and overall happiness. The summer before she began her second year, she participated in curriculum writing at Truman. The school's Curriculum Coach provided Sofia feedback about the re-written standards, lessons, and assessments she co-wrote with a peer, who was entering her first year as a teacher. During year two, Sofia continued to receive instructional support from the Curriculum Coach. She found the members of the English Department to be supportive, competent, and collaborative, and she felt comfortable approaching any department member with curriculum questions. She and another teacher debriefed daily to reflect on their classes and to discuss the plans for the following day. Having these instructional supports

seemed to add to Sofia's confidence related to instruction. Having accomplished much during the summer, Sofia found comfort in having an idea about what she would teach in the upcoming days and weeks. This was a vast contrast from the late night, last minute planning sessions of year one. In contrast to Sofia's experience, Emma continued to miss having instructional support during year two, but she dealt with its absence, knowing that collaborative curriculum development and instructional support were not parts of her school's support plan.

Kurt talked enthusiastically about the support he received from his Instructional Coach (IC). Kurt had ideas for instruction but felt he did not have the know-how to implement all of them. Presenting the IC with ideas, then brainstorming with the IC to make his lesson ideas a reality was of enormous value to Kurt. Kurt was sure to use his IC's expertise wisely, referring to their work as "professional collaboration." Rather than looking blindly for instructional ideas or validation that what he taught was "good," Kurt worked in tandem with his IC to create effective units and lessons. In year two, Kurt expected to team up with his IC to model instructional approaches for the staff at Riverview. Kurt was sure that his work with the IC improved his teaching, and he felt confident in his instructional planning. He also appreciated knowing that his IC was available to him whenever he had questions.

Maya felt confident with her lesson planning and curricular choices, even in her first year. Maya had access to a Curriculum Coach and asked her for guidance occasionally, although she felt her coach was more of an elementary school expert. Maya approached her principal with some curriculum questions, but overall, instructional support was not a high priority for Maya; rather, she was more interested in learning about classroom management and procedural techniques.

For Kurt and Sofia, having instructional supports in place led to their confidence in lesson planning. They did not second guess themselves or feel like they had to "wing it" as Sofia did her first year. They did not have to wonder if they were choosing appropriate books, lessons, or assessments. Maya did not feel she needed as much instructional support as she felt prepared in her preservice program and during student teaching. However, she did utilize her Curriculum Coach when she had specific questions. On the other hand, Emma, the only participant who had no formal instructional support (e.g. no one teaching the same classes with whom to collaborate; no Curriculum Coach) felt unsure about whether she was making appropriate instructional decisions, both during year one and year two. While year two was better than year one because she had more knowledge of what texts other English teachers used, she still wondered if her approaches and assessments were appropriate and effective.

Observations and critical feedback. Of all four participants, only Kurt did not mention wanting more observations and critical feedback. Maya, who felt confident in her lesson planning and instruction, said "it would have been nice" to be observed more during year one; she would have liked the observations to focus on classroom management techniques. Although Maya planned to be observed four times during the year, her principal observed her once in January, and they did not discuss his observation until March. When I interviewed her at the end of year one, she said she hoped to be observed more and wanted the opportunity to observe other teachers during year two. Due to a change in school-wide scheduling during year two, she had the opportunity to observe more teachers; however, Maya chose not to spend what few uninterrupted planning periods she received observing other teachers. Her principal had observed her once in October of her second year, and she found his feedback, which took place the day

after his observation, helpful. She expected to be observed at least one more time during year two.

Emma and Sofia (during year one) emphatically explained their need for critical feedback and expressed frustration that they did not receive it. When I asked Emma what it would take for her to receive more observation-based feedback, she indicated that it was not a part of her school structure or culture. She wondered how her instruction would improve without the feedback she desired: "I would always like somebody to pop in and watch me and see how it is going. I mean, that's how I'm going to improve, right? I can only do so much of my own feedback on myself."

Sofia's case showed how receiving critical feedback can make a difference for a novice teacher. The observation-based feedback that Sofia received from her administrator during year one focused on non-instructional issues, such as the content on her bulletin board and the decorations on her classroom walls. She was adamant that feedback on her instruction was critical to her growth as a teacher. In fact, when she realized that she would not receive helpful feedback from within West, she asked a methods instructor from her undergraduate teacher education program to observe her in the winter of her first year.

Moving to Truman meant having consistent observers in her classroom. When I visited her in September of her second year, she had already been formally observed by an assistant principal. While Sofia felt a portion of her lesson was misinterpreted, she did receive meaningful feedback and intended to modify approaches based on the feedback she received. Further, she admitted that the critical feedback was difficult to hear, yet she understood that it was instrumental to improving her instruction. Sofia also saw a steady stream of adults in her classroom. While some were present to formally observe her and provide feedback, such as her Curriculum Coach, her mentor, and administrators from other district schools, others were there

to provide a layer of support, which was the case with the literacy coach. Although their presence added pressure to perform well, Sofia appreciated the feedback and the potential it provided her to improve.

Moving from West to Truman impacted the frequency and value of the observation-based feedback Sofia received. Her situation contrasted Emma's. Emma wanted more feedback, but she understood that the only way to receive it was to "throw a fit" or to change schools. While Sofia's confidence in instruction increased markedly from year one to two, Emma still was unsure if she was approaching teaching and learning "correctly."

Effective collaboration. Effective collaboration can benefit novice teachers in several ways. Both Kurt and Sofia talked about sharing the planning load with others who taught the same classes. During year one, Sofia's satisfaction level increased when she and a peer took turns planning units because it minimized the burden of planning for multiple classes. Collaboration lightened her planning load during year two. Additionally, she felt planning and reflecting on lessons with a colleague actually improved her instruction. Kurt discussed the benefits of collaborating with other English department members and those on his ninth grade teams. He mentioned that the collaboration sometimes reduced his workload, and he valued that the collaboration improved his instruction because he had people to "bounce ideas off of."

Emma, the participant who worked the most in isolation, missed opportunities to collaboratively plan curriculum and expressed frustration about not knowing what other English teachers did in their classroom, especially at the beginning of year one:

I honestly didn't know what anybody did, so that was really challenging. I didn't have anybody to look at my lessons and say, 'This isn't really a good idea,' or 'You should

really do a different assessment.' There was nobody who did that at all. So, it ended up being my own hit or miss type of thing.

Since Emma was the only English teacher of juniors, if she asked her peers questions about instruction, she felt she was the only one benefitting because no one else taught the same classes she did. In other words, while she may have improved her instruction by asking questions pertaining to Junior English, she felt as though only she gained from the conversations. Not wanting to monopolize other English teachers' time for what she felt was only her gain, she hesitated before asking questions. She felt as though no one knew what she was teaching, and it did not seem as though anyone cared. This was a contrast to Kurt and Sofia's collaborative relationships in which all those participating could benefit from their dialogue and planning. Kurt explained, "Collaborative time is never wasted time, so that's awesome."

While Maya's eighth grade team was required to collaborate during two planning periods per week, she did not get the same benefits as Kurt and Sofia did. As a result of the collaborative time, Maya said, "I feel like I'm just losing out on time to be productive." The collaboration did not improve her instruction, generally did not answer questions or solve issues she had, and she felt as though her time would have been better spent planning for her classes or grading.

Curriculum help. As a result of student teaching at Liberty, her role as Literacy Leader, and her confidence in lesson planning, Maya did not have questions about what to teach. Emma and Sofia (year one), not knowing what curriculum to teach, how to teach them, or what materials to use were major sources of frustration. They both wanted observations that focused on their instructional practices, but neither received feedback that they thought would help their instruction. They wanted people to look over their lesson plans so they knew that they were using the most effective instructional practices and assessment strategies. In fact, when I spoke to

Emma at the end of her first year, she mentioned that she may write lesson plans during the summer and ask Sofia to review them for her. They were close friends, and although they lived three hours away from each other, they kept in close contact and talked often about their respective teaching experiences. While they did get together a couple of times during the summer following their first year, lesson planning was not something they accomplished during their time together.

