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Trusted Professionals: Research on How Induction Mentors Help Novice Teachers Learn to Problem Solve

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This article describes the benefits of extending the mentoring relationship beyond student teaching into induction years. Couple the demands placed on beginning teachers with a lack of support at the district level and it is understandable why so many young teachers leave the profession. This multi-case study of 65 first-year teachers and 12 college supervisors highlights the power of mentor continuity in supporting new teachers and helping them become more independent problem-solvers. Findings reveal the benefits of college supervisors continuing to work with their student teachers into their first year, as they are able to leverage the trust that already exists from student teaching and use their prior knowledge to maintain novice's growth trajectories.

Keywords: Induction, problem-solving, continuity, growth

Introduction

For decades, researchers have highlighted the challenges that new teachers face during the first years of teaching. Beginning teachers enter the teaching profession feeling underprepared, overwhelmed, and unsupported, which leads to frustration, stress and burnout after only a few years in the classroom. In particular, new teachers face many problems related to both instruction (e.g., engagement and management) and other contextual factors (e.g., professional interactions with colleagues and administrators) that they do not know how to solve on their own (Goff et al., 2020). This is one of the common issues that contributes to new teachers leaving the profession.

Many states face teacher shortages, particularly in hard-to-staff schools and programs serving high-need or marginalized students (McPherson, et al., 2025; Nelson, 2004; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). Although mentoring programs for early-career teachers are becoming more common, rising attrition rates suggest these efforts fall short (Buchanan et al., 2013). Up to 50% of new teachers leave within five years, often due to inadequate support during the induction period (Hafner & Owings, 1999; Helms-Lorenz et al, 2016; Huling-Austin, 1990; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ronfeldt & McQueen, 2017). While many districts require mentors for new teachers, there is little guidance on mentor qualifications, training, or the structure of support. Mentors are frequently untrained, in different buildings or subject areas, and the mentoring often consists of minimal, informal interactions (Brondyk, 2021; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In an effort to address these high attrition rates (Achinstein et al., 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011), this study explored the benefits of the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) extending support for teacher graduates through the first year in the classroom, highlighting the benefits of utilizing these "trusted professionals" to support and retain new teachers.

Literature Review

Problem-solving is foundational to effective teaching, involving the identification of challenges and the implementation of effective solutions. For novice teachers, this skill is still developing and is shaped by personal factors (Jones, 2008), preservice preparation, clinical experiences, and mentoring. Many new teachers feel unprepared for the unpredictable, context-specific challenges they face (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Goff et al., 2020; Voss & Post, 1988), including instructional issues like differentiation (Bailey, 2022; Beck et al., 2020), content knowledge (Taplin, 1998), classroom management (Gu & Day, 2020; Pillen et al., 2013), and stakeholder relationships (Borko & Livingston, 1989).

Problem-solving in teaching is iterative and context-driven, influenced by beliefs and prior experience (Loughran, 2006; Schön, 1983). New teachers often rely on trial-and-error strategies (Miller et al., 2021), short-term solutions (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), or scripted methods from teacher education (Grossman et al., 2000). With experience and reflection, they begin to adapt and develop more effective approaches (Bergmark & Areskoug Josefsson, 2019). Structured reflection through writing or video analysis (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Larrivee, 2000), collaboration (Goff et al., 2020), and data-informed decision-making (Hunzicker, 2020) can accelerate this development.

Several factors influence new teachers' problem-solving growth. Effective preservice programs integrate case studies, micro-teaching, and practical experience (Darling-Hammond, 2006), and explicitly teach coping strategies (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). Self-efficacy also plays a role, as confidence correlates with persistence

in solving problems (Heikonen, 2017; Krug et al., 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Supportive school environments that foster collaboration and experimentation further enhance these skills (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Mentoring is particularly critical. "Educative mentoring" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) supports immediate needs while guiding long-term development through individualized, scaffolded support (Irby, 2014; Brondyk, 2024). This often involves analyzing teaching artifacts and discussing classroom dilemmas. Research shows that effective mentoring, specific feedback, and reflective tools like journals improve new teachers' problem-solving abilities (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Nesje & Lejonberg, 2022; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Ukrop et al., 2018).

Literature Review

The conceptual framework for this study was based on John Dewey's (1938) idea that learning is a result of disequilibrium, which is a disruption in the natural flow of things. As learners move from experience to experience, disequilibrium occurs when something jolts them out of their complacency. It is in these moments that genuine learning occurs. Piaget (1936) suggested this happens when people cannot fit new ideas into their existing schema or understanding of things, so it causes them to pause and re-consider things in a new way.

