

Supporting Beginning General Education Teachers in Meeting the Needs of a Diverse
Classroom: A Study of Induction Practices

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine how beginning teachers are supported while teaching in a diverse school setting with students finding academic success. The literature identifies the connection between attrition rates, feelings of support, instructional practices, and some focus on the connection of student outcomes and practices associated with beginning teacher support. There is a gap in the literature relating to induction practices supporting beginning career teachers in diverse school settings. Knowing this gap exists, this study aims to address the following research question: *In schools that are successful with diverse learners, what structures, programs, and practices provide support to beginning career teachers that prepares them to educate diverse learners?* To address this research question, a comparative mixed-methods case study of two schools within the same school district will be framed by concepts of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The study is significant in that it will present important strategies and insights into practices diverse schools and school districts use to support beginning career teachers aimed at increasing student achievement for all students. The study introduces the concept of the *Reciprocal Growth Mode of Teacher Development* as a model of collaborative learning as a support for beginning career teachers. Along with their mentor, principal, and colleagues the beginning career teacher participates in a model of support and learning where not only they learning from others, but the beginning career teacher is recognized for the strengths a beginning career teacher may bring to a school.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study and Statement of Problem

Introduction to the Study

Beginning career teachers face classrooms with a wide range of diverse learners from various racial, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. There have been historically marginalized groups of students, based on race, socioeconomic status, and primary language, who have not found success in the current structure of schools. School districts have struggled to find ways to support beginning career teachers in using effective instructional strategies aimed at creating success for all students. In fact, some policies have created systems or structures promoting inequity in outcomes, such as a high focus on accountability in “failing” schools leading to a more scripted curriculum and constraints on instructional strategies leading to a continued difficulty in meeting the needs of all students. (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Spiegelman, 2004)

In this study, I examine how two school districts support beginning career teachers in an effort to raise the academic achievement of all students, especially focused on those students who are historically marginalized in schools and society based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, and language. The study will focus on the school district support structures that influence the strategies beginning career teachers use when facilitating learning in a racially, socioeconomically, and/or linguistically diverse classroom aimed at creating success for all students.

The concept of the “achievement gap” has become prevalent in research and literature, especially since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, which focused school accountability on student groups who were not consistently experiencing the same level of

academic achievement as other students. The “achievement gap” is a term used to describe the difference in academic achievement between white students and students of color, middle to upper class students and students considered economically disadvantaged, students who speak English and students who are not English proficient, and students without disabilities and students with disabilities. NCLB was able to bring these inequitable outcomes to a national conversation, but unfortunately, the term “achievement gap” led to an indirect blaming of the gap on students and families of color, lower socioeconomic status, and non-native English speakers.

In keeping consistent with the theoretical framework of this study (Culturally Relevant Pedagogy), the concept of “educational debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) is more appropriate to describe the reason for the achievement differences between student groups than the use of “achievement gap”. Ladson-Billings looks at the ongoing differences in academic achievement, as an ongoing issue of “debt” connected to historical laws and practices leading to inferior education, economic disparities in spending in school districts with a majority of students of color or students of lower socio-economic status, and political issues leaving families and communities of color and/or lower socioeconomic status out of the political process (i.e. voting). Due to the long term and ongoing effects of these issues, a “debt” has been created and only grows because the issues have not been properly dealt with in order to bring high achievement and equity for all students. In essence, the differences in academic achievement are the effect of the educational debt incurred and are only dealt with at a reactive, surface level and are not being addressed at a root, proactive level.

In the coming paragraphs, you will find graphics and information focused on the inequities in academic achievement among groups of students leading me to defining a problem statement and why I chose to focus this research on proactive and ongoing support districts can

provide beginning career teachers. The graphics illustrate the “debt” being incurred among racial, socioeconomic, and language lines in students.

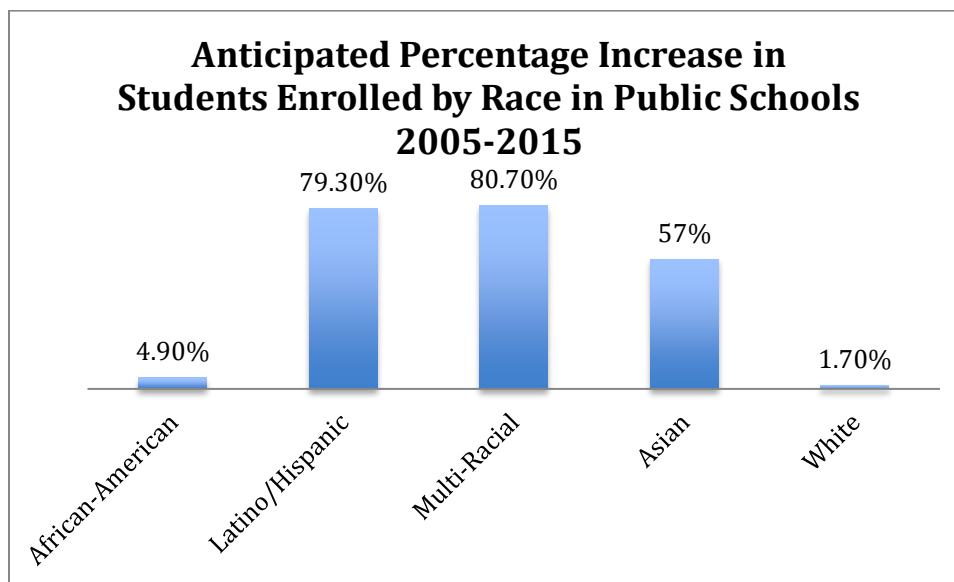
Evidenced by the different achievement levels among different student groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), schools struggle to best educate all students. Beginning career teachers have a feeling of unpreparedness when stepping into a diverse, multi-cultural classroom (Howard, 2003). Many new teachers are not exposed to diverse classrooms whether through their university preparation programs or through their own educational background (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004), with little coursework focused on student diversity and equity in outcomes among diverse students. In the following sections, I will argue school districts should create induction services and professional development opportunities for beginning career teachers focused specifically on implementing instructional practices proven to be effective in increasing academic achievement among all students.

I will consider four main reasons for the emphasis on supporting beginning career teachers through a focus on equity within diverse school settings: (1.) the continual increase in racial, linguistic, ability, and socioeconomic diversity in the classroom; (2.) the continued lack of academic success and growth of students of color, students speaking a language other than English, and students from economically disadvantaged households, (3.) the continued differences between the demographics of the teaching workforce and the students entering school each day, and (4.) effective teaching practices focused on increasing student achievement among diverse learners

Increasing student diversity. As shown in Figure 1.1 (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, & J. Zhang, 2013), students of color are currently enrolled in U.S. schools at a rate resulting in more diversity in our schools with the higher rate of enrollment

expected to continue into the future. The number of Latino children is rising the fastest among all racial groups, and now accounts for nearly one quarter of the students enrolled in prekindergarten through 12th grade, followed by Multi-Racial, Asian, and African-American students respectively. If the increase in the number of students of color in schools continues at the current rates, students of color will begin to be the majority of the students in prekindergarten through 12th grade by 2020.

Figure 1.1. Anticipated percentage of increase in students by race in United States from 2005 to 2015.



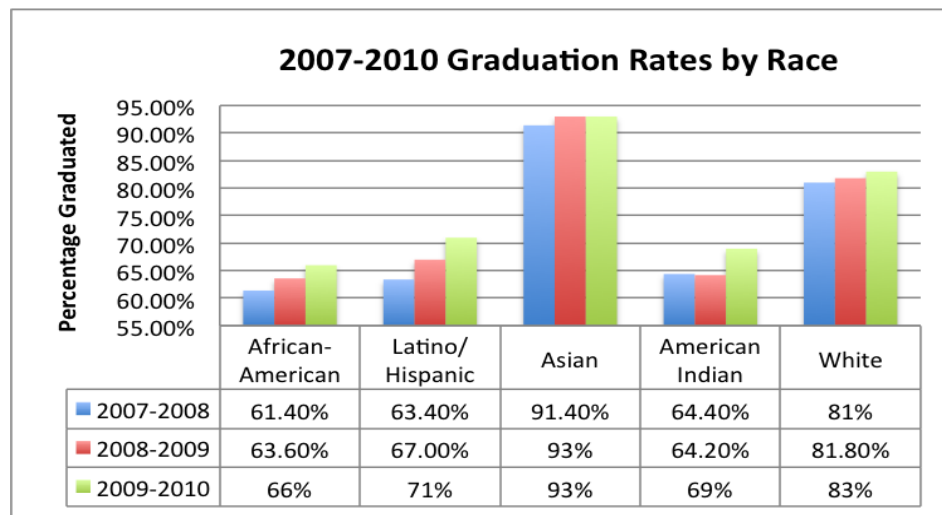
The percentage of school-aged children (5-17) speaking a language other than English at home increased from 10% to 21% from 1980-2009 (NCES, 2011). School districts find beginning teachers have graduated from teacher preparation programs without preparing them for the language diversity that is a reality in many classrooms across the country (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglmán, 2004).

The socioeconomic status of students also contributes to the changing demographics of schools. In 2006, 17% of students lived in poor households; in 2011, 21% of students lived in poor households (NCES, 2011). According to the Common Core of Data (NCES, 2011), 46% of public school students were eligible for free and/or reduced lunch based on their family's socioeconomic status. Students who are entering schools from families of low socio-economic status have less academic readiness skills leading to lower academic achievement than students from higher socioeconomic status families (Herbers, Cutuli, Supkoff, Heistad, Chan, Hinz, & Masten, 2012). Unfortunately, the difference between students coming from a lower socioeconomic status and students from higher socioeconomic status has not been shown to close, and actually widens as students continue their schooling (Dauber, Alexander, & Entwisle, 1996; Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003) **Educational debt and diversity.** The next step to understanding the need for a focus on supporting teachers in using successful teaching strategies with diverse learners is to understand the significant differences in academic achievement among the diverse populations reflecting the “educational debt” Ladson-Billings (2006) describes. I will focus on two general national sets of data to illustrate the significant inequity in achievement outcomes among student race, native language, and socioeconomic status: graduation rates and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Race and Academic Achievement. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics report “The Condition of Education” (Aud et al., 2013), the graduation rates vary significantly when comparing groups based on race. When looking at the graduation rates (Figure 1.2), there are significant differences among students based on race. The graduation rates are the most recent national graduation rates due to the data using the “Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate” which is calculated as a percentage by taking the estimated freshman class

from 4 years earlier compared to the diplomas earned in their senior year. A comparison between racial groups shows a difference in graduation rates in 2010 between 12% and 17%.

Figure 1.2. National graduation rates from 2007-2009 disaggregated by race.



A similar disparity in academic achievement among racial groups is clear in the data from the 2013 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). Figure 1.3 (NCES, 2013) illustrates the significant differences in reading scaled scores in 4th and 8th grade NAEP results among racial groups. White students were scoring on average more than 20 points higher than African-American, Latino, and American Indian students in both 4th and 8th grade reading were. To understand this disparity, white students in 4th grade were only scoring 18 points less on average than 8th grade African American students. The outcome differences between White and African American students in the same grade were similar to the difference in White 4th grade students and 8th grade African-American after the African-American students had 4 more years of instruction. Figure 1.4 (NCES, 2013) shows similar results in math scaled scores with white

students scoring on average more than 20 points higher than African-American, Latino, and American Indian students in both 4th and 8th grade results.

Figure 1.3. Reading scaled scores on 2013 NAEP results disaggregated by race.

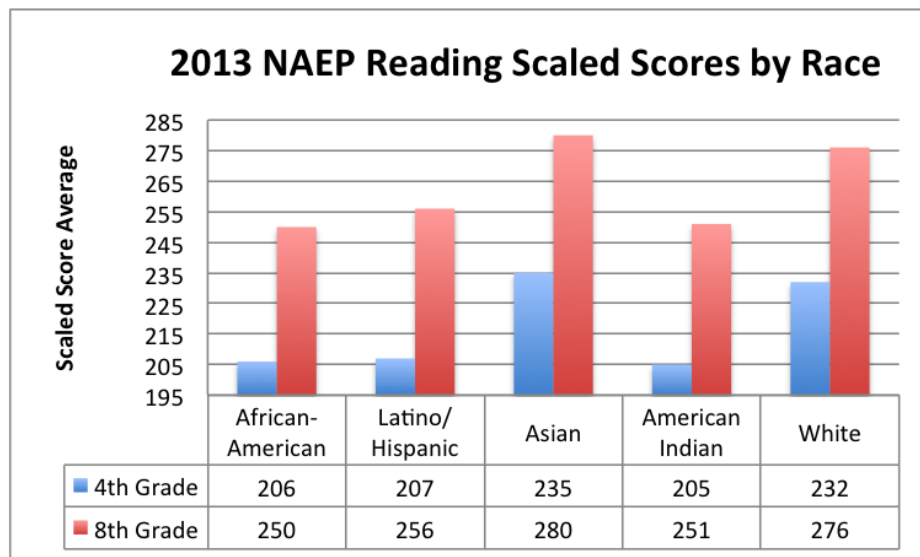
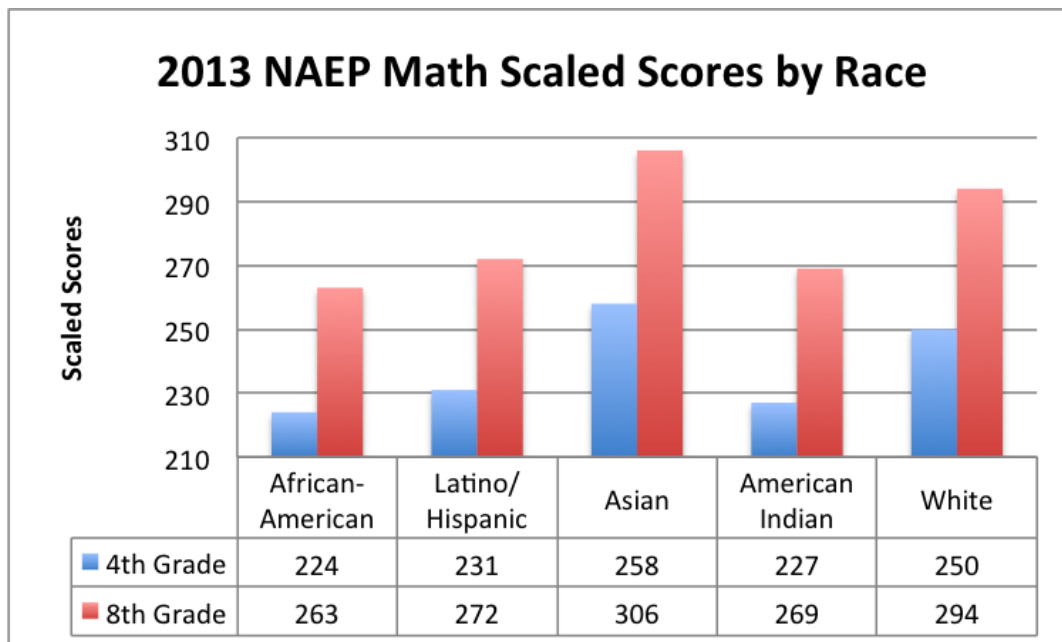


Figure 1.4. Math scaled scores on 2013 NAEP results disaggregated by race.



Socioeconomic status and student achievement. Socioeconomic status of students correlates with specific trends for multiple academic outcomes including dropout rates in high school and math and reading NAEP results. According to a report from the National Center of Educational Statistics (2011), socioeconomic status has a significant effect on high school dropout rates with 48% of all dropouts are from families that are in the lowest quarter of socioeconomic distribution, and 77% of dropouts are from families in the lowest half of the socioeconomic distribution. A composite score of parents' occupational status, parents' education, and family income calculated socioeconomic status.

Socioeconomic status clearly has effects on achievement results as reported in the results of the 2013 NAEP Reading and Math assessments. Figure 1.5 (NCES, 2014) displays the disparity in achievement results of the reading portion of the NAEP between students who receive free and reduced lunch assistance based on their family income with students who do not receive assistance. The scaled scores show disparities as large as 29 points between students receiving free and reduced lunch and those students who do not receive lunch assistance, which translates into students receiving free lunch being a full grade level behind their peers who are from families considered middle to upper class in socioeconomic status. The same pattern is evident in the results from the math portion of the NAEP in Figure 1.6 (NCES, 2014) where students receiving free lunch and reduced lunch are scoring as much as 27 points lower on average than students who do not receive lunch assistance based on their family's income.

Figure 1.5. 2013 NAEP reading scaled scores according to socioeconomic status.

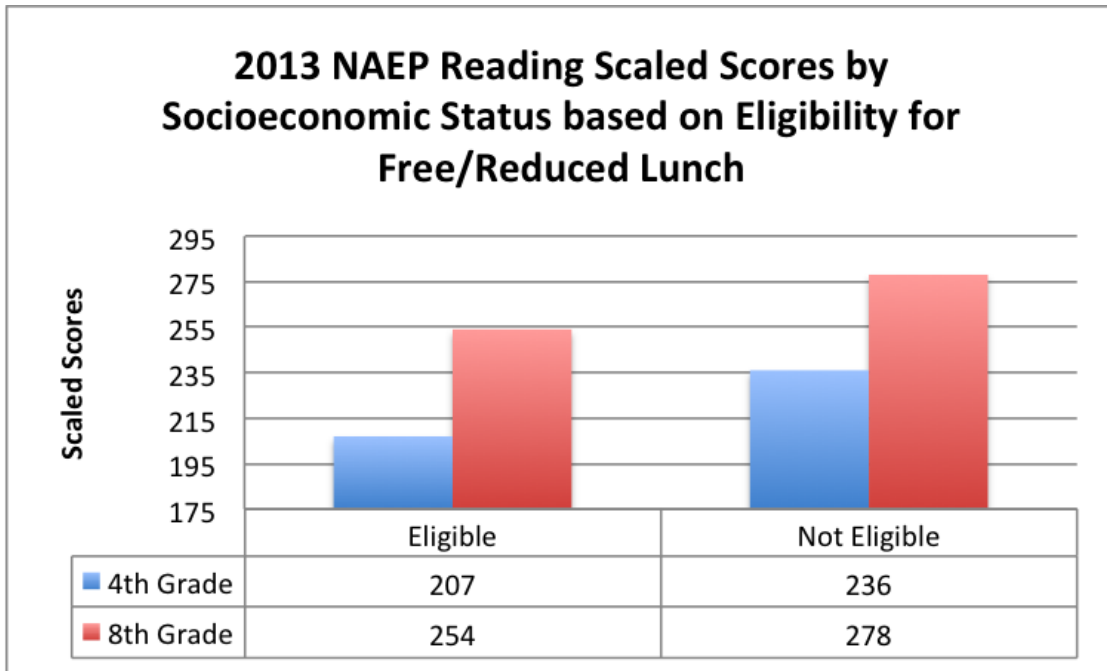
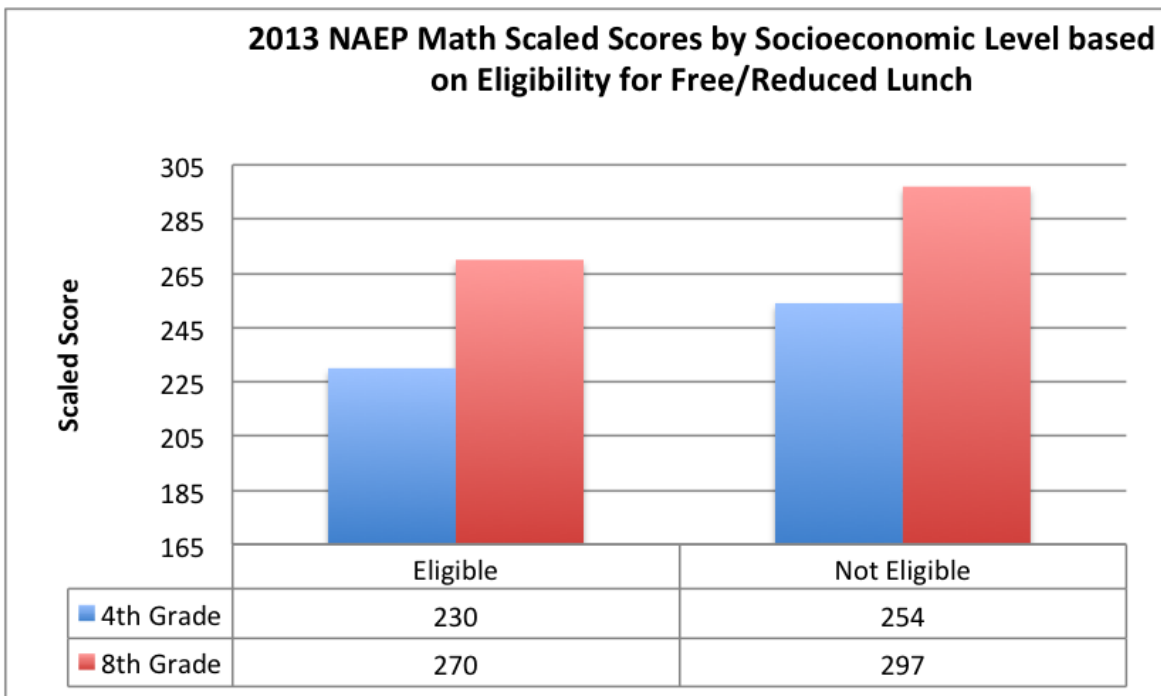


Figure 1.6. 2013 NAEP math scaled scores according to socioeconomic status.



Language and academic achievement. The final area of student demographics I will highlight to demonstrate the unequal academic achievement based on specific demographic descriptors is a student's label of being an English Language Learner (ELL). This is another example of the need for teachers to learn successful strategies for teaching in diverse school settings. Achievement data show the continued struggles school districts have in guiding English Language Learners (ELL) to proficient levels in reading with significant differences between students who are Limited English Proficient (LEP) and students who are not LEP. Figure 1.7 (NCES, 2014) shows a difference of 25 points in the average of scaled score points in the math portion of the NAEP between students who are ELLs and those students who are native English speakers in 4th grade and 41 points between the same groups in 8th grade. This disparity translates to the average native speaker of English in 4th grade scoring at approximately the same rate as an English Language Learner in 8th grade on the math portion of the NAEP, which means by 8th grade ELLs are an average of almost 4 grade levels behind native speakers of English. Figure 1.8 (NCES, 2014) shows even larger disparities in reading scaled scores on the 2011 NAEP with native English speakers scoring on average 39 points higher in 4th grade, and 45 points higher in 8th grade. This disparity shows the average native speaker of English scoring higher on the reading portion in 4th grade than the average English language Learner in 8th grade.

Figure 1.7. 2013 NAEP reading scaled scores according to a student's status as an English Language Learner.

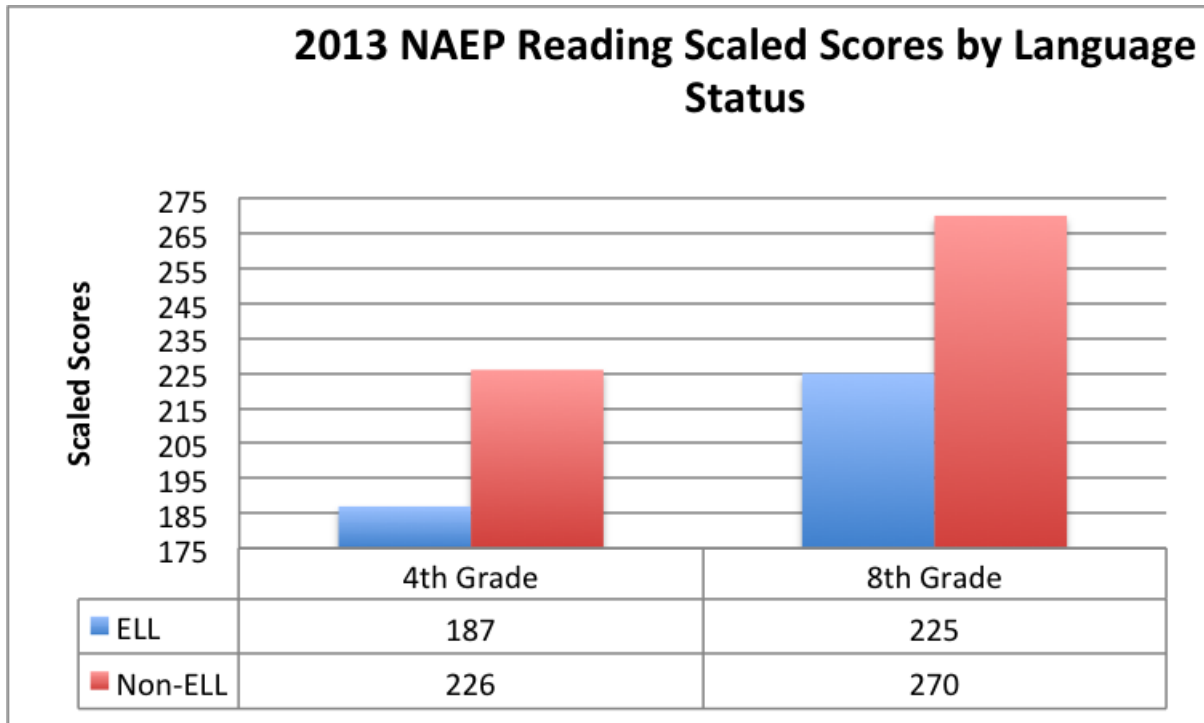
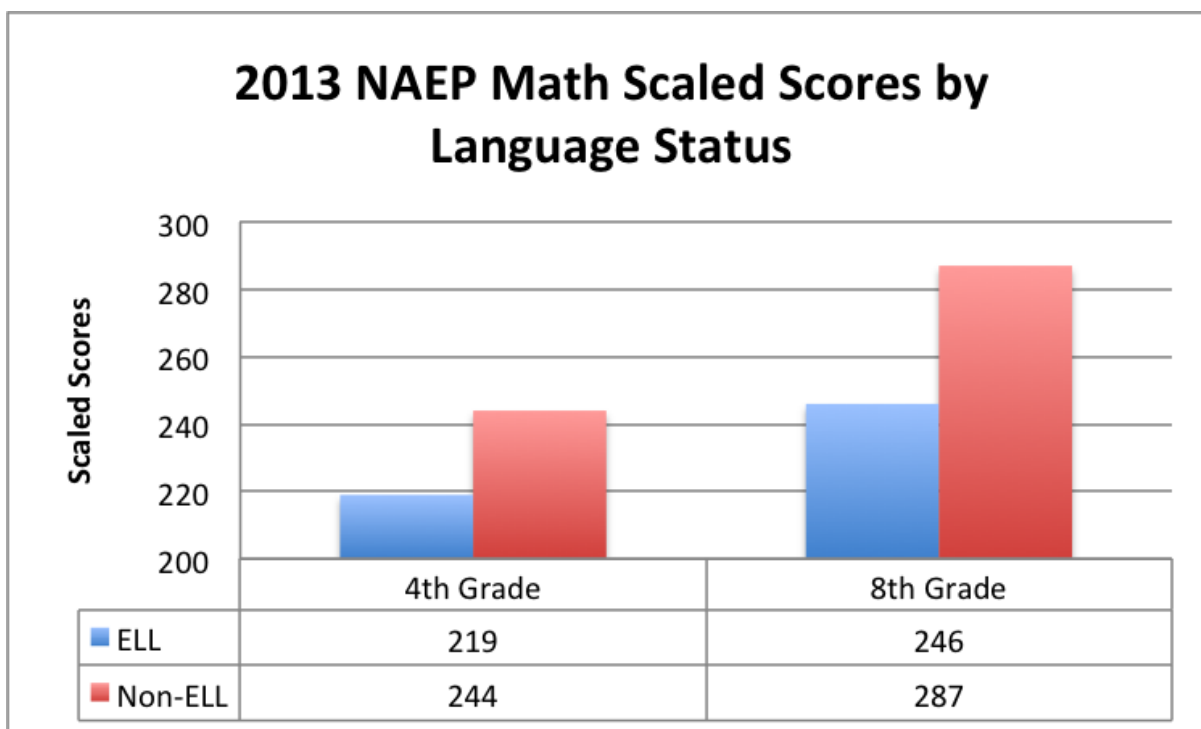


Figure 1.8. 2013 NAEP math scaled scores according to a student's status as an English Language Learner.



Demographics of teachers and students. The achievement outcomes among different groups of students described in the previous paragraphs highlight the need for new teachers to build their ability to be teaching in diverse school settings. The demographic differences existing between the current and future trends in the teaching force and the demographic trends in the current and future trends in students in the United States verifies the need for specific induction practices focused on diversity and equity.

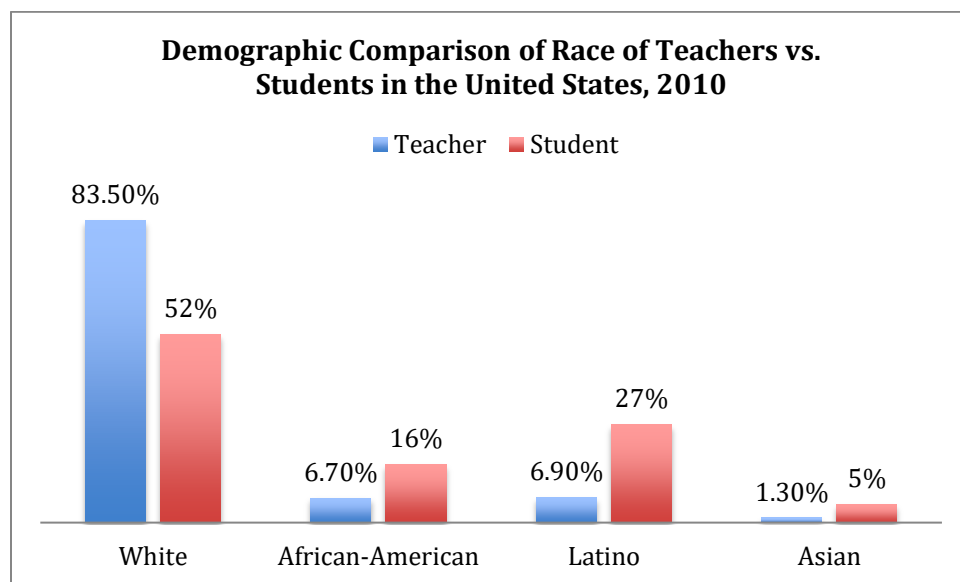
The population of new teachers entering a classroom for the first time is continuing to be a trend where a high percentage of teachers are first year teachers. In 1987 there were roughly 50,000 first year teachers compared to 200,000 in 2007 (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This trend of roughly 200,000 new teachers annually continues to be much higher than the average of 50,000 new teachers annually during the 1990's (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). In 2008, first year teachers were the most common teacher in public schools nationally, where in 1987 a teacher with 15

years of teaching experience was the most common teacher in schools. The most common teacher in 2008 was a first year teacher with the most common teacher in 1987 being a teacher with 15 years of teaching experience (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These facts demonstrate the need for school districts to support more beginning teachers than ever before in schools where diversity is growing and with the influx of new teachers school districts must address the demographic differences between students and teachers (Seidel, 2007).

One demographic area to focus on is race, where 83.5% of teachers are white, 6.7% are African-American, and 6.9% are Latino (NCES, 2010). Figure 9 (NCES, 2011) shows the demographic differences between the student populations and teacher populations in 2010. Figure 9 illustrates the racial divide between student and teacher providing a need for specific professional development to build a bridge between teacher and student in an effort to bring equitable outcomes for all students. When breaking down the demographic data to include only teachers with between one and five years, the data continues to show there is a large demographic divide between beginning career teachers and the students they are teaching with some racial divides becoming larger (NCEI, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Information (2011), for teachers with between one and five years of teaching experience, 78% of the teachers were white, 5% were African-American, 13% were Latino, and 3% were of more than one race. The report shows a shift with less white beginning career teachers, less African-American beginning career teachers, and more Latino teachers. The discrepancy is still very high with more than three-quarters of beginning career teachers being white, while the student demographic data show a much more rapid trend towards students of color being the majority of the students in U.S. schools. With a teacher's cultural background possibly informing much of their educational practices (Capper & Frattura, 2007), it is evident

school districts must develop teachers to focus on bringing equitable academic outcomes to all students. A teacher's background and experiences growing up serve as filters for what they are learning about people who have a different racial, cultural, and socio-economic background than themselves (Garmon, 2004).

Figure 1.9. Demographic comparison of teaching force and student enrollment by race.



Seventy-eight percent of teachers in 2011 were female, typically brought up in a middle class socioeconomic status as a child (NCES, 2012). Again, looking at the socioeconomic status of students in our schools another divide between teacher background and student background emerges with 46% of students receiving free and reduced lunches based on family income while a majority of our beginning teachers are coming from families of middle class or higher (Achinstein & Davis, 2014). Gender differences are also present in this statistic in that 51% of students enrolled in schools were male students while only 22% of teachers were male (NCES, 2012). Only 16% of teachers are male that have between one and five years of teaching

experience showing an actual decrease in the number of males coming into the teaching force (NCEI, 2011).

The final demographic difference between teachers and students is in language. With over 20% of students now speaking a language other than English at home (NCES, 2012), there seems to be a need for bilingual teachers or teachers who have training focused on students who speak another language. Unfortunately, there are only 2.5% (NCES, 2012) of teachers nationwide who were certified to teach students who spoke a language other than English.

The previous section of the introduction is arguing beginning career teachers have limited skills, abilities, or backgrounds to meet the needs of all learners, which can be an overgeneralization about all beginning career teachers leading to misguided support for new teachers (Sass, Hannaway, Xu, Figlio, & Feng, 2012). The literature review of this research study will show a large segment of beginning career teachers *do* feel underprepared and communicate a lack of support from school districts in meeting the needs of all students. However, research presented in the latter parts of the literature review does show evidence beginning career teachers also bring assets to the field of education and at times may be more effective than more experienced teachers, even in diverse school settings.

The overall information in this section is made to further the discussion of the need for and specific strategies within proactive support for beginning career teachers through induction services due to the demographic shifts in the student and teacher populations, and the continued inequities in academic achievement among the various demographic groups described.

Statement of the Problem

The shift towards a teaching force with less experience; the demographic differences of race, socioeconomic, and language between teacher and students; and the achievement among different student groups illustrate the need for school districts to find strategies to support beginning career teachers focused on improving instructional strategies to improve learning outcomes for all students. Many beginning teachers in racially, linguistically, and/or socioeconomically diverse schools and school districts often have very little formal training in best practices focused on teaching a diverse classroom (Wang, 2001).

Teacher preparation programs have historically focused on general teaching strategies like lesson planning with little focus on racial, ethnic, or language diversity (Quinn & D'Amato-Andrews, 2004). Multiculturalism has been traditionally the area where pre-service teachers are exposed to the idea of diverse classrooms. Unfortunately, multiculturalism has only given a surface level of understanding of diversity, but does not build the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create a classroom focused on equity and instructional strategies leading to success for all students (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Many times the only classroom experience a pre-service teacher has with a diverse classroom is based on chance, by being placed in a practicum or student teaching experience with racial, ethnic, or language diversity (Andrews, 2001). When a pre-service teacher attends a teacher preparation program in an area where there is not a lot of racial, ethnic, or language diversity, there is even less of a chance the pre-service teacher will gain any classroom experience in a diverse classroom.

In a meta-analysis of studies by Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boone, & Zimmer (2009), researchers found that only 10% of the teacher preparation programs in the study required a full course on language diversity with other courses also covering topics in language diversity. Only

38% of the programs required a language diversity course plus coverage of cultural diversity. Pre-service teachers attribute their feelings of preparedness more to their placement and experience as student teachers in diverse settings, than any coursework they may take at the university level (Anderson & Stillman, 2012). In essence it seems to be the luck of the draw for a pre-service teacher to be placed in a student teaching experience allowing for the pre-service teacher to become prepared as a teacher in a diverse school setting and gain instructional competencies aimed at creating classrooms where all students experience success.

Unfortunately, student teachers are likely to come from a university level teacher education program without a coherent connection between coursework, student teaching placement, and overall philosophy focused on teaching in diverse settings (Mills & Ballantyne, 2008). The disjointed approach being employed at many teacher education programs leads to beginning career teachers feeling unprepared to be effective in the diverse classrooms (Zeichner, 2003). These findings further illustrate the need for school districts to begin creating coherent induction services for beginning career teachers to support their growth in meeting the needs of all students in the ever-changing demographics of school classrooms.

If a school district does not have a formal induction program focused on building the skills of beginning teachers, the school and district is not able to support those students, which in turn heightens the frustration level of the beginning teacher who is often already overwhelmed by just learning how to manage a classroom for the first time independently. Unfortunately, this becomes a sink or swim structure for both beginning teacher and the students in the classroom of the beginning teacher.

More than half of the states in the U.S. require some type of induction practice ranging from mentoring to ongoing workshops (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Speiglman, 2013). In a study

conducted by Ingersoll and Strong (2011), of the 91% of teachers reporting they received induction support, only 5% of those teachers received a comprehensive induction program including mentoring, regular meetings with their principal, beginning teaching seminars, reduced workload, and common planning time with colleagues. Induction programs focused on socializing the beginning teacher into the current school culture, helping beginning teachers know the basic rules and policies of a school and district, and helping them know where to find supplies or other items within a school have been shown to be far less effective than a comprehensive induction program described above (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Odell & Schwille, 2008).

School districts with a diverse population would benefit from induction processes supporting a beginning teacher in building on his/her strengths and build the capacity of the beginning career teacher in being able to meet the needs of all learners within schools growing in racial, linguistic, and socioeconomically diversity (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). School districts have recognized the need for supportive practices through induction practices, but a very small amount of districts have focused on supporting beginning teachers with induction programs focused on classroom diversity and equity. (Loeb & Darling-Hammond, 2009; Achinstein & Athanases, 2005).

Research Question

Education researchers have focused on comprehensive induction programs and the effect on teacher attrition, feelings of support in beginning teachers, and the effects of induction programs on student academic achievement outcomes. Within the main body of research on comprehensive induction programs, there is a small body of research focused on teacher

induction programs centered on diversity and equity. This small amount of research is focused on school districts striving to develop beginning career teachers who create classrooms where all students find academic and social success. Throughout the proposal, I will be describing the strategies induction programs use in helping beginning career teachers become practitioners driven to create equitable outcomes for all students.

In defining the strategies within induction programs aimed at successfully supporting the academic growth of all students within diverse school settings, I will rely on the theoretical framework of the study focused on Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy where instruction allows students to experience academic success, maintain and develop cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. In an effort to add to and strengthen, the research literature focused on how supporting beginning career teachers working in diverse settings, the research question I will answer is:

In schools that are successful with diverse learners, what structures, programs, and practices provide support to beginning career teachers that prepares them to educate diverse learners?

A few terms within the research question must be defined. The term, beginning career teacher, refers to a teacher who is within the first three years of their teaching career. I chose the term "beginning career teacher" over "new teacher" based on the majority of school districts defining probationary teachers as teachers within their first three years of teaching and considering them "beginning teachers". A school district considered "successful" in the context of the research question is defined by academic achievement outcomes higher than the state average on state standardized assessments for all students, especially for students in racial, linguistic, and lower socioeconomic sub-groups. Finally, the terms "beginning career teacher

support program” and “induction program” will be used interchangeably throughout the body of this research study as they both represent the support systems a school district would put into place to support a beginning career teacher.

Theoretical Framework

In framing this research study surrounding teacher induction programs focused on creating educational equity for all students, I will be using Ladson-Billings’ (1995) framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy focuses on instruction leading to student academic success, developing and maintaining students’ cultural competence, and students developing skills to challenge the current social order. The culturally relevant framework will help focus the research design on developing beginning career teachers in becoming culturally relevant practitioners focused on effective instructional practices ultimately bringing equitable outcomes in student achievement for all students through the social change agent of schools.

Using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as a framework to conceptualize this research study allows for the organization and findings to center on how school districts support beginning career teachers in using Culturally Relevant Practices with an aim at ensuring equitable academic outcomes. In the following paragraphs, I will be describing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as to how it will inform the study and describe my research results. At the absolute root of this research study is the inquiry of how school districts support beginning career teachers in eliminating inequity in the academic achievement outcomes among all students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) describes Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as having three overriding criteria:

- Students must experience academic success.
- Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence.
- Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order.

To further describe Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and connect the CRP framework to my study, I will be focusing on the three criteria defining Culturally Relevant Pedagogy stated above in the following sections.

Students must experience academic success. Ladson-Billings (1998) challenges educators to meet students' academic needs focused on guiding students to long-term academic achievement, and not just looking to make students feel good about what they are doing. This challenge is in response to many teacher preparation programs focused on building students' self-esteem through social-emotional learning activities and through consistent positive feedback even in times when a student may need critical feedback. Focusing on making a student "feel good" with extrinsic motivators does not allow the student to fully experience success and build an intrinsic attitude of attaining success through personal skills and talents (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

CRP includes a strong emphasis on teachers creating an environment in school fostering students in choosing to be academically successful. Academically successful is defined broadly without being constrained by only showing academic success through a satisfactory score on a standardized test. Ladson-Billings (1995) defines academic success as students being able to develop "literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy" (p. 160). This includes an emphasis on connecting the academic work in the classroom to success in the world outside of the classroom. Understanding the

knowledge shared and constructed in the classroom is not static, but shared, recycled, and added on to prior knowledge as a component of a culturally relevant classroom. The teachers and students must critically view the knowledge being taught and/or gained in a school where students are held to high expectations with an acknowledgement the students own background knowledge is valued and included (Howard, 2003).

Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence. Culturally relevant teachers must be able to use instructional tools where students are encouraged to maintain their cultural identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students of color do not see school as a welcoming place or a place where they can be themselves due to a feeling their culture is not valued by their teachers or schools (Jackson, 1994). Ladson-Billings (1994) describes teachers who support students in developing and maintaining cultural competence are able to connect to students valuing the student as an individual person and as a member of a larger family and community culture. A teacher effectively employing culturally relevant practices also understands his/her own culture and how his/her own cultural perspective informs teaching practices and relationships built with students (Winter, Cooper, Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The culturally relevant teacher sees teaching as a way to give back to the community and see themselves as a member of the school community. This viewpoint connects with how teacher's culturally relevant classroom overlaps into creating a community of learners within a classroom where there are strong connections between students and teachers.