Kurt shared a different viewpoint on knowing what to teach. Although deciding what to teach was difficult at times during his first year and life would have been easier if someone had provided him with "a little more direct instruction," in retrospect, he was happy he struggled through the decision-making process. The instructional choices he had to make helped him feel like a professional. He even noted that while it would have been easier to ask someone to validate his decision making, he said that teachers act more as paraprofessionals than actual teachers when they seek out the "good" or "bad" way to approach instruction. Kurt valued taking risks and did not seem to mind if those risks resulted in unsuccessful teaching moments. He viewed both the successful and unsuccessful moments as opportunities for growth. It is important to remember, however, that Kurt did have the support of an Instructional Coach, whom he sought out when he had specific instructional questions. Perhaps knowing the support was available when necessary helped Kurt with his confidence and increased his inclination to take risks. Not having access to such a support may have led to Emma and Sofia's discomfort in making curricular decisions.

Give it a Full Year

Each participant felt their satisfaction levels increase during their first year. While every participant's satisfaction level increased, no increase was as dramatic as Sofia's. Early in year

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one, Sofia doubted she would even be able to finish the year; however, her satisfaction increased

second semester as a result of several factors including coaching softball; sharing the workload

with peers; having informal and formal peer support; and travelling less on the weekends. When

I spoke to her at the end of her first year, she was elated to receive kind notes and cards from

students who would miss having her at West. She said the impact she had on students "made

[her] feel on top of the world." Knowing she would not return to West also played a role in her

satisfaction level, but she spoke at length about the other factors as well.

A few factors led to Maya's satisfaction increase through the year. First, her biggest

learning curve did not relate to "lesson planning, teaching, or grading"; rather, it took her a while

to become familiar with the tasks to which she did not have exposure during student teaching

such as "forms and emails." Second, as she became more acclimated to teaching middle school

aged students, her satisfaction level increased. Also, attending student athletic events and co-

sponsoring the National Junior Honor Society helped her find her "niche" in the school, which

impacted her satisfaction level.

Kurt's satisfaction level increased during the last half of second semester. By then he

"was able to make the adjustment to teaching and feel more confident." Helping him with his

adjustment was working with the Instructional Coach and another member of the English

department. Their collaboration helped him "see what [he] was supposed to be doing in the

classroom and what [his] role was in the learning process." He also formed better connections

with the students second semester by giving them more relevant coursework and better

understanding their perspectives and attitudes.

About her first semester teaching Emma said, "It was awful! I mean, it wasn't terrible, but

I think I could have done so much better. I mean, I think I could have been a so much more

organized person and a better teacher." As the school year progressed, Emma came to a better understanding of what she should teach. She also felt like she "had a lot more to offer" and "felt a little more on top of things." She considered second semester to be "middle of the road," "good," "okay," and "not awful."

Classroom Management

Maya, Emma, and Sofia shared similar philosophies about classroom management, which was evident when I observed them. For example, their students knew the procedures for entering class, what they should do when the bell rang to signal the start of class, where to locate make-up work in the event of an absence, and that they were not dismissed when the bell rang. Rather, they were dismissed when the teacher gave them the verbal okay to leave. Maya, Emma, nor Sofia seemed to have what I would consider major discipline problems. In fact, when I observed them at the beginning of year two, I noted how smoothly their classrooms seemed to run and the respect their students seemed to have for them. Nevertheless, Emma, Sofia, and Maya had some self-identified problems with discipline. Emma spoke about changing her verbal warning policy and firming up her discipline approach during year two. Sofia talked about having to assign detentions due to students' incessant talking during year one.

Maya's discipline concern during year one concerned silent study hall and her principal helped her solve that issue. Maya was interested in having people observe her teaching to give her classroom management tips, and she was interested in observing other teachers for the same reason. Upon observing her teach and noticing that her classroom management seemed great, I pushed her to talk about why classroom management was at the forefront of her interests. It seemed that because she felt comfortable with lesson planning, curriculum, and instruction, she felt that the best way she could improve her classroom was to get inside tips from others about

classroom management and procedures. She acknowledged that classroom management was not a problem for her, but she thought other teachers may have neat ideas that she could adopt.

Kurt's approach to classroom management was less structured than Maya's, Sofia's, and Emma's. For example, "bell work," or work for students to begin immediately upon the bell ringing, was not posted like it was in Maya and Sofia's classroom. In fact, Kurt did not necessarily begin class immediately when the bell rang if he was tending to individual student issues, speaking to a co-teacher, or getting his teaching supplies ready after traveling from one classroom to another. He attributed his laid back classroom management approach mostly to his previous experience in social work but also to being male and being older than many other novices. His approach to classroom management focused on creating structure in an organic, less teacher-centered way. He thought that a more structured approach may allow him to feel more "safe," but he did not feel it was necessarily in the best interest of his students.

Kurt also used humor when engaging with his students. While Maya, Emma, and Sofia smiled at their students when they entered their classroom, often greeting them at the door, and were consistently kind to their students, they did not mention the importance of humor in their classroom management approach, nor did I witness their use of humor in their classrooms. For Kurt, using "levity and humor" was instrumental in his teaching philosophy, and I witnessed him using humor several times when I visited Riverview.

Extra-Curricular Activities

When I questioned the participants about their year one satisfaction levels, Maya, Sofia, and Kurt discussed the important role extra-curricular activities played in their general happiness. For Sofia, softball played a significant role in her satisfaction level. For Maya, participating in extra-curriculars helped her find her niche in the school. She attended athletic

events, co-sponsored National Junior Honors Society, tutored, and served as an adviser, which helped her get to know students and parents on a deeper level. Participating in extra-curriculars was an important part of Kurt's professional identity. Especially valuable to him was co-sponsoring the Social Action Committee because it allowed him to promote his social justice agenda. He felt like he was contributing to positive school changes while enhancing his relationships with students and staff.

Emma was the sole participant who did not talk about the importance of extra-curricular activities in her satisfaction levels. When I interviewed her a second time, I probed to determine why she did not find the same value in extra-curricular activities. Emma was a sponsor of Ashland's Student Assistance Program (SAP). The sponsors' primary responsibility was to assist students whose basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, and clothing) were not being met. They identified students in need, and each sponsor took on two or three student cases and checked in throughout the school year with those students to see how things were going. Emma made sure the students assigned to her knew she was a caring adult and was there to address their concerns or needs. In addition to meeting with the students individually, she met with the other sponsors to discuss how the students were doing and to identify additional supports students may need. I asked Emma to speculate why being a part of the SAP did not contribute to her satisfaction. She replied:

> This is going to sound really bad, but probably because they're not often kids that I would particularly love. They're not those kids who are super fun and interesting to talk to. They're the kids who have the problems. It's not that I don't like it, but it's not like it's my favorite thing to do or I really enjoy it.

When Emma decided to pursue a second job at the retail establishment, she made a tough decision and turned down the cross-country coaching position at Ashland. Had she accepted the coaching position she "would have loved it and it would have added satisfaction to [her] job." Emma chose the retail position because the earning potential was much greater. Emma valued the enriching experience that extra-curricular activities can have for students, and she understood why her peers felt extra-curriculars added to their overall satisfaction. However, her experience with the SAP appeared to be completely neutral.

Juggling obligations. All four participants had to make what they considered to be tough decisions due to their various obligations. For Sofia during year one, her planning load and lack of support made her feel like she cheated some of her students. Even though she found herself working from 7 a.m. to midnight on multiple occasions, especially during first semester, she did not feel like she always served her students well. She felt like no matter how much time she put into planning and grading, it was never enough. Things changed for her during her second year. Planning during the summer, having support during the school year, having fewer classes for which to prepare, and having longer daily panning periods led to her feeling like she was able to better server her students.

While Maya was busy during year one, the school-wide changes implemented during year two made balancing her obligations difficult at times. She lost planning time before school due to faculty meetings. Twice per week she lost her planning period due to mandated team meetings. She found her new role as Assessment Manager burdensome because she did not feel connections to the students with whom she worked. Plus she was forced to leave her students with a substitute teacher three days per testing cycle, which would equate to twelve days per year. Planning for the substitute and catching up after returning to her class made Maya feel

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behind. Prioritizing became more difficult than it had been in year one, and she took longer to return graded work to her students and continued to spend "a lot of time" planning and grading at home.