The first year of teaching is fraught with moments of disequilibrium (Cook, 2009; Wall, 2021). It is in these growth-producing moments of "disequilibrium" that mentors can create teachable moments in which to provide learning opportunities, as new teachers are more receptive to problem-solving, to learning, to figuring out what they don't know and how to move forward. How new teachers manage and are supported in these moments can make the difference between whether they stay in the profession or leave (Hong, 2012).

In this study, we looked at those moments of challenge and ways that our university-based mentors helped their first-year teachers turn stressful, challenging situations into opportunities for growth and, in particular, how they helped them become more independent problem-solvers.

Methodology

The central research question of this study was: To what extent and how do early-career teachers benefit from continued support from their EPP college supervisor? In order to examine this, we designed a multi-case study to analyze the learning opportunities provided to first-year teachers by their EPP college supervisors. The analytic processes common to case study research— considering theoretical propositions and writing case descriptions—permitted us to use disequilibrium as a theoretical framework for analyzing the first-year teachers' ability to problem-solve (Yin, 1994).

Participants

The context for this study was a small liberal arts college in the Midwest that graduates approximately 100 undergraduates each year. The mentors in this study were twelve college supervisors who were former teachers/administrators that were selected based on their extensive mentoring experience and diverse areas of specialization. They received intensive mentor training during annual retreats and monthly meetings. Each supervisor mentored recent graduates whom they had supervised during student teaching.

Table
Participants

Year	Mentors	First-Year Teachers	Time Requirements
1	4	11	Minimum of 16 sessions over 1 year
2	7	17	Minimum of 8 sessions over 1 semester
3	12	38	Minimum of 8 sessions over 1 semester

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were collected, allowing us to corroborate facts. This involved interviewing college supervisors and beginning teachers, watching video excerpts of mentoring sessions, and reviewing surveys and mentoring documents like field notes, teacher reflections, and mentor meetings. Data were collected from 175+ mentoring sessions which were recorded using GoReact and transcribed. Two interviews were subsequently conducted with each mentor and teacher using semi-structured interview protocols. These multiple sources allowed us to corroborate facts. Finally, retention rates for all these first-year teachers were collected.

Data Analysis

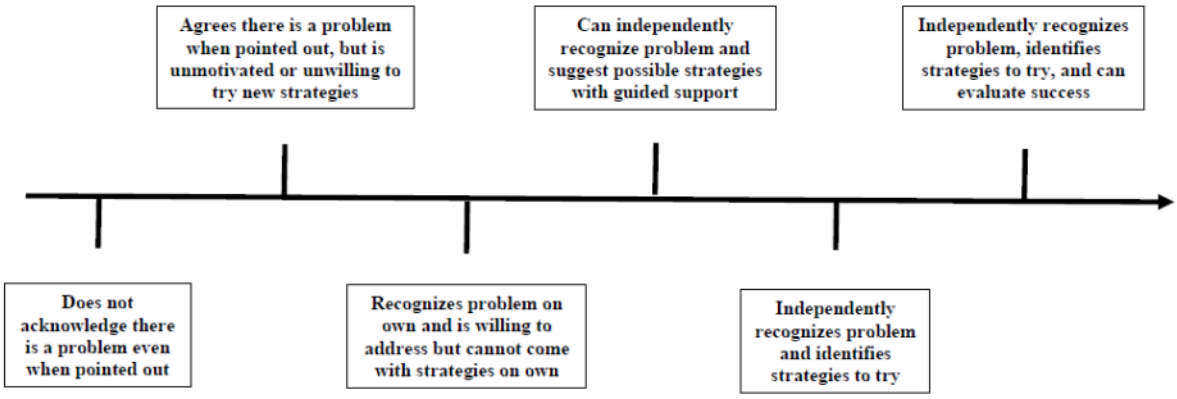
Data analysis occurred in multiple phases. Initially, cases were analyzed separately. Field notes and interview video recordings were transcribed and coded with codes developed from literature representing key words and phrases that relate to the research questions: developmental learning, teacher efficacy/confidence, mentoring (language and tools), challenges (e.g., student behavior), and problem-solving. Coding helped to organize data and look for patterns.

Next, each case was written and described based on emerging themes. Yin (2003) refers to this analytic technique as explanation building, because it uses narrative descriptions to explain phenomena and to look for causal links. Specifically, the problems faced by the first-year teachers were identified and described using Dewey's ideas around disequilibrium to catalog the nature of the problems, the teachers' attitudes, and their ideas about how to solve them. For each of these problems, the mentoring moves were analyzed to look for themes. Cases were checked by the mentors as a way to verify accuracy. One case was chosen as a way to describe mentors as trusted professionals and the role they play in helping beginning teachers learn to problem-solve more independently.