Culturally relevant teachers understand the need students have to be connected to their teacher, but also encourage students to be connected to one another (Winter, et.al. 2011). Fostering a strong connection between the students and teacher and among students can be accomplished in many different ways. A teacher can connect with their students through a simple

gesture of writing a personal letter to each student on a weekly basis or meeting the students each day at the classroom door asking them about what amazing things they are going to accomplish that day. A teacher may also create an entry questionnaire asking the students about who they are and what interests they have in order to better structure the classroom and content to connect with a specific group of students (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Creating a classroom where students connect to one another creating a “community of learners” is an important aspect of a culturally relevant classroom. Examples of a teacher creating connections among students can include: a teacher who explicitly discusses with the class about the idea that their classmates are extended family, a teacher creating a camping trip with her class prior to school starting, or setting up partnerships in a classrooms where students are accountable for their own classmates work completion and learning. Outside of these examples, a culturally relevant teacher creates a classroom where students feel supported in cooperating with one another, but also feel empowered to feel responsible in creating an atmosphere of critical learning in the classroom.

Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. Culturally relevant teachers see their instruction as a constantly changing work of art always in the state of development based on critically engaging with the world and with the changing dynamics of each group of students a teacher works with from year to year or from hour to hour (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Culturally relevant teachers are active in critically reflecting on norms, values, knowledge, and systemic structures in place maintaining inequities. The culturally relevant teacher takes these reflections and structures classroom instruction to invite students into discussions and activities in changing inequitable structures to support all students.

Culturally relevant teachers believe knowledge must be constructed and reconstructed by connecting new knowledge with the students' current knowledge in an effort to help the students personally understand what is being taught (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The scaffolding of instruction to build upon the knowledge of each student facilitates learning without the teacher always being the one who passes on knowledge.

A teacher may engage students to examine the idea of Europeans "discovering" new lands that were already inhabited by Native Americans, Africans, or other groups. Students are challenged to reflect on the word "discovering" and whether this word describes someone that comes to a land where people are already there. This type of discussion can help students challenge their own beliefs and how these beliefs can ultimately lead to the inequities we see in our communities. The discussion allows students to understand the importance of reflecting on their own knowledge and perspective and how that may differ with what the majority of people believe. A culturally relevant teacher honors the different perspectives of the students in the classroom, and gives the students the skills to communicate and argue in favor of those perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 2009)

The Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is helpful to guide the study in answering the research questions due to the directness to which CRP addresses many of the concerns beginning educators have towards working in a diverse school setting. As stated in the introduction to the study there is a continued cultural contrast between teachers and students where the cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of teachers do not reflect the cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of the students the teachers are working with each school day. Helping students develop "cultural competence" and a "critical consciousness" are specific attributes to CRP and the research questions of this study specifically address the ways school

districts support beginning career teachers in building their own “cultural competence” and “critical consciousness” in order to support their students’ learning in these areas.

CRP also addresses the need for students to experience academic success to build confidence and see the connection between what they are doing in school and the world surrounding them. Students must see themselves as successful in the academic areas of schools by meeting high academic expectations of a teacher. This aspect of CRP connects with the selection of research sites where students from diverse groups are finding academic success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following literature review links to the research question using three specific strands of research: pre-service teacher preparation programs focused on diversity, general teacher induction practices, and teacher induction practices focused on diversity and equity. I will initially focus on pre-service preparation and teacher certification programs and how those programs prepare prospective teachers for working in a diverse classroom setting. I will then move onto literature centered on general induction practices school districts use to support and socialize beginning career teachers after the years of preparation at a teacher education program. Following the review of literature on general induction practices, I will concentrate my literature review and focus on induction practices focused on diversity and equity to understand what research has shown in relation to the strategies and structures school districts put in place to support beginning career teachers in working with diverse student populations.

I used the same electronic databases ERIC, EbscoHost, Google Scholar, and JSTOR to search for empirical studies focused on the different strands within the literature review process. At the beginning of each strand of the literature review, I will describe the specific terms I searched and why I chose those words.

Pre-Service Training of Teachers Focused on Diversity

Literature I used in the following strand of the literature review concentrates on pre-service training of teachers focused on diversity. I organized this strand into the following categories focused on pre-service training of teachers focused on diversity: state teaching certification standards related to diversity and teacher education strategies focused on diversity. Even with a small amount of research regarding the topic, I felt it was important to recognize the

influence or lack of influence state and federal departments of education have on teacher certification and accreditation of the teacher certification agencies, most notably university and colleges, focused on preparing pre-service teachers to work in diverse schools and classrooms. This section will give a context for why a majority of new teachers tend to feel especially unprepared to successfully teach in diverse classrooms. The second section will focus on the strategies, and success of those strategies, teacher certification programs use in order to prepare pre-service teachers to teach in diverse schools and classrooms.

There has long been research on teacher preparation focused on preparing teachers to teach in diverse schools, but there has been a rise in the amount of research in the area of diversity and pre-service training or teacher certification in the past decade since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwanto, 2005). The No Child Left Behind Act created more scrutiny around teacher preparation as it relates to guiding teachers in strategies to ensure all students find academic success, and has only increased in the recent years as the current Secretary of Education continues to critically look at teacher preparation programs preparing teachers to work in diverse settings.

Search process. I used the following terms in various combinations when using electronic databases to search for empirical studies on pre-service teacher training with an emphasis on working in diverse classrooms and schools: pre-service teachers, diversity, equity, field experience, student teacher, multicultural education, social justice, disposition, and culturally relevant. I chose the terms pre-service, student teacher, and field experience due to the prevalence of using these words to describe prospective teachers. I combined those terms with multicultural education, culturally relevant, and social justice due to the overlap each of these terms seems to have within teacher education.

State teaching certification standards related to diversity. Overall, there is a lack of attention in state teaching certification standards on the issues surrounding the diverse classrooms many teachers will experience when beginning their teaching career and throughout their teaching career. Of the states requiring some type of either university classroom experiences or field experiences meeting a “diversity” requirement, the requirement is relatively minimal such as one class focused on multiculturalism or a short experience working in a diverse environment.

In a study performed by Akiba, Cockrell, Simmon, Han, and Agarwal (2010), an analysis on the state standards used in the fifty states in the United States focused on teacher certification and accreditation of teacher certification programs as it relates to diversity and/or equity related requirements within those standards. The study sheds light on a possible link brought up in the introduction of this study focusing on beginning career teachers feeling unprepared to work within diverse settings due to lack of experience, coursework, and discussion surrounding diversity and equity. The researchers used Sleeter and Grant’s (1987) Five Approaches to Multicultural Education a theoretical frame. Sleeter and Grant’s approaches range from a deficit view of cultural difference to multicultural education that is social reconstructionist. Akiba et al. (2010) contend many of the requirements and standards derive from a deficit view of cultural difference where cultural differences are “accommodated” or looked at as “exceptional”.

Akiba et al. (2010) found only 55% of the states required diversity “demonstration” of knowledge by pre-service students within a teacher certification program. 47% of the states created a requirement for certifying universities to be accredited to provide curriculum or program design to meet diversity requirements. 41% of states required the diversity requirement to be met through field experiences. The requirements were all very ambiguous with a focus on

long-term goals and not the methods or practices needed to support pre-service teachers in gaining strategies to meet the needs of students in a diverse school setting. The researchers found 23 states focused on a deficit model of multicultural education looking at the idea to fit cultures into the mainstream with more of a focus on assimilating cultures rather than finding how the diversity can enhance the learning environment in a classroom or school. Only 5 states have any focus on social reconstructionist approaches (Zeichner, 1989) to teacher certification or accreditation of certifying teacher preparation programs where teacher candidates are encouraged to see how their role as educators has an effect on the overall movement of a society towards social justice. Overall, the researchers found that diversity requirements seemed to be more of an option rather than a requirement for the certifying teacher preparation program. The findings of the study may lead to a belief why beginning teachers are not comfortable or confident in their ability to successfully teach within a diverse school environment.

Neumann's (2010) findings were similar in that the researcher found that out of 300 universities studied, 45% required coursework in the social foundations of education and multicultural education. The coursework was found to be limited in depth, leading to new teachers having little or no background and knowledge about the democratic purpose of schooling and diversity within schools. Overall, Neumann (2010) found providing one class focused on multicultural and social foundations does not provide enough background knowledge for a pre-service teacher to have the ability to be a culturally relevant practitioner. Neumann (2010) contends universities and teacher education programs will need to provide pre-service teachers with the time needed to reflect on the coursework, field experiences in connection with the coursework, and the pre-service teacher's concepts of multicultural education and social

justice there will be a continued disparity between teacher knowledge and the diversity most schools are currently experiencing.

Teacher education strategies focused on diversity. The demographic changes in the United States described in the introduction to this study has prompted universities, colleges, and teacher preparation programs to create courses and field experiences to focus on preparing pre-service teachers to work with diverse populations. The continued cultural mismatch between the teaching force dominated by white, middle class, females and a student population where students of color, students speaking a language other than English, and students of low socio-economic status has prompted teacher certification programs to begin questioning how the program is preparing teachers to work within diverse school environments (Storms, 2013). Ullici and Battey (2011) argued pre-service teachers are more apt to hold they are “color blind” when it comes to teaching children. Pre-service teachers may believe it is best to see children as equal in every phase of diversity: gender, socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic.

When discussing race among pre-service and professional teachers, they likely will turn to the idea not seeing their students’ skin color (Johnson, 2007). This idea can create a barrier for teachers to move forward in discussing how they understand and connect with their own cultural background and the cultural background of their students. “Colorblindness” can lead to a teacher who is not only unaware of who his/her students are, but when making instructional and curricular decisions is unable to reflect upon the students in his/her classroom and have those students represented in those decisions. An example might be a teacher who works in a racially diverse classroom and is teaching about the Civil War using memoirs of people who lived then to bring perspectives to the students but does not include memoirs from African-American slaves during that time. Even though this teacher is claiming to be colorblind and professing the equal

treatment of others, by omitting the perspectives of African-American slaves is clearly silencing a very important group of people from the era of the Civil War communicating to the students that perspective is not valued.

Building a pre-service teacher's understanding of diversity and the connection to a culturally relevant practices has been shown to be a "two steps forward, one step back" process even in the most coherent teacher preparation programs focused on building a social justice core in pre-service teachers within the frame of culturally relevant practices (Gere, Buehler, & Haviland, 2009).

The challenge for universities and colleges providing certification for teachers is to find strategies to build the pre-service dispositions towards working successfully with diverse populations. Kidd, Sanchez, and Thorp (2008) found the program experiences having the most impact on developing dispositions of teachers working with diverse populations were ones involving five components: readings focused on issues of race, culture, and social justice; internships in diverse communities; interactions with diverse families; critical reflection; and dialogue and discussion. The researchers concluded pre-service teachers do not become more culturally relevant through one or two classes, but the certification program must continually and systematically focus on the components described or students will only have a surface level understanding of culturally relevant practices. The challenge lies in connecting all pre-service (classes and field experience) activities to have a common focus of diversity and equity (Storms, 2013).

Specific activities and experiences have an effect on how pre-service students begin to wrestle with the idea of how to grow as culturally relevant practitioners. A study by McCrary (2010) focused on a specific activity titled the "Invisible Differences Project" where a

homogeneous cohort of pre-service teachers completed a family history project to present and discuss with one another. The study found the pre-service teachers were able to think about their own family histories and how within a perceived homogenous classroom there was still a large amount of diversity relating to their perceptions of their upbringing. The researcher contends the pre-service teachers were able to better understand diversity within their own cohort and how understanding their own family history helps them appreciate diversity in their own classroom. Similar to Ladson-Billings (1994) contending an important piece of being a culturally relevant practitioner is when a teacher guides his/her students to understand in developing and maintaining a students' own cultural competence.

The challenge of connecting all, or most, pre-service requirements (classes and field experience) to have a common focus of diversity and equity is important to address in order to best prepare pre-service teachers for working in diverse school settings (Storms, 2013). There may not be one specific strategy to use when preparing a pre-service teacher to work in a diverse setting, but it may just as important to develop specific dispositions within pre-service teachers focused on, for example, the tenets within Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to be successful in diverse settings. Garmon (2004) found a beginning or practicing teacher's general disposition is a large indicator of their ability to focus on building relationships with a diverse group of students. In the study, the researcher used a single case study to better understand what a teacher needs in order work within a diverse community. According to Garmon (2004), a teacher must have a strong sense of social justice, openness to new ideas, and be very self-aware of who they are and how they connect with the world around them. The other factors determined to play a large part in a positive multicultural development for a teacher are experiencing multicultural

teaching placements, group discussions with other educators in diverse settings, and experiences in specific courses in pre-service training.

Mills and Ballantyne (2010) found results from a study supporting Garmon's findings, with a claim that stand-alone classes are not sufficient to change dispositions of pre-service teachers. The researchers found consistent discussions with colleagues focused on social justice, and constant reflection over the course of multiple semesters or years of study are the most important pieces of the needed personal transformation a pre-service teacher needs to make in order to become a successful teacher in diverse classroom settings. A focus on the subject of social justice over only one semester did not give the pre-service teachers the ability to dig into the understanding of what social justice means in educational systems and classroom instruction. The researchers theorized pre-service teachers come into the certification programs with a set disposition towards working within a diverse school setting, and must be given time to reflect along with focused coursework and field experiences in order to pave the way for pre-service teachers to challenge their own disposition.

Researchers have wrestled with the idea of whether or not pre-service teachers' dispositions are too engrained to ever be developed or changed, especially when it comes to how a teacher understands cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences in students. Schussler, Stooksberry, and Bercaw (2010) conducted a qualitative study focused on how dispositions of 35 pre-service teachers were influenced by specific activities and time to reflect and think on one's own assumptions. The idea of three domains making up a personal disposition: intellectual, moral, and cultural framed the study. The researchers offered a comprehensive definition of a teacher's disposition: a disposition involves the inclination of a teacher to achieve particular purposes and the awareness of the self and the context of a given situation to employ appropriate

knowledge and skills to achieve those purposes. The most powerful tools in developing a disposition of a teacher were time to reflect and discussing one's own assumptions and how those assumptions relate to their experience with diverse classrooms. The researchers found the pre-service teachers often viewed their students as the others and unlike the teacher. The researchers noted the teachers typically did not see themselves as coming from a specific culture, but the cultures the students were coming from were discussed many times between pre-service teachers. The researchers further developed a working definition of a cultural disposition, which is the teacher's inclination to make necessary modifications to meet the needs of diverse learners. A teacher's cultural disposition involves an awareness of his/her own cultural identity, an awareness of students' cultures, and the effect of culture on the learning environment and student achievement. In order to develop a teacher candidate's disposition, they must be able to fully reflect and deal with their own assumptions by unpacking those assumptions while gaining experience in working with diverse populations of students.

Petersen (2007) also found when pre-service teachers were working with a diverse population of students, in this case service-learning opportunities; the pre-service teachers had difficulty not seeing the students as the "other". The study found the pre-service teachers needed to understand their own background and how it can inform and cloud how they interact with students with backgrounds other than their own, and how they interpret the actions and behaviors of those same students. The study gave more credence to the idea without coherence between the experiences student teachers have working with diverse students and the courses they take within their teacher education program along with reflective conversations with one another, it is difficult for the pre-service teachers to change lifelong beliefs, dispositions, and misconceptions about diversity.

Goodlad (1990) clearly speaks to the importance of pre-service teachers understanding the context of their position as a teacher within the bigger framework of society challenging their beliefs and challenging the current inequities within society.

“It is possible—indeed, likely—that college students will go through their general education requirements and academic majors, perhaps to the level of a masters’ degree, without even thinking about these inequities in schooling. But it is intolerable for future teachers to remain ignorant and unconcerned. And so their professional education must ensure a necessary loss of innocence.” (p. 22)

The inequities Goodlad speaks of are the racial, gender, and socioeconomic differences in achievement present in our schools. The statement summarizes the reason this study is framed using Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and is focused on the importance of the type of support beginning career teachers receive in working with diverse populations of students. The statement points to the importance of pre-service teachers being reflective upon their own assumptions concerning diverse student populations, but also brings to light some of the findings from the studies discussed in this section of the literature review. It is important to recognize the research does not clearly show what “works” to prepare pre-service teachers to successfully meet the needs of a diverse set of learners. There are aspects of preparing pre-service teachers to successfully teach in a diverse setting within the research presented that must be accounted for in pre-service programs as well as induction programs those teachers will be a part of when they become employed for the first time. Some of those aspects found to have a positive impact on pre-service teachers’ ability to work within a school having a diverse students population were: building an understanding of a teachers own cultural makeup and background (Petersen, 2007), specific discussions surrounding the effects of culture on instruction and learning and what that

means for a teacher working in a diverse school setting (Schussler, et. al., 2010), an extended focus on instruction with social justice lens over the course of semesters and years in a pre-service teaching certification program,

In the next sections of the literature review, I will be reviewing studies focused on how school districts support beginning career teachers using various supports after receiving a teaching certificate to extend their growth as an educator past the licensing program and how the support affects teacher retention, teacher instructional practice, and student outcomes. This research study will specifically address the lack of literature focused on how school districts support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse groups of learners by providing induction services aimed at guiding them in gaining strategies beginning career teachers may have not gained in their pre-service education.

General Teacher Induction Practices

I have configured the literature review of general induction practices into three sections: (a) effect of induction practices on teacher retention, (b) effect of general induction practices on teacher instructional practice, and (c) effect of general induction practices on student outcomes. There is a large base of research surrounding induction practices and how those practices affect teacher retention, but in the recent decade research has focused more on how induction affects teacher practices and student achievement outcomes.

Teacher induction practices can take on many forms including a beginning teacher being assigned a mentor teacher in the same building as the beginning teacher, a beginning teacher being assigned an offsite mentor, ongoing meetings, workshops, or mini courses focused on being a beginning teacher, release time, formal orientation to the district or school before school

year begins (Darling Hammond, 1997). Teacher induction practices may have several different goals, such as: lowering the attrition rate of teachers leaving the profession, socializing teachers into the district's culture, simply teaching a new teacher the logistics of surviving the first year of teaching, and in rare cases focusing on improving the instructional practices of beginning teachers (Quinn & Amato-Andrews, 2004). In 1990, 49% of beginning teachers reported receiving some type of induction support and by 2000, 79% of beginning teachers were receiving some type of induction support (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). In 2012, 27 states required some type of mentoring or new teacher support (New Teacher Center, 2012). There are as many types of induction models as there are school districts. Typically, an induction program will include, or have one or two of the following aspects: a beginning teacher paired with a mentor for one to two years, orientation meetings prior to the first school year starting to be acclimated to the school district and mentor, and ongoing meetings or professional development throughout a school year. For the purpose of this research study, I will focus on and describe models and their relation to the topics of teacher retention, teacher practice, and student outcomes.

Search process. The main search terms used to search for empirical studies and information regarding general induction supports and the effects of induction on retention, teacher practice, and student achievement in various combinations were: induction, beginning teacher, new teacher, mentor, retention, attrition, instructional practice, student outcomes, academic achievement, socialization, and support.

“Beginning” teacher and new teacher were both used due to their interchangeable use among empirical studies focused on teachers new to the profession. Socialization began to emerge as a term highly used among the studies focused on induction and support of new teachers as they are “socialized” into the specific context of a school district. The use of words

“retention” and “attrition” expanded the amount of studies focused on the effect of induction programs have on teachers staying in the teaching profession.

Effect of general induction practices on teacher retention and feelings of support.

Teacher attrition costs the nation’s school districts up to 7 billion dollars per year (NCTAF, 2007). An average teacher costs \$50,000 to hire, train, and lose (NCTAF, 2007). In response to those attrition rates school districts on up to the U.S. Department of Education have invested time and money into creating supports for beginning career teachers to counteract the high attrition rate among beginning teachers. One driving force behind schools and school districts using induction services was to reduce the attrition rate of beginning career teachers.

There are many factors that may lead to a teacher leaving the field, but some of the most prevalent reasons and indicators of why teachers leave the profession are: lack of administrative support, student discipline problems, lack of resources focused on student learning, lack of induction or mentoring program, socioeconomic status of students, and high proportions of students of color in the student population (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley 2006; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin 2004). Odden (2011) suggests that helping students achieve and collaborating with colleagues on teaching and learning issues are the primary factors in motivating teachers to stay in the position of teaching. Induction programs attempt to provide the support a new teacher needs to positively affect student achievement and feel connected to other teachers with the same mission. The formal collaboration structure of an induction program supports the belief that teachers receiving the support they need to guide students to higher achievement will be more motivated and more likely to stay in the profession of teaching and impact student achievement positively.

The feeling of support a teacher feels is often a focus of recent research centered on the effect induction has on teacher retention rates. To be sure, a feeling of support is not the only reason a teacher leaves or continues in the teaching profession. Support comes in many different forms with researchers using the word “support” in many different forms ranging from emotional support and instructional support with backing given by colleagues, supervisors, community members and parents.

Support for a beginning career teacher can mean a difference in how a beginning teacher connects to colleagues in a mentoring relationship. A study conducted by Andrews and Quinn (2001) focused on a school district of over sixty thousand students with one hundred and eighty-eight beginning teachers. The beginning teachers were divided into three focus groups: beginning teachers assigned a mentor through the district mentor program, beginning teachers assigned a mentor by the building principal, and beginning teachers not assigned a mentor. Using a questionnaire containing Likert scale questions attempting to find what type of support the beginning teachers felt, the researchers found a significant increase in feelings of support especially in the area of emotional support during the difficult times in the school year (i.e., report cards, parent-teacher conferences, difficult student behaviors, etc.) Though this study lacks a direct connection between feelings of support and actual attrition rates, it does support the idea that induction services do have a significant effect on a teacher’s feelings of support possibly leading to higher retention rates.

The number of supports a beginning career teacher receives can have an impact on the overall attrition rates according to a study conducted by Ingersoll and Smith (2004). Ingersoll and Smith (2004) found teachers reporting some type of induction support rose from 41% in 1990 to 79% in 2000. The study found teachers with no induction support had an attrition rate of

40%, while teachers with three specific support structures had an attrition rate of 28%, six induction supports had a rate of 24%, and eight induction supports had a rate of 18%. The induction supports referenced were: mentors, collaborative structures with colleagues, increased resources (i.e. books, connected with an instructional coach), decreased workload, and increased time for preparation. Within this same study, it was found the most effective strategy to reducing teacher attrition was connecting a beginning career teacher with a mentor in the same field resulting in 30% reduced risk of leaving.

When an induction program aligned to a district's mission, vision, and the context of the district, the retention rate among beginning teachers is higher (Wechsler, Caspary, Humphrey, & Matsko, 2010).

Hallam, Chou, Hite, and Hite (2012) found similar results of lowered attrition rates when beginning career teachers were given more than just orientation, and especially when given the support of a mentor working in the same school building as the beginning teacher. Using an on-staff mentor assigned to a beginning teacher was used in a majority of schools and districts that do offer induction services. The researchers compared the perceptions of beginning teachers on the support they receive from on-staff mentors versus mentors from another school or service. The study found beginning teachers perceived in-school mentors to be the most effective at supporting beginning teachers due to the easy access of the mentor. Over a three-year period, the in-school mentors created a significantly higher rate of retention of the beginning teachers than the beginning teachers receiving less time with mentors or mentors who were outside the school building they worked in.

“In particular, mentoring programs serve to ameliorate the sense of isolation and lack of support new teachers often feel” (Andrews & Quinn, 2001, p. 113). Providing a mentor to a

beginning career teacher for the first one or two years of a teachers career gives the beginning teacher a feeling of formal support they do not need to seek out on their own (Richter, Kunter, Ludtke, Klusmann, Anders, & Baumert, 2013). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found mentors create a higher sense of job satisfaction with lower levels of emotional stress, which could connect to higher level of beginning teachers staying in the field of education. The researchers also found that when mentoring was the only component of an induction program attrition rates dropped from 18.6% to 11. 8%.

Studies have also found the support a principal provides through a formal induction process has a significant effect on retention rates among beginning career teachers. A study conducted by Quinn and D'Amato-Andrews (2004) found the overall feeling of support was much higher in beginning teachers when the principal was directly involved in the support services offered by a school district. A principal could show support by attending meetings with the beginning teacher, providing positive and constructive feedback, or just being in the beginning teacher's classroom on a regular basis to observe.

To be sure, there is a "healthy" level of attrition in any organization where employees leave due to being terminated, leave voluntarily due to their own admission of lack of skills, or desire to perform the responsibilities of the job. In a study of novice teachers in North Carolina, Henry, Bastian, and Fortner (2011) found less effective teachers were more likely to leave the profession than those teachers who rated higher in effectiveness over ten different measures. This type of attrition can be argued to be a positive movement in increasing the overall effectiveness of a school or district. There is no consensus on what a "healthy" attrition rate among school teachers is, but an attrition rate that could be as high as 40% can lead to high costs for a school district as retraining has to occur each time a new teacher is hired for a recent loss of an

employee as well as the time and effort of administrators in hiring a new employee (i.e., interviewing, reference checks, finalizing hiring.) (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

There are still questions as to what is a “healthy” rate of attrition and the reason for a teacher leaving a specific district may vary based on context. As shown in this section of the literature review, induction programs including mentoring do have an impact on lowering the attrition rate among beginning career teachers. It is important for districts to learn about why teachers might be leaving their own district in order to best support beginning career teachers within that specific school district context. In regards to the research questions posed in this study, understanding how induction supports can positively impact the way teachers feel supported within a diverse setting is important to keeping effective teachers in schools where attrition can be higher based on the demographics of a school district (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Induction programs are created for various reasons such as limiting the attrition within a school district, and in the next section, we will look at the effects induction programs have on changing and improving instructional practices.

Effect of induction on teacher practice. Along with the focus of induction programs on reducing the attrition rates of beginning career teachers by providing emotional support, another reason given for induction programs is to support beginning career teachers in building their instructional repertoire of teaching strategies focused on improved academic achievement. Twenty-two states prescribe targeting the improvement in classroom instructional practices by using a more experienced teacher as a mentor within state policy governing teacher induction programs (New Teacher Center, 2012). Teachers typically enter the field of teaching with only one to two years of experience in a classroom setting, practicing and observing instructional practices within their teacher preparation at the college level. The practicing teacher in reality

only lead teaches for approximately two to four weeks (Boyd, 2009) thus necessitating the need to support beginning career teachers through induction focused on instructional practices.

Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, and Pressley (2008) studied six elementary teachers focused on the perceptions of beginning teachers as it related to their perceptions of improvement in their instructional practices with the support of a mentor within induction services provided to them by their school district. Three out of the six beginning career teachers showed improvement from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year based on the observational instruments and surveys utilized in the study. The authors provided recommendations concerning induction services for beginning career teachers based on the teachers who showed instructional improvements: the mentors had more experience and were more effective as teachers, the majority of discussions between mentor and beginning teacher were focused on curriculum and instruction, mentors took time to model effective instructional practices for beginning teachers, select mentors that will focus their feedback and discussions with new teachers on the instructional practices and strategies being recommended by the school district, and train beginning career teachers to reflect on their own abilities in comparison to the expectations of instructional practices prescribed by the school district.

Beginning career teachers typically step into their first professional teaching position without a clear understanding of effective instruction and what it might look like, sound like, and feel like (Wong, 1994). Nevins-Stanulis and Floden (2009) used an experimental design to compare improvement in instructional practice between twenty-four teachers receiving intensive mentoring support versus twenty-four teachers who did not receive intensive mentoring support. Intensive mentoring included specific discussions and planning around the use of specific instructional practices and strategies. Using the AIMS (Atmosphere, Instruction/Content,

Management, and Student Engagement) measure, the experimental group receiving intensive mentoring scored at a statistically significant higher rate than the control group in three out of the four categories of the AIMS. The “management” section of the measure showed a positive result for those teachers receiving intensive mentoring, but not at a significant level. Odell and Schwille (2008) found instructional changes shown to occur among new teachers connected with a mentor, but fewer changes happened within the classroom management section of their instruction.

Evertson and Smithey (2000) found that when a beginning career teacher was given a trained mentor, the students in the classroom of the beginning teacher were more engaged based on observational data provided by the researchers than in classrooms where a beginning teacher was given a mentor without specific training how best to be a mentor. The mentors were trained through specific content and professional discussions focusing on the nature of being a mentor, the needs of a beginning teacher, and mentoring practices (i.e. difference between mentoring and evaluating, using reflective discovery). The beginning teacher was more organized and presented a more structured and connected pace when teaching the students concepts and skills.

Similar to the effect of induction services in teacher retention and attrition of beginning career teachers focused on the role of the principal in an induction program, principals also play a role in supporting beginning career teachers in improving their instructional practices within an induction program that includes mentoring. In a study using a multiple case study approach, Wood (2005) studied four different schools focused on the research questions:

- What roles do principals play in supporting novice teachers?
- How do principals participate in a large, urban, standards-based teacher induction program?

The researcher found the principals supported change in instructional practices by infusing the induction program into the overall professional development of the school staff. The principal also attended any professional development focused on the beginning career teachers with the teachers providing time to learn with the novice teachers in his/her school. Principals were also found to model lessons and instruction for those beginning teachers allowing the principal to have a direct connection to the teachers' instructional practices. Recruiting mentors, matching mentors and beginning teachers, and providing feedback for the mentors as they work with a novice teacher, also directly connected principals to the mentoring relationship between a veteran teacher and a new teacher. The study found new teachers responded to a survey showing they were more likely to stay at a school and adopt the instructional practices deemed effective by the school when the principal was directly involved in the induction services provided for the novice teacher.

Providing induction services to beginning career teachers can fit under the umbrella of professional development for those teachers, so it is important to recognize research focused on overall professional development and the effect it has on changing instructional practices. Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002) conducted a three-year study focused on over 200 teachers looking at the effect of exposure to specific professional development opportunities focused on instructional practices and whether or not teachers would then use those practices more often after the professional development. The findings supported other studies referenced in this literature review (Wood, 2005; Roehrig, et. al., 2008) showing the importance of providing specific professional development and then providing focused feedback and discussion among colleagues and mentors in order to provide the time and support to fully implement the instructional practices being learned. The researchers also showed the a positive correlation

between leadership and educational administration at a school or district in being directly involved in the ongoing focus and development of those instructional strategies deemed effective by the school and district and the consistent use of those strategies by the teachers.

The selection of a mentor may have a direct impact on whether a beginning teacher changes their instructional practice based on the induction services provided. A study by Achenstein, Ogawa, and Speigelman (2004) showed that the induction services a beginning teacher received was largely based on the philosophy and background of their mentor, and was not correlated to an overall school or district goal of the mentoring relationship established by the school or district. If the mentor did not match the direction of the district in regards to recommended instructional practices and strategies, the beginning teacher was less likely to use those practices.

In this section the topics of selection of the mentor, role of the mentor, and training of the mentor for beginning career teachers were prevalent throughout the literature placing a large importance of the impact a mentor can have within an induction program. Beginning teachers assigned to mentors were more apt to change and refine their instruction (Odell & Schwille, 2008). In summary, the research has shown school districts should structure their induction programs to utilize the following strategies regarding in choosing mentors: mentors should be chosen based on their experience and effectiveness as teachers, mentors that focus their feedback and discussions with new teachers on the instructional practices and strategies being recommended by the school district connected with the overall vision and mission of the school district, and mentors willing to model effective instructional practices for beginning teachers (Roehrig, et. al., 2008).

It was also clear mentors trained in how to be an effective mentor had a larger impact on instructional practices of the beginning teacher (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). Trained mentors also were able to guide beginning career teachers to reflect on their own abilities in comparison to the expectations of instructional practices prescribed by the school district with feedback from the mentor along the way.

Effect of induction on student outcomes. As shown earlier, schools districts implement an induction program for many reasons, one being to lessen the attrition taking place in a school district with a large amount of research surrounding the idea of induction services improving retention rates of beginning career teachers. The research surrounding the connection between induction services for beginning career teachers and student achievement is not as prevalent and is in need of further exploration. I begin this section referencing a large-scale study that attempted to connect the effect teacher attrition has on student achievement, followed by studies focused on a link between induction and student achievement.

Attrition and student achievement are linked in that when a teacher leaves their position that teacher may take with them the experience and professional development a new teacher may not have which may have an effect on overall student achievement. On the other hand, there are studies to show despite an initial lag in student achievement, if a teacher leaves because they are ineffective and replaced by a more effective, yet less experienced teacher, student achievement actually increases over time (Ingersoll, 2001). Through a large scale study by Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2012) looking at the student achievement of over 850,000 students over an eight year span in New York City it was clear teacher turnover negatively affected achievement in reading and math. Students where 100% of the teaching staff turned over scored between 8.2% and 10.2% less than the standard deviation in math, and between 4.9% and 6.0% less than the

standard deviation in reading. The studies also found the students most affected by the negative impact of teacher turnover are students in urban settings with a high proportion of African-American students. Having an understanding of the effects attrition has on student achievement gives way to the idea of the effects of teacher induction services has on student achievement with one of the reasons to have an induction program is to aid in retention of candidates and improve the instructional practices of those beginning career teachers.

Induction programs have various levels of “intensity” in looking at the time beginning career teachers collaborate with other staff members, time spent with their mentor, the combination of mentoring and formal meetings, and the list can go on. Fletcher and Strong (2009) found when a new teacher had a full release mentor (mentor from outside the school with a flexible schedule) their students’ overall achievement data was higher than those new teachers had mentors who were teaching in the same school they were. Rockoff’s (2008) findings supported the idea brought about in Fletcher and Strong’s (2009) study where teachers who were able to spend more time with mentors had higher achievement among their students in both math and reading.

Many schools, even if there is no formal induction program, have an informal socialization process where a beginning career teacher may be taken “under the wing” of a veteran teacher. This informal socialization process may include the veteran teacher helping the new teacher with the curriculum, meeting the other staff members, give a history of the staff and students of the school, and provide emotional support (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfin, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, and Jacobus (2010) conducted a large scale randomized study of 1,098 teachers in 418 elementary schools within 17 urban school districts where schools were split into groups with one group being provided with comprehensive

induction services (mentor, beginning teacher meetings, extra preparation time, observation time in veteran teacher classrooms) and the other group given the induction services that the schools had always provided. The researchers found the teachers receiving one year of comprehensive induction services had no positive impact on student achievement, but teachers receiving two years of comprehensive induction services had a positive and statistically significant impact on student achievement in their third year of teaching. Strong (2006) suggests the reason for the lag in student achievement may be due to the fact beginning career teachers in their first year focus so much on managing the classroom and understanding the basics of classroom structure, they may not completely focus on instructional practices aimed at improving student achievement until their second and third years in teaching.

In summary, I have broken down the effects of induction supports for beginning career teachers into three sections regarding the effects of induction on (a) effect of induction practices on teacher retention, (b) effect of general induction practices on teacher instructional practice, and (c) effect of general induction practices on student outcomes. There are a substantial amount of studies focused on the effects of an induction program on the attrition and/or retention rate of beginning career teachers (Ingersoll and Smith 2004; Hallam et al. (2012)). In the area of how induction services affect the instructional practices of teachers there are fewer studies (Roehrig et al. 2008; Nevins-Stanulis & Floden, 2009; Odell & Schwille, 2008). The effect on student outcomes or achievement lacks a large amount of studies as well as studies clearly showing any effect of induction on student outcomes, but a small amount of studies were presented showing a positive effect on student outcomes based on comprehensive induction services (Ingersoll, (2001); Ronfeldt, et al. (2012); Fletcher and Strong (2009)). Throughout the three sections a very small amount of research has been presented concerning the support and alignment to district

goals administrators provide within beginning career teacher induction services in the area of attrition (Quinn and Amato-Andrews (2004); Wechsler, et al., (2010)) and teacher practices (Wood (2005) This research study attempts to fill the gap in literature surrounding induction support and alignment between administrators, mentors, and beginning career teachers' perceptions of the successes and barriers in supporting beginning career teachers in diverse settings.

Teacher Induction Focused on Diversity and Equity.

I have configured the literature review of teacher induction focused on diversity and equity into two sections: (a) challenging beliefs and building on strengths and (b) alignment of school district vision focused on diversity and beginning teacher induction. There is a small amount of research specifically focused on supporting beginning career teachers working in diverse school environments. Attrition among beginning career teachers in socioeconomic, racial, and language diverse schools is higher than in less diverse environments (Glazerman, Isenberg, Dolfen, Bleeker, Johnson, Grider, & Jacobus, 2010) making the topic of finding effective structures or practices of support for beginning career teachers in these environments especially important.

The first section of this strand of literature review focuses on the expectations and thoughts beginning career teachers bring when they first begin working in a diverse school environment and how those expectations or thoughts become challenged as they learn how to teach. The second section, which is relatively light due to the lack of research, focuses on how the alignment of a school district's mission and vision to the actual structures and practices

employed to support beginning career teachers affects the growth of beginning career teachers as Culturally Relevant practitioners.

Search Process. I used the following terms in various combinations using electronic databases to search for empirical studies centered on teacher induction focused on diversity and equity: diversity, equity, induction mentor, new teacher, beginning teacher, novice teacher, multicultural, social justice, and culturally relevant. I chose many of the same words as I did when I was looking for studies on general induction standards, but included more words focused on diversity and equity. I specifically chose the words “multicultural”, “social justice”, and “culturally relevant” to connect with the theoretical framework of the study, and to search deeper in the induction literature specially looking at intentionally focusing induction programs within diverse school settings.

Challenging Beliefs and Building on Strengths. When a beginning teacher enters their first teaching position, they are typically inducted into their school or district through formal and informal induction processes such as being assigned a mentor or being a part of ongoing trainings specifically focused on beginning teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). These induction practices have become more of a focus of school improvement and school reform in the recent decade with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and the rising percentage in teacher attrition, especially in those areas where language, racial, and socioeconomic diversity is the highest (Glazerman et al., 2010). NCLB appropriated nearly three billion dollars a year to train, recruit, and prepare high quality teachers. The creation and implementation of a teacher induction program is one allowable use of these funds, and school districts are attempting to find effective strategies and structures to support beginning teachers in

meeting the needs of the racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse classrooms with a specific focus on all students performing at high levels of academic achievement.

In schools where there are higher percentages of students of low socioeconomic status and students of color, beginning career teachers are more than twice as likely to move to a different school or leave the teaching profession all together (Ingersoll, 2012). The result is some of these schools are staffed disproportionately with inexperienced teachers who may benefit from a comprehensive induction program supporting the inexperienced teachers in meeting the needs of a diverse school population (Loeb & Darling-Hammond, 2009).

Achinstein and Barrett (2004) describe “expectation shock” where beginning teachers are surprised by the challenges of diverse classrooms and the need to meet a variety of needs. Beginning teachers have a small picture of what teaching encompasses and have “unelaborated schemas of children” (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004) where they only have views of children with backgrounds different from the teacher based on limited experiences with diversity and stereotypes possibly gained from media or other people with limited experiences with diversity. The cultural mismatches with a majority of the teachers being white, middle class, female teachers can lead to diversity seen as a problem with beginning teachers rather than an opportunity to problem solve and find ways to better meet all students’ needs. Induction services need to focus on moving past deficit thinking to asset thinking where teachers are looking to know their students at a deeper level than just academic finding what each student has for strengths (Achinstein and Athaneses, 2005).

Liston and Zeichner (1991) describe beginning teachers as bringing specific beliefs and assumptions about the social context of school. Much of the time, the beliefs and knowledge of the social context of schools beginning teachers bring to their classroom are based on the

experiences and social contexts specific to each beginning teacher and their own culture and background knowledge. A teacher must begin to understand their own positionality in order to understand the diverse students a teacher has in his/her own classroom (Edgar & Warren, 1969).

A statement by a mentor describing their mentee in a study by Achinstein and Barrett (2004) is an example of the deficit thinking new teachers may use when stepping into a diverse setting and focusing on the teacher as the keeper of learning and not looking for the knowledge and skills the kids bring to school each day:

“It is an equity issue in that there is a culture among teachers who have accepted that these kids are of limited intelligence. These kids are designated “low learners.” They are not being treated as 10 year olds, but as 6 year olds. It’s totally humiliating their intelligence and what they are capable of doing. You would never see that in a white middle class school where the parents are empowered. This is an attitude formed in a vacuum of being challenged.” (p. 733)

Achinstein and Barrett (1994) contend there are three frames beginning teachers tend to take when teaching: Managerial, Human Relations, and Political. A beginning teacher focused on classroom management, rules, logistics, efficiency, and structures of teaching defined the managerial role. The human relations frame focused on the teacher attempting to fit into the culture of the school and adapting their instruction to meet the culture building strong relationships with the students. The political frame centered on a teacher being focused on teaching being a way to solve societal issues and adapting instruction to provide facilitation for students as the students learn how they can be change agents in society. The study found the novice teachers typically spent most of their planning and instruction focused on the managerial

frame of teaching, but mentors played a vital role to reframe the novice teacher's thoughts to move into the human relations and political frames of teaching and planning.

Ferguson (2003) argues the mentor of a beginning career teacher plays a large part in guiding a new teacher's expectation of all students, especially expectations surrounding students of color, gender, and economically disadvantaged students. The researcher found if a mentor was committed to the concepts of teaching to all students believing all students can and will learn, the beginning career teacher was more likely to hold those same expectations when working in a diverse setting.

Outside of the research showing, beginning teachers may come into schools carrying a deficit view of students, it is important for school districts to reflect on what assets a beginning career teacher may bring to a school or school district. Beginning career teachers do face a large amount of learning and struggles throughout their first years of teaching, however building off of their strengths may help school districts build confidence in their beginning career teachers and use their perspective to inform practice in other inexperienced or experienced teachers.

Melnick and Meister (2008) performed a quantitative comparison study of concerns of experienced and beginning teachers. Many of the same themes emerged over concerns of beginning career teachers have around classroom management, connecting with parents, and working within diverse settings. The study did show beginning career teachers felt more confident in working with students with disabilities and using multiple assessments than did the experienced teachers. The sample size of the study was 494 respondents with 301 of them having zero to three years of teaching experience, 193 having four or more years of experience. Understanding the sample size is relatively small, but it is important for school districts to

recognize what assets a beginning teacher brings to a school and build off that in order to build off areas of strengths as well as weaknesses.

In an ethnographic study by Nolen, Horn, Ward, and Campbell (2008), eight secondary teachers were followed from their preservice teacher education program to their beginning years in professional teaching. One of the teachers profiled in the study, Abe, shows how a beginning career teacher can already bring assets of strong instructional practice to the field. The questions Abe asks of himself, shows a strong reflective nature he brings to helping students access the instruction and materials he is providing:

“What stands out to me is, “How do the kids interact with the math, and how does the teacher make the math accessible to the kids? How much set up does the teacher do? How do you develop a concept? How do you develop an overarching idea?” Those are some of the things that go through my mind during lesson or unit planning. I always want to make things connect to what we’re going to be doing.” (p.66)

The quote shows the thoughtfulness that may not always be associated with a beginning career teacher leading to the idea. The study also found the teachers who grew the most during the study recognized the gap between what they learned in their pre-service work and the actual classroom environment, and reflected upon the gap when adjusting instructional practices.

Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten (2011) conducted a study focused on 11 pre-service teachers and their development of using instructional tools with support from analyzing student work and collegial conversations. The study showed pre-service teachers reflecting on the issues they were presented with during teaching as “puzzles of practice” (p. 1344) leading to a focus on the building of practices through reflection and recognizing positive incremental steps towards improved instruction, rather than looking to improve weak areas of instruction. The study was

another example of novice teachers bringing highly reflective practices to the teaching field where the teachers were able to accurately reflect on the areas they wanted to build on. The teachers highlighted in the study typically looked at their instructional practices as the main reason why students were learning, and not blaming the students for any lack of success in learning.

Alignment of school district vision focused on diversity and beginning teacher induction. Bianchini and Brenner (2009) found beginning teachers saw their induction program contributing very little to their ability to teach toward equity. The study showed the beginning teachers saw their overall teaching community supporting their ability to teach toward equity more influential than the induction services provided. The researchers believed there needed to be more of a connection between the vision and mission of an induction program focused on equity and social justice with the induction program offered especially in the training of mentors to help new teachers wrestle with the difficulty of teaching a diverse group of students. The researchers specifically mention the importance of a formal expectation for the beginning teachers to get to know about their students' lives and the importance of the school administrator having an influence over the focus on equity with the new teachers.

The findings of Pinto, Rottman, and Barrett (2012) support the importance of administrators ensuring the induction program offered to new teachers has a specific focus on equity and social justice and aligned from the policy documents right down to the conversations between mentor and new teacher. The focus will allow the administrator, mentors, and beginning teachers to specifically address strategies aimed at meeting the needs of a diverse classroom and helping the students feel empowered to improve academically.

Unfortunately, there is a very small amount of studies addressing specific induction practices and how those practices should be a large part of any induction program with a focus on equity and diversity. There are studies looking at general induction practices having a positive impact on teachers working in diverse settings. Fletcher and Strong (2009) found that a full release mentor had some connection to a positive gain in student achievement versus a mentor who is on the same staff as the new teacher. This may be for a number of reasons, but the researchers offer the idea that maybe the release mentor was able to provide more time for the teacher to meet with the mentor or the release mentor is able to stay away from any deficit thinking a teacher or school may have around students of color or low socioeconomic days.

The studies reviewed do not speak of how induction practices can allow for beginning teachers to learn about teaching practices aimed at success within a diverse school, which is the issue that many beginning teachers who do not stay in the profession point to as the reason why they left. Beginning teachers are sheltered in their teacher preparation programs from directly tackling the many diverse issues a teacher faces in a typical classroom and without targeted induction, strategies many teachers become disenfranchised with a profession they once thought would be their way of helping change society for the better.

There was a significant lack of research studies focused on the strengths of a beginning career teacher. A large majority of studies focused on the lack of experience and lack of strategies beginning career teachers bring to their profession, especially strategies focused on working in a diverse school setting. The studies that did find strengths and assets in beginning career teachers do provide a positive counter argument to the prevailing research findings showing beginning career teachers struggling to find success with diverse school demographics.

The research findings in this section of the literature review give direction to this research study. The current research shows an importance of alignment of the school district vision towards diversity and equity, the focus of the induction program, the training of the mentors working with the beginning career teachers to positively affect student outcomes, and the importance of building on the strengths of beginning career teachers rather than focusing solely on the shortcomings a beginning career teacher may bring into the field. (Pinto, et. al., 2012; Bianchini & Brenner, 2009; Ferguson, 2003). Current research has some clarity in the importance of an asset thinking approach, and centering an induction program on asset thinking for beginning teachers working in diverse school settings (Achinstein & Athanases, 2005), especially with research showing beginning career teachers may enter the profession with a deficit thinking approach to thinking about diversity (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). The deficit thinking approach to working with children is in direct conflict with Critically Relevant Pedagogy and the idea of all students having the ability to be successful. Research has consistently shown the importance of how teacher expectations have a large effect on the outcomes of all students, and these expectations must be high for all students in all subgroups. (Rist, 1970; McKown, C., & Weinstein, R. S., 2008).

This research study aims to add to the literature concerning how school districts best tailor their induction programming to focus on how to support teachers in meeting the needs of diverse students. This research study will also add to the limited amount of literature focused on how administrators support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners through induction services, and the alignment of the perceived successes and barriers experienced by administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers while implementing the induction services focused on equity and diversity.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

In answering the research questions from this study, I employed a mixed methods research design using qualitative and quantitative methods with a comparative case study research design. After describing the research design, I will describe the participants, procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis methods.

Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods research design addressed the research questions of this study using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Greene, Caracelli, & Graham (1989) outlined five purposes of a mixed method design and reasons why a researcher would use a mixed-methods design:

- **Triangulation:** Pursuing convergence of results from different methods to increase the validity of the results attempting to negate any biases in the research.
- **Complementarity:** Pursuing interpretation and reinforcement of results with the findings from both qualitative and quantitative methods of research increasing the usefulness building on the strengths of each method and negating biases from each of the methods.
- **Development:** Pursuing the development of one method based on the results of the other method where the validity of results will be stronger and have the ability to capitalize on the strengths of both methods.
- **Initiation:** Pursuing the possible contradictions in results from both methods increasing the depth of the study and results.
- **Expansion:** Pursues expanding the range of results in using both methods for different components of the study by using the most appropriate research component.

“Triangulation” refers to the practice of using various sources of data in an effort to find consistency in the data and provide a higher level of validity and trustworthiness to the data. Triangulation applies to this research study by combining the qualitative data in the form of results from observation, document analysis, and interviews of various levels of participants with the data gained from a quantitative survey of the participants. I analyzed the data using the lens of the theoretical framework of this study, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, which was “complimentary” by bringing a focus to the data gained from the various sets of data in looking for relationships among the findings. . Surveys are a useful compliment to qualitative research connecting the quantitative results in a way that supports the qualitative findings of interviews and observations (Creswell, 2007). Survey results are a compliment to the interviews done in a study because the questions within the survey can connect with similar questions in the interviews based on the theoretical framework of a study (Creswell, 2007). This connection between surveys and interviews can lead to a more confidence in the conclusions made in a research study, or can lead to a contradiction which may result in a new finding or learning within the research study.

Using a mixed-methods approach to the research questions posed led to “initiation” of the results as differences were analyzed and elaborated upon, leading to a deeper and more complex understanding of the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study. The survey portion of the research study used a Likert scale to analyze the perspectives regarding support from beginning career teachers and the perceptions of the successes and limitations of the program by the mentors, administrators, and beginning career teachers within the induction program. Using the results from the survey of beginning career teachers and the results of the survey of mentors and administrators focused on the perceived successes and limitations of the

induction program shed light on whether the perceptions of the various groups matched and, if they did not match, what might be the reasons.

The matches or mismatches in data from the qualitative and quantitative methods of the mixed methods approach expanded the understanding of the research study. The qualitative aspect of participant interviews gave a deep understanding of a small number of beginning career teachers, mentors, and administrators focused on their perceptions of the effectiveness of the induction program. The survey expanded the results of the interviews by looking at the broader aspects of a beginning teacher support system and the perceptions of beginning career teachers who were directly receiving the supports of the induction services in their school district, mentors of the beginning teachers, and the administrators overseeing the supports.

A mixed method approach allowed for an interconnectedness and coherence of data leading to a higher level of persuasiveness and validity (Greene, 2006). The research design was a qualitative comparative case study complemented with quantitative data collected through a survey. A mixed-methods approach allowed for a deeper analysis of the findings in regards to the research questions in this study. The quantitative results gained from the survey came from a sample of beginning career teachers, administrators, and mentors. The quantitative results connected to the deeper and more complex qualitative results found within the interviews, observations, and document analysis. A mixed methods approach gave a comprehensive look at the connections made with what the school districts were effectively doing to support beginning career teachers working in diverse settings. The mixed methods approach allowed the researcher to analyze the findings from the surveys in comparison to the findings from interviews describing the barriers and successes each of the different participant groups saw when supporting beginning career teachers working in diverse settings.

Comparative Case Study Approach

A comparative case study research design addressed the research questions of this study. I chose a comparative case study approach over a single case study approach due to the research question surrounding how schools support the development of beginning career teachers in diverse settings focused on equity being relatively unstudied, allowing me to provide more than one example of how beginning teachers are supported in a diverse school setting. A comparative case study offered rich description of two examples of schools implementing an induction program that focuses on the perceptions of beginning career teachers and school administrators of the barriers and successes in concentrating on diversity and equity in an effort to create schools where all students experience academic success.

The comparative case study approach describes two school contexts and the support provided to beginning career teachers in a diverse school setting. Most induction programs are formally directed at the district level, but each school may implement those formal structures in ways to match the specific school context leading to a difference in both formal and informal structures and practices supporting beginning career teachers. For this reason, I chose to study two schools within the same school district. Studying schools allowed for a more in depth look at support provided for beginning career teachers due to a smaller group of subjects and contexts than an entire district would provide, but still show how a larger district approach is implemented.

In defining a case study, Merriam (1998) describes the following features making a case study especially connected to the research questions addressed in this study:

- Case studies are *particularistic* in the ability to focus on a specific practical problem coming from a common problem in practice focusing on how people or an organization take on a specific problem
- Case studies are *descriptive* and offer a thick description of the many variables and perspectives involved in the problem or phenomenon being studied allowing for a better understanding of how those variables interact.
- Case studies are *heuristic* by increasing the understanding of the focus of the study to the reader by bringing about new understandings leading to an evaluation of possible application of the concepts presented in everyday practice.

The case study approach allowed me to deeply understand and communicate the processes a school district has in place to support beginning teachers in successfully meeting the needs of all students in diverse settings at the school district and school level (Creswell, 2007).

A case study design was ideal as I was able to go in depth of how a school first implemented the program, how it has evolved, and what steps were taken to ensure the program continues to support beginning teachers and traverse any barriers to the program from different perspectives. Since there are a relatively small number of districts focusing effort through induction services supporting beginning teachers in diverse settings, a comparative case study gave examples of how two schools with different contexts apply the concept of induction programming focused on diversity under the structure created and implemented within the same school district. Knowing schools exist within different cultural and political contexts allowed for the findings in a comparative case study to have depth and the possibility and use in structuring an induction program in another school district (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A comparative case study was used to increase the external validity or transferability of the study by the cross

analysis of the data from each case study connecting it to themes to be used in creating supports for beginning career teachers in schools and school districts. Transferability allows for diverse schools and school districts to look at this research and connect some of the findings to their current practices and look for ways to improve their own structures and practices in meeting the needs of all learners.

Case studies fall into four types of disciplinary orientations based on whether the intent of the case study is to describe, interpret, evaluate, or build a theory (Merriam, 1998). The four types are ethnographic, historical, psychological, and sociological (Merriam, 1998). This case study fell under the sociological disciplinary orientation. Case studies with a sociological disciplinary orientation focus on social institutions such as schools concentrating on the demographics and the roles of the people in those institutions. Sociological case studies are concerned with the socialization of people within those institutions. The focus of the research questions—the support beginning career teachers receive in becoming successful practitioners in diverse school settings and the perceptions of the successes and challenges when developing support for beginning career teachers in effectively meeting the needs of a socioeconomically, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse classroom—fit within the scope of a sociological case study.

I employed a largely descriptive case study method, with interpretive and evaluative methods also being employed (Merriam, 1998). Descriptive case studies provide a detailed description of the research focus describing the subject before any type of hypothesizing or theory building. Descriptive case studies typically are useful when an area is relatively unstudied. In the case of this study, teacher induction has a preponderance of research attached to it, but there is little research on structures of teacher induction as it relates to building and

supporting beginning career teachers who are successful at meeting the needs of all students in a diverse school setting.

Interpretive methods answered the research question surrounding the perceptions of success and challenges administrators and beginning career teachers see in becoming effective teachers in diverse classrooms. Interpretive case study methods focus on rich description creating conceptual categories by analyzing and interpreting data in theorizing about the problem being studied (Merriam, 1998). Incorporating this method into the research allowed for a deeper understanding of the perceptions of key roles within the structure of the induction program focused on supporting beginning career teachers in diverse classrooms, schools, and school districts.

Evaluative methods focused on the alignment among the district mission and vision statements to the survey and interview data from all stakeholders involved in the study using the lens of the theoretical framework of this study, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Evaluative methods described how the structures and strategies being used in the induction programs link to the overall success of the schools in experiencing positive gains in outcomes for all students including students of color, students who are economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners. Using evaluative methods during the comparison of vision and mission statements and the alignment with the data gathered from the survey and interviews allowed for a theory to be built or a “judgment” (Merriam, 1998) to be made regarding the reasons the school district may be finding success in supporting beginning career teachers evidenced by positive student achievement gains with students of color, students that are economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners.

Participants

School district and schools. The criteria used to choose research sites connected to the research question focused on schools currently implementing a formal induction structure for beginning career teachers with a focus on supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs students from diverse socioeconomic, racial, and linguistic backgrounds (See Appendix A). The initial focus was at the district level in order to create relevant findings, since most induction programs are formal policy initiatives at the district level initiative. A focus at the district level allowed for an expansion of the findings to understand how teachers, school-level administrators, and district-level administrators view the successes and barriers to creating and facilitating an induction program supporting beginning career teachers. The focus then moved to the school level in order to look at the specific implementation at the school level. Focusing on schools allowed the study to dive deeper into the informal practices and supports of each school and the support provided for the beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students in a diverse school setting. Overall, the design of the study allowed for study of both the macrostructure of supporting beginning career teachers at the district level and the microstructure of the supports provided at the school level, all the way down to the relationship between a beginning career teacher and their mentor or teaching team. The case study portion of this research initially focused on the school district and the findings from document analysis, interviews of district leadership, and survey data of district leadership. The focus at the school level allowed for an in-depth look at the informal supports a school may provide based on the environment of the school, teacher leadership, and principal leadership within the larger context of the formal district structure.

The first criteria used to choose a school district and address the research question were the academic achievement of all students but in particular students of color, students who were economically disadvantaged and students labeled as English Language Learners (ELL) within the last five years. The achievement data were taken from state assessments. To ensure the academic achievement was not a one-year anomaly, I used two to four years of data to ensure all students, students of color, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students who are labeled as English Language Learners scored at or above the state average in math and reading on the state assessment in each of the subgroups and curricular areas.

An emphasis on all students experiencing academic success through a focus on educational practices focused on equitable outcomes for all students using multi-cultural perspectives in curriculum and instruction needed to be included in the district mission statement, vision statement, and/or school district goals. This mission had to be evident in the structure and focus of professional development and beginning teacher support program.

There is no clear definition of what a “diverse” school demographic would be, and it seems there are as many definitions of what a diverse school is as there are research studies focused on diverse schools. For the purpose of this research study, I used school districts and schools as research sites where at least 30% of students economically disadvantaged (students meeting the requirements to receive free and reduced lunch or lower than 185% of the poverty level), 25% of the students are students of color, and 5% of the students speak a language other than English as their home language. I chose the percentages listed above because they are very similar to the school context in which I work, therefore allowing me to use the research in helping me as an educational leader support the beginning career teachers in my own setting.

Choosing a minimum of 25% as a percentage of students of color, 30% students considered economically disadvantaged and 5% English Language Learners enrolled in both the school district and schools being chosen as research sites was also a consideration because it would connect with a wider range of school districts and schools leading to the potential transferability of the study. Data provided by the National Center of Educational Statistics (2011) showed 33 states have 40% or less of students of color enrolled with 26 of those states having less than 30%. The range of students considered economically disadvantaged range across the United States from 20% in New Hampshire to 68% in Mississippi. Thirty-eight states have 40% or lower of their students considered economically disadvantaged and of those 38 states, 17 states have 35% or lower of their students considered economically disadvantaged. Finally, the number of English Language Learners ranged from 1% in Mississippi to 29% in California with 29 states having between 1% and 5.9% English Language Learners enrolled in public schools. Choosing 25% as a percentage of students of color and students considered economically disadvantaged and 5% English Language Learners enrolled in research sites was a consideration because it would connect with a wider range of school districts giving strategies to support beginning career teachers in diverse settings.

These percentages were chosen to ensure the beginning career teachers receiving support through induction services were teaching in classrooms where approximately one third, and sometimes more, of the students were from backgrounds from traditionally marginalized student groups, which reflect the student enrollment demographics in a majority of the states in the United States.

Finally, the school district and schools were chosen based on their commitment to meeting the academic needs of all students focused on themes consistent with Culturally

Relevant Pedagogy. Document and artifact analysis (see Appendix B) using a protocol for site selection determined the level of connection between the strategies supporting new teachers and the basic tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Two out of the three descriptors below must have matched a school district to be a research site. In the case of this study, all three descriptors matched with the school district research site:

- The school district's mission and/or vision statement emphasizes meeting the needs of *all* students.
- The school district's mission and/or vision statement values diversity and/or a multicultural education
- The school district's strategic plan or goals specifically achieving high academic achievement outcomes for all students, and may have state goals centered on students of color, English Language Learners, and/or economically disadvantaged students.

The School District of Yorkville, a school district in the Midwestern section of the United States, met the criteria to answer the research question, as well as two schools within the school district. The school district's demographic data match the criteria of the research study with over 50% of the students considered economically disadvantaged, 26% of the students being students of color, and over 6% of the students considered English Language Learners.

The academic achievement of the school district and schools have shown students of color, students that are economically disadvantaged, and English Language Learners all have scored higher than the state average in multiple measures ranging from state standardized tests in reading and math, and also using a state school district report card with areas specifically focused on closing the achievement gaps based on race and economic status.

Typically school districts have an overall mission statement driving all of the schools within the school district, which is the structure followed by the School District of Yorkville. The school district's mission statement is "To Serve Our Community by Educating Every Child" connected by goals specifically focused on increasing the achievement for African-American and Hispanic students:

- Raise the State Assessment reading score for Hispanic students from 79% to 81% and for Black students from 75% to 77% by 2015-2016.
- Raise the State Assessment math score for Hispanic students from 75% to 77% and for Black students from 63% to 65% by 2015-2016

The two schools within the school district meeting the demographic criteria of the research study were Casper Elementary School and Schroeder Elementary School. Casper Elementary School has 86% of students considered economically disadvantaged, 57% of the students are students of color, and 20% of the students considered English Language Learners. Schroeder Elementary has 45% of students considered economically disadvantaged, 25% of the students are students of color, and 8% of the students are considered English Language Learners. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will provide more specific information on the district and two schools.

Administrators. I interviewed and electronically surveyed both district level administrators and building level administrators. The size of the schools and school district I chose typically have one building level principal, and within the district will have between 2 and 4 district level administrators who are directly involved with the beginning teacher induction programming. District level administrators included the superintendent and director of instruction working at a district level to support the mission and vision of a school district, and/or who have any responsibilities related to the district's mentoring and induction program. Due to

the structure of the school district, the Superintendent and Director of Instruction were the only district level administrators interviewed and surveyed. The superintendent provided guidance on what should be included in the beginning teacher support program, and the director of instruction implements the actual program. Building level administrators included the principals of the two schools.

I interviewed the Superintendent and the Director of Instruction from the selected school district who are directly involved in the beginning teacher support program to gain an in depth perspective of the challenges and successes at the district level they have found supporting beginning career teachers in gaining effective instructional strategies working within diverse school settings.

I interviewed each of the building level principals. The building level principals were the most familiar with the new teachers supported through the school district induction program since they worked with them directly at the school level. This increased trustworthiness of the study by providing an in-depth look at how district support played out at the school level. The principals were able to discuss the anticipated challenges and plans how to be flexible in their support to side step these possible challenges.

Certified Staff. I interviewed and surveyed certified staff including beginning career teachers and mentors. The surveys were conducted electronically with each group. I looked for threads focused on the successes and challenges in supporting effective instructional strategies supporting all students in diverse school settings with an effort in all students experiencing academic success. In an effort to provide even thicker and deeper description, I selected staff from each of the certified roles to interview and compare to the responses from the administrators analyzing for matches and mismatches between what administrators, mentors, and

beginning career teachers feel are successes and challenges of the induction program. I used survey results to find those respondents who found more challenges and those who found more successes in the beginning teacher support program in an effort to understand the perspectives of the beginning teachers, mentors, and/or instructional coaches and how those perspectives compare with the administrators of those same school districts.

To gain a level of confidence in my findings, my goal was to receive survey results from at least 15 beginning career teachers, 6 from each school within the first 3 years of their teaching career, and who have taken part in the supports of the induction program offered by the school district. I had a goal to receive survey results from at least five mentors or instructional coaches, two from each school, who have supported beginning career teachers through the induction program offered by the school district. Due to the size of each staff and the amount of new staff at each building, I was able to survey nine beginning career teachers, three of those teachers taught at Casper Elementary and six taught at Schroeder Elementary. One mentor in Casper Elementary completed the survey, and three mentors at Schroeder completed the survey. Due to the size of Casper Elementary and the number of beginning career teachers there was only one mentor to survey and interview. With the smaller number of mentors and beginning career teachers at Casper, I went more in depth with questions focused on the challenges and successes of the beginning career teacher support program at Casper.

Interviews and surveys were conducted across the school district in order to get results representing the larger context of each school district addressing the research question focusing on the school district to give a context of policy and direction for the schools that were more of the focus of the research project. In addressing the second research question, the surveys and interviews of building administrators and teachers gave a cross section of schools within a school

district describing the challenges and successes each of the roles have experienced or are experiencing implementing supports for beginning career teachers.

Initially my goal was to interview only respondents, especially beginning career teachers, finding specific barriers and successes based on their support provided to them as beginning career teachers working in diverse settings. As I met with the school district and school officials, I realized I would need to interview all respondents in order to understand the successes and barriers the beginning career teachers were finding based on the support they received especially since the number of participants was not as large as I originally anticipated. Interviewing all survey respondents allowed me to find themes I may not have uncovered if I only interviewed specific respondents of the survey, and gave me a better sense of the overall support beginning career teachers were receiving. Overall, I interviewed two district administrators, two school principals, four mentors, and nine beginning career teachers.

Data Collection

The depth of this case study depended on the variety of data I obtained and my ability to synthesize the data to tell the story of how the districts have supported beginning teachers working with racially, ethnically, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse students. Interviews, surveys, document analysis, and observations provided the data for the study.

Document Analysis. Documents used prior to the implementation of the supports, documents used to communicate during the implementation of the program, and documents used to describe the district's commitment to effective instructional practices for all students and the measures being taken to support beginning career teachers in growing as effective teachers of diverse classrooms were to be used to supplement the data found in interviews, surveys, and

observations. To organize and analyze the data collected from documents I used a specific protocol (Appendix B). Merriam (1998) defines documents in a study to be “an umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand” (p. 112). Three major types of documents can be used for the purpose of analysis in research: public records, personal documents, and physical material (Merriam, 1998).

I was surprised by the small amount of documents focused on the support the beginning career teachers in the school district and schools. After finding a small amount of documents directly related to the supports given to beginning career teachers, I focused on the district level documents relating to the overall expectations, vision, mission, and goals of the district level beginning teacher supports. Documents included to answer the research questions were the district mission and vision statements, strategic plans, and a document titled “The Platinum Plan” focused on providing culturally responsive practices.

Using documents supported the study in addressing the research questions in giving a background and context to the research sites, the commitment they have made to support beginning career teachers, and all teachers in effectively working in diverse classrooms. Documents are objective pieces of data in that the researcher does not change or influence the data (Merriam, 1998). I used the *Program Induction Standards* (2011) from the New Teacher Center and the theoretical framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) to provide guidance in analyzing and coding the documents to inform the findings of this research study.

Interviews. Interviews were the primary data source for the research study. One on one interviews were conducted with beginning teachers, mentors, and administrators directly involved with supporting beginning teachers. Merriam (1998) describes interviews as “conversations with a purpose” attempting to find out information a researcher cannot directly

observe. I used a semi-structured interview format to ensure I got a better perspective from those people I was interviewing (Merriam, 1998). Semi-structured interview formats allowed the researcher to formulate questions prior to the interview, but gave freedom to allow the interview to confirm understandings and provide the possibility of new learning. Semi-structured interviews allowed for answers to questions and the reasons for those answers (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews take responses and learnings from previous interviews and use them to dig deeper into the issue surrounding the research questions with subsequent interviews (Merriam, 1998).

The interviews focused on the general support provided in the induction program with a focus of unique strands of the induction program staff found to be effective in supporting beginning career teachers working with diverse learners. I interviewed the respondents at a specified place close to their work area, to get the best response rate from staff interviewed and to increase their comfort level. Immediately after each interview, I recorded notes of observations made during the interviews (See Appendices C, D, E)

As stated in earlier, I had originally planned to interview a portion of those participants responding to the survey. Due to the smaller number of participants at Casper Elementary and at the district level, I decided to interview all survey respondents to increase the depth of the understanding and to ensure I was able to give a clear picture of the supports at the district and building level.

Surveys. A survey (Appendix F) was developed using the *Induction Program Standards* published by the New Teacher Center (2011). The New Teacher Center is a national leader in organizations creating supports in collaboration with regional New Teacher Center organizations working directly with school districts and the beginning career teachers in their districts. The

center describes ten *Induction Program Standards* representing three programmatic aspects of an induction program. The three overriding aspects of an induction program with the program standards addressing those aspects are:

- Foundational: the base upon an induction program is built
 - Program Vision, Goals, and Institutional Commitment
 - Program Administration and Communication
 - Principal Engagement
 - Program Assessment, Evaluation, and Accountability
- Structural: components, practices, and activities of an induction program
 - Mentor Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, Assignment, and Assessment
 - Mentor Professional Development and Learning Communities
 - Assessing Beginning Teacher Practice
 - Beginning Teacher Professional Development and Learning Communities
- Instructional: emphasis on instructional practices and student learning
 - Focus on Instructional Practice
 - Focus on Equity and Universal Access

Using these aspects along with the ten program standards, I developed a 31-question survey especially focusing on the three aspects within the program standard focused on “Equity and Universal Access.” The researcher used the aspects and standards along with the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to label and code the results of the survey, interviews, document analysis, and observational data. The researcher used the survey to gather data from a larger sampling of the varying roles (administrators, mentors, beginning career teachers) within each of the school districts with the following goals:

- Collect descriptive information from a broad sampling of the various roles within the case study school districts focused on gaining information on the alignment of district goals with the implementation of an induction program for beginning career teachers.
- Inform the choice of roles that are interviewed allowing for interviews with administrators and teachers who have experienced both successes and barriers to the support for beginning career teachers working in diverse student populations.

Surveys were electronically distributed to the beginning career teachers, principals, mentors, and district administrators who have participated in or supported the districts' induction program at the school or district level.

Observation. Observational data were collected as a supplementary source of data. I developed an observational protocol (See Appendix G) to guide my observations in connection to the research questions surrounding the support of beginning career teacher working within a diverse setting. Gold (as cited in Merriam, 1998) describes four roles an observer can take on during research: complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. I took the role as “complete observer” throughout the research project. The group of people being knew my intentions and goals of my research being the collection of information during my observations, not being an active participant in the activities observed.

My observations focused on the physical environments of the school districts' being studied and meetings where beginning career teachers and their teacher team. Using the theoretical framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy will drive the organization of the observations. A field journal and note taking apps were used to record observations, and the notes were analyzed following each of the observations.

I observed the physical environment of schools in each of the school districts looking for how *all* students are represented in the items hung on the walls, curriculum texts used, and the literature offered in the libraries. If the school has consistent, all school expectations of learning and behavior, I observed how those expectations are displayed and their place within the frame of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and the focus on diverse settings within this research study.

Once again, the small amount of formal meetings involving beginning career teachers connected to the overall district beginning teacher support program surprised me. I was able to observe a grade level meeting at each of the schools where a grade level team was planning instruction with a beginning teacher and mentor involved that were a part of the interview and survey portion of the study.

I had originally planned on attending and observing meetings that could have included: workshops for beginning career teachers focused on meeting the needs of all students, meetings focused on supporting mentors or instructional coaches on helping the beginning career teacher support all students, meetings between mentor and beginning career teachers, general meetings for all staff focused on meeting the needs of all students within a diverse school setting, or meetings among the directors and school leaders focused on the planning and focus of the beginning teacher supports surrounding the topic of supporting students in a diverse setting. Surprisingly, outside of regular professional development opportunities there seemed to be very little follow-up or continued monitoring from a district level focused on the beginning career teachers and the varying support systems they were experiencing or not experiencing. I felt comfortable in having a more limited number of observations than I had first planned, due to the data collection mainly focused on interviews and surveys. In order to enrich the data due to the lack of observations, I ensured I interviewed all staff members who completed the survey instead

of only interviewing those who experienced barriers or successes through the support they were given.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in an effort to validate the instruments used to gather information focused on answering the research questions of this study. The participants were three teachers who were in their second or third year of teaching in the same district, and had all participated in the one year beginning career teacher support program. The participants also included the Director of Instruction and an Instructional Coach. The Director of Instruction and Instructional coach have the responsibility of facilitating the beginning teacher support program for the district. The teachers, Director of Instruction, and Instructional Coach all are employed by the same school district. In using the site selection tool (Figure 11), the district met two out of the six academic achievement criteria, two out of the three demographic criteria, and three out of the four “Commitment to Meeting the Needs of All Learners” criteria.

Table 3.1

Pilot Study School District Information Using the Site Selection Tool
Academic Achievement Criteria

	Math	Reading
Over a 2-4 year period all Students are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.	Yes	No
Over a 2-4 year period students of Color are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.	No	No

Over a 2-4 year period students considered Economically Disadvantaged are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.	Yes	No
Over a 2-4 year period English Language Learners are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.	No	No

School District Demographic Criteria

Percentage of Specific Subgroups	Yes	No
School District and School serves at least 25% Students of Color		X
School District and School serves at least 30% Students considered Economically Disadvantaged	X	
School District and School serves at least 5% English Language Learners	X	

Commitment to Meeting the Needs of All Learners Criteria

	Yes	No
Mission/Vision Statement of School District focuses on all students	X	
District Strategic Plan/Goals specifically focus on all students experiencing academic success.	X	

The three teachers who had received induction support from the district all participated in the survey. The average time the survey took was 12 minutes. I spoke with each teacher

following the survey. Each of the teachers agreed the survey was easy to understand, and made them think about the support given to them in regards to working in diverse settings. The group agreed the open-ended question at the end giving the respondent a chance to write down any other thoughts about the support they received was a good idea because it gave them a chance to go a little more in depth.

When I analyzed the data provided from the three surveys taken, I specifically was looking for questions with large variance among the three respondents in an effort to find questions that may have been misunderstood or created confusion. For example, if a question had answers on the scale of 1, 3, and 5 there may have been an indication of the question being unclear, which I would have followed up with the teachers to see if they were unclear of the question. There were only three questions with a variance in responses ranging from two to four, and when asked about these questions it was evident the question was clear to each of the teachers with the variance based on their individual opinion of how the district supported them as a beginning career teacher.

I conducted the school administrator interview and mentor or instructional coach interview with the Director of Instruction and Instructional Coach, respectively. The interviews lasted between thirty and thirty-five minutes. I learned immediately the importance of remembering to give the person being interviewed a paper copy of the questions. Both respondents felt like the questions were well connected and understandable, but needed the questions in front of them in order to refer to them when answering the questions.

The second piece of feedback I received was concerning the phrase “beginning career teacher” being mentioned many times throughout many of the questions. The respondents both commented on the use of “beginning career teacher” in describing the teachers and the program

created some initial confusion or distractions within each of the questions the phrase was repeated. I went back to the questions and used the phrase “induction program” in replacement of “beginning teacher support program” in order to cut down on the use of the phrase and distraction of repeated phrases.

In the interview process, I am specifically looking for those successes and barriers the people in different roles find when supporting beginning career teachers in working in diverse settings. The interviews with both the Director of Instruction and Instructional Coach led to lengthy answers to the questions revealing the successes and barriers both people found when supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. Overall, I believe the small sample of interviews in the pilot study showed the questions posed focused on the successes and barriers respondents found within their induction programs, showed the length of the interview to be reasonable, allowed for changes to be made in questions to lessen confusion, and understand how to better prepare the people being interviewed to directly answer the questions being asked.

Data Analysis

To create an in-depth look at the data from the case study, I organized all files and data to access the data as I look for patterns and themes that begin to emerge. I created a priori codes to begin analyzing the collected data. A priori codes are codes created prior to a study where the researcher decides on codes highly connected to the study. I analyzed data to determine if inductive codes became consistently evident during the data collection and analysis. Inductive codes are generated by the researcher while collecting and analyzing data (Merriam, 1998). After

collecting the data, the a priori codes created prior to the collection of data proved the most effective procedure for organizing the data.

The a priori codes were a combination of the three criteria of the theoretical framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and the three aspects of the New Teacher Center's ten *Induction Program Standards*. The Culturally Relevant used in the a priori codes surrounded the following tenets: students must experience academic success, students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. I used the ten *Induction Program Standards* created by the New Teacher Center within three programmatic aspects: foundational, structural, and instructional with a specific focus on aspects of the instructional standard of "Focus on Equity and Universal Access". The standards were described earlier in the description of the survey done in conjunction with this research study. The New Teacher Center is a leader in providing support and guidance surrounding the support of beginning career teachers through induction services. The codes used in the survey items will be next to the survey item using the following codes: FCRP, SCRCP, and ICRP. *Figure 9* contains a full description of the a priori codes used on coding survey questions and answers.

The first letter in the codes where there is a letter before CRP stands for one of the programmatic aspects of The New Teacher Center Induction Standards connected with one of the three tenants of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Practices. The "Foundational" (F) standards prescribed by the New Teacher Center address the vision of the induction program, evaluation of the induction program based on the vision and goals of the induction program, and designing a program focused on supporting teachers in meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs. The "Structural" (S) standards focus on selecting mentors who embody the

vision of the program and school district, providing professional development for mentors and beginning career teachers in meeting the diverse needs of both the beginning teacher and students, and assessing beginning teacher practices in meeting the needs of all learners. The “Instructional” (I) standards focus on the mentor assisting beginning career teachers in creating an environment conducive to learning for all students, practicing culturally responsive practices, and providing equitable access to the curriculum and equitable outcomes.

Table 3.2

Aprori Code Explanations for Survey Questions

<i>Code</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<i>FCRP</i>	<i>Foundational/Culturally Relevant Practice</i>
<i>SCR</i>	<i>Structural/Culturally Relevant Practice</i>
<i>ICRP</i>	<i>Instructional/Culturally Relevant Practice</i>

After reading through all the data and making organized notes, I began writing an in-depth description of each case, which included the context of each case. I included a study of the district as one of the cases due to the importance of understanding the larger context in which the two schools were supporting beginning career teachers since the district provides the overall structures and policy for supporting beginning career teachers. Categories were created using the three tenets of culturally relevant practices offered as the theoretical framework of this study in combination with the three programmatic aspects of the New Teacher Induction Standards. I directly interpreted the data using the combination of these categories looking for specific

patterns shedding light and depth on the case drawing inferences within the comparative case study.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity and Trustworthiness of any research study must be addressed in order to bring legitimacy to a study (Merriam, 1998). Through a mixed methods study, I avoided the futile “methodological warfare” in which quantitative studies have been deemed the “gold standard” of research studies while qualitative studies have been questioned for a lack of “hard” data and credibility of the inferences when reporting findings (Creswell, 2000). Creswell (2000) describes nine procedures to demonstrate the validity of a study: triangulation of data, disconfirming of data, researcher reflexivity, member checking, prolonged engagement in the field, collaboration, the audit trail, thick and rich description, and peer debriefing. I used triangulation, disconfirming of the data, researcher reflexivity, member checking, and thick and rich description within a mixed-methods comparative case study approach to increase the validity and trustworthiness of this research study.

Triangulation involves providing data from multiple sources and multiple methods in an effort to confirm findings of a research study (Merriam, 1998). Mathison (as cited in Merriam, 1998) suggests the use of triangulation is a way to provide a more holistic understanding of the data provided in connection with the findings of a research study. In combining quantitative data through a survey and qualitative data through interviews, observations, and document analysis within a mixed-methods approach, I used multiple sources of data from both research methods to bring a holistic perspective to informing and connecting findings to the themes and research questions increasing the validity and trustworthiness of this research study.

I provided the school district with an executive summary of the research study as a member check to ensure the trustworthiness of the research study. I understood the participants had to make sacrifices of time and effort in order to be a part of this study, and the benefits may not have equaled the time and effort. My hope was the executive summary and the time each participant needed to reflect on the supports for beginning career teachers focused on equity and diversity was beneficial for the school districts as they continue to create effective supports for those beginning career teachers in their schools. The district administrators acknowledged the findings, and did confirm the findings in the executive summary connected with what they have come to understand regarding the beginning career teacher support program.

The district administrators saw there was a disconnect between the vision and mission of the school district and the support the beginning career teachers were receiving. The district administrators saw the results as a way to tweak their program to better connect the beginning career teachers to the overall focus on all students achieving at high levels. The district administrators were especially interested in how principals were supplementing the support the beginning career teachers provided by the district that was more context specific and specific to strategies beginning career teachers can use to meet the needs of all students. Their belief was the beginning career teacher program needed to better connect with specific strategies beginning career teachers lack when they first enter teaching in a diverse school.

Researcher reflexivity was used due to the nature of the strategy to be open, honest, and reflective about the findings brought forth in the research. I recognize my position as a principal working with beginning career teachers and at one time being a beginning career teacher myself will carry with it some biases and perspectives gained from induction services used to support me as a beginning career teacher. Based on the successes and barriers I have experienced in

those roles in conjunction with induction services, I consistently reflected on how those experiences may have influenced my focus on the successes and barriers I might suspect would be true for the district and schools I used as research sites.

In the years where I was a beginning career teacher, I was told a mentor would guide and support me through the alignment of the induction program with the district mission and vision. Unfortunately, I was not given this type of support during my first three years of teaching. The induction program I was told would be there was not, and I consistently struggled with meeting the needs of all students in my classroom especially those students who had cultural backgrounds very different from mine. I went into this research study with knowledge of my own bias as described, but looked forward to learn from the research sites chosen without allowing those biases to interfere with my analysis of the data provided.

Disconfirming evidence was a strategy employed for the research study to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the study. The researcher analyzed the data in the findings of the study related to the research questions for both confirming and disconfirming connections to the themes established. In looking for the disconfirming evidence, there was an acknowledgement of the complexity of the data related to the research questions of this study and the complexity for which school districts deal with when attempting to best support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students in a diverse classroom. Being thoughtful in recognizing disconfirming evidence not only allows the researcher to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, but also could bring about an unexpected finding and lead to further refined research questions (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher used thick and rich description to bring validity and trustworthiness to the study. The research questions pursued in this study were deeply contextualized within specific

school districts and the support they provide to beginning career teachers in diverse classroom settings. Using a comparative case study approach allowed me to describe the connections and themes to the findings in detail. The use of thick and rich description allowed the readers of the research to understand the connections and relationships between the participants, context, and findings leading to decisions about the possibility of the findings and description to be applicable to other school districts when looking to find ways to support beginning career teachers in teaching in diverse settings (Creswell, 2000).

Ethical Considerations

Understanding the ethical concerns within a research study is a researcher's responsibility to those participants involved in the research study. The most basic and important steps to representing a researcher's commitment to ethical practices is to obtain informed consent and to protect the participants from harm (Merriam, 1998). Kimmel (as cited in Merriam, 1998) explains that participants must have a complete understanding of the research study and the research questions being asked within the study, and that the risks involved in the study are outweighed by the gains to the participant and the field of study. I obtained approval of the research project through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I received informed consent (Appendix H) from all of the participants of the study establishing the participants' knowledge of the study, understanding of their role in the study, and the techniques and strategies used to create safety for them.

I recognized involving beginning career teachers in a study evaluating and analyzing the supports given through an induction process can challenge the beginning career teachers to be critical and reflective of those supports. Being in this position, as a beginning career teacher can

be uncomfortable for many reasons including the lack of confidence they may have around their ability to recognize how those supports affect their instruction or being critical of their employer through surveys or interviews. I recognized the sensitive nature of discussing issues surrounding diversity and how conversations surrounding diversity can inherently bring feelings of discomfort. Pseudonyms were given to the individuals and school districts participating in the study to help create a sense of safety when responding to interview and survey questions. The interviews were conducted in private rooms in the buildings each of the respondents worked in order to ensure privacy and create a more comfortable atmosphere than conducting the interviews offsite. The interviews were recorded using an electronic application. The respondents were told the recordings would be transcribed and then the recordings would be destroyed following transcription.

I recognized my own biases from being a teacher and a principal who has been involved with induction programs as a teacher and principal. Knowing I have experienced certain induction supports that have helped me become a better educator, and other induction strategies that have had little effect on my practice I needed to be reflective on how those experiences may influence the report of my findings. I also needed to recognize how I have never experienced induction supports with any focus on diversity and equity, hence the reason why I am interested in the research questions posed on this research study.

As mentioned earlier, I knew the time the participants gave to interviewing and completing the survey was taking the participants from their main role in supporting students. I provided an executive summary of the research study, so the different participants involved in the beginning career teacher support program could first check to make sure the summary accurately described what they knew of in the beginning teacher support program. In providing

the executive summary of the research study, I also attempted to honor their contributions and show them that the study was conducted in an open fashion by quickly communicating to them what I had found.

Importance of the Study for Research and Practice

The significance of this study in both research and practice lies in how the findings have the potential to add to the small amount of research on how best to support beginning career teachers in diverse settings. The research questions allow for school districts and schools with rising diversity to learn from school districts and schools that are finding success in meeting the needs of diverse student populations and supporting new teachers in continuing the positive achievement outcomes. In my role as a principal in a school district where economic, racial, and linguistic diversity continues to rise, I am interested in finding ways to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners. The study gives an in-depth look into the perspectives of beginning career teachers, mentors, and administrators in the successes and challenges they have found in continuing to support practices within an induction program focused on beginning career teachers in diverse settings. The ability to bring in the perspectives of each of these roles will add to the small amount of research in this area, and will again help school districts better plan and implement induction practices best supporting the growth of beginning career teachers in diverse school settings.

In the following chapters, I will give an in depth description of the school district and schools in an effort to answer the research question. I will begin with describing the larger context of the school district, and then describe the two schools followed by a comparison of the two schools specifically focusing on the similarities and differences in the how the beginning

career teachers are supported in both contexts. The description of the school district will guide the research study in understanding the general structure of the beginning career teacher support program leading to a more specific description of how those structures play out at the individual schools and what unique structures might be in place at each of the schools.

Chapter 4: The School District of Yorkville

In this chapter, I describe the school district of Yorkville where both the case study schools are located. The focus of this research study is at the school level, but the formal structures of induction services created at the district level make it important to understand the larger context of the case study schools. The chapter includes data gathered through interviews and surveys with district level administrators, and through documents of the school district focused on the structure of support for beginning teachers in a diverse school district.