Kurt discussed his obligations, both in school (e.g. committee work; four classes for which to prepare) and out of school (e.g. volunteering, social life, graduate classes). Forced to make tough decisions about his priorities, he admitted that the quality of his work was sometimes impacted due to his multiple obligations. For example, he said that he did not think about planning for his Junior English class as much because he spent most of his time planning for his Academic Ninth Grade class and Honors Ninth Grade class. However, he indicated that making such decisions was a necessary part of being a professional.

Emma's life changed significantly her second year, mostly due to the second job she began over the summer. For years she and Sofia had planned on a taking European vacation, and they wanted to travel the summer after their second year. Because Emma needed a new car, building a significant savings account was important to her, and the European trip was one year away, her teaching salary was not enough to accommodate her plans and needs. Balancing both jobs was tougher than she thought and it led to physical and emotional exhaustion.

All of the participants had to prioritize and make tough decisions due to time issues, and they admitted that having multiple commitments, teaching-related and not, impacted their planning, teaching and/or grading at times. At the same time, all of these teachers spent significant amounts of time outside of the school day, both in the evenings and on the weekends, planning and grading.

Leadership roles. Maya and Kurt discussed having leadership roles within their schools. Kurt talked about his upcoming work with the Instructional Coach to model techniques for the

staff. Although that work had not yet begun when I spoke to him in late October of his second year, he looked forward to showing the staff some innovative and effective pedagogical techniques. He also indicated that his continued collaboration with the IC would be "fun" and would "force [him] not to get lazy."

Kurt talked about the way his position as co-sponsor of the Social Action Committee impacted his professional identity. He seemed to take his leadership role seriously and contemplated the responsibility deeply. About his responsibility, he said:

> One thing that I really value is being able to create a socially just environment. So the work that I do on these committees, being able to challenge other teachers, having them know that I'm a second-year teacher, being able to challenge their thinking on certain issues. That's a calling of the committee that I'm a co-chair of so that's my obligation.

Being a leader for social justice also meant "keeping a professional identity that is approachable and that doesn't get stereotyped as one thing or another." That was an important step in getting teachers, especially those who were closed-minded to or unaware of issues of social justice, to be more open to the topic.

Maya served as a Literacy Leader during her first year. She found the role to be fairly burdensome, but it was something she enjoyed. Her responsibility required her to assist other English teachers, those with more experience, with their lesson plans and with the curriculum Liberty had adopted. She did not mind the responsibility because she knew the staff before she began her first year since she student taught at Liberty and because the staff was nice and supportive. She was quick to point out that she did not necessarily recommend that building administrators assign such leadership roles to novice teachers, addressing the pressure she would have felt in a different school context. Her role as Literacy Leader did seem to add to her

confidence in lesson planning. When I pushed her to talk about why she felt so confident with her instructional decisions, she attributed her confidence, in part, to Literacy Leader role. She said that even after the Literacy Leader position was eliminated, her colleagues continued to ask Maya to share her lesson plans with them. She figured someone would have told her if her lessons were no good. At the least, they would have stopped asking for her assistance.

Future Plans in Education

All four participants planned to remain in education until their retirement. They also planned to earn master's degrees while teaching full time. While Emma, Sofia, and Maya were beginning to identify master's programs that would work with their teaching schedules, Kurt had already begun to work on his degree in Writing Studies. He was also considering a master's in Special Education but had no immediate plans to change focus.

Although Emma planned to leave Ashland to relocate to a more liberal area, she did plan to earn her master's degree in reading and hoped to become a reading specialist in the future. She chose reading as an area for further study because she did not feel adequately prepared to teach reading skills when she graduated with her undergraduate degree in English. She was prepared to teach canonical works of literature, but teaching literature to students who struggle with reading was something for which she was unprepared.

With the changes in education (e.g. emphasis on testing; perceived lack of autonomy for teachers) Sofia was unsure if she wanted to remain a classroom teacher until retirement, but she had no intentions to leave education completely. About her future, she said:

It's too hard to say right now because of everything that's been going on with education. If there are too many changes that put so many restrictions on me that I don't feel like I

can actually be a teacher, then I'll probably leave the classroom. I don't want to be doing

things that I know are going to be harming the students.

She was unsure of the area in which she wanted to earn her master's but was learning toward

English, Rhetoric, or Writing Studies because she thought those areas would most help her

improve her instruction. The school district in which Sofia worked during year two would pay

for a large portion of, if not all of, Sofia's master's degree. For the district to pay for her master's

degree, she was committed to beginning the degree within her first five years and remaining in

the district for five years after earning her master's.

Maya planned to remain a classroom teacher until she retires. She had no plans to move

out of the classroom since her favorite part about teaching was lesson planning and seeing her

students grow during the year. She did not feel she would get the same satisfaction in a different

position inside or outside of education. She hoped to earn her master's degree in Literature but

found the logistics difficult because the local university only offered the program on a full-time

basis, which made enrolling while teaching impossible. When I spoke to her at the beginning of

year two, she was still weighing the options available to her.

Conclusion

The four participants in my dissertation had unique experiences. At the same time, they

shared some similar perspectives, which Chapter Five highlighted. In Chapter Six, I will connect

the participants' experiences to the literature. I will also share my findings and provide

recommendations for further studies.

Chapter Six

Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, I connect my participants' experiences to the teacher education and induction literature. I also discuss how my findings add to the knowledge in the field. To conclude, I make recommendations for further research before discussing how this research project will impact my work as I move into my first faculty position, which I will begin in Fall 2012.

Supportive and Competent Administrators

As the literature shows, (Brickmore & Brickmore, 2010; Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Roberson & Roberson, 2009; Woods, 2005) school administrators significantly impact the lives of novice teachers. Maya, Sofia (year two), and Kurt appreciated having supportive and competent school administrators whom they could approach with issues ranging from instruction to classroom management. Kurt understood his experience with a supportive, competent principal who was an "instructional leader" to be an anomaly and worried that he would not find the same competency in a principal when he was forced to find a new teaching job. By comparison, Sofia's (year one) experience with a perceived weak administrator was a significant contributor to her unhappiness. My participants' expectations for the principal aligned with the literature:

> Novice teachers want communicative interaction with principals. Whether from the principal's classroom visits, feedback (formal or informal), or words of encouragement and affirmation, novice teachers want to hear what principals have to say about their performance and efforts in the classroom. (Roberson & Roberson, p. 115)

Critical feedback. A part of an administrator's role in supporting novice teachers is to provide them with feedback about their teaching (Brock & Grady, 1998; Roberson & Roberson, 2009). The participants in this study expressed the need for critical feedback. They were open to feedback from an administrator, supervisor, mentor, or peer. Emma and Sofia (year one) talked about wanting critical feedback that would help improve their teaching. They described their administrators' observations as too short and too infrequent to get an accurate account of what was happening in the class. Sofia and Emma complained that the feedback they received was focused on minor issues such as classroom set up and decor. Emma thought her principal was too easy on her during year one, and she was not excepting more helpful feedback during year two. Changing schools meant that Sofia did receive the critical feedback she desired during year two.

Entering year two, Maya wanted more frequent observations and more meaningful feedback. For year two, her school district adopted a new teacher observation framework, and she found it to be more helpful. In year two, Maya's principal observed her for the entire 85 minute period, and his feedback was focused on the specific instructional strategies she used. During the post-observation conference, the principal discussed ways she could improve her teaching, and he referenced specific things Maya said and did that were effective or could use modification.

Three of my participants felt like their observers and evaluators went easy on them, maybe because they were first-year teachers. They wanted their administrators to have high expectations for them and feedback that would help improve their craft. My participants enjoyed having people in their classrooms and said they would appreciate any helpful feedback provided to them by anyone who was willing to provide it.

It is important to note that when Sofia did receive critical feedback from an administrator her second year, she had a difficult time accepting it. She cried as she talked to her mentor about the feedback and wondered if the administrator completely understood her lesson. Likewise, Maya's principal, using new observation guidelines, was more critical of her teaching during her year two observation. Maya talked about having a shaken confidence when the principal indicated that she had more room for growth when compared to the feedback he provided at her year one observation.

Based on Sofia's and Maya's year two experiences with critical feedback, they would prefer frequent, informal feedback, perhaps provided by a peer or a mentor, over the high-stakes feedback that came from an administrator. After their first year, they wanted validation for their teaching, but when the feedback was critical, they expressed concern and encountered brief confidence issues. Informal observers could provide them with suggestions for improving their teaching. The improved teaching resulting from the feedback would give them increased confidence for the more formal, high-stakes observations. The novice teachers would be more accustomed to being observed and hearing critical feedback, perhaps relieving some of their pressure when administrators observe them.