After the initial overview of the demographics of the district, I will provide a description of the structure and execution of the support systems for beginning career teachers. I then connect these to the program standards of the New Teacher Center and tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

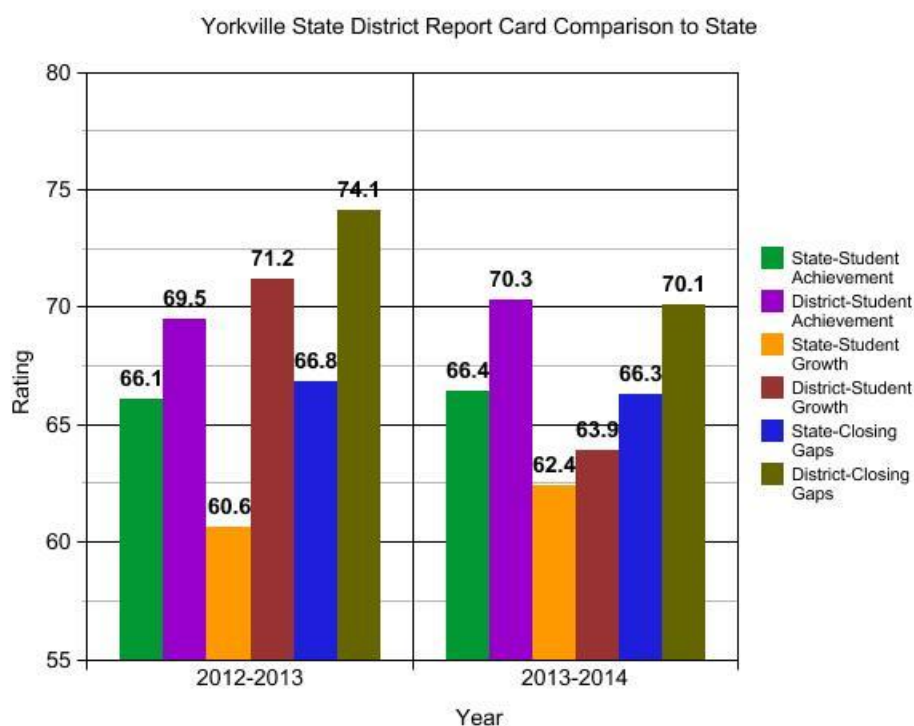
School District of Yorkville: Demographic and Academic Essentials

The School District of Yorkville is located in the Midwest section of the United States within a city of a population of over 60,000 people. The school district serves over 10,000 students. In the years from 2010-2015, the overall student enrollment has been stable, only increasing .17% over those years. Within the small increase of the overall amount of students attending the school district, the amount of students of color has increased significantly increasing the overall diversity of the school district. Over the past five years, the district has seen an increase of 11.7% in African American students, 3.1% in Hispanic students, 8.9% in Multi-racial students, and 6.6% in Asian students. The growth in the population of students of color paired with a decrease of 1.7% in the enrollment of white students. As a whole, the racial demographics of the student population are currently 74% White students, 12% Hispanic

students, 6% African-American students, 2% Asian students, and 6% Multi-racial students. The percentage of students considered economically disadvantaged has increased from 46% in 2010, to over 50% in the 2014-2015 school year.

Within that same timeframe from 2010-2014, a steady increase began in outcomes for all students culminating in district ratings above state averages. The academic data is not included for the 2014-2015 school year due to the data not being released from the state at the time of this writing. According to a state school district report card from the 2012 to the 2013 school year, (See Figure 4.1) the ratings were higher than the state average in all areas being assessed: overall student achievement, overall student growth, and closing gaps (focused on achievement among students of color, English Language Learners, and students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds). You will see a decrease in both the state and district ratings between the state and school district, which may have been due to a change in the state assessment between those two years, but the district is still well above the state assessment in both overall student achievement and closing the gaps. The state report card was used for those two years in the span, but does focus on all students and the progress made as a whole and as demographic groups (i.e., students of color, English Language Learners).

Figure 4.1. Comparison of Yorkville school district and state on components of the state school report card between the years of 2012 and 2014



Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show the outcomes of the state standardized tests in grades 3-8 and 10 in reading and math according to economic and language status where the district students consistently outperform the state average of students scoring in the proficient or advanced range. Figures 4.4. and 4.5 demonstrate the district student achievement focused on students of color outperformed the state data of students of color and growing slightly in reading and significantly in math over those 4 years. The data on the report cards and the standardized tests document relative overall success the district is having within their diverse student population making the district relevant to answering the research question of how a district finding success with diverse learners in a diverse setting is supporting beginning career teachers.

Figure 4.2. Comparison of Yorkville school district and state on state reading assessment between the years of 2010-2014 based on ELL and economic status

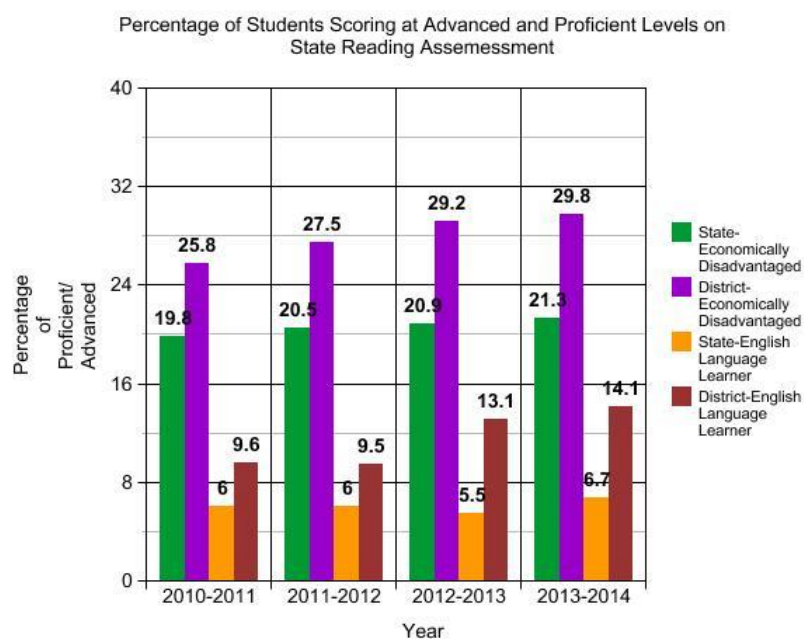


Figure 4.3. Comparison of Yorkville school district and state on state math assessment between the years of 2010-2014 based on ELL and economic status

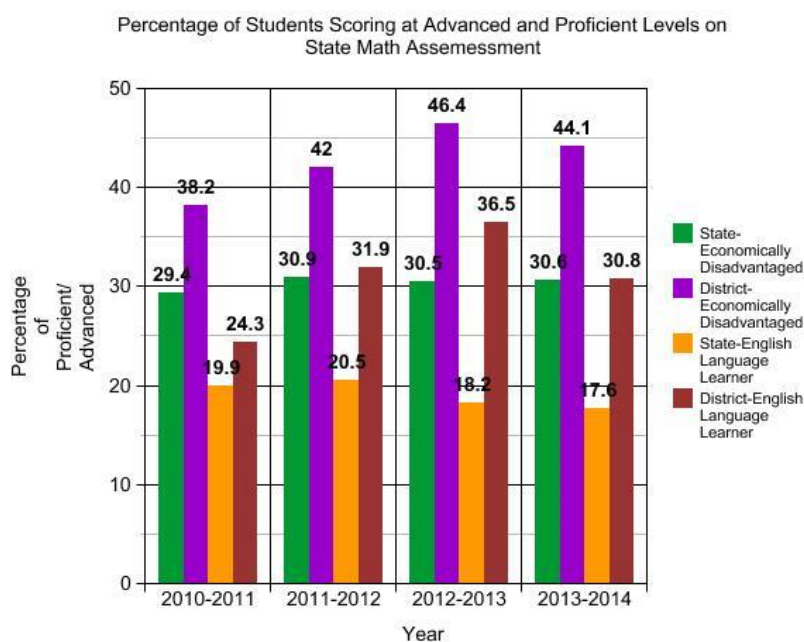


Figure 4.4. Comparison of Yorkville school district and state of achievement of students of color on state reading assessment between the years of 2010-2014

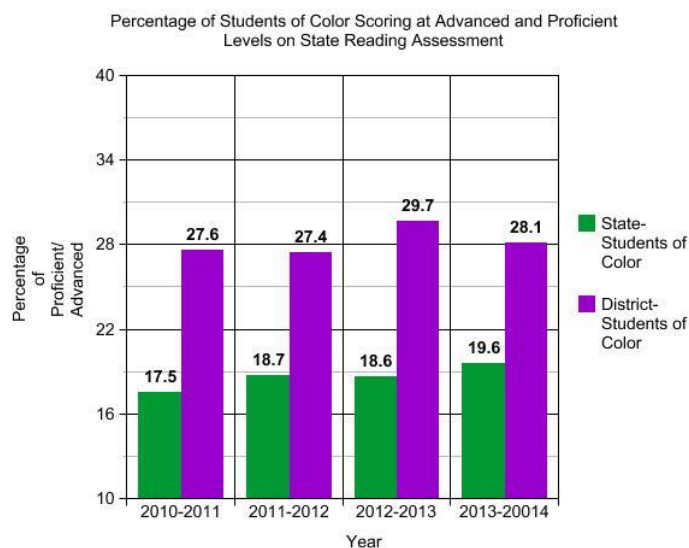
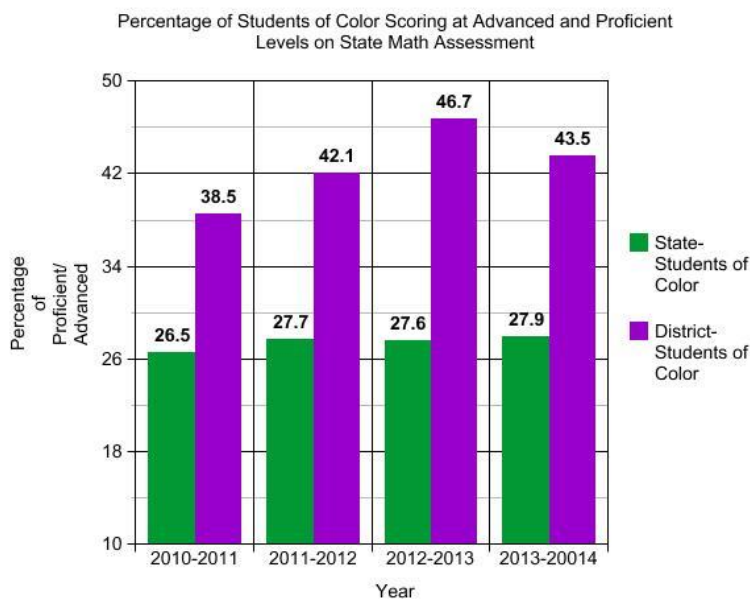


Figure 4.5. Comparison of Yorkville school district and state of achievement of students of color on state math assessment between the years of 2010-2014



Beginning career teachers are supported by a variety of formal and informal supports provided by the school district and schools in an effort to meet the district goals. The formal supports include a weeklong institute for beginning career teachers where the beginning career teachers are introduced to the district policies and expectations. A mentor is assigned to the

beginning career teacher during the institute. The mentor is required to stay with the beginning career teacher for their first year. Throughout the first year of employment, there are required professional development opportunities for the beginning career teachers focused on working in diverse environments, as well as classes on general instructional strategies. Principals provide feedback with scheduled meetings, checking in on how the beginning career teacher is feeling about their work, as well as the beginning career teacher being a part of the evaluation process providing ongoing feedback to the beginning career teacher. Informal supports include the support given by colleagues in the school and other beginning career teachers. Throughout the chapter, I will provide detailed descriptions of the formal and informal supports the district provides beginning career teachers.

In the following paragraphs, I will share the information gained through the documents, observations, interviews, and survey results as it pertains, or connects with, the codes used to analyze the data. The use of the codes allowed me to combine the induction standards of the New Teacher Center and the framework of the study, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), into a comprehensive look at the school district and schools. Combining the New Teacher Center Induction Standards focused on data at the practitioner and system level and the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy focused on students allowed me to analyze the data in a complete and thorough manner. As described in the design of the study, I used the following categories to describe and analyze data: Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers, Structural Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers, and Instructional Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers.

Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The foundational qualities discussed in the following section of how the school district supports beginning career teachers within a culturally relevant framework include the following sub-sections:

- Program vision and goals
- Principal engagement

These subsections connect to the findings within the survey responses, interview responses, and document analysis. The subsections also connect with the sub standards of the Foundational Standards of the Induction Program Standards of the *New Teacher Center*.

Program vision and goals. The school district vision stated as “Educational Excellence: Building Our Future” is connected to a mission statement of “To Serve Our Community by Educating Every Child”. As with most school districts, there are goals connected to the vision and mission related to achievement outcomes, enrollment in Advanced Placement courses, and attendance goals. The school district set specific goals for African-American students and Hispanic students and their growth on the state assessment in math and reading. The goals were:

- *Raise the State Assessment reading score for Hispanic students from 79% to 81% and for Black students from 75% to 77% by 2015-2016.*
- *Raise the State Assessment math score for Hispanic students from 75% to 77% and for Black students from 63% to 65% by 2015-2016*

According to survey results and interviews of the district administrators, there was a strong belief the mentor program has a clear connection to the vision and mission of the school district. The two district administrators “strongly agreed” with the survey statement, “There is a clear connection between our district level professional development and initiatives focusing on

meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.” The results of the survey of district administrators reported in Table 4.1 show the administrators have confidence the beginning teacher support program in place in Yorkville directly connect to the vision and mission of district.

Table 4.1

Survey Results of District Administrators’ Ratings focused on the Connection of District Mission, Vision, and Goals

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
The goals set for our beginning teacher support program are clear and understood by all stakeholders (administration, teachers, and mentors).	4.5
I see a direct connection between the support provided in our beginning career teacher support program and the specific mission, vision, and academic data of our school district.	5.0
I understand my role and responsibilities within the beginning teacher support program.	4.5
I understand who I need to turn to in order to receive guidance in how I can support or be supported by the appropriate staff member within the structure of the beginning teacher support program.	4.5

The Superintendent and Director of Instruction pointed to the “Platinum Plan” as evidence to the alignment between the vision and mission of the school district and school district operations. The Platinum Plan is the structure the school district has created to focus the employees and school community on providing culturally relevant schools for all students. The Director of Instruction pointed to how having the writers of the Platinum Plan involved in the beginning career teacher support program and professional development connects the beginning career teacher to the plan and the overall mission and vision of the school district.

A foundational aspect to the focus on growth in all areas of achievement for all students is stated in the document titled “The Platinum Plan: Closing the Achievement Gap”. District administration created and supported the Platinum Plan to build a framework and support structure for staff focused on Culturally Relevant instruction in relation to ensuring all students achieve at high levels. A team of administrators developed the “Plan” and teachers sitting on the “District Equity Leadership Team” focused on providing professional development centered on Culturally Responsive Teaching contributed to the plan. The plan clearly states that it is “based on the premise that all district staff need to understand the importance of culturally responsive strategies in the area of instruction, classroom management, and curriculum design and assessment as well as building effective relationships with students and families” (Yorkville Area School District, 2011)

The Platinum Plan opens by stating, “We are working hard to ensure that all students are progressing academically at high rates. We are not comfortable with a gap in achievement between any groups of students.” The plan continues on to specifically focus on the development of staff in “understanding the importance of culturally responsive strategies in the area of instruction, classroom management, and curriculum design and assessment, as well as building effective relationships with students and families.”

The Director of Instruction discussed the optional classes or workshops the district provides to beginning career teachers and veteran teachers as other examples of the district’s commitment to culturally relevant practices. Each year the school district provides district led classes focused on culturally relevant practices and connects those classes to the overall goal of providing culturally relevant instruction to all students. Through these supports for new teachers focused on Culturally Relevant Practices and the discussion with district administration, the

district shows the commitment towards creating Culturally Relevant educators. These professional development opportunities are led by school level educators and district level educators (mentors, instructional coaches, etc.) who were typically part of the CREATE teams from each individual school.

Understanding the Platinum Plan, components are a required staff development structure in all of the schools to incorporate culturally responsive curriculum at the building level ensuring the framework of the Platinum Plan is consistently a focus. Further, in the analysis and comparative case study, I will connect back with the Platinum Plan and the connection to mentors, principals, and beginning career teachers and the influence of the plan on the support teachers received. A discrepancy in how district administrators see the influence of the Platinum Plan and how the other roles see the influence of the plan will be discussed.

Within the plan, there is a description of the action steps towards creating *Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement* (CREATE) teams at each of the district schools. The teams were created to facilitate the discussions and actions steps towards closing the achievement gaps focused on each of the schools' school improvement plans through specific professional development opportunities led by CREATE members. The Director of Instruction referenced the Platinum Plan and the importance of the focus on meeting the needs of all students in connection to the plan: "I think (the plan) is a strong agent to help support that. We have had Shiraki Holly here before. Anthony Muhammad has been here. We try and make sure that there's a lot of ongoing staff development." Shiraki Holly and Anthony Muhammed are both considered leaders in the area of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy connected with creating school environments supporting all students from all demographic backgrounds. In using district resources to invite nationally recognized experts in how to create a culturally

relevant workforce, it was evident the district leadership advocate for culturally relevant instruction.

The beginning career teachers interviewed did not mention the Platinum Plan in any of their interviews concerning the support they receive as a part of the beginning career teacher support program. When asked about the Platinum Plan none of the beginning career teachers knew what it was, and only two of the mentors had heard of the plan and the relation to Culturally Relevant Instruction. The beginning career teachers did have an understanding of the CREATE teams and their role in providing professional development, but did not see the direct connection to the Platinum Plan. A disconnect between how the district administrators believe the Mission, Vision, and the Platinum Plan were driving the support program and how the beginning career teachers seeing a connection between the district Mission, Vision, and Platinum Plan with the support they are receiving will be covered more as the school sites are described in following chapters.

Principal engagement. The school principal at the foundational level provides the other area of support of beginning career teachers. Again, the district administrators communicated a high degree of confidence that principals were providing the support at the school level the beginning career teachers would need to find success within a school. The Superintendent referenced the practice of “rounding” where school administrators provide support throughout a school year rather than only conferring informally throughout the school year. The Director of Instruction described “rounding” conversations as formal conversations are at the 30, 60, and 90-day periods of the school year between beginning career teachers and the principal. The conversations centered on asking the teacher how things are going overall, and if the principal can support the teacher in any way to help them continue to grow and stay connected to the

school goals and objectives. The rounding conversations can center on any topic the beginning teacher would like to focus on, especially areas the beginning career teacher is struggling with or finding success. The rounding conversations provide a built-in communication system between a principal and a beginning career teacher. As the Director of Instruction stated,

“It’s a check in. What’s working for you? How are you doing? There’s a script that follows with it. There’s a 90-day one that comes again. It’s just all about making sure that you are well supported and that you have what you need so that you’re effective.”

Beginning teachers and principals in both schools mentioned the rounding conversations they had with their principals and discussed the positive aspects the conversations with the principals had on their growth as culturally relevant teachers and as teachers in general. The one on one time with the principal was an important part of the beginning career teachers’ growth with many of the beginning career teachers mentioning the rounding conversations as an important piece of feeling supported in what they are learning about every day, and getting one on one feedback provided by the principals at each building. The principals also mentioned the power of the rounding conversations as a formal way to check in with beginning career teachers and provide ongoing feedback about their instruction. A more in-depth look at how the rounding conversations take place in the respective schools will be covered in future chapters.

The beginning career teachers did agree the rounding conversations were helpful in creating a connection with their principal on a regular basis, but to be sure discussing struggles with their direct supervisor can be a difficult. Discussions concerning diversity and engaging in conversations that may have some misperceptions involved could be especially difficult, yet these are the types of discussions that may need to happen for a beginning career teacher to grow.

Outside of the rounding conversations, principals are expected to evaluate new teachers and provide them feedback throughout the year in various ways though walkthroughs of their classrooms, being present throughout the building, and during team or department meetings. The Superintendent specifically mentioned the principal of Schroeder Elementary School, one of case study schools, as a principal being in the classroom a lot. The Superintendent described how the principal, Erin, consistently provided feedback to the beginning career teachers through a classroom walkthrough process connected to the state teacher evaluation system and the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

The Director of Instruction also specifically commented on the high level of skill principals in both schools focused on in the research study have with providing timely and effective feedback to all teachers, but especially beginning career teachers. He shared his support of both principals and his belief they are two principals with a truly centered focus on meeting the needs of all students while working in diverse schools. The survey results in Table 4.2 focused on principal engagement in the process of supporting beginning career teachers further show the two administrators' belief their principals are actively and effectively supporting beginning career teachers. In coming chapters, dialogue that is more specific will take place in describing the principals of both schools and their effect and role in supporting beginning career teachers in finding success in diverse school settings.

Table 4.2

District Administrators Survey Results in Regards to Principal Support and Administrative Support

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly
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	Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
The principal cares about and understands how to support beginning career teachers in developing as teachers who meet the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	5.0
Principals are actively involved in supporting mentors and beginning career teachers by providing access to the appropriate professional development opportunities needed to support growth in effectively teach a diverse classroom of students.	5.0
The superintendent and director/coordinator of the beginning teacher support program place a high priority on supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of all students.	5.0

Structural Culturally Relevant Standards Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The Structural Culturally Relevant standards of a support program focused on the following areas:

- Professional development of beginning career teachers and mentors
- Mentor selection and support

These subsections connect to the findings within the survey responses, interview responses, and document analysis. The subsections also connect with the sub standards of the Foundational Standards of the Induction Program Standards of the *New Teacher Center*.

Professional development offered to beginning career teachers. The district provides specific professional development for beginning career teachers focused on the basic routines and procedures of teaching (i.e. filling out requisitions, taking attendance, etc.), creating engaging classrooms for all students, and providing choice through the professional development

offered throughout the school year focused on creating engaging classrooms for all learners. The professional development offered also includes the formal structures provided at the school level through grade level meetings, feedback provided by principals, and the feedback and coaching provided by the mentors.

Table 4.3

Connection of Professional Development to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to District Administrators

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
There is a clear connection between our district level professional development and initiatives focusing on meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	5.0
I am given the professional development opportunities allowing me to understand the importance of cultural competence (ability to effectively interact with people of different backgrounds) and the role it plays in long-term success for students.	5.0
The school district strongly supports my growth in understanding how to meet the needs of all students in a diverse school setting.	5.0
Beginning teachers are provided with effective professional development surrounding the topic of diverse classrooms.	5.0

Based on the survey results and interview responses in Table 4.3, the district administrators (Superintendent and Director of Instruction) believe the professional development provided to the beginning career teachers is highly effective in supporting beginning career teachers in understanding the connection between their instruction and providing equitable outcomes for all students. The survey results connect with the outcomes from the interviews especially in the area of creating an individual connection with beginning career teachers through professional development opportunities within their school and provided at the district level. The

district administrators felt the professional development was highly effective in guiding beginning career teachers in best practices in meeting the needs of all students. Prior to the school year starting, the district provides professional development through the induction program that all beginning career teachers are required to take part in as their employment with the district. During this time, teachers are learning about policies and procedures they will need to be aware of to perform the day-to-day pieces of their job such as using district email and taking attendance, and learn about the district vision and mission in connection with the Platinum Plan described earlier. In the Superintendent's view, there is an emphasis on ensuring the beginning career teachers feel welcome and supported by building relationships during this first induction programming, including building a relationship with the superintendent.

“I make them get out a piece of paper and a pen, and I say write this down and I give them my cell phone number and I tell them I love to be connected to what's going on in the district, call me, text me, email me, I expect to hear from you. Sometimes you get into a jam or you don't know what to do about something, feel free to call me. That's the connection I make...”

During the initial induction program, the Superintendent stated she wants the beginning career teachers to “feel like we are a very warm and inviting district”. She went on to say that she hears the beginning career teachers speak about how they were surprised by the process the district takes to supporting them and the time the district takes to help the beginning career teachers build relationships and understand the demographics of the community and students they will be working with. The superintendent discussed the importance of building relationships with one another as colleagues in setting the tone for positive relationships in general as to also

show beginning career teachers the importance of building strong relationships with parents and students.

The Director of Instruction specifically discussed the emphasis the district places in supporting the beginning career teachers on understanding the “culture” of the school district. The first morning of the induction programming prior to school starting for the beginning career teachers focused on the culture, which the Director of Instruction defined as the values and core beliefs focused on the vision and mission of the school district. During these discussions, the “diversity message” contained in the vision, mission, and Platinum Plan is very strong and intertwined according to the Director of Instruction.

The introduction of the Platinum Plan is the beginning of supporting new teachers in understanding culturally responsive practices. The assets, goals, and objectives of the Platinum Plan are explained and then a clear connection to future professional development is made to keep culturally responsive practices “on the front burner” of the thoughts of beginning career teacher according to the Director of Instruction. The superintendent mentioned the importance of the school district framing the idea of diversity as an asset of the district and not a deficit and how the Platinum Plan further pushes that concept in order to drive the professional development forward with a positive focus on diversity.

Later in describing the schools, beginning career teachers mention their own reasons for working in the district, and how they see diversity as an asset rather than a deficit. The discussions center on both their own personal belief of their own decision for working in a diverse school environment, and how professional development further supported their ability to provide instruction and a classroom environment supporting all learners.

The district requires three mandatory courses for beginning career teachers in the school district titled: Effective Teaching 1, Effective Teaching 2, and Winning Strategies of Classroom Management. Each course spans the entire school year meeting approximately one time per month. The Director of Instruction said a focus on diversity intertwined across the classes and connected to the idea of differentiating and meeting the needs of all students. “Effective Teaching 1” focuses on the routines and procedures important to creating a classroom that runs efficiently. “Effective Teaching 2” focuses on the instructional strategies and curriculum in order for the beginning career teachers to get accustomed to the required curriculum. The district focus on culturally relevant practices is evident in the “Winning Strategies of Classroom Management” class. The class guides beginning teachers in creating a consistent classroom community where students’ backgrounds and demographics are the center of how beginning career teachers create an environment where all students feel welcome and safe. The district administrators described the importance of all of those classes connected to the idea that one size does not fit all, and the importance of knowing a student’s academic understandings, as well as knowing the student’s cultural background.

Beginning career teachers did see the benefit in the classes as general ways to learn about the diversity in the school district, but there was difficulty in connecting the overall classes to their growth as Culturally Relevant practitioners. As a beginning career teacher, there could also be a feeling of the district is not recognizing the beginning career teachers may already have some skills in meeting the needs of all learners by offering classes meant to only create a level playing field rather than building off of the beginning career teachers’ strengths.

The district administration believes the tenets of Culturally Relevant Teaching are the basis of the professional development offered to beginning career teachers. In describing the

importance of the professional development offered to beginning career teachers focused on diversity, the Director of Instruction stated,

“I think the Winning Strategies in Classroom Management piece gets at that the best. One of the key parts of that class is relationships, relationships, relationships. You can understand the common core as well as you want, but if you have no relational capacity, you’re always going to be handicapped in your effectiveness. That’s the key part that is taught in that class and is strongly emphasized.”

Much like descriptions in earlier paragraphs, the statement emphasizes the connection to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and the importance of building relationships with students taught and communicated through the professional development classes offered to the beginning career teachers. Within the classes offered, the district then moves the beginning career teachers into classes helping beginning career teachers use the knowledge they gain from the relationships they build with their students into creating engaging classrooms that match the students’ strengths and areas of growth.

The district provides ongoing professional development that is required of new teachers. The professional development opportunities focus on differentiation as a way to meet the needs of all students in all demographic groups. According to the Director of Instruction, the professional development opportunities are “to make sure that one size doesn’t fit all and we respond to the differences in kid’s readiness level and cultural background and then use those as important starting points to move forward”. The comment connected with a teacher understanding the students academically, socially, and emotionally in order to meet the needs of all learners in a classroom.

An area of professional development not to overlook was the support given by colleagues of the beginning career teachers in what the district calls Professional Learning Communities (PLC). PLC work includes regularly scheduled meetings with educators teaching in similar areas (i.e., grade-level teachers) and with teachers who support students who may be in an educator's class (e.g., special education teacher supporting a specific teacher). The meetings focused on planning instruction based on the data collected throughout the school year. The beginning career teacher's own drive to ask questions of colleagues and the discussion topics created by the PLC drove the support of the beginning career teachers. School culture and colleague support was discussed throughout the interviews of teachers, mentors, and principals at each school. The Director of Instruction referenced the work of PLC, by stating:

“We do a lot of PLC work in our building, so grade levels have a strong support network through a PLC sort of structure. There are units (of curriculum) and the units work together.”

There was a strong connection with the district administrators' belief of the importance of creating a strong culture within a building focused on meeting the needs of all students. The beginning career teachers in each of the buildings gave a lot of credit for their own success with diverse learners to the support and guidance provided by their colleagues in their buildings, which will be discussed in upcoming chapters focused on the school level support of beginning career teachers.

Mentor selection and support. In addition to professional development opportunities, the district provides each beginning career teacher with a mentor for the first year of their career. Each school also has an Academic Learning Coach (ALC) who, along with veteran teachers in the school, can also support beginning career teachers, but my focus here is on the role of the

mentors as a key aspect of the formal district induction program. The principal of each school assigns the mentors, and mentors are typically staff in the same school who are teaching in an area that is similar to the beginning career teacher. For example, a beginning second grade teacher would have a mentor who is also a second grade teacher. In specialized area, such as speech and language, a mentor may be from another school since there may not be another speech and language teacher in the same school building.

The mentors were teachers with more than three years of experience and demonstrated to the principal high levels of effectiveness in their own teaching. The district determines a teacher's effectiveness based on the district teacher evaluation system which is the evaluation procedure endorsed by the state level department of instruction. The evaluation system is focused on: how a teacher plans for meeting the needs of all students, creates a classroom environment where all students feel respected, implements instructional strategies focused on meeting the needs of all students, and how a teacher collaborates with other staff members to meet the needs of all students.

District expectations, the needs of the beginning career teacher, and the expectations of the individual principal at each of the schools defined the level of support for the beginning career teacher. The mentors are required to meet with their beginning career teachers once a month focused on their development and goals the mentor and beginning career teacher set in the beginning of the school year. Other expectations of the mentors include:
Formal Observation of the beginning career teacher at least once a quarter followed by feedback.
Attend monthly meetings for all mentors in the school district.

According to the results of the survey focused on mentor support (see Table 4.4), the district level administrators felt the support provided by mentors was strong and supportive of

the needs of the beginning career teachers. The survey results also showed confidence in the professional development of the mentors, and the support provided for the mentors as they work with beginning career teachers. Workshops are in support of those coaching techniques of how best to ask reflective questions of beginning career teachers to help challenge their instructional strategies in meeting the needs of all learners. The professional development includes regular meetings of mentors focused on ways to best support beginning career teachers where beginning career teachers are at the same meeting so the mentors can immediately implement strategies focused on helping beginning career teachers reflect on their ability to meet the needs of all students. Based on the interview data, there is no specific workshop or professional development focused specifically on only mentors, which the Director of Instruction admitted needed to be addressed so mentors are constantly improving their practice of supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.

Table 4.4

Ratings of Mentor Support to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to District Administrators

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
The selection of mentors is driven by a strength-based approach where mentors are selected based on their ability to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.	5.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to seek out the professional development needed to better support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.	5.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to continue building their own ability to use instructional practices meet the needs of all students.	5.0

As a follow up to the survey, there was a consistent comment by the district administrators believing the district still had a long way to go in helping mentors understand how they can best support beginning career teachers in challenging their own set of beliefs as they begin their work in a diverse school setting. The Director of Instruction believed the mentors struggled with challenging the beginning career teachers' preconceived ideas about diversity and the challenges it may bring because the mentors may have their own preconceived ideas getting in the way of difficult conversations aimed at improving instruction. The administrators were concerned some of the mentors may not always bring an assets based approach to their work with beginning career teachers in a diverse school setting which may perpetuate negative attitudes towards the increasing diversity in the school district. The district administrators worried the struggles some of the mentors might be having in their own classroom translates into a negative attitude for when trying to support beginning career teachers with similar issues in the classroom. Understanding the need for improvement shows the district was not yet satisfied with the support mentors are providing beginning career teachers, and is looking to improve the selection, retention, and development of effective mentors for beginning career teachers. There was some discussion among staff interviewed at the school sites focused on the fact that even though their schools were very supportive of one another and the tenets of Culturally Relevant practices, they came into contact with push back from colleagues who were not always approaching diverse classrooms with an assets based approach.

Instructional Culturally Relevant Support for Beginning Career Teachers

The Instructional Culturally Relevant supports provided within the district's beginning teacher support approach focus on instructional practices aimed at enhancing equity in academic

achievement and universal access to all curriculum using culturally relevant instructional practices. In this section, I discuss how the district administration views the effectiveness of the beginning teacher support program in relation to Instructional Culturally Relevant support for beginning career teachers. The section will be divided using two concepts related to Instructional Culturally Relevant practices in supporting beginning career teachers:

- Focus on Student Demographics and Equitable Outcomes
- Beginning Teacher Growth as a Culturally Relevant Practitioner

Focus on student demographics and equitable outcomes. Understanding the specific demographics of the school community is an important piece to the beginning career support program in Yorkville. The district administrators consistently rated the beginning teacher support program as excelling at educating the beginning teachers about the specific demographics of the district and specific schools (See Table 4.5). During the first week of the year workshop for beginning teachers, beginning career teachers discuss the specific demographics of their school and school district. Beginning career teachers took part in a driving tour of the district with a goal of helping the beginning career teachers better understand where the students are coming from every day.

Table 4.5

District Administrators Ratings of the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program and the Connection to the District Demographics and Equitable Outcomes

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging Survey from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)

The beginning teacher support program is tailored to meet the specific and unique needs of the students in our school community.	4.5
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are providing consistent support focused on creating equitable outcomes among diverse groups of students.	4.5
The context and demographics of our school community is a strong consideration in our beginning teacher support program for beginning career teachers.	4.5
The school district supports my growth in understanding the specific academic and social diversity brought to the classroom each school day.	5.0
I have a good understanding of the academic achievement outcomes of the students in our schooldistrict and how specific demographic groups. (race, gender, socioeconomic status, language status) are performing.	5.0
The beginning teacher support program has a focus on the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	5.0
The leaders (administration, mentors, coordinators) encourage the beginning career teachers to guide students in seeing a clear connection between what the students are doing in the classroom and how those same skills are important in life inside and outside of school.	4.5

After learning the specific demographics of their school and school district, the beginning career teachers are given disaggregated academic achievement data. The data are disaggregated by race, socioeconomic status, gender, special education status, and language spoken. The beginning career teachers are part of an in depth discussions about what might be the reason for disparities in academic achievement data based on race, socioeconomic status, language spoken, special education status, or gender. The Director of Instruction believed this is when most beginning career teachers first confront the disparities in academic achievement data focused on different demographic groups (i.e. race, socioeconomic status, and language). He believed up until when the beginning career teachers first meet together during the beginning of the year workshop, most of the beginning career teachers had only discussed the “achievement gap” in undergraduate classes without much reflection or discussion of the actual data showing up at the national, state, and local levels. He described how every year there is a “sucking the oxygen out

of the room” moment when there is a realization of what the beginning career teachers are about to combat in their first years of teaching. He described it as a moment where beginning career teachers have the question of, “Why didn’t we talk more about this in college?”

The Director of Instruction looked at beginning career teachers as needing direction when they first enter the field, especially when working in a diverse school. As evidenced by the comments he made, there is an assumption that beginning career teachers may not bring assets to the classroom or school related to meeting the needs of all students and will struggle in the classroom. This be a reason behind the disconnect beginning career teachers expressed concerning how the district level professional development wasn’t as effective as the school level development that was more connected to the individual teacher and school context.

After time working through the specific demographics and achievement data of the schools and school district, the beginning career teachers and mentors work on building and sustaining successful strategies in meeting the needs of all students based off the tenets of Culturally Relevant data and the district Platinum Plan. In later chapters, time will be spent describing some of the beginning career teachers in both schools confirming thoughts around this idea of how they were never truly exposed to the reality of the achievement gaps and what those gaps mean when working in a diverse school environment.

The focus on understanding the demographics of the school district connects to the tenant of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in knowing and honoring the cultural backgrounds a teacher’s specific class is coming from and using this knowledge to create a classroom where students have a strong sense of belonging and connection to their teacher and each other. District administrators consistently discussed the importance of creating relationships with students

based on the idea the relationship should always rest on a base of high expectations for all students in all areas of achievement.

The Superintendent believed new teachers rarely came into the field with the instructional skills and strategies needed to meet the needs of all students in a diverse school environment. Due to this, the district looks to hire specific types of candidates based on their disposition. If people with the right disposition are hired, then the beginning career supports can guide them into building their skill set and strategies to provide equitable access to the curriculum.

“We don’t see teachers coming in with that skill set. We have to teach that and train people to hit all areas and we try and hire people that are more solution focused so when they come up against that student or type of student where they don’t know what to do, they start digging and asking questions.”

The Superintendent’s focus on hiring candidates based on disposition reflected the focus the district has on guiding the district in hiring educators focused on further understanding the demographics and specific needs of the students within each school in effort to help all students achieve at high levels. The superintendent’s comment may be another piece of evidence of how beginning career teachers are not being seen as having possible assets coming into the classroom other than their personal disposition they bring into the field. Some beginning career teachers at both schools discussed their desire to work in diverse schools, and they were specifically looking to work in specific districts similar to Yorkville, which will be discussed later with chapters focused on school sites.

Beginning teacher growth as a culturally relevant practitioner. As the beginning career teachers learn about the specific demographics of the students in their school and school district, the beginning career teachers began to work with their mentors on strategies to meet the

needs of all students in their classrooms. Table 4.6 supports the idea of the district level administrators belief the beginning career teacher support program was supportive of providing the development opportunities to beginning career teachers focused on creating relationships with the students in their classroom and using the knowledge to inform instruction. Even though all areas were at the level, between agree and strongly agree, the lowest area was encouraging beginning career teachers to be “active in the school community”. When asked about this subject in follow up interviews, the district administrators gave similar thoughts that with all of the concepts and situations a beginning career teacher must learn about in their first year the district and schools encouraged beginning teachers to take time for themselves.

The teachers are encouraged to be an active part of the community, but knowing many family events happen in the evening or weekends beginning teachers were told of the importance of these events, but were reminded they must still take care of themselves and take time to separate from their teaching position. In subsequent interviews with beginning career teachers, there were interesting findings and connections to the concept of being an active member of the community as a teacher and caregiver. The beginning career teachers saw being an active community member as an important part of their role in children’s lives, but on a more personal level rather than how district administrators saw being an active member of the community at a more level akin to being a part of a committee focused on creating connections to the committee. The concept of being a part of the active in the community and how different roles viewed this tenet of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy will be discussed further as the focus turns to the schools.

Table 4.6

District Administrators Ratings Based on Beginning Teacher Growth as a Culturally Relevant Practitioner within the Beginning Teacher Support Program

Survey Questions	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging Survey from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to integrate the diverse backgrounds of students into learning activities and daily routines.	4.5
Beginning career teachers are encouraged to guide students in becoming active in the school community.	4.0
The beginning career teacher support program guides new teachers in understanding the importance of creating connections with parents of the children in their class in an effort to better understand the children in their class.	5.0
The assets/strengths a diverse group of students bring into a classroom are recognized and there is an emphasis on how important it is for educators to recognize and honor those assets.	4.5
Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to create connections with parents of diverse backgrounds.	5.0
Beginning career teachers and mentors are given time to explore how their own cultural background informs and influences their instruction	4.5
The beginning teacher support program guides beginning career teachers in understanding the importance of recognizing the cultural background of my students and using the understanding to tailor my instruction to meet the unique needs of my students.	5.0
I feel the beginning teacher support program is/was an effective support in my growth and understanding of how to meet the needs of all students.	5.0
The beginning career teacher support program supports beginning career teachers in helping all students find a voice and be an active participant in their own education.	4.5
The beginning teacher support program focuses just as much of the strengths/assets beginning teachers bring to the profession as it does on the weaknesses of the beginning career teachers.	5.0

Based on the survey results (Table 4.6), district administrators believed the support for beginning career teachers have many connections to varying aspects of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. The table shows the district administrators had confidence the beginning career teacher support program was providing clear and concrete strategies in how best to understand

the cultural background of the students in their classroom and how best to use this knowledge to create a classroom where the cultural backgrounds are honored and recognized. The district administrators seemed to also connect this same idea when they showed confidence the beginning career teacher support programs guided beginning career teachers in focusing on the assets and strengths of each student in creating a classroom to meet the needs of each of the students.

Beginning career teachers learned about the importance of creating an atmosphere of high expectations for all students even with the perceptions of the possible challenges a diverse school may bring. The Superintendent's comment below connects to the Culturally Relevant tenet of carrying high expectations for all students:

“That no matter what your barrier is or where you come from, so to speak, you can never second guess where a person can go or grow to because it's the idea of one might often think the most privileged kids or the smartest kids are going to end up at the top in the end and that's not true at all. The kids where somebody may have said they will never amount to anything or they don't have the skills to go to college, I have seen those kids do just that. Go to college and have a good career and a good life, good family life. I guess the way it's informed my practice is every student deserves everything we've got and then what they do is up to them.”

The district administrators believed their beginning career teacher support program focused on diversity and the importance of supporting the beginning career teacher in keeping a positive outlook on creating a classroom where all students are finding success. The idea of having an assets-based approach to instruction focuses beginning career teachers on the strengths students bring to the classroom. Assets based thinking may allow a beginning career teacher to

see the opportunities diversity brings rather than seeing diversity as a barrier to high levels of learning, and leads to a higher level of expectations for students. Beginning career teachers in both school sites did speak about how high expectations were important to keep for all students. Some beginning career teachers who spoke on the importance in meeting the basic needs of students (food, clothing, sleep, etc.) to help the kids reach high expectations.

District administrators communicated a level of concern about how the beginning career teachers typically come into the field working with diverse classrooms with a positive outlook, but can be influenced by colleagues who may not see diversity as an asset. The superintendent stated, "...sometimes there is strength in not knowing something or not having a predisposed way of thinking and so it's fresh..." The superintendent went onto describe the importance of the principal and mentor in providing the atmosphere in combating any negative attitudes towards diverse demographics within a school or district.

The positive outlook, or assets based thinking, a beginning career teacher may bring to the position is supported through an emphasis on beginning career teachers creating connections with families and students. The Director of Instruction stated, "The strongest indicator (for a beginning career teacher) to me is that they really know the kids, and can talk in great detail about the child and their family." The professional development offered connects to the concept of knowing the students and the way this knowledge can help a teacher hold high expectations of all students. Again, holding high expectations intertwined within the interview collected from beginning career teachers at both school sites, but was tempered with the idea of compassion towards the students who needed their basic needs, which may chip away at the idea of high expectations by focusing on the deficits of the students in a school setting. The concept of high

expectations and compassion for life situations of students within a CRP framework will be explored more in the chapters focused on the school sites.