Meaningful Collaboration

In the literature there are frequent references to the importance of time to collaborate with other teachers. Collaboration is one of the most common and potentially one of the most meaningful forms of novice teacher induction (Darling-Hammond, 2010; National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Researchers claim that collaboration leads to positive changes in teaching (Darling-Hammond); collaboration is essential to teacher learning (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006); and

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collaboration may lead to increased student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

For Sofia (years one and two) and Kurt, their work with other teachers made planning more efficient because they shared the workload. They also found that collaboration improved their instruction because they modified their instructional decisions based on the feedback they received.

In his first year, Kurt formed his own collaborative team as he worked with another English teacher and his Instructional Coach. For him, joining the ninth grade team formalized his collaborative efforts since time to collaborate was required and built into the daily schedule. In addition to his individual daily planning period, the ninth grade teachers had a daily planning period to collaborate. Kurt found this collaborative time to be time well-spent. His team had guidance from administration about what should occur during their planning, such as addressing the needs of specific students and planning for curriculum and assessment.

In contrast, Maya felt her collaborative time, which was also required, was wasted time. Their collaborative time had minimal direction, and Maya felt little was accomplished. Rather than having an additional planning period in which to collaborate, her team met during her "individual" planning time. This was certainly not the type of collaboration that reduced her workload. She noted that her time would have been better served during individual work such as lesson planning.

For Emma, collaboration was not a priority in her school, and she worked mostly in isolation. By the beginning of year two, she acknowledged that isolation was engrained into the culture in her school, and her isolation was something she came to accept as the norm. Emma

was not alone. Kardos and Moore (2007) found that "many new teachers tend to be isolated in their classroom work" (p. 2101).

It seems important that if administrators require teachers to meet regularly, they should build the collaborative time into the schedule (Kurt) rather than expect teachers to sacrifice their individual planning time to meet (Maya). Plus, the collaboration should be aimed at improving teaching and, when possible, lightening the workload for the teachers. Collaboration has the power to benefit teachers and students, but the work should be focused and worthwhile for all involved.

My data suggest that collaboration is effective and meaningful for novice teachers if teachers share common goals. The goal could be related to a variety of issues such as increased student test scores, improved student discipline, or reduced teacher workloads. Shared goals help to focus the work that they do together and create dialogue within the group. It is also helpful if collaborators are open to change and innovation. For example, if one of the collaborators proposes implementing something that has not been done before, the others are open to trying the suggestion and comparing the results. If a suggested idea does not seem possible, the collaborators would work together to discuss the barriers and solutions. They also would be willing to abandon options and create alternatives when necessary. Collaborators are comfortable to speak openly and honestly with each other. For this honesty to occur, there needs to be a safe space to talk, generating mutual respect among the collaborators. Without this safety, collaborators may not feel comfortable bringing up new ideas or talking about their successes and issues in the classroom. Finally, collaboration is strengthened by working on projects that lead to productive changes. If there is no productive impact of their collaboration, they may view the collaboration as wasted time. In sum, collaboration among novice teachers can lead to

meaningful results, but these cases suggest that some components make collaboration attractive and useful to novice teachers.

Co-teachers. When co-teachers are perceived to be good, they are invaluable. When perceived to be unhelpful, they are burdensome and are more of a hassle than they are worth. Maya had two different co-teachers during years one and two. She found both to be helpful and to improve the experiences for the students in her class. Kurt found most of the co-teachers with whom he worked to be burdensome because the co-teachers were more experienced than he, yet they did little work and added little to the experiences of the students. On the contrary, the unprofessionalism (e.g. cell phone use, frequently leaving the classroom) of one co-teacher made teaching more difficult for Kurt than it would have been had he not had a co-teacher at all.

As shown in Maya's case, pairing novice teachers with co-teachers can benefit the teachers and the students. In contrast, it seems unfair to place ineffective or incompetent co-teachers with novice teachers. It is up to the administrators and the leaders of the special education department to ensure that co-teachers understand and fulfill their responsibilities. It is not the responsibility of the regular education teacher, and certainly not a novice teacher, to direct the work of a co-teacher.

Extra-curricular Activities

My findings relating to extra-curricular activities contradict what the literature suggests about the topic. Research indicates that novice teachers should not participate in "demanding," or highly visible, extra-curricular activities (Huling-Austin, 1992). Coaching softball (Sofia), leading the Social Justice Committee (Kurt), and acting as Literacy Leader (Maya) meet the criteria as "demanding." When first-year teachers participate in "demanding" extra-curricular

activities, they are less effective during their second year than they would be had they not participated in the activity (Huling-Austin).

While I do not know if Sofia, Kurt, and Maya would have been more effective teachers during year two had they not participated in extra-curricular activities during year one, participating in the activities added to their satisfaction. Participating in extra activities helped them feel part of the school community, and they enjoyed getting to know students outside of the classroom. For Sofia (year one), coaching softball was critical to her emotional well-being during her challenging first year.

Participating in the extra-curricular activities added to my participants' workload, and juggling their obligations became a challenge at times. All four participants spent significant time planning and grading in the evenings and on weekends. Nevertheless, participating in extra-curricular activities seemed to be worth the time and effort because the return was great.

It is important to note that for extra-curricular activities to increase satisfaction, the novice teacher should feel like he or she is making an impact on students, and there should be a level of enjoyment of participating in the activity. This was not the case for Emma, and her experience with extra-curricular activities was "completely neutral." Emma's extra-curricular activity required her to meet with the other Student Assistance Program committee members, who were teachers and a school psychologist, monthly. She also met periodically with students one-on-one. She knew the support the committee provided for the students was important, yet she did not develop close bonds with the students and did not get much pleasure from the work. In contrast, the other participants found the impact of their extra-curricular activity work gratifying.

I suggest that novice teachers participate in the extra-curricular activities that they find interesting and meaningful. They should not be pressured or required by school leaders to partake in the activities that are not interesting to them. Here the role of school leaders should be to check in with novice teachers periodically to ask about their overall workload and emotional well-being and provide support when needed.

Participating in extra-curricular activities can be beneficial for novice teachers. I was somewhat surprised to find that these novice teachers found extra-curricular activities empowering if they felt they were impacting students outside of their classroom. It seems that making a difference in the larger school context can lead to increased confidence and satisfaction for novice teachers. Participating in extra-curricular activities can be worthwhile, even when novice teachers feel they have numerous obligations to juggle and spend several hours planning and grading outside of the contracted school day. It is important to note that not all extra-curricular activities may be meaningful for novice teachers. Novice teachers should have the freedom to choose the extra-curricular activities in which to participate because their passion for the activity is a key component in their success and satisfaction. Novice teachers should be allowed to co-facilitate such activities if they feel more comfortable working with someone else rather than facilitating an activity on their own. I am not suggesting that novice teachers should be required to participate in extra-curricular activities, but they should be supported when they choose to do so. Based on the findings of this study, such experiences have the power to increase satisfaction, allow novices to get to know their peers, students, and parents, and increase novice teachers' sense of ownership in the school.

Curriculum Support

The importance of curriculum support was a prevalent theme in my study. For Kurt and Sofia (year two), receiving curriculum support was the most beneficial support they received. The Curriculum/Instructional Coaches with whom they worked added to their confidence levels as their instructional decisions were validated. Kurt was able to implement innovative approaches that he did not feel he could implement without the help of his Instructional Coach. The link between collaboration and the increased likelihood to try innovative strategies and take instructional risks is supported in the literature (Gaspar & Wetzel, 2009; Goddard et al., 2007; Inderbitzin & Storrs, 2008; Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008). For Sofia, her Coach's feedback on objectives, assessments, and lesson plans added to her professional confidence.