The work between mentors and beginning career teachers focused on the current teacher standards used in the teacher evaluation system. Many of those standards focused on knowing the students and using the knowledge of those students to tailor instruction to meet the needs of all students and releasing the responsibility of learning onto the students. The focus on teachers completely understanding the students in his/her classroom and building a relationship with each student allows a teacher to honor a child's culture and background. The instructional focus for teachers in Yorkville is not just on the academics, but also on how each child's background and culture is important to understand to meet each child's needs. The district's literacy curriculum in the elementary schools is a good example of the emphasis on understanding the students in a classroom. The curriculum asks teachers to meet with students on a daily basis focused on goals set mutually with the teacher and student in the younger grades, and then moving the goal setting to the students, as they grow older. Along the way, the teacher is checking in with each student as the student progresses towards the goals. The parents are told how their child is doing so they can support at home, and given strategies on how best to support the student.

The district emphasizes the importance of releasing responsibility onto the students by creating classroom environments where students are taking the lead on learning rather than the teacher being the "sage on the stage". Allowing students to advocate for their own learning in connection with becoming leaders within their own classroom connects directly to the tenet of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy where teachers create classrooms where students have a real connection to their learning, making it purposeful and connected to their own life inside and outside of school. Creating a gradual release of responsibility model where students are given

more control over their learning allows students to gain a sense of ownership over their learning instead of feeling minimally challenged by the set curriculum, which may not connect with their own background or culture. Gradual release models allow for independent work with structure.

A classroom that has a great model and implementation of a gradual release of responsibility gives freedom to how students want to learn thus creating a more personalized learning structure honoring the individual student and their cultural or familial background. A beginning teacher at one of the school sites went in depth in how she had switched her thought process from feeling she had to make sure the student progressed to a planned out focus on how best to create a classroom where students feel empowered to drive their own learning. The beginning career teacher felt like her principal and colleagues guided her to the idea that “these kids can do it” helping her question her practice and how her perceptions of her students drove her to looking at her kids with a deficit view of whether or not they could take responsibility for their learning with the challenges they may face outside of school.

The Superintendent discussed how she still did not feel the district has done a great job of guiding teachers in understanding the concept of gradual release of responsibility, but with integrating the concept into the beginning career teacher supports she believes this will allow the district to grow in the area. The Superintendent believed the more the district moves away from the teacher being the giver of information to a model where a teacher is facilitating learning with student input the closer the district will move to where students feel empowered to drive their own learning and advocate for what they need from an individual level. She believes the ability for students to feel empowered to drive their own learning would lead students to see themselves as empowered in life with the ability to control one’s future. The Superintendent added students from typically underserved backgrounds typically feel little control over their own success and

teachers must be able to provide the opportunity for students to gain the control of their own learning and show the students they do have the ability to be successful.

The integration of real world examples of best practices in instruction and making connections with families is important to the support of beginning career teachers according to the district administrators. The belief is beginning career teachers need to discuss specific strategies to picture how those strategies can be used within a classroom. The Director of Instruction discussed the importance of having discussions of beliefs and theories surrounding the idea of meeting the needs of all students, but beginning career teachers also need concrete strategies to use in their classrooms. When looking at the school sites in future chapters, a focus on the desire of beginning career teachers in the district to see and hear concrete examples of how to handle various situations in Culturally Relevant ways will show a high level of interest from beginning career teachers to discuss concrete strategies to handle various situations. The goal is to pair the theories and beliefs through concrete examples, and build successful strategies to build confidence in the beginning career teachers working in diverse school environments.

Case Summary—Yorkville School District

The Yorkville School District has seen a rise in racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity over the past five years. In response to the increasing diversity, the district began focusing on developing teaching staff whose practices are more culturally relevant. When focusing on beginning career teachers, the district attempts to ensure their beginning career teachers have the support they need to meet the needs of all students they work with. The district administrators interviewed and surveyed shared a very positive evaluation of the way the district supports beginning career teachers in successfully working within a diverse school.

The district administrators' positive evaluation of the beginning career teacher support program connected to the focus on the importance of professional development connected to the concept of culturally relevant practices. The "Platinum Plan" was a driving factor in creating a vision for the district in connecting the district vision and mission of "To Serve Our Community by Educating Every Child" to the supports provided to the beginning career teachers. The "Platinum Plan" is the district's plan focused on equity and influenced on all facets of the school district as they focus on meeting the needs of all students.

The importance of the building principal in support of beginning career teachers using formal and informal structures was emphasized in both the interviews and survey results of district administrators. Formal structures such as rounding and scheduled observations were given as examples of how principals support beginning career teachers, yet there was some indication the district administrators believed some principals were more involved with support of beginning career teachers over others. The principals in the two school sites used to answer the research question were highlighted for their strong abilities to support and guide beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners.

The use of mentors to support beginning career teachers was discussed as an important strategy the district used to support beginning career teachers working in diverse schools. The district administrators mentioned especially how important the decision on who was going to be a mentor for each of the new hires is in relation to ensuring the beginning teacher receives positive support. The principals in each of the schools chooses who will mentor each of the beginning teachers, but there seemed to be some hesitancy on whether all mentors were providing the positive and proactive support beginning teachers need in a diverse school setting

due to a lack of professional development directly connected to working in a diverse school environment.

In the next two chapters, I focus on the two case study elementary schools in the Yorkville School District and bring a more thorough understanding of how the beginning career teachers are supported. Each school fits within the parameters of what a diverse school is as defined by this study and have similarities and differences in how beginning career teachers feel they are supported, how mentors provide support, how principals provide support, and the other informal supports provided. As mentioned in this chapter, there were similarities between what the district administrators, teachers, mentors, and principals perceived as strong support systems for the beginning career teachers, and there were differences in their perceptions. These similarities and differences will be further explained and explored in the coming chapters focused on each of the school sites leading to a communication of the findings in relation to the research question.

Chapter 5: Casper Elementary School

In this chapter, I describe Casper Elementary School, the first of two elementary schools in this study. The focus of this chapter will follow up on the formal beginning career teacher support structures described in the previous chapter. After the initial overview of demographics of the school, I will provide a description of how the formal and informal structures and practices of beginning career teacher support are carried out at the school level and how the effectiveness of the supports are perceived by the beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal of Casper Elementary School. I will describe the findings specific to Casper Elementary within the framework of the study using the New Teacher Center Teacher Induction Standards and tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

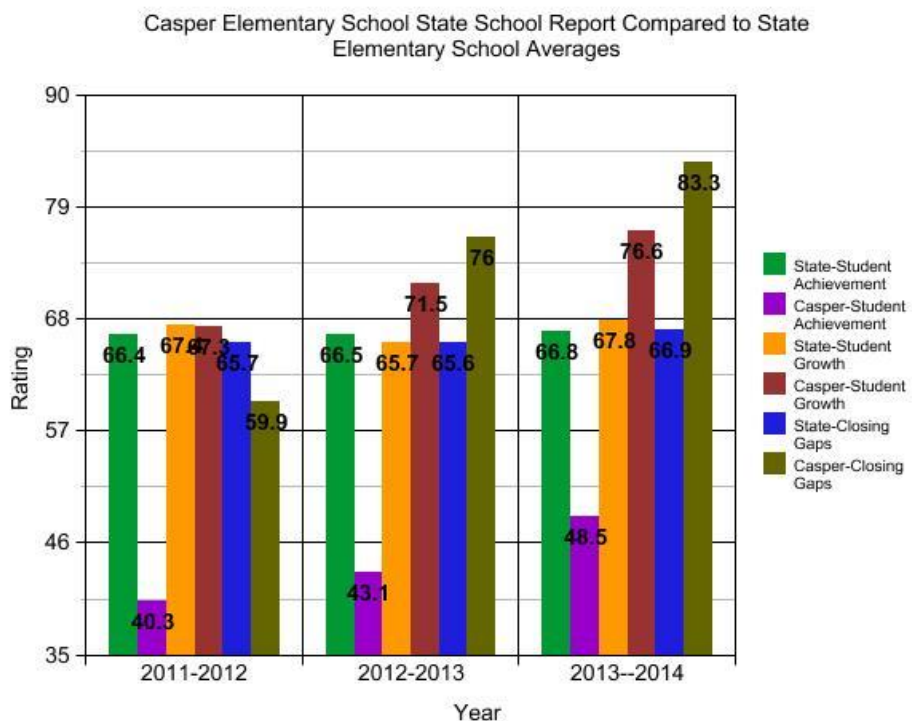
Casper Elementary School—Demographic and Academic Essentials

Casper Elementary has 316 students enrolled in ages spanning from 4 to 12 years old. Depending on the grade level, there are 2 or 3 teachers per grade level. Eighty-eight percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. Twenty percent of the students were “Limited English Proficient”. Over fifty percent of the students were students of color with a majority of those students being African American or Latino. The demographics described have been consistent between the years of 2010 and 2015.

There has been a continued rise at a rate higher than the state average growth in academic achievement over the past three years at Casper, though overall student achievement still lags behind the state average in both math and reading. Casper Elementary is located in a state where schools and school districts are given a report card that gives a school and district an overall accountability score based on: overall achievement for all students in reading and math, growth

over a three year period on the same areas, and a “closing the gap” score showing growth in students in subgroups (i.e. students of color, ELL, etc.). Casper Elementary was “meeting expectations” during the 2013-2014 school year. In areas of student growth and closing gaps, Casper was higher than the state average over the past three years. Figure 5.1 shows the consistent improvement in all areas counted in the report card. In a three-year period, the school went from below state average in student growth and closing gaps to significantly higher in both areas. The school is still lagging in overall student achievement, but improved a total of 8 points overall while the state during that time has only gained .4 points.

Figure 5.1. Comparison of Casper Elementary School and state elementary schools on components of the state school report card between the years of 2011 and 2014.



Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show the reading and math performance of the students in Casper respectively. In reading, there was inconsistent growth over the past three years, but over that span students that were economically disadvantaged and students of color went from four to five percent lower than the state average to one and two percent below the state average respectively. English Language Learners were the only group to show a decline in achievement over the three-year span, yet they were still the only group above the state average.

Casper has improved more rapidly in the area of math (Figure 5.3) based on the state assessment in third grade through fifth grade, especially within the subgroups of Economically Disadvantaged Students, English Language Learners, and Students of Color. All three of those subgroups showed improvement and were significantly above state average. When looking at the achievement of all students the school is one percent below state average, but has grown over 20% over the last three years, where the state as a whole has shown little growth over the three years.

Figure 5.2. Disaggregated reading achievement data 2011-2012 to the 2013-2014 school years for Casper Elementary School in comparison to the state average.

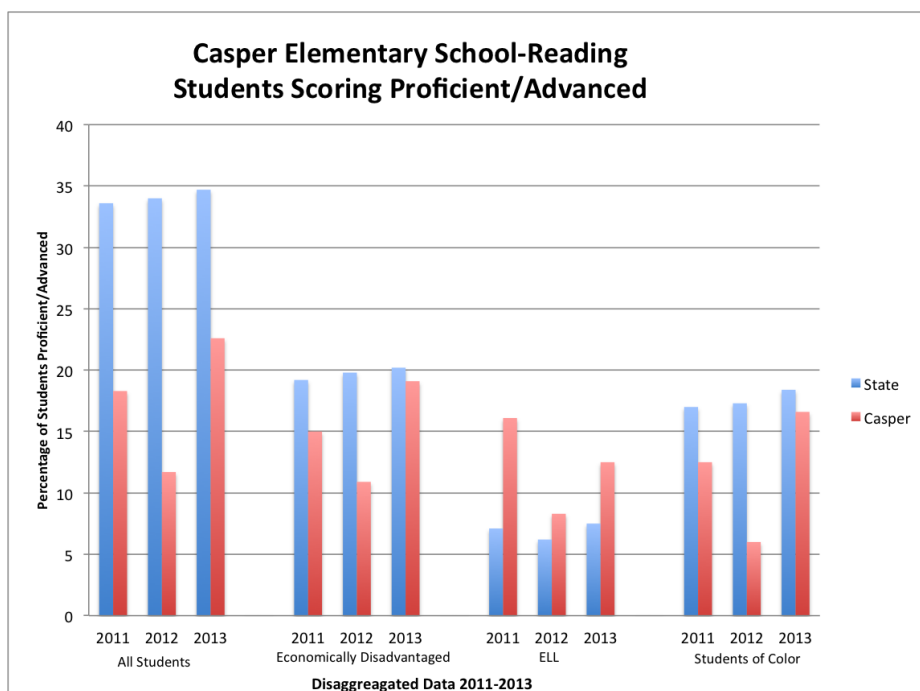
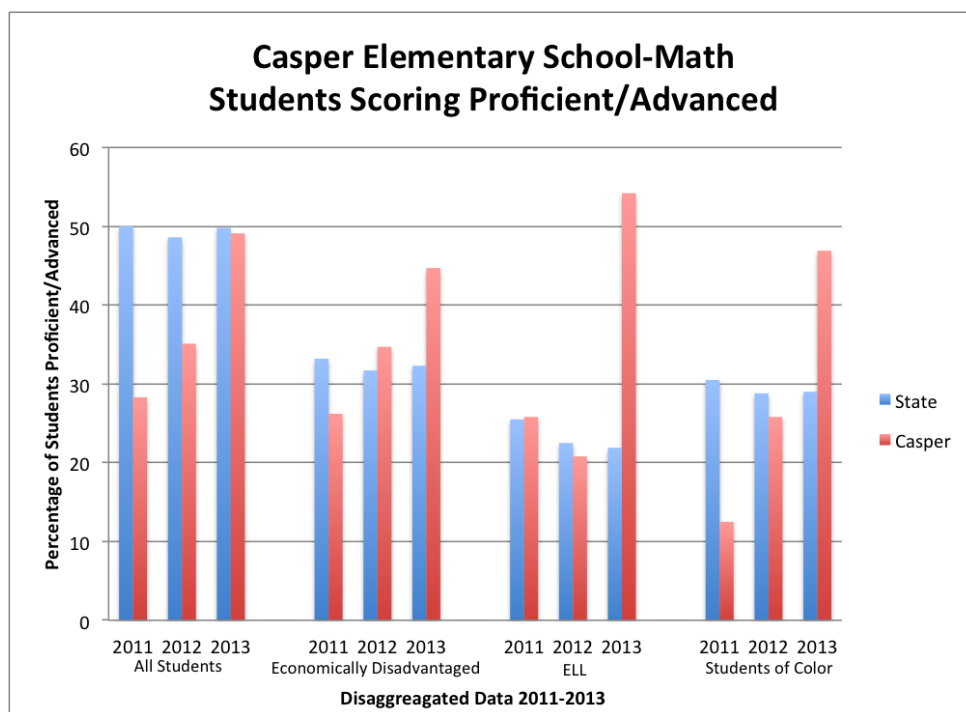


Figure 5.3. Disaggregated math achievement data 2011-2102 to the 2013-2014 school years for Casper Elementary School in comparison to the state average.



Initial Observations of Casper Elementary School

Casper Elementary School is a three-story school, and was a “neighborhood” school. The students live within walking distance of the school and walk home or are picked up by parents. The school opened in 1930. There are many murals throughout the school painted on the walls depicting children and storybook or fairy tale characters. International flags from China, Cambodia, Laos, Mexico, and other countries hung from the ceiling in the cafeteria. There are also displays of artists such as Andy Warhol with a picture of the school mascot in a painting much like Warhol may have painted.

When entering the school there is a poster on the wall stating the tenets of the concept of “Character in Action” focusing on the following concepts:

- We value self and others
- We are accountable for our choices
- We work together as one
- We tell the truth
- We are kind and helpful

The concept of valuing “self and others” related to CRP in how the school supported the students in being proud of their own background and who they are. The hallways had pictures of students from the school posted next to work done by those students. Two display cases highlighted students recognized for their work in fine arts and writing. Five out of the eight students highlighted in the display cases were students of color.

The most prevalent of all school premade signage was hallway expectations signs where photos of students demonstrated the expectations of behavior and voice level. These types of signs were posted on the stairways as well. There were two areas in the school where “test tips”

were posted outside of classrooms. The “test tips” focused on simple strategies such as rereading questions, looking at the answers to see which ones make the most sense, etc.

On the second floor there were numerous student made and pre-made signs focused on diversity and acceptance of difference with little observable mention or highlighting of diversity in the other floors of the school. On this floor, there was one display of translated words into Spanish. This display was the only one observed in the building where the Spanish language translation was also included. As I moved throughout the building, I came back to the second floor many times to realize the noticeable difference on the second floor and how diversity and difference was mentioned or highlighted much more often on this floor. The observational data were collected prior to interviews and surveys of the participants in the study. I realized after the interviews and surveys that the second floor is where two of the beginning teachers had classrooms as well as the mentor. I will discuss this link further in this chapter connecting their answers in interviews back with the reasons their areas of instruction were noticeably different in respect to displaying diversity as an asset in their classroom areas.

Overview of Support Structures for Beginning Career Teachers. The structures in place to support beginning career teachers at Casper include the district level supports described earlier in Chapter 4 including the weeklong workshop prior to school starting focused on supporting the beginning career teachers as the school year approaches and the workshops the beginning career teachers are required to attend through the year.

The beginning career teacher was assigned a mentor for their first year of teaching in the school for the purpose of ongoing support. Erin requires the mentor to meet with the beginning career teacher the mentor is working with on at least a weekly basis. Erin assigns the mentor to a beginning teacher and is typically the same one or two veteran staff members Erin believes are

effective and providing support to beginning career teachers especially focused on helping beginning career teachers use effective strategies in meeting the needs of students in a diverse school. Due to the small number of classrooms per grade level, the mentor may not always be a teacher on the same grade level.

The principal formally met with the beginning career teachers at the 30, 60, and 90-day mark of employment for the beginning career teacher. The principal asked what type of support the beginning career teacher needed to meet the needs of the students in the classroom they are teaching. The principal also supports the beginning career teacher during these discussions with critical feedback. Erin specifically focused these conversations on meeting the needs of all students, and providing Culturally Relevant instruction.

The beginning career teacher is part of a team, such as a grade level team or job alike team (i.e. special education) which meets on a weekly basis to plan instruction and brainstorm ways to improve academic and/or social outcomes for students. This is not a specific structure focused just on beginning career teachers, but is an important structure of support provided for all teachers at Casper. Beginning career teachers saw this as a support structure for them connected to the overall support they felt from their colleagues.

Participants. The respondents at Casper included three beginning career teachers within their first three years of their teaching career, one mentor, and the principal of the school. The mentor had over ten years of experience teaching at the elementary level. The principal of the school had been at the school for three years after working in the school district as a reading specialist.

The mentor was the ELL teacher for seven years and the building assistant for three of those years. The building assistant role is the staff member who assumes the principal role when

the principal is not in the building. Two of the beginning career teachers had this mentor in the last three years. The other beginning career teacher had a mentor on her own team, but had moved to other employment before the research study began.

One beginning career teacher was in his first year teaching fifth grade. The second beginning career teacher was in her second year teaching second grade. The third teacher was in her third year of teaching and was teaching kindergarten. The mentor was a Reading Specialist that worked on the same grade level teams as the beginning career teachers.

Foreshadowed Findings. In the coming sections, I will provide a description of the practices, structures, and policies surrounding the support of beginning career teachers. The perceptions of the effectiveness the beginning career teachers, mentor, and principal hold of the supports will be provided. I will use the same headings as when describing the school district in the previous chapter to organize the data focused on Casper Elementary: Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers, Structural Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers, and Instructional Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers.

The following findings were highlighted throughout the data collected. Within the Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices, it was found the high level of principal engagement found at Casper was a large and positive factor in the level of support the beginning career teachers felt and received from their mentor and colleagues. There was a perceived misalignment of district mission and vision and how the beginning career teachers were supported. The findings within Structural Culturally Relevant Practices focused on the importance of pairing the broad professional development focus of the district level to the local development provided by the mentor, principal, and colleagues at Casper. There was a perceived variance among the

quality of mentors across the district between the principal and beginning career teachers when it especially came to the support of Culturally Relevant practices in beginning career teachers. Finally, the findings in the Instructional Culturally Relevant Practices centered on how the district provided a comprehensive understanding of the demographic data of the school district connected to academic achievement, but did not provide a formal structure on how to use the data to effectively close the gaps among subgroups and how to use the data to also drive growth in the cultural competence of the beginning career teachers. The school environment at Casper is one built on an assets based approach to working in a diverse environment carried out in both informal and formal practices and structures.

Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The foundational qualities discussed in the following section of how Casper Elementary supports beginning career teachers within a Culturally Relevant framework include the following sub-sections:

- Program vision and goals
- Principal engagement

The subsections connect with the Foundational Standards of the Induction Program Standards of the *New Teacher Center*, and relate back to the previous chapter describing the support structures provided by the school district.

Program Vision and Goals. As the vision and goals of a beginning career teacher support program were set at the district level, it is important to understand if the goals were clearly communicated to the beginning career teachers via support from mentors, colleagues, principals, and professional development opportunities. As a reminder, the School District of

Yorkville vision statement is “Educational Excellence: Building Our Future” which is connected to the mission statement of “To Serve Our Community by Educating Every Child”. In the case of Casper Elementary, the beginning career teachers demonstrated an understanding of the basic goals of the program as evidenced by the survey results in Table 5.1. The beginning career teachers could not completely connect the overall mission and vision of the district to the supports of the beginning career teacher support program.

Table 5.1

Connection of Goals, Mission, and Vision of the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principals.

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
The goals set for our beginning teacher support program are clear and understood by all stakeholders (administration, teachers, mentors).	4.67	3.0	2.0
I see a direct connection between the support provided in our beginning career teacher support program and the specific mission, vision, and academic data of our school district.	3.67	4.0	2.0
I understand my role and responsibilities within the beginning teacher support program.	4.67	4.0	5.0
I understand who I need to turn to in order to receive guidance in how I can support or be supported by the appropriate staff member within the structure of the beginning teacher support program.	5.0	4.0	5.0

The beginning career teachers saw the overall goals of the support program were to ensure the beginning career teachers have support around the basic understanding of the procedures of the district (i.e., how to order supplies, where to find materials), professional development around improving practice, structure of mentor relationship, and how to best to

manage classroom procedures and behaviors. A common thread among the beginning career teachers was their desire to learn the curriculum and what materials they needed in order to “teach”. There was a description of feeling overwhelmed during the week prior to school starting when the beginning teachers were meeting to discuss the basics of how specific structures work (i.e. schedules, how to get a substitute teacher, how to make copies, etc.).

As evidenced in the survey results and interviews, the beginning career teachers had difficulty understanding the connection between the mission, vision, and academic data to the support they were being given. The beginning career teachers felt as though they were so focused on the procedures and routines of getting started in teaching (i.e. getting the classroom set up, knowing where to get supplies, etc.), there was little time to think about the overall vision of Culturally Relevant instruction. The district administrators felt the structures and discussions put in place in the beginning of the school year focused on the overall vision and mission of the school district.

Based on the survey and interview data the beginning career teachers did not have as a high level of connection between the district vision and mission of the school district the district level supports. This may have been a case of what the principal defined as the old educational thought equating to the statement of “We taught it, so they must have learned it.” Referencing the fact the discussion around Culturally Relevant instruction did take place, but may not been effective in having beginning career teachers understand their role in connecting with the larger vision and mission of the school district.

One of the beginning career teachers stated after talking with other beginning career teachers, that she was thankful for her mentor who did have focused discussions around strategies for working in diverse classrooms as the school year moved forward. The beginning

career teacher wondered whether other beginning career teachers in the school district had the same experience with their mentor, or if she was lucky to have a mentor who ensured their discussions focused on how to meet the needs of all students in a diverse classroom. Her mentor also described the same sentiment in realizing there was inconsistency in what mentors discussed with the beginning career teacher(s). It was found inconsistency may be caused by mentor support only focused on the immediate needs of the beginning teacher, a mentor who may be uncomfortable with discussing diversity, or a mentor may not find it important to focus on Culturally Relevant practices. The mentor stated she had not been given specific points to discuss with beginning teachers, so she reflected back on her own experience as a beginning career teacher working in a diverse school using those reflections to drive her conversations and guidance of the beginning teachers she was working with.

The mentor and principal did not have a high level of confidence that the goals set for the beginning career teacher program were clear for all stakeholders. The principal felt like the program leaned too much on the side of the simple items such as where to get materials and general information about the district, and not enough towards specific strategies on how to focus on meeting the needs of all students in a diverse classroom and school. The mentor felt in order to move the beginning career teachers forward in becoming effective culturally relevant teachers the mentors needed more clarity on the goals of the program.

The principal and mentor discussed the concept of creating more long term and systematic support system moving past the basics of teaching into the strategies needed to fulfill the mission of educating all children. Erin felt having a mentor assigned to the beginning career teacher for longer than a year would allow the beginning career teacher to grow in meeting the needs of all students. Erin said the first year of teaching is a trial by fire and the beginning career

teacher is on such a large learning curve it is difficult to truly get to the deeper level of reflection needed in order to meet the needs of all learners. Erin believed having a mentor over a two-year period would allow the mentor to support the beginning career teacher through the day to day difficulties of the first year, and then help the beginning career teacher reflect on their teaching in the second year to have a deeper focus on culturally relevant practices.

The principal, Erin, questioned the connections the beginning career teacher support programming had between the vision, mission, and goals of the school district. As noted in Table 5.1, the principal disagreed with statements focused on the clarity of the goals and connection with the mission and vision of the school district with the beginning career teacher support program. Erin saw the support of beginning career teachers as a more hit or miss structure where there was not a specific focus on the mission, vision, or goals of the district and was dependent on what mentor worked with the beginning career teacher chosen by the principal. Erin's description of the support being dependent on the mentor had a direct connection with the concern the beginning career teacher described earlier in this chapter. As the beginning career teachers described, Erin saw the quality of support among mentors focused on Culturally Relevant practices as inconsistent based on the mentor and mentor selection process used at each school. Erin believed some principals chose mentors based on the willingness to be a mentor rather than using mentors truly invested in creating a more Culturally Relevant school community.

Erin said much of the feedback she had received from the beginning career teachers has been they feel very overwhelmed by the information the district initially shares with them, especially since much of the information is disconnected, possibly leading to an even more disconnected discussion around diversity and Culturally Relevant practices:

“They’re getting into some educator effectiveness, trying to get into curriculum with them. They don’t really separate them out into levels. It’s just like, if we’ve got 110 new hires, they’re all in the same room, they’re all getting the same message...It’s overload for them, and it doesn’t necessarily just focus on new teachers and here’s how we do things.”

Erin’s comment connects with the earlier disconfirming evidence where the district administrators were not seeing the assets or strengths beginning career teachers bring to a school and district. Erin believed the induction structures needed to mirror the skill set of the beginning career teachers being hired in a differentiated support structure.

Erin shared the concern the district provided an orientation with too many focuses where beginning career teachers only received snippets of what to expect and how to find success working in a diverse school setting. Erin found her understanding of the shortcomings of the district’s overall support programs for beginning career teachers drives how she then supports the beginning career teachers in her own school and connects the support to the goals, mission, and vision of the school and school district. Erin’s specific support will be discussed later in this chapter.

The discrepancy between the survey ratings and interview data of beginning career teachers, mentor, and principal may be due to the fact the beginning career teachers “don’t know what they don’t know” as the principal described. The basic items were “expected” by the beginning career teachers, but when it came to connecting the overall vision of the beginning career teacher support programs to the culturally responsive vision of the district, the beginning career teachers may not have understood the importance of moving past the basics and looking at how the vision and mission of the school district should be intertwined within the support they

are receiving through professional development, mentor support, and support from administrators.

Another piece of understanding the goals of the district in providing education meeting the needs of all students was the Platinum Plan. The Platinum Plan was the plan focused on closing the achievement gaps that existed between subgroups based on race, language spoken, and socioeconomic status. The plan included specific committee and professional development structures (including workshop models for beginning career teachers to attend) aimed at closing the achievement gaps. The district administrators described the Platinum Plan as a driving force in supporting all teachers in the district in meeting the needs of all students in a diverse school district, yet none of the participants at Casper Elementary School mentioned the plan. The absence of discussion of the Platinum Plan was also evident in the second school site studied.

In the following section, principal engagement in the process of supporting beginning career teachers will be the focus as data will be analyzed on how beginning career teachers and mentors view Erin's support and ability to help them grow as educators. A small section will also be dedicated to analyzing the support provided by the superintendent and other district level administrators.

Principal engagement. Principal engagement focused on how a principal supports beginning career teachers is defined by providing ongoing feedback on instruction, support in providing the appropriate materials for what the beginning career teacher needs in order to provide the required district curriculum, and the support a principal provides mentors focused on improving the practices of the beginning career teacher in meeting the needs of all students. Erin has been principal of Casper Elementary for four years, and was a reading specialist at Casper for two years prior to becoming the principal.

Table 5.2

Connection of Principal Support and Administrator Support to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principals

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
The principal cares about and understands how to support beginning career teachers in developing as teachers who meet the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	4.67	5.0	5.0
Principals are actively involved in supporting mentors and beginning career teachers by providing access to the appropriate professional development opportunities needed to support growth in effectively teach a diverse classroom of students.	5.0	5.0	4.0
The superintendent and director/coordinator of the beginning teacher support program place a high priority on supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of all students.	2.67	4.0	1.0

The beginning career teachers and mentor felt Erin was supportive in guiding them with strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population. The overriding feeling was Erin was constantly in their classrooms, giving them encouragement, and time to reflect on their practices. Two of the beginning career teachers joked about how they would be working with their students at one moment without seeing Erin in the room, and then when they looked up she would be either talking with a child in their classroom about what they were working on or typing notes while observing their instruction. The beginning career teachers described Erin as consistently being in the hallways, classrooms, lunchroom, and by the doors at the end of the day. One beginning career teacher said Erin is “everywhere” building relationships focused on high expectations of students and staff. When asked, the beginning career teachers were not apprehensive about her being in the classroom consistently, they felt supported believing with

Erin in the classroom she was better able to support them because she knew them as people, as professionals, and understood the various challenges in their classrooms.

Erin would use much of her times in the classrooms to provide quick, on the spot feedback, especially around the concept of student engagement related to Culturally Relevant practices. One beginning career teacher described an example of quick feedback when Erin was in her room, and as Erin walked out Erin quickly pointed out the make-up of a pair of students in the classroom, which were seemingly disengaged with independent reading as they were playing with blocks in the corner. The two students were students of color and were boys, and were the only boys who were students of color in the room. The beginning career teacher said she would never forget the quick conversation between Erin and herself, and how it made her look at her classroom differently. She reflected back on the conversation, and how just the simple observation of who the children were made her more aware of the diversity in the classroom and how it may affect her instruction or how she views her students.

Erin described how she supports her beginning career teachers and mentors in a variety of ways throughout the school year, so they have the tools and feedback needed in order to connect with the students in their class. Erin uses open-ended 30, 60, and 90-day interviews as described in Chapter 4. The interviews are specifically used with beginning career teachers and are focused on questions looking to see what is going well for the beginning career teacher and what support or resources the beginning career teacher needs to improve his/her teaching practice. Having defined time periods allowed Erin to learn the issues the beginning career teacher might be concerned about, and give strategies and feedback to support the beginning career teacher.

Erin was concerned when a beginning career teacher had an especially challenging student in the classroom. Erin worked with her student services team (counselor, social workers,

and special education teachers) to support beginning career teachers with challenging students and keeping an asset-based approach in supporting those teachers. A perceived lack of support from the principal or staff surrounding a challenging student could be the reason a teacher leaves the field or loses the drive to look at specific situations with an assets based approach. Erin believed being involved on these individual student cases showed her support for the teacher, and allowed her to ensure the conversation around the child keeps an assets based structure holding the teacher and student to high expectations building a Culturally Relevant atmosphere at Casper Elementary.

Looking at Table 5.2 and the interview data described in the earlier paragraph, the beginning career teachers and mentors believed Erin cared about their development as teachers in a diverse school setting. The beginning teachers in her school felt Erin's most supportive characteristic is how she is approachable and will respond to your needs very quickly and consistently. Each of the beginning career teachers mentioned they felt the support Erin provided within the diverse environment of Casper Elementary created a "tight knit" feel among the staff members.

The feeling of community among the teachers allowed the beginning career teachers to feel they had more support than just from their mentor, principal, or district administration. Many of the beginning career teachers said they could turn to multiple people in the school to get support when looking for strategies to support all students in their classroom and attributed this feeling to Erin's leadership as principal of Casper. The feeling of support from a community of teachers working in a diverse school was a recurring theme among beginning career teachers in both school sites with the beginning career teachers seeing this as one of the most important parts

of their support structure. The beginning career teachers at Casper Elementary saw a direct connection between Erin's leadership style and the way the staff supported one another.

Erin saw one of her roles in supporting beginning career teachers as removing barriers by looking for ways to help alleviate the immense pressure and stress beginning career teachers feel in meeting the needs of all students in a diverse school while having a small amount of strategies to meet those needs. Erin commented on the effect school culture has on how a beginning career teacher navigates the daily work of teaching in a diverse school. Erin acknowledged she works hard to meet the needs of the beginning career teacher, but cannot do it alone. Erin discussed how the culture of Casper Elementary School was positive and supportive for teachers, which translates into a culture of support for beginning career teachers, too. A beginning career teacher at Casper, discussed how Erin was a strong communicator, constantly circulating among the building, and never showing she is "rattled". The beginning career teacher commented on her ability to stay even keeled allowed all staff, especially new staff, to feel a sense of calmness even on days where things do not exactly go right.

A beginning career teacher described an event where Erin's ability to stay calm and focused on meeting the needs of a student allowed the beginning career teacher to stay focused. A parent was upset with the beginning career teacher over how the parent perceived the teacher was treating her daughter centered on the expectations the teacher was holding for her daughter in the classroom. The parent confronted the teacher at the end of a school day accusing the teacher of being too hard on her daughter. Erin overheard the conversation and walked over asking the parent if she had any time to sit down and discuss the concern. Erin facilitated the discussion between the parent and beginning career teacher and the parent.

The beginning career teacher admitted being very anxious about the discussion, but by the end of the discussion the beginning career teacher explained to the parent the reason for the high expectations of her daughter was due to her strong underlying abilities she had observed. The parent eventually was thankful for the way the beginning career teacher was holding her daughter to high expectations, because no teacher had ever known her daughter so well and told her about the great things her daughter was doing. The beginning career teacher said this was the first time she realized the power of high expectations partnered with a strong relationship with family could truly make a difference for a student. Through the conversation, the beginning career teacher learned the parent had a lot of difficulty in her own experience in schools due to what she described as teachers not believing in her because she came from a poor family from a difficult part of town. The teacher described the conversation as being one of the most influential in her career due to the way Erin was able to navigate through the conversation with a focus on creating a relationship, while still focusing on high expectations for all students.

The beginning career teachers attributed the reason the school was a welcoming and stable place for staff and students focused on creating positive relationships was due to Erin's supportive and consistent leadership. The teachers referenced how they could go to a school that might have an "easier" demographic, but Erin's drive to support all students by creating a supportive environment drove them to stay at Casper. Erin acknowledged how important relationships were to her with staff, students, and parents. Erin believed every interaction she has with a student, staff, or parent builds the culture of the school. Erin hoped by setting this example, staff, especially beginning teachers, follow the example and work on building their own strong relationships with staff, students, and parents.

The concept of “relationship building” was a theme among the beginning career teachers and mentors of Casper. When asked more specifically, the beginning career teachers all shared Erin’s ability to build relationships showed them the importance of relationship building within a Culturally Relevant Framework. Ladson-Billings (1995) described the importance of building strong relationships with students in order to increase the cultural competence of the teacher, and building a trusting relationship with a student will allow the teacher to understand the assets of each of student in order to hold them to high academic standards. In building a strong relationship with students and parents, a teacher can gain a better understanding of the students and their cultural background, which can bring a better understanding of the best way to meet the needs of the student. As one of the beginning career teachers clearly stated,

“I think, the biggest thing for me, is relationship building and trying to be a stable person for them (students) and this being a safe place in the community that they can come every day.”

The mentor felt supported by Erin in her role of supporting the beginning career teachers. Erin was rated as high in the survey by the mentor in understanding how best to support beginning career teachers in a diverse school environment and actively supporting both mentors and beginning career teachers in growing in their effectiveness. The mentor described Erin as an excellent communicator in the expectations she has for the mentors. Erin’s communication gave more direction and focus for the mentor than other schools. The mentor explained when she met with other mentors throughout the district mentors have different experiences based on the support they received from their principal. The mentor also explained Erin is timely in answering any questions she may have making her feel like Erin does value them and wants them to have the information they need in order to support the beginning career teachers.

Along with the supportive environment Erin provides for her staff focused on building relationships, the beginning career teachers described Erin's high expectations of the instructional practices of each teacher, ability to meet the needs of all students, and drive to do whatever is needed in order to find success with each student held of all of the teachers at Casper. The beginning career teachers described the feedback provided by Erin always included strengths Erin had observed, but included specific critiques of instructional practices connected to Erin's drive to meet the needs of all students at Casper. The expectations connected with ideas to help the beginning career teachers provide instruction meeting the needs of the students in the classroom. Erin often states the students "deserve our best" in order to overcome their own barriers. The beginning career teachers and mentor was a teacher in the building, commented on how up front Erin is with her expectations. When she provided critical feedback of their practice there are no surprises, which allowed them to reflect on her feedback and improve their practice.

As evidenced by the survey results and interview data, Erin felt like there needed to be a much larger connection at the district level to the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of all students and how best to support beginning career teachers in meeting those needs paired with more direction from district level administrators. The beginning career teachers at Casper also rated the district level support from district administrators as one of the weaker areas showing they may not see the overall connection of the goals and objectives set out from the district level and how it connects with their daily work in the classroom. Erin believed most of the district level support for beginning career teachers focused on the basics of teaching without enough intertwined focus on the diversity that existed at her school and the district.

Erin saw the need for more of a focus on supporting beginning career teachers in the area of how best to meet the needs of learners in diverse schools. With this understanding of the areas

lacking in the district beginning teacher support program, Erin made sure she had direct conversations with beginning career teachers focused on the importance of creating proactive and positive relationships with students centered on high expectations.

Erin discussed how there was not a perfect way to cover all areas of support a beginning career teacher needs, but she saw a disconnect between what beginning career teachers really need and the formal supports provided by the school district. Erin wanted to see a more direct link between the realities of working in a diverse school environment and Culturally Relevant tenets. The beginning career teachers would see a stronger connection between what Erin's feedback on their instruction and what they learned from the district level support if the district was more deliberate in their focus on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. This again shows the disconnect between the district administrators' perception of the direct relationship between the mission and vision of the school district, district level professional development, and Culturally Relevant Practices and how the principals, mentors, and beginning career teachers see the relationship as being very loose and possibly even non-existent.

Erin felt she could also do a better job of providing support for the mentor with a stronger connection of the overall support structure focused on Culturally Relevant practices. Erin took an active role in working directly with the mentor to ensure the conversations with beginning career teachers was supportive of the day to day needs of the beginning career teacher, but still always came around to the tenets of Culturally Relevant practices. The mentor explained the relationship she had built with Erin has allowed her to do a better job of supporting beginning career teachers by helping her know Erin's expectations and beliefs of creating classrooms and a school centered on Culturally Relevant practices. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the mentor felt the direction

given by Erin aligned to the district mission and vision of the school district than the direction given by the district leadership.

Structural Culturally Relevant Standards Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The Structural Culturally Relevant standards of a support program focused on the following areas:

- Professional development of beginning career teachers and mentors
- Mentor selection and support

These subsections were based on the connections found within the survey responses, interview responses, and document analysis. The subsections connect with the sub standards of the Structural Standards of the Induction Program Standards of the *New Teacher Center* paired with the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

Professional development offered to beginning career teachers. Overall, the beginning career teachers believed the professional development they received specifically focused on meeting the needs of all students in their classroom and was supportive in their development. The highest ratings among the survey results (Table 5.3) focused on areas of understanding backgrounds and strengths of each student including building relationships with the parents of the students. The beginning career teachers discussed many of the practical items they learned in how best to get to know their students through the classes of the formal beginning teacher support program. The items discussed included ideas such as interest inventory surveys for both students and parents, and specific communication strategies for a better school-to-home connection. The ideas were shared during the weeklong districtwide workshop for beginning career teachers at the beginning of the school year.

As described in Chapter 4, the beginning career teachers are required to attend a weeklong orientation program focused on the support of beginning career teachers prior to the school year beginning. The week consists of the beginning career teachers meeting with the superintendent to get an understanding of the district mission, vision, and strategic goals. The beginning career teachers are introduced to their mentor, and are given time to meet with their mentor and work in their classrooms to prepare for the beginning of the school year. During the week, the mentor and beginning career teacher introduced to the Platinum Plan. The Platinum Plan was a plan focused on creating a Culturally Relevant school district focused on closing achievement gaps between various subgroups of students. After the introduction of the Platinum Plan, the beginning career teachers took time to discuss with one another what the plan means to them and the instruction they will provide in their classroom.

One interesting area of difference between the principal, mentor, and beginning career teachers was the response to the statement: “The beginning teacher support program guides beginning career teachers in understanding the importance of recognizing the cultural background of my students and using the understanding to tailor my instruction to meet the unique needs of my students.” The beginning career teachers rated this as one of the best areas of professional development whereas the mentor and principal saw this area as one of the areas lacking in professional development.

This is an interesting link to previous theories of the principal of Casper, Erin, where she believed the beginning career teachers did not know what they did not know about truly creating a Culturally Relevant classroom environment. There was a confirmation of this concept when interviewing the beginning career teachers, especially the two beginning career teachers who were now in their second and third year of teaching at Casper. The two teachers acknowledged

there was no real support or practice that could have prepared them for working in a diverse classroom, but did acknowledge the supports of the school district focused on the mechanics of teaching and not the overall concept of meeting the needs of all learners.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the beginning career teachers did not remember speaking about the Platinum Plan and the focus on Culturally Relevant practices until they worked with their principal and mentor. Though Erin believed the beginning career teachers did not know what they did not know in working in a diverse school, there was evidence in the survey results where the beginning career teachers did feel they had existing skills or growing skills in meeting the needs of all learners. Interview data did show beginning career teachers choosing to work in diverse schools which may show they had some confidence in their skills to be successful in a diverse school environment. Erin, the principal, also believed the district focused only on a shallow area of understanding the demographics of the school and how those demographics affect a classroom. Erin wanted to see a larger focus on how to use the strengths within the demographics of the school to create instruction meeting the needs of all students. Erin felt the focus on the negative issues associated with diverse demographics was more prevalent than looking at diversity as an asset and ways to cultivate a classroom taking advantage of these assets. In Erin's opinion, the strategies taught were good strategies, but were addressed as a way to overcome diversity rather than embrace it and build off the strengths of diversity. Erin described the negative bent to the concept of overcoming diversity rather than embracing diversity as a reason why she got even more involved with the development of her beginning career teachers as they began at Casper.

When asked about this concept of looking at diversity as a barrier rather than an asset, the beginning teachers interviewed all seemed to pause and reflect upon their experience and

realized at the district level support program for beginning career teachers was more a deficit view of diversity rather than an asset based approach. One of the beginning career teachers attributed this more to how other mentors or beginning career teachers drove various discussions during the times when all beginning career teachers and mentors attended together. The teacher described how sometimes teachers from other schools would come to the meetings with negative attitudes towards diversity, and could drive the conversations in the wrong direction. The teacher believed with more direction and clear expectations around asset-based approaches, those conversations could have been more assets driven.

One beginning career teacher discussed how she learned from a veteran teacher the importance of bringing an asset based approach to every day of teaching in a racially and economically diverse school and school community. She shared how she felt like she was in constant doubt of whether or not she was handling things correctly within her classroom. “It seemed like I would run to my mentor’s class at least two times a day to ask a question about something I did that day. I constantly wondered if I had done the right thing or not. A lot of the times, I was just looking for a conversation, not an answer”

Her grade level team would support her by asking her questions forcing her to reflect on the students she had in her class and always focus on those specific students when making instructional decisions in her classroom. She discussed how she learned how important it was to hold high expectations of all students in order to give them every opportunity to be successful. At the beginning of her first year of teaching, she discussed how she might have held lower expectations for students coming to school hungry and tired due to difficulties at home through a sympathetic feeling. After discussing specific plans for students with her veteran grade level teammates, she realized she was doing the students a disservice by holding them to lower

expectations. Her teammates helped her have empathy for the students, but never forget to hold high expectations for those students because she was told students would meet your expectations wherever you hold them.

Once again, I asked whether the Platinum Plan discussed in previous chapters was referenced or discussed as the mentors and beginning career teachers met. The beginning career teachers and mentor said the plan was not referenced, and still had difficulty understanding what the plan actually was. Many of the times when I talked about the plan, I received questions back from the beginning career teachers wondering what the plan was. When I explained how the plan focused on Culturally Relevant practices, they would say how a discussion centered on the plan in the beginning of the year with mentors and beginning career teachers may have guided their discussions as a group to be more assets based in relation to diversity. According to the district the plan had been discussed, but based on the beginning career teachers discussions if it had been introduced it was not effectively communicated.

Table 5.3

Connection of Professional Development to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principals

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
There is a clear connection between our district level professional development and initiatives focusing on meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	3.67	4.0	2.0
I am given the professional development opportunities allowing me to understand the importance of cultural competence (ability to effectively interact with people of different backgrounds) and the role it plays in long-term success for students.	4.0	4.0	4.0

The school district strongly supports my growth in understanding how to meet the needs of all students in a diverse school setting.	4.33	4.0	4.0
Beginning teachers are provided with effective professional development surrounding the topic of diverse classrooms.	4.33	4.0	4.0

The beginning career teachers at Casper believed the most effective professional development came from their mentor and colleagues within the veteran teaching staff at the school within their PLC structure. The discussion of the “best” professional development focused on the short term and long-term support provided by the colleagues. Throughout the interviews, the beginning career teachers provided examples of veteran teachers checking in on a day-to-day basis providing simple ideas or strategies focused on instructional strategies to ways to connect better with a challenging student in the classroom. The beginning career teachers commonly discussed how many of the veteran teachers on their grade level teaching team spent extra time planning with them to discuss the best strategies to meet the needs of the students in their classroom. Based on the interview data the discussions with their PLC members ranged from instructional planning questions to specific questions about how to support a challenging student or parent.

The beginning career teachers especially felt supported in meeting the needs of all learners when speaking of those challenging students and parents. The beginning career teachers mentioned how important it was for them to have team members always using an assets based approach with high expectations for all students to discuss their concerns. The push to look at the assets of the student allowed for beginning career teachers to focus on strategies to embrace the issue rather than look at it with a negative barrier.

The principal, beginning career teachers, and mentor all discussed the importance of their Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure and how their grade level and job alike teams supported one another in meeting the needs of all students. The principal also mentioned the importance of how the school went above the PLC structure within grade level teams, and how it was common for teachers from various grade levels to support each other even if the teacher they were supporting was not from their own grade level. PLC structures included a grade level alike team along with a special education or reading specialist consistently meeting to plan curriculum and student support. The beginning career teachers felt comfortable in going to any teacher for support, not just their mentor or teachers on their specific team.

A beginning career teacher explained how on her PLC team a teacher focused on social justice concepts and Culturally Relevant practices by always asking reflective questions when they were planning upcoming instruction, or when reflecting on data they were collecting in their classrooms. The reflective questions centered around two central questions focused on which students were finding success and which students were finding challenges in academic achievement. The beginning teacher at first described the questions as intimidating because it brought into question each of their instructional strategies, but after time building confidence in planning and instruction, she felt the questions were very important to the team in making sure their focus was consistently on meeting the needs of all students.

Mentor selection, professional development, and support. Mentor selection and support was clearly driven by Erin as principal of the school. The mentor, Grace, was a teacher Erin had worked with over her three years of principal of Casper, and Erin had confidence in her for the outcomes she specifically had within a diverse classroom. Erin stated she believed beginning career teachers coming in to the school were in for a large mindset shift no matter

what type of student teaching they may have experienced. A mentor should help them understand the background of the students and the importance of holding of high expectations of all students. Erin's response to the survey item (Table 5.4) connected to the selection of mentors shows her belief of the mentor being chosen based on a strengths based approach in helping beginning career teachers meet the needs of all students.

Grace discussed how much she appreciated the clear direction given by Erin in how best to support the beginning career teachers she was working with. Grace described how Erin consistently discussed any issues or questions she may have about the best supports for the beginning teachers she was working with, and those discussions served as both a way to learn how to be a better mentor and her connection to creating a more Culturally Relevant teacher in each of the beginning teachers she was working with.

Grace embodied this ideal by stating,

“Some new teachers say, “I can't teach because they can't learn.” I say to them “Well, no. We just meet them where they're at, and they will meet your expectations with support and a good relationship with them.”

Grace had a background in teaching English Language Learners (ELL), and recognized her own drive in creating a Culturally Relevant school. Grace and Erin met bi-weekly to discuss what each teacher needed in meeting the needs of all learners. Grace discussed how those discussions typically were brainstorming sessions surrounding specific areas of growth the mentor and Erin felt the beginning career teacher needed to take a step towards in creating a Culturally Relevant classroom. Grace asked the same reflective questions Erin used in her walkthroughs in the classroom and questions asked within PLCs (described earlier) when she was working with beginning career teachers. The questions always centered around bringing

awareness to beginning career teachers in which students were finding success or challenges in the classroom, and if there was a specific pattern among students within gender, race, or socioeconomic status.

Much like the beginning career teachers in the previous section saw the variance in how effective a mentor might be in other schools in the school district, the mentor saw some of the same variance and believed it may have come from how each principal gave a different focus for the mentors in their specific school building. Without specific criteria, vision, or training for mentors centered on Culturally Relevant practices the mentor felt the variance of effectiveness among mentors would continue.

Table 5.4

Connection of Mentor Support to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principals

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
The selection of mentors is driven by a strength-based approach where mentors are selected based on their ability to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.	4.0	5.0	5.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to seek out the professional development needed to better support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.	4.0	4.0	3.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to continue building their own ability to use instructional practices meet the needs of all students.	4.0	4.0	5.0

As far as the support of mentors, Erin supported Grace by meeting with her on a bi-weekly schedule to provide professional development opportunities focused on instructional

coaching or time to meet with the beginning teacher she was connected with. Overall, Grace believed the professional development offered and encouraged at the district level and within the building are supportive and connected to the idea of meeting the needs of the beginning teacher (Table 5.4). Erin did not feel as strongly about this area due to her belief the mentors are not given the time to develop their own mentoring skills, but did feel strongly the mentors are encouraged to continue growing their own instructional strategies in meeting the needs of all students through the district wide professional development offerings.

The beginning career teachers had an interesting take on the support and professional development of the mentors they had worked with. Based on the survey results (Table 5.4) the beginning career teachers felt strongly the support given by the mentors to create equitable outcomes among all students was consistently strong and positive. One beginning career teacher described an activity her mentor had her complete focused on asset-based language. The mentor asked the beginning career teacher to describe her most challenging child using only asset-based language without describing the challenges the student had. The beginning career teachers described it as a very difficult, but important activity that showed the importance of looking at a child's strengths in order to create a classroom where the student was successful rather than always hearing about the many things he/she had to improve each day.

The beginning career teachers did question the process of selecting mentors and professional development offered to mentors. When discussing the selection of mentors, the issue the beginning career teachers brought up was there had been times where mentors were working in another school making it very difficult for the consistent support needed throughout a school day or year. This was not the case at Casper, but some of the beginning career teachers at other schools had shared their difficulties in being paired with a mentor from another school. In

their opinion, every day has challenges and without someone close, to confide in many of them believed they would not go to and see their mentor. Instead, they would go to someone on staff that could help with the issue at that moment. The district administrators did not seem to share the same concerns as the beginning career teachers concerning the mentor selection and development. The possible disconnect in what the district saw as the beginning career teachers needing in order to meet the needs of all learners due to a deficit view of beginning career teachers without considering the strengths or assets of the beginning career teachers may have led to the difference in perception.

The beginning career teachers also felt the professional development offered to the mentors did not seem to be conducive to an already busy schedule for mentors who are teaching full time and supporting a beginning career teacher. The mentors met with the beginning career teacher they worked with on a weekly basis. As a group the beginning career, teachers were required to meet at a district level once a month. The monthly meetings with other beginning career teachers focused on how things had went the previous month and settings goals for the upcoming month. The beginning career teachers enjoyed the meetings connected with other beginning career teachers because as one beginning career teacher put it, “It’s nice to hear others are struggling with some of the same things I am struggling with.”

Instructional Culturally Relevant Support for Beginning Career Teachers

The Instructional Culturally Relevant supports provided within the beginning teacher support program focused on instructional practices aimed at providing equity in academic achievement and universal access to all curriculum. Bringing high achievement results to all students no matter race, socioeconomic status, gender, or primary language were the focus of

improving instructional practices. In this section, I will discuss how Casper Elementary School beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal view the effectiveness of the beginning teacher support program in relation to Instructional Culturally Relevant support for beginning career teachers. The section was divided using two concepts related to Instructional Culturally Relevant practices in supporting beginning career teachers:

- Focus on Student Demographics and Equitable Outcomes
- Beginning Teacher Growth as a Culturally Relevant Practitioner

Focus on student demographics and equitable outcomes. The district's first connection with the beginning career teachers is to help the beginning teachers understand the demographics of the school district. From the beginning teachers' perspective, the school district provided a relevant learning experience for beginning career teachers in regards to understanding the demographics of the school district (See Table 5.5). The beginning teachers interviewed felt like they knew they were going to a diverse school environment, so a lot of the demographic information shared was of no surprise other than just how diverse Casper really was when it came to race and socioeconomic status. The principal of the school felt the district did not communicate demographics clearly and how those demographics may affect how a teacher approaches instructional decisions and expectations of students. Erin felt as though the district only gave a surface level idea of the diversity of the district and school without allowing for discussion focused on how the specific diversity of the school affects instructional decisions and classroom environment. This will be discussed as I analyze the supports put in place to guide beginning career teachers in becoming Culturally Relevant teachers.

Table 5.5

Casper Elementary School Beginning Career Teacher, Mentor, and Principal Ratings of the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program and the Connection to the District Demographics and Equitable Outcomes

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Career Teacher	Mentor	Principal
The beginning teacher support program is tailored to meet the specific and unique needs of the students in our school community.	4.0	4.0	1.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are providing consistent support focused on creating equitable outcomes among diverse groups of students.	4.33	4.0	2.0
The context and demographics of our school community is a strong consideration in our beginning teacher support program for beginning career teachers.	4.33	3.0	1.0
The school district supports my growth in understanding the specific academic and social diversity brought to the classroom each school day.	4.33	4.0	4.0
I have a good understanding of the academic achievement outcomes of the students in our school district and how specific demographic groups. (Race, gender, socioeconomic status, language status) are performing.	4.0	4.0	5.0
The beginning teacher support program has a focus on the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	3.67	3.0	1.0
The leaders (administration, mentors, coordinators) encourage the beginning career teachers to guide students in seeing a clear connection between what the students are doing in the classroom and how those same skills are important in life inside and outside of school.	4.0	4.0	4.0

When analyzing the results of Table 5.5, where the theme of the survey questions are focused on the specific demographics of the students in the school, the beginning career teachers believed the supports put in place at the district level were supporting their ability to understand

the demographics and academic achievement of the school and district and meet the needs of a diverse classroom of students. Much like in Figure 5.4, there is another difference in how the beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal view the support provided for beginning career teachers. Once again, the differences may connect with the principal's view that the beginning career teachers do not completely understand what they really need to know in order to meet the needs of a diverse classroom of children until they are actually working in the classroom for a few years. The principal and mentor believed the discussion of demographics was only a surface level discussion on the specific demographics of the school district without allowing time for beginning career teachers to dig into the achievement numbers to see the gaps that exist between demographic groups in the school and district. The principal felt the best way to help beginning career teachers internalize the importance of building Culturally Relevant strategies was to give them the time to dig into the behavioral and academic data analyzing what strategies lead to improved overall outcomes for all students. Finally, through the formal observation process, Erin would evaluate the teacher on whether those strategies were implemented in the classroom using the district approved evaluation process. Erin felt tying the formal observation and evaluation process into the implementation gave her and the beginning career teacher a deliberate way of focusing on a Culturally Relevant strategy and taking time to have a reflective conversation together on the effectiveness of the strategy.

Giving a deeper understanding of the demographics could also give the beginning career teachers in Casper Elementary the opportunity to ask questions about why the gaps exist and how they can positively affect the closing of those gaps. The mentor used the demographic discussion to have the beginning career teachers ask questions focused on the specific demographics of Casper Elementary School. The mentor felt having the beginning career

teachers ask reflective questions for the reasons for the gaps, made the beginning career teachers look closer at their own instructional practices and how those practices maintain the gap or close the gap.

One of the beginning career teachers discussed how she had heard so much about the “achievement gap” in her teacher preparation program, but never explored the possible reasons behind the gap and what could be done to raise achievement levels for specific groups of students. When the mentor specifically had the beginning career teacher bring her students’ data to their meetings, the beginning career teacher said it was astounding to see the same gaps play out in her own class. From the recognition of the gaps and reflective questions asked about reasons for the gaps, the conversation then moved to structure and specific instruction the beginning career teacher could implement to begin targeting the gaps such as using targeted strategy groups instead of using large group instruction. Within the reflective conversation, the mentor felt it was very important to continue turning the conversation to what strengths each child brought to school and how those strengths as well as the areas of growth were important to planning strategy groups in meeting the needs of all students. The principal supported the idea of the targeted and reflective conversations specifically on gaps recognized in the classroom, and encouraged the mentor to continue the practice as the next step to the district discussion of demographics.

Overall, the principal and mentor at Casper Elementary School felt the district needed to go deeper into the demographics of the schools and school district where beginning career teachers weren’t just looking at the numbers associated with the demographics, but why those numbers exist in order to begin tying into the professional development needed in order to close the gaps they see. The beginning career teachers saw the introduction to the demographics of the

district as helpful in understanding what the background of the students they would be working with, but did not feel like the demographics guided the overall district support structure for beginning career teachers.

In the next section, I will describe how the beginning career teachers, principal, and mentor felt about how the beginning career teacher induction policies, structures, and practices guided the beginning career teachers in growing as Culturally Relevant practitioners.

Beginning teacher growth as a Culturally Relevant practitioner. When analyzing how the induction policies, structures, and practices in place guided beginning career teachers, the same trends existed where beginning career teachers felt the support they received in relation to their growth as a Culturally Relevant practitioner was effective, where the mentor and principal were lower in their assessment of how the district supports beginning career teachers. Table 5.6 shows again the disparities in how the beginning career teachers viewed the supports versus how the principal and mentor viewed the same supports. A theory about why the disparities consistently happened will be discussed in the final chapter.

Table 5.6

Casper Beginning Teachers, Mentor, and Principal Ratings Based on Beginning Teacher Growth as a Culturally Relevant Practitioner within the Beginning Teacher Support Program

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Career Teacher	Mentor	Principal
Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to integrate the diverse backgrounds of students into learning activities and daily routines.	3.0	4.0	2.0
Beginning career teachers are encouraged to guide students in becoming active in the school community.	4.0	4.0	4.0

The beginning career teacher support program guides new teachers in understanding the importance of creating connections with parents of the children in their class in an effort to better understand the children in their class.	4.33	4.0	2.0
The assets/strengths a diverse group of students bring into a classroom are recognized and there is an emphasis on how important it is for educators to recognize and honor those assets.	4.33	4.0	2.0
Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to create connections with parents of diverse backgrounds.	3.33	3.0	2.0
Beginning career teachers and mentors are given time to explore how their own cultural background informs and influences their instruction	4.0	3.0	1.0
The beginning teacher support program guides beginning career teachers in understanding the importance of recognizing the cultural background of my students and using the understanding to tailor my instruction to meet the unique needs of my students.	4.33	3.0	2.0
I feel the beginning teacher support program is/was an effective support in my growth and understanding of how to meet the needs of all students.	4.0	2.0	1.0
The beginning career teacher support program supports beginning career teachers in helping all students find a voice and be an active participant in their own education.	3.67	3.0	2.0
The beginning teacher support program focuses just as much of the strengths/assets beginning teachers bring to the profession as it does on the weaknesses of the beginning career teachers.	3.67	3.0	2.0

The beginning career teachers consistently shared they did not fully understand the high level of flexibility they would need both instructionally and emotionally when working in a diverse school setting. The beginning career teachers seemed to have a sense of believing the students and parents of the classroom came from a similar background or had similar school and community experiences as the beginning career teacher, which meant the instruction that worked for them would work for their students. Two of the beginning career teachers explained coming

into their classroom with a false sense of what type of students would walk through their classroom door the first day, even after much of the demographic and achievement gap discussions had taken place. The beginning career teachers were forced to look closer at the students in their classroom, and put attempt to put aside their own background and experience in school in order to create a classroom truly reflective of the skills, backgrounds, and experiences of the students in the class.

There was a feeling of unpreparedness among the beginning career teachers in connection with the support they received prior to the school year beginning in relation to working with diverse students. The feeling of unpreparedness seemed to come from the fact that the student teaching and practicum experiences never really allowed the beginning career teachers to understand how to prepare and proactively plan strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

Typically, the beginning career teachers had a two “lead teaching week” in their student teaching experience, but were not involved in how the school year was set up and how to plan for specific students using strategy groups or other individual structures. The small windows of opportunity for beginning career teachers to truly take charge in their student teaching, never really forced them to reflect on how best to meet each child’s needs in a diverse classroom environment. To be fair, this feeling was acknowledged as something the beginning career teachers did not believe a school district could prepare them for, no matter what level of support they received. When discussing the concept the beginning teachers were not sure of how a mentor or specific professional development would get them completely prepared for teaching in a diverse setting. The feeling among the mentor, beginning career teachers, and principal in Casper Elementary was the best time to really support beginning career teachers is throughout

their first years of working in the classrooms with ongoing focused support around specific Culturally Relevant strategies through discussions with the principal, mentor, and colleagues.

The beginning career teachers in Casper consistently felt like the professional development that truly helped them grow as Culturally Relevant practitioners was their informal work with the mentor, principal, and staff of Casper building off the formal district programs. The mentor would consistently meet with the beginning career teachers connecting her conversation with them to the overall ongoing workshops provided by the district and “Casper-ize” (as stated by one of the beginning career teachers) the learning from the district level workshops. The learning from the workshops focused on how to begin building relationships with students and parents focused on improving overall achievement, understanding the importance of instructional routines and procedures to the environment of the classroom, and using formative assessments to gauge instructional effectiveness. The mentor would reflect on what was learned in the workshops with the beginning career teachers, and then ask the beginning career teachers how they were to use what they learned to meet the diverse needs in their own classrooms making it more relevant to the classrooms within Casper. Throughout the school year, Grace would follow up the workshops with beginning career teachers and ask them how they had used what they learned in the workshops between the workshops. The beginning career teachers many times would say they did use what they had learned, but the most important learning was the day-to-day trial and error followed up with discussions with Grace.

The general concept of relationship building connected to the idea of becoming “culturally competent” meaning the beginning career teacher needed to look past their own experience and background and begin to look at the perspective of others in order to build stronger relationships with families and students. The use of formative assessments linked to the

concept of holding high expectations of all students based on their current skill or knowledge level, and implementing strategies specifically designed for individuals or small groups to meet or exceed grade level benchmarks. The mentor at Casper and Erin would work with beginning career teachers around these concepts and set informal goals with beginning career teachers understanding how the strategies meet the needs of individual students in their diverse classrooms.

Many times the conversations spurred on by the mentor would bring questions to the mind of the beginning career teachers, which would make them, reflect on their own practice leading to discussions with their veteran colleagues on their teaching teams. The high level of support provided by colleagues at Casper as discussed earlier in this chapter were once again brought up as why the beginning career teachers felt they were highly supported with growing as a Culturally Relevant teacher. Once again, the beginning career teachers connected their support more to the local supports provided by the mentor, principal, and colleagues at Casper than the supports provided at the district level, even though many times the district level supports and local supports were interconnected. Throughout the interview process, there was almost no mention of teachers looking at diversity in a school as a negative or barrier to learning or high academic outcomes. The beginning career teachers openly spoke of bringing questions concerning specific, challenging students or data showing an achievement gap in their class, and their colleagues or PLC giving them specific strategies immediately rather than discussing the barriers setting an expectation the beginning career teacher also look for the assets of a situation rather than the barriers.

A beginning career teacher explained how a teammate invited her to come and observe a “Morning Meeting” to get ideas on how to begin each day with an asset-based relationship

building class meeting. The “Morning Meeting” idea of getting the students together immediately in the morning to discuss subjects important to them provided the beginning career teacher a concrete idea of how to build relationships among the students and with her focused on creating a more cohesive and positive classroom community.

When discussing the need for concrete examples of how to meet the needs of all learners through instructional strategies and connecting with parents, the beginning career teachers felt the district, professional development workshops sometimes focused too much on the theory and not enough on concrete examples of how to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. One beginning teacher equated the workshops to their undergraduate classes where there was a lot of theory discussed without a connection to specific strategies to be used in the classroom. The beginning teachers would seek out the concrete examples or strategies from their mentor or colleagues. The beginning career teachers were able to access either their mentor or colleagues to find a concrete strategy to attempt and then discuss after implementing the strategy. They felt more comfortable speaking about the specific students in their classroom with their colleagues because they felt they had a better connection with the specific students in their classroom than other beginning teachers at the district level meetings.

An example was how a beginning career teacher was having difficulty bringing a parent in to discuss the progress of a child in their classroom. The child was from a family considered economically challenged, and the beginning career teacher was getting frustrated. A colleague in her PLC discussed how some (not all) parents from economically challenged families may not have had the best experience in schools and are reluctant to come to school, and to possibly offer going to meet them somewhere other than school to create a more comfortable place to meet. The beginning career teacher stated the conversation shifted her thought on parent meetings by

changing her perspective and realizing she perceived the parent as uninvolved with their child's education instead of looking at the barriers the parent might be seeing. The conversation showed the growth of cultural competence within the beginning career teacher where she was able to recognize the culture or belief system of a family may be different than her own and she must consider this when working with diverse families and students.

The principal of Casper strongly disagreed the school district provided effective support when guiding beginning career teachers in building strategies and skills needed in order to meet the needs of all students within an economically, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse school setting, specifically the demographic range of the students attending Casper. Erin mentioned the Platinum Plan and the focus on providing development opportunities surrounding successfully engaging students in a diverse school have become less prominent with a lot of the pressure to support beginning career teachers falling on the principal, mentors, and other veteran staff members. Erin thought this might be due to a variety of factors ranging from the time needed to learn and implement the newly adopted state teacher evaluation model, or due to budget constraints and not having, the people to provide ongoing quality professional development focused on how to meet the needs of all students in a diverse school environment.

Erin discussed how important discussions surrounding Culturally Relevant are for beginning career teachers, and how the district could consider less formal classes or workshops and more defined conversations to happen between mentors and beginning career teachers. According to Erin, personalized conversations between mentors and beginning career teachers may force more reflection since they would happen more often and in a more comfortable environment with a person, they trust.

Case Analysis Summary—Casper Elementary School

Casper Elementary School has seen a steady rise in their academic achievement among various demographic groups of students based on race, socioeconomic status, and language. Though not at the state average in reading and math, growth in both areas outpace the state growth rates. The school has the most dramatic rise in the outcomes related to math, where the subgroups focused on race, socioeconomic status, and language are significantly above the state average in the same demographic areas.

There was a consistent feeling among the beginning career teachers, principal, and mentor at Casper Elementary School there was not a consistent connection of the goals of the beginning teacher support program and mission and vision of the school district. The mission and vision of the school district focused on meeting the needs of all students, and the beginning teachers, mentor, and principal felt the support structure from the district did not consistently refer back to how it connects with the vision and mission of the school district.

The proactive and effective support provided by the principal of Casper Elementary School, Erin, was frequently discussed among beginning career teachers and the mentor. The beginning career teachers discussed how Erin created a Culturally Relevant environment at Casper focused on creating equitable outcomes for all students by focusing on feedback provided to the teachers to improve instruction through a focus on: building relationships with students and parents honoring their culture and backgrounds, holding high expectations of all students and staff, and creating an environment where all teachers feel supported by one another. The beginning career teachers believed they had become more effective teachers in a diverse school environment due to the leadership of Erin, and her constant focus on holding high expectations

of staff and students paired with focus on creating positive relationships with students and parents.

Casper beginning career teachers felt their most beneficial Professional development came from the mentor, colleagues, and the principal rather than the district provided workshops. The beginning career teachers believed the discussions with their mentor or colleagues surrounding concrete strategies and instructional practices focused on meeting the needs of all students while holding high academic and social expectations were how they were able to progress as Culturally Relevant teachers. The beginning career teachers focused on how important an asset based approach to providing instruction was, and how their colleagues and mentor took this attitude into their work with them.

The beginning career teachers felt the district did help them understand the overall district demographic data, but the teachers, principal, and mentor felt the district needed to improve on how deep they analyzed the data with the beginning career teachers connecting it to what types of instructional strategies would best address the gaps in achievement they were noticing. Beginning career teachers wanted to see more of a focus on how or why the demographics connected to the overall academic achievement data in the school district and what that meant for their specific instructional practices.

Overall, the beginning career teachers supports provided by the district guided them growing as Culturally Relevant teachers in meeting the needs of all learners in the following areas: consciously holding high expectations of all learners, building strong relationships with students and families focused on acknowledging the specific background and culture of each student, and believing in an assets based approach to viewing the diversity of students in their classroom as a strength rather than a barrier. An area where the beginning career teachers seemed

to need more support for growth in was specifically reflecting on how their own background and culture informed how they make pedagogical decisions possibly leading to gaps in the achievement between sub groups within their classrooms.

The next chapter, I will analyze the second school in Yorkville School District, Schroeder Elementary School using the same concepts used in analyzing the data for Casper Elementary School.

Chapter 6: Schroeder Elementary School

In this chapter, I describe Schroeder Elementary School, the second of two elementary schools in this study. The focus of this chapter will follow up on the Yorkville School District's formal beginning career teacher support structures described in a previous chapter. After the initial overview of demographics of the school, I will provide a description of how the formal and informal structures and practices of beginning career teacher support are carried out at the school level and how the effectiveness of the supports are perceived by the beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal of Schroeder Elementary School. I will describe the findings specific to Schroeder Elementary within the framework of the study using the New Teacher Center Teacher Induction Standards and tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

Schroeder Elementary School-Demographic and Academic Essentials

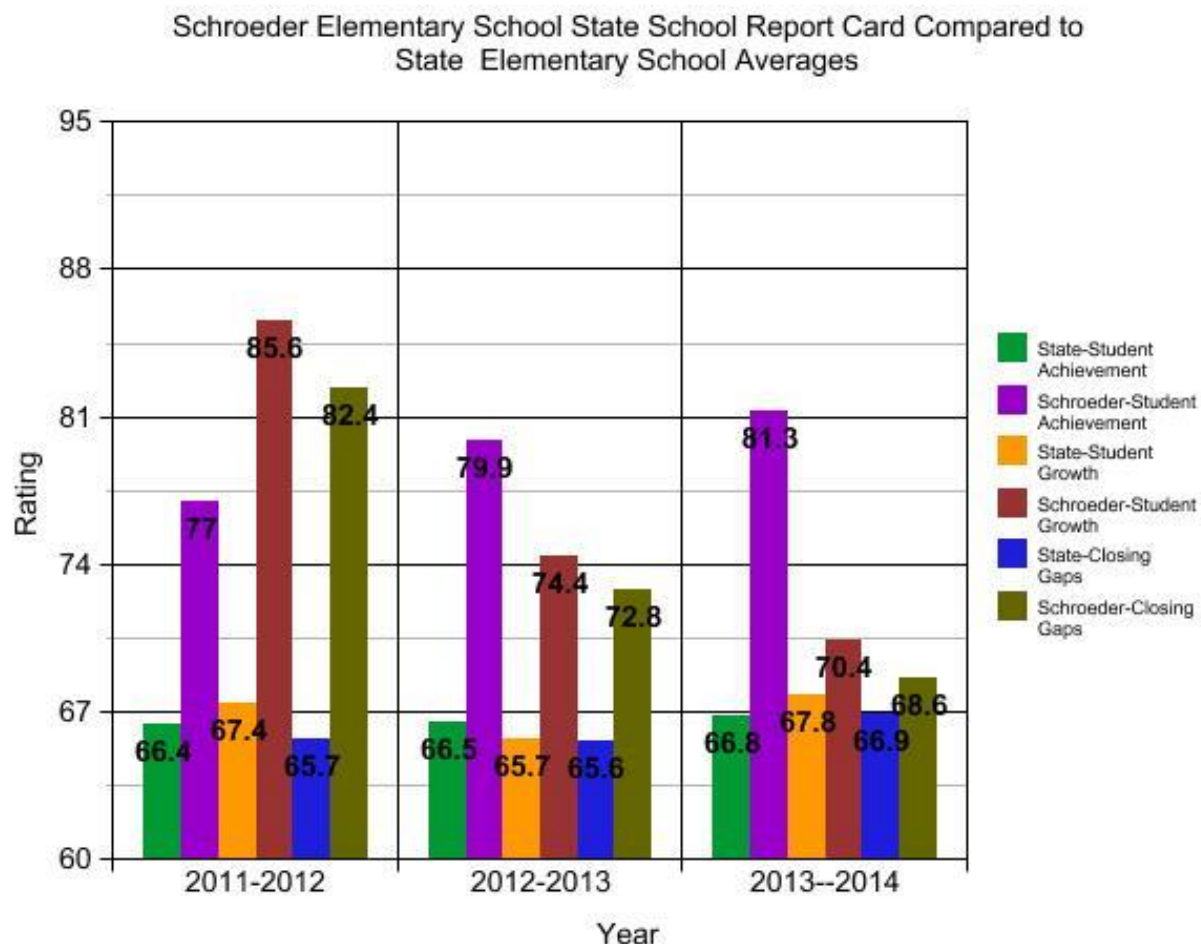
Schroeder Elementary School was located in the same district as Casper Elementary School in the Midwest section of the United States. Schroeder had 384 students enrolled in kindergarten through 5th grade, ages spanning from four to 12 years old. Forty-five percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Nine percent of the students were "Limited English Proficient". Twenty-five percent of the students were students of color with a majority of those students being African American or Latino. The demographics described had been consistent over the last three years.

Schroeder Elementary School was a U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School in 2011. The award recognizes schools with students that had achieved at high levels or where an academic achievement gap was narrowing within a school where 40% of the students were from disadvantaged backgrounds. There was a plateauing of student achievement over the

past three years at Schroeder where academic achievement was above state average, but with little growth over that time.

Schroeder Elementary was located in the same school district and state as Casper Elementary and received the same school report card as Casper Elementary. Schroeder had ranged from “significantly exceeding expectations” to “exceeding expectations” on their school report card from 2011 to 2014. The report card in this case was a little deceiving in that the overall student achievement was increasing, while student growth and closing gaps were decreasing, yet still above state average (See Figure 6.1). The reason the areas of student growth and closing gaps were still above state average may have been due to the fact the gaps and growth scores had been high in the past so the gaps were already closing.

Figure 6.1. Comparison of Casper Elementary School and state elementary schools on components of the state school report card between the years of 2011 and 2014.



Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show the reading and math performance of the students in Schroeder respectively on the state standardized test. In reading, there was a decrease in overall student achievement for all students, economically disadvantaged students, and students of color. There was a significant increase in English Language Learners during the last three years. All students including the subgroups (economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students of color) were significantly above state average from 2011-2014. In math, there was a plateauing of achievement results with slight decreases over the same 3-year span, except with English Language Learners that slightly increased in achievement from 2011-2012 to 2013-2014. Just like in reading, all students including the subgroups (economically disadvantaged, English

Language Learners, and students of color) were significantly above state average from 2011-2014 in math achievement.

Figure 6.2. Disaggregated reading achievement data 2011-2012 to the 2013-2014 school years for Schroeder Elementary School in comparison to the state average.

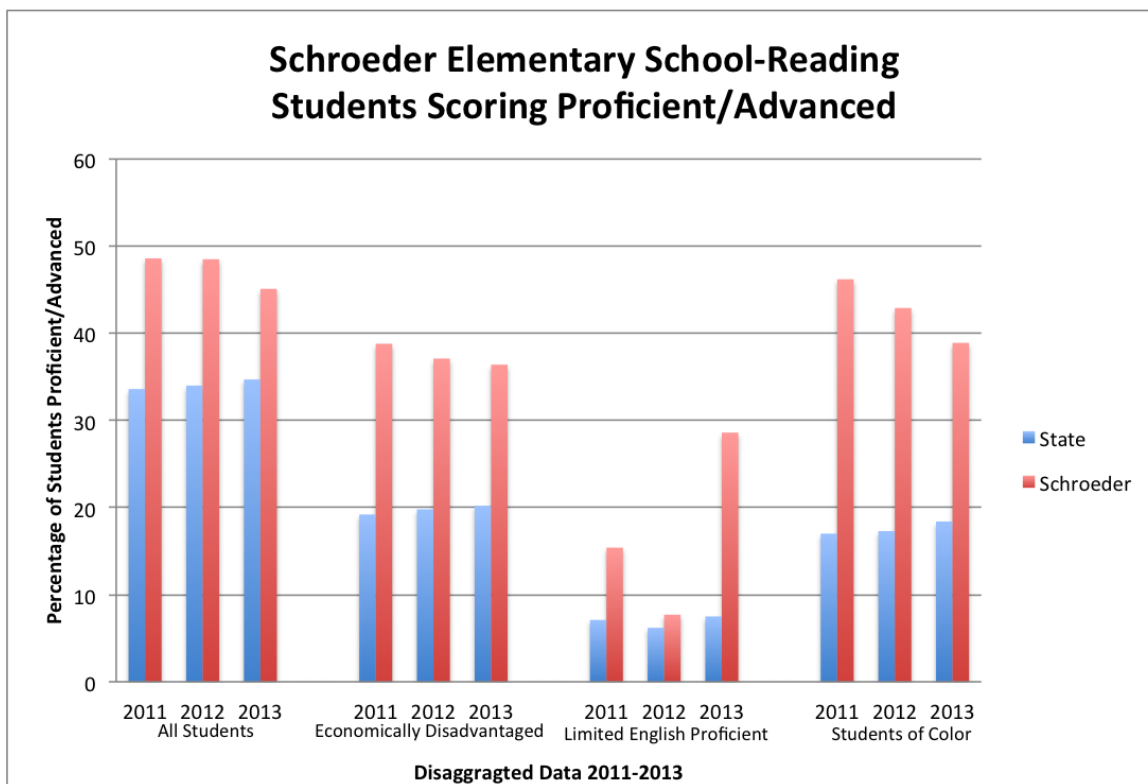
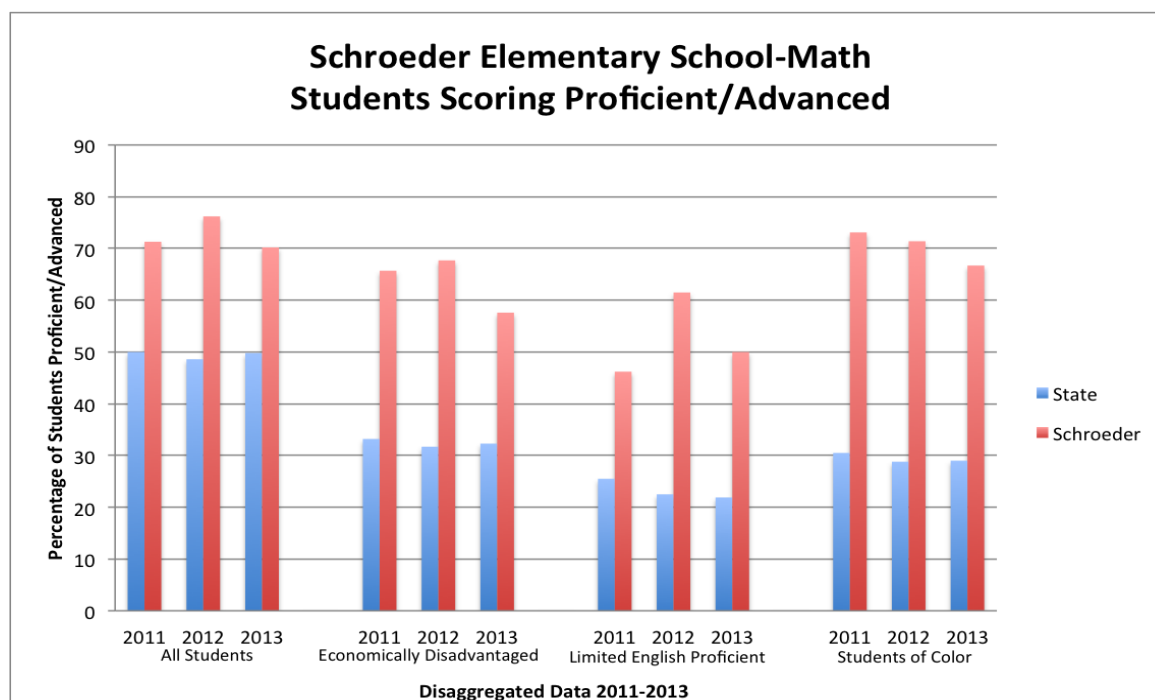


Figure 6.3. Disaggregated math achievement data 2011-2102 to the 2013-2014 school years for Casper Elementary School in comparison to the state average.



Schroeder Elementary was approximately 15 years old, housing grades kindergarten through fifth grade and built through the passage of a building referendum. The school was the first school built in the district for 30 years. The grade levels in the school were in “neighborhoods” which are intended to create a feeling of community among the grade level teams. The school was in a “suburban” neighborhood with single-family homes and duplexes. There was a significant amount of observable evidence of recognizing the diversity of the student population and connections to the ideals of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in the hallways and classrooms of Schroeder Elementary.

Visual evidence of the school staff recognizing the diversity of the student population were premade posters, student work, and mission statements. The mission statement was displayed in various ways throughout the school stating the mission of the school was, “*Enter with hope and aspiration. Learn with dignity and enthusiasm. Leave with pride in self and community.*” The concept of “pride in self and community” aligned with the component of CRP

focused on students developing cultural competence through a connection to the pride students would have with their own background and the connection to their own school community. The same connection was in many student created posters displayed throughout the building highlighting actual photos of the student and their family and descriptions of their family and what each students' family enjoyed doing together. The posters spanned all of the grade levels from kindergarten to fifth grade. The older graded students wrote about their families and described what made their family special and/or different.

Throughout the hallways there were "Character in Action" signs focused on the following concepts:

- We value self and others
- We are accountable for our choices
- We work together as one
- We tell the truth
- We are kind and helpful

The concept of valuing "self and others" was another related concept to CRP in how the school was visually supporting the concept of students being proud of their own background and who they were.

Outside of the office there were various awards displayed focused on parent satisfaction surveys, employee satisfaction surveys, and the principal being awarded the principal of the year within the school district. Banners throughout the school showed the school was a National Blue Ribbon School Award winner.

Recognizing language diversity was evidenced in the school with translation of many of the banners, posters, or flyers posted on the walls and bulletin boards of the school. Many of the

school created posters (i.e. Mission statement, calendars, information) were translated into Spanish. In two display cases, one in the front lobby and one in the library, there were artifacts from China with authentic writings in Chinese translated into English and were at the level where younger students could see and read the words.

Students created a majority of the signage or décor. If there was an art project, where students needed to create a picture an actual photo of the student was used to identify the student. Using actual photos of the students is an approach educators use to ensure the diversity of the student population was being shown in the work being created by those students. Various displayed writing projects focused on accepting differences and diversity. An example of a project focused on accepting differences and diversity included a project titled “We Need Different Colors” where students wrote about why it was important to have different types of people around. Another project titled “The Skin Your In” where students wrote about the different activities they were comfortable doing connected with a picture of themselves created from construction paper in different hues connected to their skin color. Generic pre-made posters throughout the school focused on accepting differences and diversity. There were posters focused on Martin Luther King Jr., Black History Month, a poster stating “Expect to be Accepted”, and posters stating “Celebrate Diversity”. These types of posters did not reflect the specific children in Schroeder, but did communicate a general acceptance of diversity in the school community.

Overview of Support Structures for Beginning Career Teachers. The structures in place to support beginning career teachers at Schroeder had the same district level supports described in Chapter 5 at Casper Elementary School including the weeklong workshop prior to school starting focused on supporting the beginning career teachers as the school year

approaches and the workshops the beginning career teachers are required to attend through the year.

The beginning career teacher was assigned a mentor for their first year of teaching in the school for the purpose of ongoing support. Much like Erin at Casper, Kate required the mentor to meet with their beginning career teacher on at least a weekly basis. Kate assigned the mentor to a beginning teacher. Kate had more options than Erin due to a larger and more experienced staff at Schroeder than Casper. Kate selected mentors who were effective in their own ability to meet the needs of the students in their own class and were actively involved in providing leadership in meeting the needs of all learners. Kate described how she used the district evaluation process to decide whether a teacher was “effective” and a good candidate to provide mentorship to a beginning career teacher.