Sofia (year one) and Emma did not receive curriculum support, and this contributed to their lack of confidence. Emma often wondered if she was choosing the "right" instructional methods and assessments. She felt like the only way to improve her teaching was to individually reflect on her teaching. She knew her growth would be limited if she did not have curriculum support or feedback on her instruction. Sofia felt the same frustrations during her first year. As a new teacher, she was on her own to decide what to teach and how to teach it. With no curriculum support and inexperienced colleagues in the English Department, Sofia initially sought help from outside of the school (e.g. cooperating teacher from student teaching, teacher education program instructor). For my participants who did not receive curriculum support, I believe that having curriculum support would have boosted their confidence significantly. The support may have also increased their instructional effectiveness.

Providing novice teachers with necessary support leads to increased retention (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In my opinion, subject-specific curriculum support is the most important thing

that a school can provide its novice teachers. I believe that providing novice teachers with curriculum support improves teaching, which can result in higher student achievement. It was clear in my case studies that help with curriculum added to novice teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction, and the lack of it was a detriment. Help with curriculum planning should be a non-negotiable component for all novice teachers.

  Role of mentors. Assigning mentors to novice teachers is one of the most common forms of induction (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). This form of induction can be impactful, but much depends on the mentor/beginning teacher pairing and the focus of their interactions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Moore Johnson & Kardos, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Novice teachers should be paired with mentors who teach the same subject area, and interactions with their mentors should focus on improving instruction. Improving instruction can occur through developing classroom management approaches, studying lessons, critiquing teaching approaches, and reflecting on student learning (Darling-Hammond; Moore Johnson & Kardos).

  For the most part, the novice teachers in this study did not find their assigned mentors to be helpful in improving their instruction. Maya was not assigned a mentor. Both Emma and Kurt were assigned mentors who were English teachers, but their interactions did not focus on curriculum. The focus was more on emotional support (Emma) and school policies and procedures (Kurt). Sofia's (year one) mentor was a science teacher who was not paired with her until November. They did focus on Sofia's instruction when they met. Sofia found their interactions to be fairly helpful, but since they taught different subjects, her mentor was limited in the content-specific help she could provide her. During year two, she was assigned a mentor in the English department. Sofia's interactions with her mentor sometimes focused on English-specific discussions, but other times they focused on other topics such as classroom management

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or communicating with parents. Their interactions were guided by the district's formal induction program, which Sofia found helpful.

Sofia (year two) was the only participant who found her mentor's support to be a critical component of her teaching success. Her mentor was one of numerous supports on which she could rely. Overall, my cases suggest that assigning a mentor to a beginning teacher is not enough. Based on my participants' experiences, mentoring should incorporate several features:

- Time should be scheduled for mentors and novice teachers to meet.

- The content of mentor/beginning teacher interactions should focus on improving instruction (e.g. developing and refining lesson plans; analyzing student work).

- Mentor/beginning teacher discussions should be confidential and should not impact the novice teacher's job security.

- The mentor should observe and provide feedback for the novice teacher.

- Mentors should receive professional development before becoming mentors in order to help refine their mentoring skills. They should have time to collaborate with other mentors.

- Mentors should meet with the novice teachers immediately after the novice teachers are hired so the mentor can address curriculum related and non-curriculum related issues (e.g. how to use the copy machine; how to check email) before the school year starts.

Teacher Education

A disconnect existed between my participants' needs and the teacher education program from which they graduated. Their experience is not unusual. According to the research, too often, teachers feel their teacher education programs did not prepare them for the reality of teaching (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999). The importance of cohesion between field

placements and university coursework is commonly cited in the literature (Allsopp, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006; Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Goodwin & Oyler, 2008; Morey, Bezuk, & Chiero, 1997; Ryan & Healy, 2009; Sleeter, 2008; Zeichner, 2010), and my participants found cohesion to be lacking in their teacher education program. My participants also found some of their instructors to be out of touch with the realities of the K-12 classroom. When instructors don't practice what they preach or the content is superficial or abstract, preservice teachers reinforce their notions that the real learning occurs during field placements or student teaching (Feiman-Nemser).

My participants all agreed with the sentiments in the literature expressing that they would have felt better prepared had their teacher education program focused more on the practical approaches to teaching canonical literature commonly taught in secondary schools. They also would have preferred that their instructors had professional relationships with the secondary teachers in the area to bridge the gap between theory and practice. They felt that closer connections with the schools would have helped keep the university instructors current with local school initiatives.

I attribute the participants' criticisms of their teacher education program to a number of factors. First, they attended a research-focused university. There, the faculty tenure system did not support faculty members spending time to build connections with local K-12 teachers. The emphasis was on research and publications. Some faculty do their research in schools and a few faculty have projects in the schools, but they are in the minority. This overall result for many students was a gap between what they were learning in their courses and what they saw in their placement classrooms. Second, it was difficult for these participants to connect the field placements to their coursework because no one supervised them in their field placements prior to

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student teaching. There were no systems in place for the preservice teachers to discuss in their university classes what they saw in the K-12 classrooms. This left the preservice teachers on their own to make connections to what they saw in the field and what they read and discussed in the university classrooms. Kurt, Sofia, Maya, and Emma felt like some of their university instructors had little knowledge of what happened in the local classrooms.

Kurt and Maya, the two participants who taught in the most diverse schools, felt prepared to teach the students in their classrooms. In our interview, Kurt talked about the teacher education program's "constant" emphasis on diversity. Although he felt the emphasis on diversity was "overkill," he said it may have been a necessary emphasis for the program, which served mostly white, middle to upper class students from suburban areas. Even Maya, whose hometown is rural and almost entirely white, felt prepared to teach the students at Liberty, where only 41.8% of the students were White. Their preparedness to teach *all* students may have been a result of the focus in their teacher education program.

While Kurt and Maya felt prepared to teach in diverse settings, my interpretation of Sofia's (year one) and Emma's experiences complicates the topic. Neither Emma nor Sofia was raised in a rural area, and they both struggled with living and working in rural contexts. Sofia considered the parenting to be "different" in the town she worked and had difficulties relating to the students who were not college bound. Emma struggled with the conservative nature of her school and town. While the teacher education program from which the participants graduated prepared them well to teach diverse student bodies, teaching students unlike themselves, especially in rural schools and in conservative communities, may have been overlooked. While learning to teach in a diverse society is important, we must remember that diversity also includes rural contexts.

Plans to Remain in the Profession

All four of the participants planned to remain in education for the duration of their careers. Although their experiences, school contexts, and supports differed greatly, none planned to leave the profession. If they stay in teaching as planned, it will run contrary to what the literature says, with up to 50% of novice teachers leaving teaching within five years (Curran & Glodrick, 2002; Herbert & Ramsay, 2004; Ingersoll, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2006; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; NCTAF, 1997), with the lowest levels of retention occurring in urban (Kurt) and rural areas (Sofia during year one and Emma).

Sofia's plans for her future may have been quite different had she not gotten a job at a new school. Early in her first year, Sofia was unsure if she chose the right profession. She felt overworked and under supported; she wondered, at times, if she would make it through her first year. Her experience with burnout early in her first year is supported by the literature. Feeling overworked, incompetent, and unappreciated by the principal are all indicators of early career burnout, and Sofia experienced all three (Gavish & Friedman, 2010). Sofia was not alone in leaving her school after one year. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that "nearly 3 out of 10 new teachers move to a different school or leave teaching altogether at the end of their first year" (p. 37).

Even though my participants planned to remain in teaching, Kurt and Emma both had plans to leave their present schools. Emma hoped to move to a different school district for her third year of teaching, and Kurt anticipated moving after his wife finished her PhD. Maya would leave her school if she was forced to teach more than one class that had a scripted curriculum but had no immediate plans to switch schools. Sofia was committed to staying in her school, due to

her district paying for her master's degree. Down the road, however, she would be open to the idea of moving to a district closer to Chicago. If they leave their schools, my participants are just a few of the "large numbers of teachers [who] move from or leave their schools long before retirement," a phenomenon Smith and Ingersoll (2004) referred to as the "revolving door" that contributes to staffing problems in education (p. 38).

While these participants planned to remain in the profession, they admitted that one cannot predict the future. For example, Emma and Sofia dreamt of becoming writers and would leave education if they had the opportunity to breakthrough as full-time authors. All four participants were only in their 20s, and it is possible that they may have unforeseen career changes throughout their lives.

Transitioning from Year One to Two

The research questions I sought to answer were the following:

- What were the induction experiences of the four novice teachers in this study?

- What supports were most meaningful for the novice teachers in this study?