Kate formally met with the beginning career teachers at the 30, 60, and 90-day mark of employment for the beginning career teacher. Kate asked questions during these discussions focused on a variety of areas including ways Kate and the mentor could help the beginning career teacher in meeting the needs of the students in their classroom. Kate used these times to ask similar questions to Erin’s questions used at Casper Elementary School focused on what students were finding success and which students were finding challenges in the classroom, with the focus being thoughtful on patterns that may emerge between race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Schroeder Elementary used a PLC structure similar to Casper Elementary School—summarize. Kate put a lot of emphasis on the PLC to plan for individual students and brainstorm together, but did add more structure around a focus on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy through yearly book studies. Once again, this was not a specific structure focused just on beginning

career teachers, but is an important source of support provided for all teachers at Schroeder. Beginning career teachers saw this as a support for them connected to the overall support they felt from their colleagues.

Participants. The number of participants at Schroeder Elementary School included six beginning career teachers, three mentors, and the building principal. All of the beginning career teachers were either in their first or second year of teaching. Two of the beginning career teachers were Special Education teachers while the others were all grade level classroom teachers ranging in grades from second to fifth grade. All three of the mentors had more than twelve years of experience at Schroeder Elementary. The principal, Kate, had been the principal at Schroeder for 3 years and had worked in the district as a teacher, assistant principal, instructional coach, and reading specialist for over 20 years.

Foreshadowed Findings. The following findings were evident throughout the data in relation to answering the research question. Within the Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices, the high level of principal engagement found at Schroeder, much as it was at Casper Elementary, was an important factor in the level of support the beginning career teachers felt and received from their mentor and colleagues. Beginning career teachers described having an active and hands-on principal focused on an assets based approach was a very important support as they were learning to be Culturally Relevant practitioners.

The findings within Structural Culturally Relevant Practices focused on the importance of pairing a mentor with an overall focus on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, and the school level professional development. Schroeder Elementary School had a larger pool of mentors than Casper, which gave Kate the ability to match mentor and beginning career teacher based on the strengths of the mentor and areas in need of growth in the beginning career teacher centered on

Culturally Relevant practices. Assets based approaches in mentor support were important to both the development of the beginning career teacher, and to the overall environment created in the school. The beginning career teachers found the professional development was more effective and engaging when it was provided at the school rather than at the district level because it was more connected to the actual demographic of students in their school.

The findings in the Instructional Culturally Relevant Practices centered on perceived growth of beginning career teachers as Culturally Relevant practitioners and a focus on equitable outcomes. The beginning career teachers felt a focus on equitable outcomes was effective when a mentor or principal guided the beginning career teacher in understanding how their classroom achievement data connected with the overall school achievement data allowing the beginning career teacher an insight in how their instruction affects the overall growth of all students. In the coming sections, I will provide a thick description of the various practices and structures implemented to support the beginning teachers in Schroeder Elementary School from the perspective of the beginning career teachers, mentors, and the principal by looking at survey results and interview responses. Comparisons between Casper and Schroeder will take place through the chapter. I will use the same headings as when describing the school district and Casper Elementary in the previous chapters to organize the data focused on Schroeder Elementary: Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers, Structural Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers, and Instructional Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers.

Foundational Culturally Relevant Practices Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The foundational qualities discussed in the following section of how Schroeder Elementary supports beginning career teachers within a Culturally Relevant framework include the following sub-sections:

- Program vision and goals
- Principal engagement

The subsections connect with the subsections of the Foundational Standards of the Induction Program Standards of the *New Teacher Center*, and relate back to the previous chapter describing the support structures provided by the school district.

Program Vision and Goals. As the vision and goals of a beginning career teacher support program were set at the district level, it was once again important to understand if the goals were clearly communicated to the beginning career teacher level via support from mentors, colleagues, principals, and professional development opportunities. As a reminder, the School District of Yorkville vision statement is “Educational Excellence: Building Our Future” which is connected to the mission statement of “To Serve Our Community by Educating Every Child”. In the case of Schroeder Elementary, the beginning career teachers demonstrated an understanding of the basic goals of the program as evidenced by the survey results in Table 6.1, but did not overwhelmingly agree they completely understood the goals of the program. The beginning career teachers had a better understanding of the connection between the vision and mission and the supports provided through the district beginning career teacher support program shown through the survey results.

Table 6.1

Connection of Goals, Mission, and Vision of the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principal at Schroeder Elementary School.

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
The goals set for our beginning teacher support program are clear and understood by all stakeholders (administration, teachers, mentors).	3.33	3.67	4.0
I see a direct connection between the support provided in our beginning career teacher support program and the specific mission, vision, and academic data of our school district.	3.67	2.67	5.0
I understand my role and responsibilities within the beginning teacher support program.	3.83	4.0	4.0
I understand who I need to turn to in order to receive guidance in how I can support or be supported by the appropriate staff member within the structure of the beginning teacher support program.	4.33	4.33	4.0

When interviewed the beginning career teachers could not connect the overall mission and vision of the district to the structures and practices of the beginning career teacher support program. A common theme among the beginning career teachers at Schroeder was they felt as though there was nothing formally focused on diversity when it came to specific topics of new teacher meetings or meetings with their mentors at the district level. One beginning teacher put it as a more “as need to know basis” to discuss instructional strategies specifically focused on diversity. Much like at Casper, the beginning career teachers looked at the topic more from the local perspective of how the support from mentors and principals focused on meeting the needs of a diverse classroom of learners.

The principal of Schroeder, Kate, saw a connection between the mission and vision of the school district and the beginning career teacher support program through the Platinum Plan evidenced by a higher rating of agreement according to the survey and through responses during

the interview. Kate's ratings and discussions surrounding the support of beginning career teachers in connection with the mission and vision of the district was more in line with the ratings of the district administrators. Kate was the first staff member of either school to mention the Platinum Plan in the interview process. Kate was on the planning committee of the Platinum Plan and discussed how the committee used the plan to ensure several professional development opportunities for beginning career teachers connected them to the overall mission of the school district in meeting the needs of all students. Schroeder Elementary School was also one of the first schools to have the CREATE (Culturally Responsive Education for All: Training and Enhancement) training as a part of the Platinum Plan. CREATE teams were formed at six schools in the Yorkville School District in response to the creation of the vision and mission statement focused on improving the academic achievement of students of color, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students speaking a language other than English.

The mentors at Schroeder Elementary felt the supports in place at the district level were not sufficient in consistently preparing beginning career teachers to work in a diverse setting. Overall, the mentors felt much of the support was not connected to the mission and vision of the school district. The mentors felt there was more of a focus on the procedures and routines of teaching (how to get copies, curriculum materials, etc.) at the district level. One of the mentors seemed to sum up the overall feelings of the mentors interviewed from Schroeder by discussing how she felt the support program needed to put more emphasis on guiding beginning career teachers in simply becoming more aware of the diversity in the schools and the academic achievement of the subgroups within the school.

Principal engagement. Principal engagement focused on how a principal supports beginning career teachers defined by providing the following: ongoing feedback on instruction,

support in providing the appropriate materials for what the beginning career teacher needs in order to provide the required district curriculum within a Culturally Relevant framework, and the support a principal provides mentors focused on improving the practices of the beginning career teacher in meeting the needs of all students. Kate had been principal of Schroeder Elementary for four years, and had worked for the Yorkville School District for 24 years as an elementary teacher, reading specialist, and instructional coach. Kate's background and experience within diverse environments included growing up in a family that hosted over 35 different foster children from a variety of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds and pursuing a PhD at a university focused on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Social Justice. Kate explained the way she grew up and her continued education continued to drive her to lead a diverse school in efforts to close the achievement gaps between subgroups.

The beginning career teachers and mentors believed Kate was a supportive leader in their school in guiding them to meeting the needs of all students (See Table 6.2). The beginning career teachers believed Kate held an assets based approach in all aspects of supporting students and staff at Schroeder Elementary. Kate discussed her own drive to keep a focus on the strengths the students bring to school each day, and how she focuses conversations about students on their strengths. A beginning career teacher described a situation where she was frustrated with a challenging student, and when talking with Kate she was first asked to describe the student's strengths before speaking about what was not working. The beginning career teacher acknowledged that at first, she was taken back by Kate's question, but after talking about the strengths of the child it was easier for her to find different ways to support the child. The strengths included the child's interest in art, drawing, and the support of a large, extended family in the community. The conversation focused on the family and led to the beginning career

teacher calling the parent and beginning a communication plan between home and school. The beginning career teacher admitted she made an assumption the family did not want to be involved with school based off her own biases, and the call helped her progress as a teacher of all students.

There was a feeling of thankfulness among many of the mentors and beginning career teachers for Kate's positive attitude in all situations. The mentors, being veterans of the school and district, mentioned they had discussions with other mentors about their principals and had come to understand the importance of Kate's assets based attitude in guiding the school in becoming a welcoming environment for students from diverse backgrounds. Mentors and beginning career teachers described Kate as a caring leader who would go out of her way, especially for beginning career teachers, to connect on a personal level by learning about a staff member's family or interests.

A mentor described Kate's experience as a learning support teacher (description of a learning support teacher resembled what most districts would title as an assistant principal), reading specialist, and a learning coach all contributed to Allison's effectiveness as supporting teachers, and especially beginning career teachers.

“Not every administrator I think has that background and understanding, so when I talk to other people in other buildings you can just see holes and you listen and you're just very thankful that you have somebody that has that. Kate's personality. She always has her door open and she listens.”

Table 6.2

Connection of Principal Support and Administrator Support to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principal at Schroeder Elementary School.

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
The principal cares about and understands how to support beginning career teachers in developing as teachers who meet the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	5.0	4.67	5.0
Principals are actively involved in supporting mentors and beginning career teachers by providing access to the appropriate professional development opportunities needed to support growth in effectively teach a diverse classroom of students.	4.83	4.0	4.0
The superintendent and director/coordinator of the beginning teacher support program place a high priority on supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of all students.	3.67	3.0	4.0

Beginning career teachers and mentors discussed Kate’s willingness to discuss issues with all staff and creating an atmosphere of support at Schroeder. Much like at Casper Elementary, the beginning career teachers and mentors credited the supportive environment at Schroeder Elementary School to the principal leadership provided by Kate. Beginning career teachers were appreciative of Kate’s open attitude to discussing any of their concerns, and how they felt very comfortable in talking with Kate about struggles or successes, they were having working in a diverse school. In discussions surrounding concerns, Kate’s positive attitude was a refreshing point of view where as one beginning career teacher put it,

“We have our meetings and we might have a little bit of where we’re all a little upset, because we feel like we’re not meeting the students’ needs. She’s been really good about facilitating and pointing out those positives that we have been doing, to make us feel better. She’s definitely one of the great ones that I have worked with.”

In her own words, Kate commented, “If you are going to work here, we’re going to support each other and work together and collaborate.” Kate was clear about her expectations of mentors and beginning career teachers meeting weekly, and collaborating with one another focused on meeting the needs of all students. Kate discussed the importance of being up front when hiring staff about what she expected from them when they work at Schroeder. One of those expectations included being an active member of the staff by allowing people to support them and being willing to support others.

Kate drove development opportunities for all teachers in Schroeder to become better able to meet the needs of all learners and created a focus on Culturally Relevant instructional practices. Kate was a driving force in bringing CREATE training to the school in connection with the Platinum Plan. The district administrators both pointed out Kate’s strong focus to lead the school in becoming a school meeting the needs of all student needs. The beginning career teachers and mentors both discussed how Kate led the school in book clubs where teams of teachers read a book about how best to meet the needs of a diverse student population. One beginning career teacher felt like the book clubs put everyone on the same level of learning which allowed the beginning career teachers to feel more comfortable in sharing their own successes and struggles. The book the staff read during the year of this research study was, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning by Sharroky Hollie, focused on being a culturally and linguistically responsive teacher. The beginning career teacher felt the book clubs and the passion Kate brought to meeting the needs of all learners helped them understand the vision of the school and the connection to Kate’s leadership.

Kate consistently brought the conversation back to a focus on making core instruction culturally relevant focused on meeting the needs of all students. Beginning career teachers

commented on how Kate made sure the staff did not look at Culturally Relevant practices as a separate “curriculum” or activity. Kate challenged beginning career teachers to become aware of what students were accessing the curriculum. Much like Erin at Casper, Kate seemed to seize moments with individual staff members including beginning career teachers to bring a focus to Culturally Relevant practices.

Kate was very active in being visible inside and outside the classrooms, and used the time to observe staff members followed by feedback focused on meeting the needs of all learners. Beginning career teachers discussed how Kate is able to provide critical feedback paired with specific examples of how to improve instruction. One example of seizing the moment and keeping Culturally Relevant tenets on the mind of a beginning career teacher was when Kate observed a beginning career teacher’s classroom for ten minutes, and as Kate walked out, they had a quick conversation about a specific grouping of students that the teacher could immediately think about and reflect on. The beginning career teacher was working with a small group of readers who were reading a book about boating. The word “pier” came up in the book, and the students did not understand what the word was. The teacher tried to describe it as a “dock” which the students still did not understand. After the discussion, Kate quickly spoke with the beginning career teacher about how the students in the group were all from lower socioeconomic family settings and may have never experienced a dock or pier on a lake. The beginning career teacher was challenged to better understand her class, and begin to anticipate any misunderstanding when planning and improve. Much like at Casper, the beginning career teacher mentioned this as a powerful moment in guiding her to think deeper about the students in her classroom and understand them better in order to incorporate their background knowledge into instruction creating an environment built on their strengths and assets.

The teacher described it as common place where Kate comes in for a short amount of time and gives specific feedback about something that can be changed right there making the feedback timely and easily implemented later. The mentors commented on how much they appreciated Kate's willingness to support beginning career teachers. According to the mentors, Kate provided many safety nets of support for the beginning career teachers at Schroeder Elementary School such as consistent feedback, rounding conversations, and providing scheduled time to discuss any concerns or questions they might have.

Kate wanted more time for mentors to guide beginning career teachers as they grow strategies in meeting the needs of all students. Kate discussed how she offered mentors and beginning career teachers the opportunity to get a substitute teacher and have the mentor observe the beginning career teacher to provide feedback, or have the beginning career teacher observe the mentor to reflect on their practice. Kate offered getting a substitute for any beginning career teacher who would like time to observe other teachers and classrooms. According to the mentors interviewed, Kate met with mentors at scheduled times to find out any way she could possibly support them in their role. The meetings helped the mentors understand Kate's expectations of them, and provided a space for them to brainstorm strategies in how best to work with beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.

Within the structure of the meetings. Kate always brought the conversation back to meeting the needs of all learners and making sure the mentors were doing the same with their beginning career teacher. One mentors described how Kate consistently reminded the mentors not to focus all of their time on the basics of teaching (procedures and routines), and make sure their conversations were more proactive and focused on Culturally Relevant practices focused on meeting the needs of all students. Kate consistently asked the mentors to estimate the percentage

of time taken in conversations with their beginning career teacher focused on Culturally Relevant practices and meeting the needs of all learners versus the time used to discuss routines and procedures of teaching. Kate understood the beginning career teachers needed time to discuss the routines and procedures of teaching, but communicated an expectation to the mentors the majority of time taken should be focused on meeting the needs of all learners.

Overall, Kate saw her role in guiding beginning career teachers was to anticipate the challenges the beginning career teachers may encounter. Kate used the same 30, 60, and 90-day rounding conversations as Erin did at Casper as a way to discuss the good things happening in the beginning teachers' classrooms and to discuss challenges they were encountering. Kate felt it was also important to keep in touch with the mentors as the typical yearly challenges come up (i.e. report cards, parent teacher conferences), and brainstorm together proactively to give beginning career teachers strategies to better handle those situations and build confidence in their teaching abilities. Rounding conversations paired with the mentor discussions allowed Kate to create connections between the strengths and challenges of each beginning teacher to use in her support and the mentor support of each beginning career teacher. Kate looked at her role as a partner in supporting beginning career teachers knowing the many challenges they face in working in a diverse setting and reflecting back on the beginning of her own career and the many challenges she faced and how important it is to continue to keep an assets based mindset:

“In helping prepare teachers for a diverse population, I think the biggest challenge coming in as a new teacher, among many things, is getting to know your students and that classroom management aspect too. Anytime we have new teachers at the very beginning of the year, sit down and talk about the vision and the beliefs of Kennedy. I think telling staff that from the very beginning, this is what we believe, this is how we build

relationships with students, and this is part of who we are and what we do every day, I think it's very important to lay that foundation from the beginning.”

To be sure, a beginning career teacher could see a sit down discussion principal where the principal tells the beginning career teacher what the school is all about and the belief system of the school staff as intimidating guiding a beginning career teacher to assimilate into the school. This type of discussion would not be taking into account the beginning career teacher's own unique skill set which may help the school grow because it challenges the current belief system or culture of the school.

Structural Culturally Relevant Standards Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The Structural Culturally Relevant standards of a support program focused on the following areas:

- Professional development of beginning career teachers and mentors
- Mentor selection, professional development, and support

These subsections were based on the connections found within the survey responses, interview responses, and document analysis. The subsections connect with the sub standards of the Foundational Standards of the Induction Program Standards of the *New Teacher Center*.

Professional development offered to beginning career teachers. The professional development provided to beginning career teachers at Schroeder included: district provided professional development, PLC support of curriculum and instruction, local school professional development opportunities (i.e. book clubs, peer observations), and feedback discussions with the principal surrounding observations. The professional development provided by the district was the same offerings of workshops as there were for beginning career teachers at Casper

Elementary School. Unlike at Casper, there was generally more agreement (See Table 6.3) among the beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal concerning their positive opinion about the effectiveness of the professional development had in guiding beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students. There was no real reason for the more positive response from Schroeder beginning career teachers, but may have been some different factors such as the principal being more connected to the Platinum Plan or possibly having less diversity than Casper which may have created less of a sense of urgency among the beginning career teachers looking for concrete ideas or examples of meeting the needs of a more diverse classes.

Table 6.3

Connection of Professional Development to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principals at Schroeder Elementary School.

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
There is a clear connection between our district level professional development and initiatives focusing on meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	3.83	3.0	4.0
I am given the professional development opportunities allowing me to understand the importance of cultural competence (ability to effectively interact with people of different backgrounds) and the role it plays in long-term success for students.	4.17	4.0	4.0
The school district strongly supports my growth in understanding how to meet the needs of all students in a diverse school setting.	3.83	4.33	4.0
Beginning teachers are provided with effective professional development surrounding the topic of diverse classrooms.	3.67	3.33	4.0

Kate, the principal, discussed the connection between the professional development offered to the beginning career teachers and the Platinum Plan. Kate pointed out the emphasis on building relationships and getting to know kids the professional development has when the beginning career teachers first start in Yorkville. The district required three to four professional development opportunities focused on understanding poverty, culturally relevant teaching practices, and using data to drive instruction focused on subgroups. Similar to Casper Elementary, the beginning career teachers never mentioned the Platinum Plan or the connection the plan might have had with the professional development offered to them.

The survey indicated differences as to how beginning career teachers, mentors, and the principal of Schroeder assessed the effectiveness of the professional development provided for the beginning career teachers. The differences were not as wide as at Casper Elementary where the beginning career teachers rated the professional development much higher than the principal did. In the case of Schroeder, the principal rated the professional development higher overall than the beginning career teachers and mentors in meeting the needs of all students.

Much like at Casper, the beginning career teachers did not see the connection between the district level professional development offered and the varied professional development opportunities conducted at the local school. Like stated in previous chapters, the beginning career teachers felt the district level professional development dealt with the basics of teaching (routines and procedures) and did not connect with the focus on Culturally Relevant practices and meeting the needs of all learners that was at the school level development opportunities.

The beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal all stated how the PLC structure and conversations were the most effective supports for the growth of a beginning career teacher. The beginning career teachers saw the PLC meetings as a time to learn from colleagues by

planning instruction together focused on individual student data in their classroom or a time to ask questions. The beginning career teachers felt the PLC structures also allowed for discussions that were more difficult to share with a supervisor or with a larger group. Having the ability to have the scheduled bi-weekly times with their PLCs helped the beginning career teachers plan on bringing questions or concerns to the PLC.

A beginning career teacher described how she came to trust her mentor and PLC, and would more readily share her concerns or frustrations with her team because she felt she wouldn't be judged and her team would listen and support her as best as possible. At a larger district meeting of mentors and beginning career teachers, she said she never shared her concerns because she did not feel as comfortable sharing her own perceived shortcomings in meeting the needs of all learners. She felt more comfortable having her team give her ideas or strategies about meeting the needs of her learners because she believed her team understood her own students better than someone from another school setting because her teammates had similar class makeups as hers. The beginning career teacher went on to describe her feeling of support from her team:

“Every team that I’ve been on or groups of teams that I had to meet for certain students, everyone has been so willing to do anything to put themselves out there to do. With their help I feel “Okay, I can make this work,” making it happen for that student, so that they were successful. It has been nice, just knowing that it’s not really a one person thing. We really are a team and everyone really is trying to make it happen.”

In an observed 3rd grade PLC meeting where the discussion involved planning for the next unit of study in the literacy curriculum. The team included a beginning career teacher as well as her mentor. The beginning career teacher was asking questions about how best to tailor

the lesson to support some of her students who were struggling (which was later learned were mostly from families of lower socioeconomic status). The mentor and another veteran teacher spoke with the beginning career teacher about a strategy focused on creating a gradual release of responsibility model in the classroom, so there would be more time for the beginning career teacher to support the struggling learners. After sharing the strategy, the mentor reminded the beginning career teacher that the team would be meeting in two weeks and should come to the meeting prepared to discuss how implementing the suggested strategies had gone. The beginning career teacher could have been interpreted the request of trying a strategy and coming back with a report as intimidating with veteran teachers checking in on the beginning career teacher, but it was not. The beginning career teacher did not see this as intimidating or supervisory, but saw it as guidance paired with accountability and high expectations, which created a more concrete experience in changing practices in order to meet the needs of all students.

In connection with the professional development a beginning career teacher receives through the work with their PLC, beginning career teachers and mentors discussed how beginning career teachers had the opportunity to observe colleagues throughout the school while Kate steps in for them as their substitute. A beginning career teacher believed this was the best learning experience she had throughout the year saying how it was great to see her teammate using the strategies they talk about in the PLC. It gave her a concrete understanding of the concept they were talking about in their PLC. The beginning career teacher appreciated the conversations her team had about effective strategies in meeting the needs of all learners, but seeing her teammate use a strategy they had discussed gave her a much better understanding of how best to use the teaching strategy. The mentors agreed the idea of a “peer observation” was a strong professional development activity, but they felt it was underutilized possibly due to the

time it took to write sub plans or the principal being the one subbing for the beginning career teacher, which added stress to the beginning career teacher. Nevertheless, the beginning career teachers felt watching a veteran teacher work effectively within a diverse classroom was effective in helping them envision what instruction could and should look like in meeting the needs of all students.

The annual book study, described earlier, focused on a building wide conversation on a book chosen by the school building leadership team. Kate worked with a local leadership team comprised of teachers at Schroeder, and decided on a book connected to the school goals for the year. The book during the year of this research study focused on becoming a more culturally relevant teacher and school, and ensuring the work being done in the classroom is meaningful to the student and has a strong connection to the child's life outside of school. The beginning career teachers felt the book study helped them focus conversations with their colleagues and put everyone on the same level as they were learning together. The beginning career teachers believed there was a deeper level of commitment to the discussions than the typical professional development opportunity because of the involvement of all staff members especially the mentors. One beginning career teacher said it was great to be learning *with* them in contrast to the many times where she was learning *from* them. When learning with the beginning career teachers, the mentors felt like they could give feedback at critical times. The book forced the teachers to all have their viewpoints challenged and the mentors felt it was important to be there as the beginning career teachers reacted to the challenges to ensure the beginning career teachers kept an assets based approach to what the book was calling into question.

The principal felt the Platinum Plan drove how she provided her own support for beginning career teachers at Schroeder. The mentors felt the district level professional

development needed to be more differentiated based on the beginning career teachers own skill level. The mentors would like to have seen a more differentiated professional development structure where the beginning teachers had choice on what best fits their current skill level. The mentors described the professional development as a “one size fits all” model instead of a structure more flexible based on the experience and skill level of the teacher. The mentors also discussed how they would like to have seen time spent between the mentor and beginning career teacher as an option for professional development, so the beginning teacher had the ability to take time to ask questions and reflect on their own teaching with the mentor.

Mentor selection, professional development, and support. Much like at Casper, the principal drove the selection and support of the mentors at Schroeder. Kate believed the mentors were key to supporting beginning career teachers in the first years of teaching in a diverse setting. Kate saw mentors as a key factor in the growth of a beginning career teachers and the ability of the school and district to retain beginning career teachers especially in diverse schools: “Again, the best things we do in supporting the new teachers at Schroeder is, I think, having that mentor and that person to connect with. Like I mentioned before, I think I can benefit the new teacher as well as the veteran teacher with ideas.”

Kate chose mentors based on leadership qualities of the veteran teachers in the school, and how much the veteran teacher uses an asset based approach to teaching in a diverse environment. She based on her decisions on her own experience with the veteran teachers she chose as mentors through the teacher evaluation process and observations of their leadership in the classroom. Kate understood the large influence a mentor could have on how a beginning career teacher approaches the work of teaching in a diverse environment, and only sets up beginning career teachers with mentors who are positive and enjoy the challenges of working in

a diverse school setting. Kate attempted to use the knowledge she has of the beginning career teacher to match the teacher with a mentor who best fit with working with the particular beginning teacher. Kate stated there was no defined way of choosing mentors driven by the district, so principals chose the staff members who could be mentors in the building. Kate admitted at times there was not as many veteran teachers willing to mentor, as she would like, so there was not always a perfect match. The mentors did not always see the selection of mentors focused on the skill level of the mentor being able to support beginning career teachers, but at times was more about which person might be available out of necessity, not skill level, to mentor (See Table 6.4).

Table 6.4

Connection of Mentor Support to the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program According to Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and Principal at Schroeder Elementary School.

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Teachers	Mentors	Principal
The selection of mentors is driven by a strength-based approach where mentors are selected based on their ability to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.	3.83	2.33	5.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to seek out the professional development needed to better support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students.	4.33	2.33	3.0
The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to continue building their own ability to use instructional practices meet the needs of all students.	4.83	4.0	5.0

The mentors believed the professional development and the focus of their role were areas the district needed to improve to better support mentors, which in turn will better support beginning career teachers. The mentors and principal all believed there was very little direction

as to the vision of best practices in supporting beginning career teachers for mentors outside of the direction given by Kate in her specific school. The mentors at Schroeder all commented they had not received any specific training on how best to support beginning career teachers as mentors in a diverse school setting. One of the mentors commented she would like to see specific standards or reflective conversations that are required of them over the year while working with beginning career teachers. She believed the more focused the mentors can be, the beginning career teachers will feel more confident in their abilities to meet the needs of all students in a diverse classroom setting. Kate and the mentors discussed how professional development options given at the district level should have included opportunities for a mentor and beginning career teacher to attend the same workshops together. One mentor believed the idea of pairing up the mentor with a beginning career teacher for PD together would allow for a more focused support system for the beginning career teacher since the mentor and beginning career teacher would be learning together and have built in time to discuss and reflect. At the time of this research the mentor and beginning career teacher did not typically attend the same professional development opportunities, much less any professional development together.

Instructional Culturally Relevant Standards Supporting Beginning Career Teachers

The Instructional Culturally Relevant supports provided within a beginning teacher support program focused on instructional practices aimed at providing equity in academic achievement and universal access to all curriculum. Bringing high achievement results to all students no matter race, socioeconomic status, gender, or primary language are the focus of improving instructional practices. The following paragraphs will discuss how Schroeder Elementary School beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal view the effectiveness of

the beginning teacher support program in relation to Instructional Culturally Relevant support for beginning career teachers. The section has two concepts related to Instructional Culturally Relevant practices in supporting beginning career teachers:

- Focus on Student Demographics and Equitable Outcomes
- Beginning Teacher Growth as a Culturally Relevant Practitioner

Focus on student demographics and equitable outcomes. As stated in the previous chapter, the district focused much of the initial professional development with beginning career teachers on the demographics of the school district and the academic achievement of the students across the district and in the local schools. Once again, the beginning career teachers and mentors felt the district communicated the demographics of the school district very well to give them an understanding of what the classrooms would resemble when they met the students in their class during the first days of school (See Table 5.5). The mentors, beginning career teachers, and principal all felt the demographics were communicated clearly; however, there was disagreement among the groups when it came to how the support program connected the specific demographics to the actual support and guidance offered to the beginning career teachers.

Table 6.5

Schroeder Elementary School Beginning Career Teacher, Mentor, and Principal Ratings of the Beginning Career Teacher Support Program and the Connection to the District Demographics and Equitable Outcomes

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)		
	Beginning Career Teacher	Mentor	Principal
The beginning teacher support program is tailored to meet the specific and unique needs of the students in our school community.	3.33	3.0	4.0

The mentors working with beginning career teachers are providing consistent support focused on creating equitable outcomes among diverse groups of students.	3.5	3.0	4.0
The context and demographics of our school community is a strong consideration in our beginning teacher support program for beginning career teachers.	3.67	3.67	5.0
The school district supports my growth in understanding the specific academic and social diversity brought to the classroom each school day.	3.83	4.33	4.0
I have a good understanding of the academic achievement outcomes of the students in our school district and how specific demographic groups. (race, gender, socioeconomic status, language status) are performing.	4.67	4.67	4.0
The beginning teacher support program has a focus on the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.	3.67	3.33	4.0
The leaders (administration, mentors, and coordinators) encourage the beginning career teachers to guide students in seeing a clear connection between what the students are doing in the classroom and how those same skills are important in life inside and outside of school.	3.5	4.0	4.0

In reflecting on the previous section, similar trends of thought are apparent in relation to the support program and the connection it has to the specific demographic of the school and school district (See Table 6.5). The beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal all believed the school district provided a strong connection to the demographics and achievement of the school district, but did not provide the same level of connection to concrete strategies to better support the students based on the demographics and achievement of the students in the school district.

Based on the data gathered through interviews, beginning career teachers at Schroeder saw the support provided by the mentor and Kate as connected to the demographics of the school

through the conversations with their mentors, the schoolwide book study, and the one on one conversations with Kate focused on improving their practice. The feelings of the beginning career teachers were not as positive as those from Casper when it came their feelings about the connection of the support they received and the demographics of the school district.

One Schroeder beginning career teacher explained without the local school support of principal, mentors, and colleagues, she would have been overwhelmed by the learning curve of working in a diverse school setting. She went on to explain the district level support was too focused on the general day to day work of a teacher, and should have had a larger connection to the work within a diverse classroom and the specific demographics of Schroeder Elementary School. Using the PLC structure in conjunction with a mentor was more effective because they could connect it directly to the students they educate every day.

A Schroeder beginning career teacher described a turning point in her year when her mentor supported her through a time when she was observing a definite divide among her class based on where they lived in the community. She acknowledged that it was natural for kids to play with one another more if they see each other at home too, but she sensed it was more than that and needed to find a way to create a stronger “community” in her classroom. Her mentor pointed her in the direction of providing a “morning meeting” each day focused on students recognizing one another’s strengths and providing time for her students to get to know students outside of their neighborhood. As the year progressed, the mentor consistently checked in with the beginning career teacher to make sure there was improvement and continued to provide discussion topics and activities to use during the morning meetings.

Kate, the principal, felt the district had done an effective job of communicating the demographic information and academic data to the beginning career teachers and connecting this

information to the goals of the beginning career teacher program. Kate's evaluation of the program was different from that of Erin at Casper Elementary. Erin felt there was a disconnect between the focus of the support program and the demographics and academic outcomes of the district. Kate saw a stronger connection, much like the district administrator's opinion. Kate's higher rating connected to her higher level of involvement in the creation of the Platinum Plan and the conversations of how to bring the tenants of the Platinum Plan into any work or support the district provides to the beginning career teachers.

Beginning teacher growth as a Culturally Relevant practitioner. The aspect the beginning career teachers at Schroeder most commented on as a strength (See Table 6.6) of support for them in growing as Culturally Relevant practitioners was creating strong connections to the student and family, understanding the assets each child brings to the classroom based on their own upbringing and background, and how best to use the understanding of the culture of each child to tailor instruction to meet the needs of the classroom. These areas as reported in the survey results as well as data collected in the interviews were the same areas with the highest ratings at Casper Elementary among beginning career teachers. Just like the beginning teachers at Casper, the beginning career teachers discussed these areas often in their interviews attributing the areas as strengths due to the positive and caring environment at each of the schools and the leadership provided through the principal at each school.

Table 6.6.

Schroeder Elementary Beginning Teachers, Mentor, and Principal Ratings Based on Beginning Teacher Growth as a Culturally Relevant Practitioner within the Beginning Teacher Support Program

Survey Question	Avg. Rating on a 1-5 Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree)
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	Beginning Career Teacher	Mentor	Principal
Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to integrate the diverse backgrounds of students into learning activities and daily routines.	3.0	3.0	4.0
Beginning career teachers are encouraged to guide students in becoming active in the school community.	4.0	3.33	4.0
The beginning career teacher support program guides new teachers in understanding the importance of creating connections with parents of the children in their class in an effort to better understand the children in their class.	4.17	4.0	5.0
The assets/strengths a diverse group of students bring into a classroom are recognized and there is an emphasis on how important it is for educators to recognize and honor those assets.	4.33	4.33	4.0
Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to create connections with parents of diverse backgrounds.	3.33	3.67	2.0
Beginning career teachers and mentors are given time to explore how their own cultural background informs and influences their instruction	3.33	2.0	2.0
The beginning teacher support program guides beginning career teachers in understanding the importance of recognizing the cultural background of my students and using the understanding to tailor my instruction to meet the unique needs of my students.	4.33	3.0	4.0
I feel the beginning teacher support program is/was an effective support in my growth and understanding of how to meet the needs of all students.	3.0	3.0	4.0
The beginning career teacher support program supports beginning career teachers in helping all students find a voice and be an active participant in their own education.	3.5	3.33	4.0
The beginning teacher support program focuses just as much of the strengths/assets beginning teachers bring to the profession as it does on the weaknesses of the beginning career teachers.	3.33	3.0	3.0

The beginning career teachers commented on how the relationships they built with the supportive staff of Schroeder guided them in understanding the importance of relationships with

parents. The beginning career teachers discussed how the staff of Schroeder were consistently out in the parking lot or in the hallway during arrival and dismissal of students greeting parents and creating strong relationships with them any chance they could get. The beginning career teachers and mentors of Schroeder all pointed at the importance of these conversations with parents as one of the defining reasons why Schroeder has experienced success working with a diverse student population. The mentors discussed the importance of making connections with parents has always been a part of being a staff member at Schroeder. The beginning career teachers are brought into the culture and grow because of observing and being a part of making those connections with parents of the children they work with.

The beginning career teachers and mentors believed the support structure within Schroeder created an atmosphere where beginning career teachers were able to learn how to incorporate the assets diversity brings to a school and classroom. The data from the survey and interviews supported the belief the school placed a high priority on bringing an assets based approach to working in a diverse environment. As stated earlier in this chapter, the hallways and classrooms of Schroeder Elementary had a noticeable focus on ensuring the hallway displays were reflective of the student demographics by using authentic pictures of the kids in the school and the actual work the students were producing in the classroom instead of premade posters or displays. Beginning career teachers commented on how there was a very small amount of time where discussions among teachers focused negatively on students or any aspect of working in a diverse school environment.

Much like the relationships the teachers built based on an assets based approach, the mentors, beginning career teachers, and principals all felt the growth of beginning career teachers at Schroeder was due to the supportive environment at Schroeder Elementary. As at

Casper, the beginning career teachers believed the supportive environment at their school was an important factor in their growth as Culturally Relevant practitioners. Kate believed the beginning career teachers had more than one person to look at as a model allowing them to grow as a professional educator at faster rate because conversations with her as the principal, with their mentor, or with colleagues all centered around the same concept of growing as a teacher able to meet the needs of all students.

The areas connected to providing concrete examples of how best to meet the needs of all learners in a diverse school setting were some of the lowest within the survey and discussed within the interview results frequently. These areas were also the lowest ratings among the responses of the principal of Schroeder Elementary. Much like the responses from the beginning career teachers at Casper Elementary, the beginning teachers at Schroeder the district led workshops for beginning career teachers reminded the teachers of undergraduate classes steeped in theory and lacking in real teaching strategies. One beginning career teacher stated, “I wanted real examples of how best to meet a child's needs. I took many classes in college focused on theories, so I was hoping for more specific strategies from the classes I took from the district. My mentor and principal helped a lot, but I think I needed more.” The sentiment of this beginning career teacher echoed through the interviews of other beginning career teachers looking for specific strategies.

The beginning career teachers connected much of their growth in finding success working in a diverse environment to their mentor and PLC. The beginning career teachers pointed to the importance of having a network of support that is responsive to their ongoing needs. It was important for them to have someone easily accessible to answer their questions or give them strategies in an ongoing way since many of the questions or concerns were

unanticipated since they were just beginning their career. The beginning career teachers discussed how they understood the importance of learning about the big picture of Culturally Relevant practices, but felt the most supported when able to go to their mentor or colleague with a specific question in and immediately get feedback on how best to move forward.

A beginning career teacher described an instance where a student brought up her skin being different from another students meaning they could not be friends. The beginning career teacher described how at first she acknowledged the comment and say that it did not matter what skin color they have they could still be friends. After school, the beginning career teacher found a veteran colleague to ask for advice on how she should follow up on the conversation. The veteran teacher encouraged the beginning career teacher to truly explore the comments made by the student with the whole class and have a true discussion where the students fully acknowledged the differences they have and see those differences as assets rather than a separating force.

Kate discussed how the program still has a long way to go to truly support and guide beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students, but has a good base of guiding students in becoming Culturally Relevant practitioners. Kate believed beginning career teachers could become Culturally Relevant teachers through consistent feedback focused on the tenants of CRP paired with focused professional development and reflective conversations with mentors, peers, and supervisors in a PLC environment. Beginning career teachers at Schroeder believed teachers could be taught to be a strong culturally relevant practitioner especially if they work within a supportive school where there is a strong focus on meeting the needs of all learners.

Case Analysis Summary-Schroeder Elementary School

Over the last three years, the demographics of Schroeder Elementary School have been consistent in regards to racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity among the student population. During the same time, overall academic achievement increased and was well above the state average in both reading and math. There has been some decreases seen among sub groups based in race, socioeconomic status, and language spoken, but the achievement among these groups has been all above state average in the last three years.

The beginning career teachers did not have a clear understanding of the goals of the overall beginning career teacher support program. The beginning career teachers and mentors agreed overall there needed to be a better connection between the mission and vision of the school district and the beginning career support program. Unlike at Casper Elementary, the principal at Schroeder, felt there was a stronger understanding of the goal of the beginning teacher support program than Casper Elementary school which may have been due to the Schroeder principal being on the a district wide steering committee on how to create a more Culturally Relevant school district.

Much like at Casper, the principal at Schroeder was frequently mentioned by beginning career teachers, mentors, and district administrators as an important to the support of the beginning career teachers in Schroeder Elementary School. Like Erin at Casper Elementary School, Kate is highly visible at her school by being in classrooms frequently giving feedback to teachers and mentors while in classrooms. The beginning career teachers and mentors felt her presence focused on making the school a welcoming place by creating strong relationships with staff and students while being visible in the school.

Beginning career teachers and mentors at Schroeder Elementary School attributed the assets based approach to diversity the school had taken on to Kate and her support of their professional development through school specific opportunities (i.e. book study) and her instructional feedback to them. Staff members described Kate as always having a positive attitude toward any situation coming up allowing the teachers to feel they could approach any situation or issue with an asset-based approach. Kate was not only described as setting an asset based approach for the school by her attitude, but also by clearly stating she expects the staff to support one another through collaboration centered on meeting the needs of all students.

Kate also drove the internal professional development of the school through staff meetings, book studies, and PLC structures. Kate was an active member of the district level CREATE team, which planned and provided professional development focused on creating a culturally relevant district and schools. Kate's influence was evident in how the mentors and beginning career teachers consistently discussed how Kate was proactive with them always attempting to help them anticipate barriers that may come up in a diverse environment and find strategies to overcome those barriers as a working PLC. The mentors and beginning teachers described Kate as "relentless", but empathetic about the work the teachers were practicing in meeting the needs of all learners at Schroeder Elementary School.

Within the Structural Culturally Relevant structures in place to support beginning career teachers beginning career teachers, mentors, and the principal agreed the professional development provided by the school district supported their growth as culturally relevant practitioners. The beginning career teachers and mentors did not believe the professional development was as well connected to supporting culturally relevant practices as the same groups at Casper Elementary School, and viewed the professional development at the district

level as a “one size fits all approach” instead of a more focused approach on specific strategies. The beginning career teachers and mentors at Schroeder rated much of their answers lower due to disconnections between the district level professional development and culturally relevant practices, but did have higher ratings due to the local professional development provided at their specific school. Kate did have higher ratings in the area of professional development as it related to working in a diverse school setting, which could be from her work on the CREATE team focused on growing Culturally Relevant practitioners in the district. Erin did not see the connection between the district professional development and meeting the needs of all learners.

Much like Casper, the beginning career teachers attributed the most effective professional development was the specific discussions and opportunities they had at their local school. The beginning career teachers and mentors at Schroeder believed the peer observation opportunities Kate created for the beginning career teachers, the PLC work and discussions had with grade level teams, and the annual book study all were the most effective professional development opportunities for the beginning career teachers.

The strategy of pairing an effective mentor with a beginning career teacher to support the beginning career teacher within a diverse school environment was in place at Schroeder just like Casper. Kate chose the mentors and the choice focused on teachers who were practicing culturally relevant strategies in their own classrooms and continuing to grow in meeting the needs of all students. The mentors did not believe they had enough opportunities to develop their own skills in supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners, which was different from how the mentor felt at Casper. The mentors felt their own development as a support for beginning career teachers was not a part of the beginning career teacher support program and needed to be strengthened. The Casper staff brought up some of the same concerns.

The Instructional Culturally Relevant Standards for supporting beginning career teachers center on how a beginning career teacher learns and implements specific Culturally Relevant strategies. The mentors, principal, and beginning career teachers all believed the professional development focused on Culturally Relevant practices should be attended by the beginning career teachers and mentor so they are able to focus their own conversations on those areas they are learning. The beginning career teachers, mentors, and principals at Schroeder all felt the demographics of the district were communicated throughout the different support structures in place for beginning career teachers. The academic achievement of all subgroups of students were communicated.

Unfortunately, much like the feedback from the staff at Casper, the beginning career teachers, mentors, and principal at Schroeder did not see a connection of the demographics and academic achievement to developing concrete strategies to meet the needs of all students. Once again, the beginning career teachers attributed much of their growth to the local school support of their principal, mentor, and colleagues. This sentiment was mirrored at Casper Elementary. Overall, the beginning teachers at Schroeder felt the district level support focused on the basics of what to do as a beginning career teacher and did not support their growth as a culturally relevant practitioners like the local school support did. The principal felt more positively about the connection between the demographics of the district and the growth of the beginning career teachers as culturally relevant practitioners which may have been due to her work on the district CREATE team focused on providing professional development focused on meeting the needs of all students.