- What changed for the teachers in this study as they moved from year one to year two?

As I reflected back on my questions, I realized that my first two questions were addressed throughout the study as evident in chapters four, five, and six. The answer to the third question, however, was less discussed than I anticipated. This last question was the initial question that motivated my interest in this study. When I wrote the question, I expected teachers' support needs to change as they transitioned from their first to their second year teaching. I found that my participants' support needs did not change much. For example, Emma needed feedback on her teaching during year one. Because she did not receive the feedback desired, she had the same need during year two. While my participants did experience some changes as they transitioned

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from year one to two, in retrospect, my third research question yielded the least interesting findings.

I found that change for these novice teachers as they transitioned from year one to year two occurred on an individual basis and was influenced by many different aspects in their school and community context. Sofia's and Kurt's changes were self-initiated. Sofia experienced the most dramatic change as she left one school to go to another. The added supports during year two positively impacted the way she perceived teaching. Kurt chose to move from teaching juniors to teaching ninth graders. This change led to more structured time to collaborate with the other ninth grade teachers. The changes Maya experienced were a result of school-wide changes imposed on her. The adoption of the scripted curriculum caused Maya to seek out a job at the local high school although she wound up staying at the middle school. Her title as Literacy Leader was also dissolved, and that was a responsibility to which she looked forward her second year. Emma did not instigate changes nor were changes imposed on her. Life for Emma remained the same as she transitioned from year one to two.

Recommendations

In Table 6.1, I provide recommendations for novice teachers, teacher educators, and supporters of novice teachers. While I cannot generalize based only on my case study data I collected, I make these recommendations based on my participants' experiences coupled with the literature.

Table 6.1

Recommendations

Recommendations for novice teachers:	
Recommendation One	Get involved with extra-curricular activities that help you feel like you are making an impact on students.

Table 6.1 (continued)

Recommendation Two	Reach out to supportive colleagues.
Recommendation Three	Seek out collaborative opportunities that will enhance your teaching and/or lessen your workload.
Recommendation Four	Look for support with subject area specific curriculum and instruction.
Recommendation Five	Even if the school year gets off to a rocky start, stick with it for at least one full school year.
Recommendations for those who educate preservice teachers:	
Recommendation One	Connect what the students learn in your class to what is happening in the local K-12 schools.
Recommendation Two	Form relationships with local K-12 teachers to ensure that you stay up-to-date with local trends and initiatives.
Recommendation Three	Incorporate teaching materials that your students will likely use when they become teachers. For future English teachers, this means making sure they understand how to teach canonical literature.
Recommendation Four	Keep in touch with your graduates and provide them with induction support.
Recommendations for those who support novice teachers (administrators, Instructional Coaches, mentors, team leaders, etc):	
Recommendation One	Provide novice teachers with critical and supportive feedback so they can improve their teaching.
Recommendation Two	Provide novice teachers with content-specific support aimed at developing, reviewing, and refining their curricula.
Recommendation Three	When requiring or leading meetings, ensure that the meetings are productive and meaningful for all involved. Meetings are helpful when they focus on creating and analyzing curriculum, lesson plans, and assessments.
Recommendation Four	Provide novice teachers with induction support prior to the school year beginning. Novice teachers appreciate knowing what classes they will teach, what materials are available, and being connected to people who will support them in developing their curriculum.
Recommendation Five	Make sure every novice teacher has at least one teacher whom they can share ideas, brainstorm, and ask content-specific questions.
Recommendation Six	Hire knowledgeable Instructional Coaches who assist novice teachers in developing and teaching meaningful curriculum.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order to fully understand the needs of novice teachers, more research is needed. I

recommend the following research related to novice teachers.

Teacher education. Teacher educators do incredibly important work and must ensure they are doing everything possible to prepare competent future teachers. Adding to the importance of their work are the various alternative paths to teacher certification today, creating competition for traditional teacher education programs. The following are research questions to consider regarding teacher education:

- Teacher education programs must prepare students to teach in a variety of settings. What strategies are most effective to do so?

- How can instructors of future English teachers ensure that their students are prepared to teach canonical works of literature while ensuring that they can teach popular young adult literature?

- How can tenure track teacher education professors be encouraged to bridge the gap between what occurs in their university at what occurs in the local classrooms?

- What incentives, if any, are needed to encourage K-12 teachers to collaborate with teacher education faculty?

- What, if any, role should higher education play in inducting their graduates as novice teachers?

Novice teacher induction. Hiring and retaining excellent teachers should be a priority for school districts. We must continue to learn how to best support novice teachers. Researchers can use the following questions to guide their work:

- How does the type of teacher education program from which novice teachers graduate impact the supports they need upon entering teaching?

- How can Instructional Coaches be trained to meet the needs of novice teachers across the content areas?

- What specific role should principals play in supporting novice teachers?

- What role should co-teachers play in novice teachers' classrooms?

- What types of collaboration are most important for improving novice teachers' instruction?

- What observation tools or strategies should be enacted when observing and providing feedback for novice teachers?

- What types of extra-curricular activities are beneficial for novice teachers?

- Are there types of extra activities that should be avoided?

- How might a school leader be able to predict if a novice teacher's participation in an extra-curricular activity will add to his or her satisfaction or not?

Implications for My Work

The findings from these case studies will inform the work I do in teacher education. Beginning in Fall 2012, I will begin working as an Assistant Professor at a small, liberal arts college. I look forward to applying what I learned from my participants to designing the courses I will teach in the future.

My students will be mostly White, middle class, traditionally aged females. Reading about, discussing, and experiencing diversity will be critical components in the classes I teach. As evident in Kurt's and Maya's experiences, emphasizing issues of diversity in teacher education programs can help prepare teachers for teaching diverse student bodies. Even if preservice teachers do not plan to teach in a diverse school, they must understand the importance of teaching for social justice and other important issues related to diversity. They must also be given experiences to engage in conversations about the inequities in education and in the U.S., in general. I expect to teach a class focused on multicultural education, in which issues of diversity

will naturally be the focus; however, issues of diversity will be woven into every course I teach. My findings have encouraged me in this direction because my case study teachers demonstrated in their verbal responses and teaching practices that what they learned about diversity and social justice in their teacher education program was carried into their teaching.

The findings from this case study (along with other data I have collected specifically focused on my teaching) validated the work I do to prepare my students to teach diverse students. However, based on information gleaned from my participants, I will make modifications to my teaching. An integral component of the courses I teach, I provide a safe, supportive environment for my students to practice teaching. With their peers as the audience, my students employ various strategies for teaching reading, writing, grammar, and literature. I require them to use high-interest, young adult literature as their focal resources. I expect to teach a course focused on English methods next year. In addition to requiring my students to practice teaching young adult literature, I will require them to teach canonical texts. The importance of learning to teach canonical texts was a strong theme in my data, and I whole heartedly agree with my participants; they need more practice and support teaching difficult texts.

One of the most exciting parts about my new position is that the college is in the early stages of forming relationships with local K-12 schools. I look forward to furthering the relationships they have initiated. I look forward to teaching my methods courses in a local high school and to building relationships with the high school teachers. The collaboration will help my students make connections between our course readings and discussions and what is happening in the local schools. I hope the collaboration will also allow my students ample opportunities to practice teaching K-12 students and to observe and reflect with master teachers. I hope also to learn from the teachers with whom I work.

I should note here that I do not have unrealistic expectations for my relationships with K-12 teachers. I know that K-12 teachers are busy. As the new faculty member I will have to work hard to gain entry into their classrooms and to form collaborative relationships. I will have to discover ways to make our collaboration worth their efforts. I also know that I will be very busy as a new faculty member, and forming these relationships will take time and energy. Even with the challenges, I am excited about the endeavor. I know that my efforts can make for a meaningful experience for my students, one that helps bridge the gap between theory and practice. It can also help them recognize that learning to teach occurs both in their university courses and in the field.

In my new position, I also hope to advocate for providing induction support to our graduates. If teacher education programs support their graduates once they become teachers, we can ensure that novice teachers receive some form of induction, even if none is provided by the schools in which they teach. As a faculty member, I cannot guarantee that our graduates receive the induction they need as novice teachers. However, with the small size of the college in which I will work, it is possible to develop an induction component. It will be difficult to provide the comprehensive induction that the literature calls for, but it is possible to provide meaningful induction. The support could include cohorts of graduates who engage in online discussions, occasional face-to-face meetings, online seminars or orientations, and faculty visits for graduates in need of assistance. Such induction support would not be designed as the sole induction our graduates receive. However, if they are not receiving induction from their schools, it may be the only official support on which they can rely. Ideally, the induction provided by the college would be in addition to the support provided by schools.

One of the reasons I accepted this particular position is because of the room for innovation in this education department, and I look forward to my upcoming opportunities. I plan to conduct a self-study of my work as a novice Assistant Professor. Documenting my transition will help me understand my experiences and improve my practices. I look forward to continuing to improve my teaching, something that this case study project has encouraged. I also look forward to collaborating with local teachers and thinking about how college faculty can play a role in induction. I think the self-study will help me make sense of my work as an Assistant Professor.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have implications for novice teacher induction and teacher education. These four cases demonstrate the variability in the induction novice teachers receive. The inconsistency of their induction experiences in Illinois is representative of induction across the United States; induction funding and supports vary widely (Goldrick, Osta, Barlin, & Burn, 2012). The varying induction support in itself is not negative, nor is it the only influence on the experiences of these case study teachers. Personal and school contexts impact the professional growth of teachers (Levin, 2003); thus, novice teachers have different experiences and induction needs. To accommodate novice teachers' diverse needs, induction programs should provide variety and be flexible. However, every novice teacher should have access to the induction supports they need and deserve. These four novice teachers intend to remain in education for the remainder of their careers, but their plans are not necessarily representative of all novice teachers. Schools that lack support for their novice teachers contribute to teacher attrition, which negatively impacts student learning and is costly for schools and districts (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

These cases also remind us that it is essential that preservice teachers are well-prepared upon graduation. Teacher education faculty must stay up to date with educational initiatives. Preservice teachers are well-served when their university instructors have collegial working relationships with local K-12 teachers. University courses and field experiences must be cohesive.

Much can be learned from the experiences of novice teachers. We know the importance of induction, yet no U.S. state currently provides high-impact, comprehensive induction, multi-year induction for all teachers (Goldrick, et al., 2012). These cases illustrate the importance of high-quality teacher education and induction, and continued research on these topics can lead to improved experiences for teachers. These cases add to the literature and strengthen the argument for induction. It is my hope that this study, and ones like it, will get the attention of policy makers across the nation so induction will finally receive the financial support it deserves.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- Did you feel like you had the necessary support during your first year of teaching? What supports did you have that you found beneficial? OR What supports would have been helpful?

- What supports do you need as you enter year two? How are these supports different than the supports you needed during year one?

- Do you have any burning questions about teaching or the teaching profession?

- How do you think your second year will be different from your first year?

- What do you look forward to as you enter year two that you did not look forward to when you entered year one?

- What challenges do you face as you go into your second year? Are these similar or different from what you felt going into your first year?

- I'd like you to rate the satisfaction level of your first year of teaching on a scale from 1-5, 5 being high. Please rate your satisfaction level, based on your first year, and then explain why you chose that satisfaction rating.

- Please talk about your predictions for the future. For example, do you see yourself being a classroom teacher until you retire? Do you see yourself staying in education but plan to move out of the classroom, perhaps as a curriculum coordinator, administrator? Do you plan to leave the education profession completely? Please talk about the factors that contribute to that potential decision.

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

- What was most surprising about your first year of teaching?

- What advice do you have for teachers who are preparing to enter their first year of teaching?

- Remember back to last August, a week before school started. What were you feeling, fearing, or experiencing excitement about? What's the biggest change since then? What or who most influenced this change? How are your feelings different as you enter year 2?

- What are some of the challenges that schools, society, and the public place on teachers? What challenges most impact you? Based on your experiences, what strategies, resources, and/or supports do teachers need in order to deal with or respond to these challenges?

Appendix C: Follow-up Interview Questions

Questions for Emma:

- You thought year one would be the toughest year of your life, and you were surprised that it was not as difficult as you expected. How has year 2 measured up to your expectations?

- Last year you wished you would have been observed more and you would have liked to receive more critical feedback. Do you feel like that is a possibility for this year? Do you still have the desire to be observed more? If so, what has occurred so far this year that is positive or negative for you in this respect or that indicates you may get more or less observations?

- As you reflect on the beginning of year two, what challenges do you face this year that are different than the challenges you faced last year (lack of curriculum; lack of feedback were mentioned..)? What has been the biggest challenge so far during year two? Do these feel different than last year? Are you approaching anything different this year, than last year? Why? What makes the difference?

- During our first interview, you said that you would have liked to have liked more support that was focused on lesson plan feedback. You spoke specifically about wanting someone to indicate if your instructional ideas are strong or if they can be improved. You said you would like to know when/if there is a more appropriate assessment for specific instruction. Do you still feel this would be valuable? Have you gotten such feedback? Would it be available if you sought it out? How does the (un)availability impact your confidence, preparation, instruction, etc.?

- Last year you felt that the extra-curricular activities in which you participated did not add satisfaction or dissatisfaction to your job. Specifically you said, "It wasn't super fun to do them, but it wasn't awful." Are you still participating in the same extra-curriculars? Do you

still feel the same way? Talk about that. What do you think extra-curricular activities do for students? I what ways are they related to teaching and teachers, or do you think about them as separate from the classroom and your teaching?

- Reflect on where you are now compared to where you were at this time last year.

- I think that you have a mature view of issues in education. For example, you talked about the privatization of schools, your concerns that education will turn into business, middle class Whites leaving public schools in urban areas, and the role of politics in education. How important are these issues to you? Why? Can you talk about why you are interested in these issues? Where does the passion come from? Where do you get your news on education? Did you learn about these issues in your teacher education program or was this more your own personal knowledge?

- You talked about your teacher education program being too theory-based. Can you talk specifically about what your program could have done to better you prepare you, in general? In what ways was it too theoretical? In what ways was it practical? Can you talk about what it could have done to prepare you re: instructional strategies, curriculum, management, etc.

- You talked about the conservative nature of this area. Can you talk more specifically about what you find conservative, perhaps comparing this area to an area you find more desirable. How has the conservative nature of the area influenced your teaching or your enjoyment of teaching/hindered the enjoyment of your first years?

- You felt this year would be easier, in a sense, because you have a better understanding of the local culture and way of life here. Please talk more about that. For example, talk about the local culture. How did you come to understand it better? How has it impacted the way you approach teaching, learning, and interacting with students, faculty, and parents?

- What differences do you see between Northern Illinois and "Southern" or Central Illinois? How has this impacted you and your teaching?

- For your second year, you planned to change your verbal warning policy. How have you changed your classroom management policies? How have the changes been received? Have they been effective? How do you like your new policy/procedures?

- You planned to create lesson plans over the summer, especially focusing on areas in which you considered yourself weak. For example, you said you sometimes struggled with in-depth knowledge in certain areas, especially in your Honors English class, because you did not have time to do the "intellectual research" to be as prepared as you wanted. You spoke specifically about the Great Gatsby in our conversation about the topic. Did you plan and research as much as you expected to over the summer? Do you feel like it's made a difference this school year?

- You indicated that you plan to remain in the education profession for the long haul, perhaps as a literacy coach. When you think about spending your future in education, what services or supports could be provided to make them fulfilling years?

- I know you didn't love your experience student teaching in CPS. Now that you're 1.5 years removed from the experience, reflect on how student teaching in an urban environment prepared you or didn't prepare you for the realities of teaching in a rural school.

- In our focus group discussion, you recommended that other novice teachers spend time with their colleagues outside of school. You also indicated that you work in a collegial culture, which plays a role in your satisfaction. Will you talk about the specific ways in which the collaborative or collegial culture influences your satisfaction? Have you spent time outside of school with your peers already this year?

- I know you picked up a second job over the summer, and you continue to work there during the school year. What would you like those outside of education to know about the sacrifices or hardships, both financially and emotionally, that teachers experience? Have the sacrifices been worth it for you?

Questions for Sofia:

- Reflect on where you are now compared to where you were at this time last year.

- You had high expectations for [town name]. How has your experience been this far?

- On flip side, [town name] had high expectations for you. How have you handled that pressure?