Kate's asset-based approach was a reason given many times by beginning career teachers for their growth as culturally relevant teachers. They felt the staff and principal always focused

on the strengths of the diverse student population when making instructional decisions. The beginning career teachers and mentors believed the assets based approach of the staff not only connected to their ability to meet the needs of their students, but also created a positive environment where staff had strong relationships with one another.

The beginning career teachers at Schroeder said the overall support program for them was effective, but did not have as a high rating as Casper beginning career teachers. The Schroeder beginning career teachers felt like the workshops and professional development opportunities provided by the school district were more like college courses focused on theories, rather than on concrete examples of strategies to use to meet the needs of all students. The beginning career teachers were thankful for the mentors and principal who created opportunities for them to learn about specific and concrete examples of how best to meet the needs of the students in their classrooms.

In the next chapter, I will be discussing the overall findings of the research study in relation to the research question, implications for practice, the limitations of the study, and possible further investigations into the findings of this study.

Chapter 7: Answering the Research Question

To understand how Casper and Schroeder Elementary Schools within the Yorkville School District supported the beginning career teachers in their schools, I addressed one research question: *In schools that are successful with diverse learners, what structures, programs, and practices provide support to beginning career teachers that prepares them to educate diverse learners?*

Both schools were in the same school district and provided the same district supports for the beginning career teachers working in their diverse schools, but both schools also had specific formal and informal ways to support their beginning career teachers to meet the particular needs of the students in their schools. The researcher analyzed observations, survey results, and interview data involving district administrators, principals, mentors, and beginning career teachers, resulting in common themes of structures and practices that were more or less effective in providing the support needed to guide beginning career teachers to educating diverse learners. It is important to understand the findings and conclusions connected to what the beginning career teachers felt were the most effective supports when working within the schools within the two elementary schools. The district administrators, principals, and mentors designed and implemented the support structures, so they gave an overview of those supports, but the beginning career teachers were the ones who had the ability to describe the effectiveness of the supports provided.

Looking at two schools within the same district allowed me to understand the formal features of a school district support program for beginning career teachers and understand how those structures worked in conjunction with the informal and formal structures of support at each school. Using the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and the New Teacher Induction

Standards allowed me to organize the data and within the organized data themes emerged. I found it interesting the most important structures to support beginning career teachers in place according to beginning career teachers were all connected very closely to their colleagues and school they worked in, and with only a loose connection to the formal structures or practices created by the school district. There were several important structures, programs, or practices found to be effective support for beginning career teachers across both schools: principal engagement, supportive school environments, and culturally relevant professional growth. In the following sections, I will describe these three support practices and structures for beginning career teachers described as the most effective by the participants of the study followed by sections focused on implications for practice, limitations of the study, and implications for further research.

Principal Engagement

Principal engagement as a found to be an important support structure by beginning career teachers, mentors, and district administrators in supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students. Principal engagement was defined by the data as the effective feedback through purposeful visibility provided by both principals in their schools and influence of these principals on school culture

Purposeful Visibility. A principal who is purposefully visible through classroom walkthroughs, formal observations, and simply supporting students and staff throughout the school and pairs visibility with specific feedback centered on meeting the needs of all students using a Culturally Relevant lens provides strong support for beginning career teachers working in diverse environments. Mentors, beginning career teachers, and district administrators all

commented on how both Kate and Erin were consistently in classrooms observing and supporting the beginning career teachers in their schools through providing feedback surrounding meeting the needs of all students.

Beginning career teachers did not perceive having their principals in their classrooms consistently as threatening or uncomfortable, but saw the observations and visits as a support in their growth. In both buildings, there was sense of comfort among beginning career teachers in having the principal in their classroom. The beginning career teachers also felt the time the principals spent in their classrooms allowed the beginning career teachers to respect the feedback the principals provided more. The beginning career teachers believed the principals' time in the classroom gave them the knowledge needed to provide feedback to the beginning career teachers in connection with meeting the needs of all learners in the classroom.

Both principals were found to be highly visible throughout the school in the hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, and anywhere students were in the building constantly observing or talking with students. The beginning career teachers and mentors connected the visibility of the principals to the collaborative and supportive cultures in both of the buildings, which affected the feeling of support expressed by the beginning career teachers. The beginning career teachers in both buildings actually shared their thoughts of the visibility of the principal in their buildings in humorous ways. At Casper, the beginning career teachers described how in one moment Erin would not be in the room one moment, and then when they looked up again Erin would be there typing notes while observing the instruction or talking with a child about what they were doing.

Beginning career teachers believed having their principal consistently in their classroom and throughout the school gave them a sense the principals were able to empathize with the beginning career teachers with the successes and challenges they faced in working in a diverse

school environment. The beginning career teachers believed principals had the knowledge and understanding of the day-to-day work within their classrooms, which gave the principals the ability to better support them in growing as culturally relevant practitioners, and have critical conversations with them to push them to becoming more effective culturally relevant practitioners.

Principal Influence on Culture. It was found that principals have a large impact on the culture of a school and whether or not a school focused on meeting the needs of all students through building strong relationships with students and families, keeping an assets based approach to working in a diverse school environment, and providing an environment focused on providing a Culturally Relevant educational environment.

The beginning career teachers and mentors in both schools believed both Erin and Kate put a large emphasis on creating school cultures focused on strong relationships between staff, students, and parents, which in turn created a supportive environment for beginning career teachers in both buildings. The principals at both buildings were consistently described by mentors, beginning career teachers, and district administrators as the reason both schools fostered strong relationships among staff, students, and parents. Both principals were described as approachable and always open to discussing any topic to support the beginning career teachers' development in meeting the needs of all learners in their classroom. The result was beginning career teachers feeling they could turn to anyone in the building when they needed guidance or support in meeting the needs of all learners.

Beginning career teachers in both buildings felt they could turn to multiple people in their schools for support in meeting the needs of all students. The principals both directly commented on their own role in creating a supportive environment for beginning career teachers. Kate was

clear in her expectation of any staff member working in the school, “If you are going to work here, we’re going to support each other and work together and collaborate.” Erin felt it was her role to remove any barriers to growth for beginning teachers, and believed she could not do it alone. She consistently communicated with staff to ensure they all understood their role in supporting one another as a staff, translating into support for beginning career teachers.

Kate consistently met with her mentors to anticipate challenges the beginning career teachers would encounter at certain parts of the school year, so instead of creating a reactive environment where beginning career teachers are blindsided by the typical stressful times of the school year, the mentors and Kate brainstorm proactive ways to support the beginning career teachers. Kate believed building a proactive structure allowed for beginning career teachers to approach situations with more confidence and lessen the stress coming during specific times of the school year (i.e. report cards, parent/teacher conferences). Beginning career teachers felt Kate’s even keeled approach and proactive communication supported their ability to meet the needs of all learners keeping their focus on instruction. Kate consistently brought a Culturally Relevant Approach to the conversations with mentors reminding mentors the majority of the conversation between beginning career teacher and mentor should be focused on Culturally Relevant practices and meeting the needs of all learners versus discussions focused on the routines and procedures of teaching.

Erin emphasized the individual relationships she makes with beginning career teachers by being involved in supporting them in any way possible. Erin works with her student services team to support beginning career teachers with challenging students. Erin knows these types of students can be a large reason why beginning career teachers may leave the profession if not supported. Erin believed being involved in these discussions builds a strong relationship with the

beginning career teacher by showing Erin is supporting them in meeting the needs of even the most challenging students.

Kate used an assets based approach to all conversations with beginning career teachers, which was clearly recognized by beginning career teachers as making it more comfortable for them to discuss any issues they need help with in meeting the needs of all learners. As stated in an earlier chapter, a beginning career teacher stated, “We’re all a little upset, because we feel like we’re not meeting the students’ needs. She’s been really good about facilitating and pointing out those positives that we have been doing to make us feel better. She’s definitely one of the great ones I have worked with.”

Erin used her regular 30, 60, and 90-day interviews with beginning career teachers as a way to positively support the beginning career teachers at Casper. She makes sure she begins the interviews with open-ended questions focused on the successes of the beginning career teachers. She wanted the beginning career teachers to be reflective, but not get too critical of their practices. Guiding them to look at their growth from an assets based approach allowed the beginning career teachers to see their own success in a diverse school setting, and not get bogged down in those areas the beginning career teacher wanted to improve. Erin stated she wanted to make sure beginning career teachers who work in diverse settings see success, or they might become too focused on the struggles and ultimately turn into cynical or even leaving the field of education all together.

Supportive School Environments

An overall school environment focused on supporting all teachers in growing as Culturally Relevant practitioners was found to be important in providing a safe environment for

beginning career teachers to appreciate the assets diversity brings to a school and the various challenges a diverse school environment brings as well. The beginning career teachers at both schools consistently referenced the supportive and welcoming environment they felt at the schools which they worked at and connected the supportive environment to their own growth as a culturally relevant practitioner. The beginning career teachers discussed the how they learned the importance of building strong relationships with staff, students, and parents in order to create environments focused on meeting the needs of all students. At Casper, the beginning career teachers discussed how they felt they could turn to any staff member in the building if they needed support to meet the needs of an individual child or needed support in understanding on how best to introduce a new concept to a classroom with diverse needs. One of the beginning career teachers at Casper discussed how they could have gone to a school with an “easier” demographic, but the environment of support at Casper drove them to stay at Casper.

Beginning career teachers at both schools felt unprepared when they began their positions in a diverse school, but the common feeling among the beginning career teachers was the school staff at both schools were always there to support them. The beginning career teachers weren't sure there was any preparation structure able to truly prepare them to successfully work in a diverse school setting, but having a supportive school culture helped the beginning career teachers feel they weren't alone and could turn to anyone for guidance.

Outside of the direct support beginning career teachers received from colleagues, the beginning career teachers were able to observe the supportive environments of their schools, which helped the beginning career teachers understand the importance of the relationships in building a supportive environment in meeting the needs of all students. Beginning career teachers at both schools recognized their colleagues for the amount of time they spent in creating

strong relationships with students and parents by taking any time possible to connect with them. At Schroeder Elementary, the beginning career teachers observed their colleagues taking a lot of time at the end of the day to connect with parents who were there to pick up their children. The beginning career teachers learned the importance of relationships by watching the interactions of the veteran teachers at both schools. The supportive school environment the beginning career teachers at both sites experienced provided them with the importance the schools put on welcoming all students and families in their diverse community showing the schools valued the cultural background of each student and their family.

The supportive school environment allowed the beginning career teachers to have critical conversations with colleagues because they felt they would be supported rather than criticized for their need for help. The beginning career teachers discussed how difficult it was to have conversations around race and class when working with parents and students due to their own apprehension and anxiety around race and class. The largest impact among beginning career teachers within a supportive school environment was their growth in recognizing and acknowledging race and class and how these should be thought of when planning and implementing instruction.

Culturally Relevant Growth Supports

School level supports provided by mentors, colleagues, and school level professional development were found to be supportive of beginning career teachers in diverse school environments. The beginning career teachers believed these to be more effective than the district level professional development and supports because of the more direct link to their own diverse classroom that school level supports provided. The most effective supports were found to be the

support provided by their mentors and colleagues, and local school professional development opportunities.

Mentors and Colleagues. The beginning career teachers had mentors assigned to them from the principal of the school. The mentors were veteran teachers who taught a similar grade or special area at the same school as the beginning career teacher. The beginning career teachers believed having a mentor from their school and team was important for them to grow as a Culturally Relevant practitioner. There was a feeling among beginning career teachers that if they had a mentor from a school that was not as diverse they would have felt as their mentor would not have the same understanding of the successes and barriers they were experiencing.

The ongoing discussions with mentors were found to be effective support as they allowed beginning career teachers to have a conversation with the mentor around concrete strategies to use in meeting the needs of all students, go back to their classroom and try those strategies, and then have a follow up meeting with the mentor to talk about the outcome without judgment. Knowing the mentors had some of the same struggles in the same diverse environment helped the beginning career teachers feel confidence in the suggestions of the mentor was giving to them.

Support outside of the mentors provided by colleagues in the school or within a PLC were also found to be effective structures in supporting beginning career teachers. Even though the mentors were specifically assigned to the beginning career teachers, there was just as much credit given to the other staff members at each of the schools. The beginning career teachers consistently discussed how they could turn to any colleague in the building for support in meeting the needs of all students. The Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Schroeder were another way the beginning career teachers felt their colleagues went out of their way to

support the growth of the beginning career teachers. An example of going above beyond included colleagues providing strategies for beginning career teachers to create a bridge with parents who are perceived to be “uninvolved” in school, but really are just working a variety of jobs that may not allow them to be involved during the regular times of the day in the traditional way of being involved.

The beginning career teachers felt their team (teachers teaching similar grades or subjects) consistently went out of their way to ask them what they needed to be successful. Anything from instructional planning with individual students in mind to brainstorming ideas on how to find success with a challenging students were discussed in order to support the beginning career teachers. One of the mentors said that if a beginning career teacher was coming up against a barrier in meeting the needs of a student or students one of the veteran teachers probably had a similar experience and can offer effective suggestions.

Mentor who were able to connect the district level professional development and what the beginning career teachers were learning to their own school and classroom were found to be the most effective at supporting beginning career teachers working in a diverse school environment. Through reflective questions, the mentors would encourage the beginning career teacher to think deeper, and make the district level professional development more relevant to what was happening in the diverse classroom of the beginning career teacher. There seemed to be some variability among mentors and how much they provided those more reflective conversations and sharing strategies in meeting the needs of all learners, which principals and beginning career teachers seemed to believe this had to do with little district direction on what the mentors should focus on in their support of beginning career teachers. The beginning career

teachers seemed to refer back to the support they received from other colleagues if the mentor was not meeting their needs.

When a beginning career teacher saw a clear connection between their classroom and a Culturally Relevant culture focused on meeting the needs of all learners, it was found to be supportive of their growth in meeting the needs of all learners. A definite feeling of “we are all in this together” came across when talking with beginning career teachers and mentors at each of the schools. The concept of diversity came up with an interesting attitude towards the “other” schools that did not experience the same type of diversity as Casper and Schroeder. The mentors and beginning career teachers took pride in working at diverse schools, which may drive the veteran teachers and mentors to take extra steps to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom.

Along with the “we are all in this together” feeling, the beginning career teachers discussed how each of their schools held high expectations of all students no matter their life situation. The beginning career teachers pointed out the high expectations held by the principal of the school and how their colleagues rarely made excuses for any child. There was a sense of empathy and compassion for students, but high expectations of students were clearly communicated to the beginning career teachers. One of the beginning career teachers specifically pointed out a situation where they were discussing her “feeling sorry” for a student in her first weeks of teaching and being challenged by her mentor to not let the life situation of the student effect how you teach the child and have a belief the child is going to be able to overcome any barrier with the right instruction and strong relationship with the teacher and school.

School Level Professional Development Opportunities. The most effective professional opportunities were found to come from a variety of focused one on one

conversations with principals, mentors, or colleagues, whole school conversations at staff meetings or book studies surrounding diversity and meeting the needs of all students within a Culturally Relevant school environment. The Yorkville School District provided ongoing and formal professional development for beginning career teachers across the district, but according to the beginning career teachers of both schools the professional development provided at the school level was the most effective in supporting them as Culturally Relevant practitioners.

The beginning career teachers believed the conversations with their principals were a driving force in supporting their growth. The scheduled 30, 60, and 90-day interviews held between the principals and the beginning career teachers were focused on their reflections on their own practices matched with specific feedback and suggestions from the principals after classroom observations. The beginning career teachers saw this as a part of their professional development with an ongoing component where they were able to discuss growth and challenges in a safe environment with their supervisor who had a large interest in their own success in meeting the needs of the students in their classrooms.

The beginning career teachers believed local professional development, like the book study of Sharroky Holly's book, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning, were more effective than large, district professional development opportunities with all of the other beginning career teachers from across the school district. The ability to talk with teachers of all experience levels also working in the same diverse environment gave the teachers more confidence in sharing their own successes and struggles opening the door to a deeper learning opportunity.

The opportunity to observe veteran teachers in their own buildings also was considered a strong aspect of their growth as culturally relevant practitioners. Being able to observe teachers

with their own diverse classrooms provided a deeper connection to the beginning career teachers' own experiences. The beginning career teachers saw the observations as powerful because a lot of the teachers they were observing were the teachers who were giving them suggestions and ideas on how best to meet the needs of the students in their own classes, so during the observations they were able to see those strategies being used first hand.

Finally, learning to use an assets based approach and language in teaching was a more indirect professional development opportunity for beginning career teachers at both schools. By participating in discussions, surrounding meeting the needs of students (especially challenging students) with a focus on the assets of the child was a learning experience for the beginning career teachers. The beginning career teachers commented on how deliberate the discussions surrounding students were kept from going down a path of focusing on the barriers of each child or issues that were out of the control of the school or teacher. Based on the experiences of the beginning career teachers in their student teaching or prior placements, the beginning career teachers felt they had to retrain their brain to become asset-based educators building on the strengths of each of the students they worked with.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this research study may inform school district leaders, principals, and teachers on how best to support beginning career teachers working in diverse school environments. School district and school leaders working in diverse school environments hire beginning career teachers to meet the needs of all learners, but beginning career teachers typically have a small array of strategies to meet the needs of a diverse student population (Neumann, 2010; Storms, 2013; Akiba, 2010) . Knowing this, school leaders must create

structures and practices to support beginning career teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Based on the findings of this research study, practitioners will want to consider the following structures and practices in guiding beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners: training principals on the importance of principal engagement in supporting beginning career teachers and strategies for providing that support focused on Culturally Relevant Practices, creating supportive asset-based school environments through a PLC or teaming approach, focusing professional development at the district level and school level on Culturally Relevant practices, and providing beginning career teachers with mentors who are effective Culturally Relevant teachers and are providing consistent asset-based support. School and district leaders with diverse student populations must consider how these practices and support systems are provided at either a district level or school level and how to create connections between all the beginning career teacher supports and Culturally Relevant practices aimed at meeting the needs of all learners (Wechsler, et. al., 2010; Pinto, et. al, 2012).

Principals must be purposefully engage with beginning career teachers directly through feedback loops focused on meeting the needs of all learners and providing an assets based environment where the school atmosphere has several support systems in place (i.e. PLC, colleague support, consistent mentor support)(Wood, 2005; Roehrig, 2008). The principals at each of the schools studied played a large role in the feelings of support the beginning career teachers felt. Knowing the large learning curve a beginning career teacher has in their first years of teaching, it is important for the principal to be both an emotional and professional support for beginning career teachers. The beginning career teacher attributed much of their growth and feelings of support to the ongoing feedback the principals provided them in scheduled rounding

discussions and ongoing observations of instruction, leading their schools in building an asset based environment, and leading local school professional development focused on Culturally Relevant Practices.

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure must be asset-based at the district and school level to best support beginning career teachers. Based on the findings, beginning career teachers feel supported and can grow as Culturally Relevant practitioners when there are multiple points of support throughout the diverse school they are working in. Pairing a PLC environment with an asset-based approach, creates a positive environment where beginning career teachers look at challenges as opportunities to learn and improve their own instruction aimed at meeting the needs of all learners. The PLC structure must include a time and a place for beginning career teachers to feel safe in asking for help and support of meeting the needs of the students and parents within their classroom.

Mentors in diverse school environments must not only support beginning career teachers in the routines and procedures of teaching, but more importantly work with beginning career teachers in building strategies focused on meeting the needs of all students (Achinstein, et. al, 2008; Ferguson, 2003). The strategies must be clearly communicated with beginning career teachers followed up by ongoing discussions centered on assessing if the strategies are effective in meeting the needs of all learners.

Schools must account for variability among mentors in providing support centered on Culturally Relevant practices to beginning career teachers by providing clear direction for principals in selecting mentors. Knowing the mentor typically has the most time involved with the beginning career teacher it is important for diverse school districts to ensure the mentors are chosen based on their own ability to meet the needs of all learners using Culturally Relevant

practices. Mentors must also have ongoing professional development on strategies to support beginning career teachers working in diverse school environments. The Yorkville School District provided a mentor to beginning career teachers in their first year in the school district. The mentor was typically on the same PLC team as the beginning career teacher. The mentor and beginning career teacher met at least once week with discussion focused on meeting the needs of all learners through planning and instructional strategies.

Professional development for beginning career teachers must focus on growth as Culturally Relevant practitioners (Wood, 2005). The professional development deemed most effective by beginning career teachers in this study were local school opportunities such as book studies, peer observations, and collaborating within a PLC structure. The district level professional development was mentioned as a guide to them, but the local school professional development had more impact on them because it connected to the actual diversity within their schools and the conversations could be a lot more personal and focused on the actual students in their class or school. Based on this finding, school districts must look to align the district level professional development focused on general understandings of Culturally Relevant practices aimed at meeting the needs of all learners to the school level professional development directly connected to the classrooms the beginning career teacher is working to ensure the professional development is purposeful and meaningful.

Reciprocal Growth Model of Teacher Development

Much of the findings in this study were focused on how the beginning career teachers felt the practices and structures provided by their principals, mentors, and colleagues were important factors as the beginning career teachers grew in their abilities to meet the needs of all learners.

As stated in the previous section focused on practice implications, it is important for the principals, mentors, and colleagues of beginning career teachers to see the importance of creating an environment of focused support for beginning career teachers in diverse school environments where explicit connections are made between classroom experience, district level professional development, and school level professional development.

When considering the findings of this study a new theory of practice began to emerge in my reflection focused on the strengths of the structures and practices highlighted in Yorkville. The *Reciprocal Growth Model of Teacher Development* is defined by a school district and school providing the structures and practices focused on creating an environment of support for beginning career teachers by building on the assets of beginning career teachers, mentors, teacher colleagues, principals, and district administrators. In previous chapters, principals, beginning career teachers, and mentors all discussed the desire to create a more differentiated approach to supporting beginning career teachers working in diverse school settings. Through ongoing, two-way discussions between principals, beginning career teachers, mentors the *Reciprocal Growth Model of Teacher Development* allows for flexible development opportunities building on the strengths of the all participants, especially the beginning career teacher.

Much of the literature, and admittedly in this study, approach the support of beginning career teachers in diverse school environments with a deficit perception of beginning career teachers as blank slates, or with very limited skills in meeting the needs of all learners. In analyzing the data, to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners school districts and schools must provide a *Reciprocal Growth Model of Teacher Development* where practices and supports are not only focused on helping beginning career teachers improve

areas in need of growth, but also build upon the strengths beginning career teachers may hold. Those strengths could span many areas, including bringing new strategies or perspectives learned through their work in their pre-service learning to their diverse school setting.

To provide a *Reciprocal Growth Model of Teacher Development*, a school district and school must see the support of a beginning career teacher as a two way, asset-based reciprocal process between the beginning career teacher, mentor, colleagues, and principal. The learning opportunities provided at the district or school level, should be in connection with specific discussions among principal, mentor, colleagues, and beginning career teacher where the beginning career teacher feels supported in providing instruction meeting the needs of diverse learners, but also must feel they have ideas and practices that may contribute to the growth of each participant leading to a diverse school better meeting the needs of all learners.

In creating a *Reciprocal Growth Model of Teacher Development*, a school district creates a support system focused on growth for all in providing an aligned system of professional development connected to an overall vision and mission focused on meeting the needs of all students. The model puts a high priority on creating a professional learning community among principals, mentors, colleagues, and beginning career teachers working in diverse schools learning from one another while supporting the unique needs of a beginning career teacher as they strive to meet the needs of all learners.

Instead of “inducting” a beginning career teacher into an organization by molding them to fit the already established culture of the school district or school, a beginning career teacher is invited into a Professional Learning Organization viewed as an asset to the organization in order to better meet the needs of diverse learners. This “invitation” includes district level professional development focused on meeting the needs of diverse learners paired with shared conversations

with mentors, principals, and colleagues. The conversations are not just connected to the professional development opportunities by themselves, but are explicitly connected to classroom practices which are then discussed with the principal, mentor, and beginning career teacher emphasizing the growth and strengths the beginning career teacher is showing in meeting the needs of all learners in a diverse school.

Limitations

The research study had limitations leading to the possibility of more research questions related to supporting beginning career teachers in diverse school settings. The small sample size of schools and participants limited the case study. Including more schools and school districts would lead to more implications for practice, the ability to provide a more in depth picture to transfer the findings, and provide a higher level of validity to the findings. A school district or school looking for a better way to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students may be able to use some of the findings and implications for practice, but due to the sample size may not see the study findings as completely founded or transferable due to their specific context and needs in working with a diverse student population. The study was also limited by only including those beginning career teachers still at both schools. Including beginning career teachers that may have left the schools prior to the study could have allowed different perspectives to inform the findings of the study and bring a deeper level of understanding on what worked and what did not work in the support of them.

Finally, the length of the study limited the findings the study. If the study was done over a two-year period, it would allow for a deeper understanding of what support strategies for beginning career teachers had long lasting effects on their ability to meet the needs of all students.

Following the beginning career teachers longer than their initial year could also inform the researcher on how long support structures should be in place for beginning career teachers.

Implications for Further Research

Keeping in mind the limitations of the study, further research questions become clear. Further research questions this researcher would include are: (1) How should school districts provide collaborative professional development focused on supporting beginning career teachers becoming Culturally Relevant Practitioners at the school level in order to support the district level mission and vision? (2) How do school districts grow school principals' ability to support beginning career teachers in becoming Culturally Relevant Practitioners? (3) How long should school districts provide formal support structures for beginning career teacher in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom?

(1) How should school districts provide collaborative professional development focused on supporting beginning career teachers becoming Culturally Relevant Practitioners at the school level in order to support the district level mission and vision? The beginning career teachers, mentors, and principals discussed the importance of learning alongside colleagues in their own schools was for beginning career teachers as they grew as Culturally Relevant practitioners.

(2) How do school districts grow school principals' ability to support beginning career teachers in becoming Culturally Relevant Practitioners? The principals at the Casper and Schroeder Elementary schools were both highly involved in the support of beginning career teachers at both schools and were credited by both beginning career teachers and mentors with a lot of the growth of beginning teachers as Culturally Relevant practitioners. Further study in this

area, may inform school districts on what is effective in guiding school principals in good practices of supporting beginning career teachers in becoming Culturally Relevant teachers

(3) How long should school districts provide formal support structures for beginning career teacher in meeting the needs of a diverse classroom? The mentors in this study were assigned to a beginning career teacher for one year, and then the mentors were assigned to a new teacher for the upcoming school year. The initial professional development opportunities were offered to beginning career teachers for their first year, too. Knowing beginning career teachers have many concepts they are learning when it comes to their first year in teaching in a diverse learning environment, it is be important to carry support for them past their first year of teaching. There is a fair amount of research concerning the length of time a mentor should be assigned to a beginning teacher (Glazerman, et.al., 2010), but it may be important to research the most effective amount of time support should be focused on beginning career teachers.

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Appendix A: Site Selection Protocol

This protocol is to be used to ensure the site selected for the study meet the criteria set for the study. The first section is a table to ensure the sites chosen meet a majority of the academic achievement criteria set for the study, where the group described must score at or above the state average of the same group or subgroup in four of the last five years in math and reading state tests. The second table focuses on the demographic data the school district must fit within to be considered for this research study. The third table centers on the use of language consistent with the tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.

Academic Achievement Criteria

	Math	Reading
Over a 2-4 year period all Students are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.		
Over a 2-4 year period students of Color are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math		

<p>and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.</p>		
<p>Over a 2-4 year period students considered Economically Disadvantaged are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.</p>		
<p>Over a 2-4 year period English Language Learners are at or above the state average or have shown growth in math and reading state standardized tests or other standardized measure.</p>		

Percentage of Specific Subgroups	Yes	No
School District and School serves at least 25% Students of Color		
School District and School serves at least 30% Students considered Economically Disadvantaged		
School District and School serves at least 5% English Language Learners		

Commitment to Meeting the Needs of All Learners Criteria

	Yes	No
Mission/Vision Statement of School District focuses on all students		

District Strategic Plan/Goals specifically focus on all students experiencing academic success.		
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Appendix B: Artifact Review Protocol

Possible Sources of Evidence	Assessing the Focus on Diversity and Equity	Notes
Website District Handbooks Mission/Vision Statements Strategic Plan Beginning Teacher Handbook Meeting Agendas Assessments of the Program Mentor Job Descriptions District Data	(Foundational Aspects focused on Diversity) Mission/Vision Statements Address Diversity and Equity and are visible Goal Statements in Handbooks address Diversity and Equity Assessment of the program addresses Diversity and Equity	
School Report Cards Goals/Priority Statements of Induction Programming Mentor Observation Protocols Formative Assessment Documents of Beginning Career Teachers	(Structural Aspects focused on Diversity) Mentor Job Description Addresses Diversity and Equity Professional Development/Meeting Agendas address Diversity and Equity	
	(Instructional Aspects focused on Diversity) Formative Assessments of Beginning Teachers address Diversity and Equity	

	<p>(Culturally Relevant Student Success)</p> <p>Evidence of learning outcomes of all students experiencing academic success and educational equity</p>	
	<p>(Culturally Relevant Cultural Competence)</p> <p>Pictures of Students representative of the demographics</p> <p>Multiple Languages Represented in district documents and/or artifacts</p>	
	<p>(Culturally Relevant and Critical Consciousness)</p> <p>Unit/Lesson Plan Organizers showing a connection between prior knowledge and new knowledge.</p>	

Appendix C: School Administrator Interview

The following interview protocol will be used with school administrators (principals, directors, superintendents) working with beginning career teachers as a part of the beginning career teacher support program. The interview is a semi-structured interview with one guiding question, with follow-up questions and clarifying questions expected to be a part of each interview. Possible follow up questions are listed after the structured guiding question are listed.

The purpose of the interview is to address the research question related to this study:

In school districts that are “successful” with diverse learners, what structures, programs, and practices provide support to beginning career teachers that prepares them to educate diverse learners?

Set Up Questions

What is your position in the school district?

How long have you been in this position?

Tell me about your experience and educational background as it pertains to working in a diverse school setting.

Primary Guiding Question

How do you support beginning career teachers in your district/school to be successful with diverse student populations?

Possible Follow-Up Questions

Describe the attributes of the induction program guiding beginning career teachers to be successful teachers in a diverse classroom.

What does it mean to you for a teacher to “meet the needs of *all* learners”? (CRP)

What assets do beginning career teachers bring into the profession, and how do you build upon those in your support of beginning career teachers?

Explain how the district mission/vision statement is connected to the structure of the induction program.

Describe how you use the demographics of the school district to drive what that means for instruction and support of beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. (CRP)

Describe the components of the beginning teacher support program from your district you feel most help beginning career teachers improve as teachers in a diverse school setting. (CRP)

Explain the challenges you are still finding with supporting beginning career teachers in teaching in a diverse school setting. (CRP)

What areas or supports could be improved within the induction program as it pertains to meeting the needs of students in diverse classrooms? (CRP)

Tell me how you have supported beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. Explain how you assessed whether or not the support was effective. (CRP)

Tell me how you have supported mentors/instructional coaches in supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. (CRP)

Explain how you have supported fellow administrators in supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners. (CRP)

How did fellow administrators or supervisors support you as an educational leader? Did you feel the support was sufficient given your needs as a supervisor of beginning career teachers in a diverse setting? (CRP)

Outside of the formal induction support components, tell me about other supports you felt helped you in improving your ability to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners. (CRP)

Is there anything else you would like to share concerning activities or experiences within your induction program as it pertains to your support beginning career teachers and their ability to meet the needs of all learners? (CRP)

What questions or concerns do you still have around supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners? (CRP)

Appendix D: Beginning Career Teacher Interview

The following interview protocol will be used with beginning career teachers between their first and third year of teaching. The interview is a semi-structured interview with guiding questions, but follow-up questions and clarifying questions are expected to be a part of each interview.

The purpose of the interview is to address the research question related to this study:

In school districts that are “successful” with diverse learners, what structures, programs, and practices provide support to beginning career teachers that prepares them to educate diverse learners?

Set Up Questions

What is your position in the school district?

How long have you been in the school district?

Tell me about your experience and educational background as it pertains to being a teacher in a diverse school setting.

Primary Guiding Question

How have you been supported as a beginning career teacher in guiding a diverse student population to success?

Possible Follow up Questions

Tell me about the most influential person, practice, or structure that supported you as a beginning career teacher working with diverse students.

Describe the attributes you believe you have gained to be a successful teacher in a diverse classroom.

What does it mean to you as a teacher to “meet the needs of *all* learners”? (CRP)

Describe how you learned of the cultural backgrounds of your students. (CRP)

What personal strengths or assets do you possess as it pertains to being a teacher in a diverse school setting? How did your induction program build upon those strengths?

Explain the challenges you are still finding with teaching in a diverse school setting. What support are you searching for to help with this challenge? (CRP)

Tell me how your mentor or other staff member(s) supported you as a beginning career teacher.

How did your principal or supervisor support you as a beginning career teacher in a diverse setting? (CRP)

Outside of the formal induction support components, tell me about other supports you felt helped you in improving your ability to meet the needs of all students. (CRP)

Explain how the induction program may have helped build your capacity to support your students in becoming positive advocates and leaders in their community. (CRP)

Is there anything else you would like to share concerning activities or experiences within your induction program as it pertains to your ability to meet the needs of all learners? (CRP)

What questions or concerns do you still have around meeting the needs of all learners?

Appendix E: Mentor Interview

The following interview protocol will be used with mentors working with beginning career teachers as a part of the beginning career teacher support program. The interview is a semi-structured interview with guiding questions, but follow-up questions and clarifying questions are expected to be a part of each interview.

The purpose of the interview is to address the research question related to this study:

In school districts that are “successful” with diverse learners, what structures, programs, and practices provide support to beginning career teachers that prepares them to educate diverse learners?

Set Up Questions

What is your position in the school district?

How long have you been in that position?

Tell me about your experience and educational background as it pertains to working in a diverse school setting.

Describe the attributes of a successful teacher in a diverse classroom. (CRP)

Primary Guiding Question

How do you support beginning career teachers in your district/school to be successful with diverse student populations?

Possible Follow-Up Questions

How were you selected to be a mentor or instructional coach supporting beginning career teachers?

What does it mean to you for a teacher to “meet the needs of *all* learners”? (CRP)

Describe how you came to understand the demographics of the school district and what that means for instruction and support of beginning career teachers. (CRP)

Describe the components of the induction program from your district you feel most help beginning career teachers improve as teachers in a diverse school setting. (CRP)

Describe how you came to know the strengths and weaknesses of the beginning teacher(s) you work with.

How did you go about building upon the strengths of the teacher(s) you were working with?

Explain the challenges you are still finding with supporting beginning career teachers in teaching in a diverse school setting. (CRP)

Tell me how you supported beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of diverse learners.

How did principals or supervisors support you as a mentor or instructional coach? Did you feel the support was sufficient given your needs as a mentor for beginning career teachers in a diverse setting? (CRP)

Outside of the formal induction support components, tell me about other supports you felt helped you in improving your ability to meet the needs of beginning career teachers. (CRP)

Is there anything else you would like to share concerning activities or experiences within your induction program as it pertains to your support beginning career teachers and their ability to meet the needs of all learners? (CRP)

What questions or concerns do you still have around supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all learners? (CRP)

Appendix F: Beginning Teacher Support Survey

You are invited to participate in a research study about the methods by which the beginning teacher support program (teacher induction program) supports the growth of beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

This survey contains 31 questions and should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey results are anonymous. No one from your school or district will be able to see your responses.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you begin participating and change your mind, you may end your participation at any time without penalty. By clicking YES, you are indicating that you have read this consent form, and voluntarily consent to participate. Would you like to continue?

Please select the job description that best fits your current position:

Teacher

Mentor/Instructional Coach

District Level Administrator (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director)

School Level Administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal)

Years of Experience in Your Current Position

0-3

4-7

8-11

12-15

15+

Years of Experience in the field of Education

0-3

4-7

8-11

12-15

15+

Please rate the statements below based on the following scale

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral: Neither Agree or Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

Not Sure/Does Not Apply

Understanding of Goals, Roles, and Responsibilities

The school district strongly supports my growth in understanding how to meet the needs of all students in a diverse school setting. (SCRIP)

The school district supports my growth in understanding the specific academic and social diversity brought to the classroom each school day. (SCRP)

The goals set for our beginning teacher support program are clear and understood by all stakeholders (administration, teachers, and mentors). (FCRP)

I understand my role and responsibilities within the beginning teacher support program. (FCRP)

I understand who I need to turn to in order to receive guidance in how I can support or be supported by the appropriate staff member within the structure of the beginning teacher support program. (FCRP)

School and Community Context and Demographics

The context and demographics of our school community is a strong consideration in our beginning teacher support program for beginning career teachers. (ICRP)

The beginning teacher support program is tailored to meet the specific and unique needs of the students in our school community (ICRP)

The beginning teacher support program has a focus on the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school (ICRP)

I have a good understanding of the academic achievement outcomes of the students in our school district and how specific demographic groups (race, gender, socioeconomic status, language status) are performing. (ICRP)

Beginning Teacher Support and Professional Development

Beginning teachers are provided with effective professional development surrounding the topic of diverse classrooms. (SCRP)

There is a clear connection between our district level professional development and initiatives focusing on meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school.

(FCRP)

I am given professional development opportunities allowing for me to understand the importance of cultural competence (ability to effectively interact with people of different backgrounds) and the role it plays in long-term success for students. (SCRIP)

The beginning teacher support program focuses just as much of the strengths/assets beginning teachers bring to the profession as it does on the weaknesses of the beginning career teachers.

(ICRP)

Culturally Relevant Aspects

The beginning teacher support program guides beginning career teachers in understanding the importance of recognizing the cultural background of my students and using the understanding to tailor my instruction to meet the unique needs of my students. (ICRP)

The beginning career teacher support program supports beginning career teachers in helping all students find a voice and be an active participant in their own education. (ICRP)

The leaders (administration, mentors, and coordinators) encourage the beginning career teachers to guide students in seeing a clear connection between what the students are doing in the classroom and how those same skills are important in life inside and outside of school. (ICRP)

Beginning career teachers are encouraged to guide students in becoming active in the school community. (ICRP)

The beginning career teacher support program guides new teachers in understanding the importance of creating connections with parents of the children in their class in an effort to better understand the children in their class. (ICRP)

The assets/strengths a diverse group of students bring into a classroom are recognized and there is an emphasis on how important it is for educators to recognize and honor those assets. (ICRP)

Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to create connections with parents of diverse backgrounds. (ICRP)

Beginning career teachers are given concrete and specific examples of how to integrate the diverse backgrounds of students into learning activities and daily routines. (ICRP)

Administrative Support

The principal cares about and understands how to support beginning career teachers in developing as teachers who meet the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of the students in our school (FCRP)

Principals are actively involved in supporting mentors and beginning career teachers by providing access to the appropriate professional development opportunities needed to support growth in effectively teach a diverse classroom of students. (FCRP)

The superintendent and director/coordinator of the beginning teacher support program place a high priority on supporting beginning career teachers in meeting the cultural, linguistic, and academic needs of all students. (FCRP)

Mentor/Coach Support

The selection of mentors is driven by a strengths-based approach where mentors are selected based on their ability to support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students. (SCRIP)

The mentors working with beginning career teachers are providing consistent support focused on creating equitable outcomes among diverse groups of students. (ICRP)

The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to seek out the professional development needed to better support beginning career teachers in meeting the needs of all students. (ICRP)

The mentors working with beginning career teachers are encouraged to continue building their own ability to use instructional practices meet the needs of all students. (SCRP)

Beginning career teachers and mentors are given time to explore how their own cultural background informs and influences their instruction. (ICRP)

Overall Perceptions of Beginning Teacher Support Program

I see a direct connection between the support provided in our beginning career teacher support program and the specific mission, vision, and academic data of our school district. (FCRP)

I feel the beginning teacher support program is/was an effective support in my growth and understanding of how to meet the needs of all students. (ICRP)

Written Response

Please share any other thoughts you have on the beginning teacher support program as it relates to meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

Appendix G: Observation Protocol

Location of Meeting/Event/Activity:

Date:

Length of Meeting:

Description:

Appendix H: Research Participant and Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Supporting Beginning General Education Teachers in Meeting the Needs of a Diverse Classroom: A Study of Induction Practices

Principal Investigator: Bruce King (phone: 608-263-4769) (email: mbking1@wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Christopher J. Sadler (email: csadler2@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about how school districts that are successful with diverse learners provide structures, programs, and practices providing support to beginning career teachers preparing them to educate diverse learners.

You have been asked to participate because you are a school leader, mentor, or beginning career teacher directly and indirectly involved in the support systems in place for beginning career teachers in your school.

The purpose of the research is to learn how school districts and schools finding success with diverse student populations support beginning career teachers through formal and informal structures and practices.

This study will include district administrators, school level administrators, teacher mentors, and beginning career teachers working in schools finding success with diverse student populations.

The research conducted will take place in the schools and offices where the subjects work.

Audiotapes will be made of your interviews only. The principal investigator and the university student researcher will be the only people hearing the audio recordings of interviews. The tapes will be destroyed immediately after transcription. Transcriptions of the audiotapes will be kept for seven years with the primary investigator and student investigator being the only people with access to the transcriptions.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to participate in an interview and survey regarding your role in providing support for beginning career teachers in working in diverse school settings. The interviews will be semi-structured, meaning the interview will include specific guiding questions, and questions that will be come up as a result of answers to the guiding questions. The interviews will last approximately 30-45 minutes.

You may also be a part of observations of meetings or other activities that are within the focus of this research study.

Your participation will last a total of approximately 60-90 minutes between completing the survey and interview.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

There is a risk of a confidentiality breach where the information gained through the electronic survey, interviews, or observations could be unintentionally shared, seen, or heard by people other than the researchers. See below for how the researchers are taking steps to protect your confidentiality.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There are no direct benefits to you. There will be indirect benefits to those who participate in that the study results can inform the school district and school on assessing the effectiveness of the support systems in place for beginning career teachers in your school/school district.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used in any publication. The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. You may be quoted directly without the use of your name to protect your confidentiality. Research records will be kept in a locked file at the Primary Investigator's office; only the researchers will have access to the records. The audio files of the interviews will be destroyed after the file has been transcribed. Any electronic files, such as the data from the survey, will be saved within a secure University of Wisconsin server with only the researchers having access to the passwords needed to access the files.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Bruce King at 608-263-4769. You may also email the student researcher, Christopher J. Sadler at csadler2@wisc.edu

If you are not satisfied with response of research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on your employment nor involve any other penalties.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature

Date