- As you reflect on the beginning of year two, what challenges do you face this year that are different than the challenges you faced last year (lack of curriculum; lack of administrative support were mentioned..)? What has been the biggest challenge so far during year two? Do these feel different than last year? Are you approaching anything different this year, than last year? Why? What makes the difference?

- You indicated that you plan to remain in the education profession for the long haul. When you think about spending your future in education, what services or supports could be provided to make them fulfilling years?

- As a self-proclaimed perfectionist, how are you balancing the demands of teaching with your other needs, such as down-time and a social life? Are you doing anything different this year?

- You had certain expectations for [city name]. I'm going to ask you about each one that you discussed last May, and I'd like you to comment on each:
    - You were excited to work with the Curriculum Director. How do you feel about the support she provides? How has it changed the way you plan and/or teach?

How do you think last year would have been different if you'd had the support of a C.D.?

o Last year you wanted to be supervised/observed more often and receive more critical feedback. You expected to have more people supervise you this year. How many people have supervised you? How do you feel about it? Has it changed anything about the way you think about teaching? If you haven't been observed as much as you'd hoped or expected to, do you still have the desire to be observed more? What has occurred so far this year that is positive or negative for you in this respect or that indicates you may get more or less observations?

o You talked about hanging out with the older English teachers so they could help you get established. How has that plan panned out? Talk about the collaboration or lack thereof that occurs at [city name] and how it impacts you.

o You were excited about having a curriculum and having direction about what to teach. How have your expectations been met or not met?

o You said that you would feel a bit like a first-year teacher again this year. In what ways do you feel like a first-year teacher? How is it different from last year? How has this year been different than your first year? How has it been the same?

o You expected [city name] to have a more collegial atmosphere and a more positive school culture. How has [city name] met (or not met) your expectations?

o You were excited about serving on the RTI committee. How has it impacted your teaching (differentiation was mentioned)? Has it contributed to your satisfaction? [leading questions]

- You perceived the students to be more motivated about academic achievement. In what ways is this true or not? Were your expectations accurate?

- When you look back on your experience in [city name], are there things you would have done differently, knowing what you do now?

- I know you felt some pressure to get your master's within the first 5 years. Do you still feel the same pressure? Have you decided on the area in which you'll study?

- Coaching softball played a huge role in your satisfaction last year. How do you predict it will impact your satisfaction this year?

- During the focus group, you said you were surprised about how much "we baby students," and you specifically talked about the homework and late work policies. How are things the same or different in [city name]?

- How do you feel about the support you get from administration at [city name]? Support from parents? How does this impact your satisfaction?

- In what are you glad and/or not glad that you changed schools?

- Compare your experience in the mentoring program this year to your experience at [city name].

Questions for Maya:

- When I talked to you over the summer you said you expected your first year to be harder than it was. This is what you said, "I would say a 4 or a 5 [satisfaction rating]. I had low expectations and it turned out being so much better than I thought it was going to be. Everyone told me it was going to be so scary, so awful, and I'd just fight to get by. But I really did like it and I'm excited after that." How is year 2 going for you? Does it match your expectations? How is it the same and different?

- In what ways is year 2 more challenging than year one? In what ways is it easier?

- Last year you would have liked the opportunity to observe more teachers. Do you have the opportunity to observe other teachers this year? If so, what would you look for? If not, do you still think it would be helpful? What would it take for you to be able to observe other teachers?

- You also said that you wouldn't mind being observed more often. Have you been observed this year? Who observed you? What were the results?

- You said you felt prepared to make lesson plans and you enjoyed it. Where did you learn it? What led to your confidence?

- You talked a lot about appreciating the support of your co-teacher. Please talk about the characteristics and background of your co-teacher from last year? How much guidance or direction did your co-teacher need from you? Do you have the same co-teacher this year? If not, do you still have a co-teacher? Is your co-teacher helpful? Why or why not?

- You talked a lot about wanting to learn more classroom management techniques, yet you did not have discipline issues in your classroom. Why do you think you were/are so focused on classroom management? Do you think that classroom management was your focus because you felt so comfortable with the lesson planning aspect of teaching? What about management would you like to know more about?

- You also talked about the helpful advice your principal gave you about classroom management (silent study hall help). Has he provided you with more classroom management (or other types of help) tips this year?

- You said that you looked forward to a few specific things during year 2, such as the advisory period, NJHS, and being the literacy leader again. Are you enjoying the responsibilities? Why?

- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of these?

- Last year you seemed to thrive on the impact you had on your students. Are you still feeling like you're making such an impact? Why? How can you tell if you're making an impact?

- Last year you said that you sometimes struggled with the workload being so different from student teaching (e.g. forms, emails). Are you having an easier time balancing these components this year? Why?

- Do you still plan to be a classroom teacher until you retire? Why? What motivates you to stay? What might make you reconsider this?

- You considered certain aspects of your literacy leader role to be "daunting" last year. How has your perspective changed or stayed the same? Do you think it's fair to expect a first-year teacher to take on such a role? What about second-year teachers?

- Last year when I talked to you, you were hoping to get the high school position. Although you enjoyed being here, you were leery about the scripted curriculum being adopted by the school. How are your feelings about the scripted curriculum now? Do you feel like it's making an impact on students? How do you know? Does it make you want to stay at or leave the school in the future? How do you think other teachers in the school are feeling about it? Has the adoption of such a scripted program impacted school culture at all?

- Last year you talked about specific support providers (e.g. 8th grade teachers, student teaching co-op, principal, curriculum coach). Are these people, or any others, providing you

with support this year? If so, what types of support are you receiving from them? If not, what supports do you wish you were receiving?

- Last year you talked about being comfortable with lesson planning. Where does that comfort come from? Where did you learn to do it? Do you have any questions about lesson planning?

Questions for Kurt:

- Reflect on where you are now compared to where you were at this time last year.

- Please talk about your life experiences and your previous employment that impact the way you work with high school students.

- As you reflect on the beginning of year two, what challenges do you face this year that are different than the challenges you faced last year (co-teachers and no classroom were mentioned.)? What has been the biggest challenge so far during year two? Do these feel different than last year? Are you approaching anything different this year than last year? Why? What makes the difference?

- How do you like teaching freshmen? How is it different from teaching juniors? Are you happy you made the transition?

- Talk about any differences you experience now that you're on a team? How do these experiences compare to your experiences last year?

- Last summer you said that teaching 14 year olds will make you a better teacher of 17 year olds. Do still you find that to be true?

- In our last interview, you said: "My experience at the [University name] was kind of irrelevant to my experience as a first-year teacher. As far as instructional strategies, I learned about them and experienced them in my practicum not at the [University name]." Can you

talk specifically about what your program could have done to better you prepare you, in general? Then talk about what it could have done to prepare you re: instructional strategies.

- During the focus group, you said that you were surprised about, yet empowered by the fact that your school leaders don't care much about what you teach. Would you have preferred to have more direction or do you like the open-endedness of it all?

- During the focus group, you talked about having high standards for your kids in the classroom and your policy to not give homework. Are these approaches you still follow or have things changed? Discuss why.

- When I asked you to give advice to a teacher entering his/her first year, you said "Don't be mean to your students. Be nice instead." Why that advice?

- You talked about the burden you felt as you entered your first year to read and plan ahead and indicated that it was an unnecessary burden that you put upon yourself, citing the support at your school. This year you are teaching all new classes, so there are some similarities between entering your first and second year. How did you approach the planning of year 2 differently?

- Based on your experienced interacting with other novice teachers, what are the biggest mistakes you see them making?

- You talked a lot about taking advantage of the supports at your school. Talk about how it would have been different had you not taken advantage of the supports (e.g. Instructional Coach, your formal mentor, your principal, the other English teacher with whom you collaborated).

- I think that you had a mature view of issues in education. For example, you talked about teaching being a political act, the anti-union sentiment, and brining into your classroom

issues that the local school board must tackle. How important are these issues to you? Why? Can you talk about why you are interested in these issues? Where does the passion come from? Where do you get your news on education? Did you learn about these issues in your teacher education program or was this more your own personal knowledge?

- You indicated that you plan to remain in the education profession for the long haul, perhaps as an Instructional Coach. When you think about spending your future in education, what services or supports could be provided to make them fulfilling years?