Results

As is to be expected, the beginning teachers in this study were faced with challenges during their first year in the classroom which they were able to work through with their university-based mentors. As a way to analyze their growth, problem-solving was used as an observable outcome. It readily became apparent that each beginning teacher was at a different place in their ability to problem-solve which then required their mentor to respond accordingly. Figure 1 shows the range of problem-solving abilities, from those who were totally stuck or resistant to those who could problem-solve on their own.

Figure 1
Problem-Solving Continuum



Findings reveal that the problems faced by the first-year teachers in this study fell into different categories, many of which were only tangentially related to teaching: Parental conflicts, issues with co-workers and administrators, navigating protective service situations and student behaviors. As a way to better understand the relationship between first teachers' developing ability to problem-solve and the mentoring provided by their continuing, university-based mentor, one first-year teacher, Grace, was studied in depth.

Discussion

As an undergraduate, Grace double majored in elementary education and special education emotional impairments. Grace felt called to be a teacher in high school when she had the opportunity to assist in a 2nd grade classroom. Fairly early into her teacher preparation program, Grace demonstrated strengths in her relational abilities and a desire to build meaningful connections with all students. Her commitment to her students continued into student teaching, where Grace grew to be a skillful instructor in the 1st grade classroom. The following fall, Grace accepted a 3rd grade position at an elementary school in the same district. The school was quite diverse with a minority student enrollment of 83% and 81% economically disadvantaged students. Grace explained to Lisa during an early mentoring session that she enjoyed the teaching staff and appreciated the principal's efforts to create a positive culture in the building.

Lisa was an experienced teacher and early childhood administrator before she began supervising student teachers in 2016. Lisa

supervised Grace during her 16-week student teaching semester, evaluating her instructional skills and facilitating conversations with Grace and her cooperating teacher. As Grace transitioned into her own classroom, Lisa's role shifted to an induction mentor, visiting Grace's classroom approximately twice a month

As Grace transitioned from her internship to her first year of independent teaching, Lisa suspected that she might struggle to support the challenging needs in her classroom, given the student population, and she would need to work collaboratively with building colleagues and mentors to support her students both academically and behaviorally. Lisa was confident that Grace could handle the position, as she proved to be organized and well-prepared during student teaching. These qualities, along with her ability to connect with students, gave Lisa confidence that Grace would do well with the transition.

Problem: Student Behavior

During her first year in the classroom, Grace faced a number of significant issues. Two growth areas were identified by her induction mentor early in the school year, after she gained a better understanding of the context: 1) Grace needed to understand the availability and process for specialist (Tier 2 and 3) academic and behavior supports and 2) meeting the needs of individual students with in-class (Tier 1 and 2) academic and behavior strategies. Study data corroborated that identifying, requesting and implementing appropriate academic and behavior supports posed the great challenges for Grace during her first year in the profession.

Helping Grace Problem-Solve

August 10

As a trained special education teacher, Grace wanted to review information about her students prior to the school year. As a new teacher, she did not understand school systems and had to rely on Lisa to find out where to go and who to ask. Grace also wanted help setting up her room in ways that would be welcoming and conducive to learning. Lisa served as a thought partner for Grace as they walked around and brainstormed how to organize the space. Grace contributed her ideas and asked good questions. Grace's attitude was very confident and excited.

August 18

Grace had never planned a parent open house before so she relied on Lisa to help her decide what should be included. As they talked through each element, Lisa shared her reasoning about what she thought should be covered. Lisa encouraged Grace to make a video, the contents of which they went over. During this meeting, Grace and Lisa discussed the fact they were still trying to find the transition information on students. Having none, they brainstormed some new behavior strategies to try. Lisa primarily led this conversation with Grace interjecting ideas she had learned from her teacher preparation program. Grace's attitude remained very confident and excited.

September 14

Now that school had started, Grace was able to identify at least three students who might exhibit challenging behaviors. However, she still did not have any transition information about these students. Lisa suggested that Grace meet with the principal and together they prepared for that meeting in which Grace would ask to see their files. Grace was feeling exhausted and overwhelmed because she did not feel that she had the information necessary to support her students. She relied on Lisa for advice and reassurance.

September 19

From her meeting with the principal, Grace learned that there was no data collection process in place meaning that there was no transition data available. The principal suggested that Grace call the parents or speak with the other teachers to help her better understand the students. Grace was very disappointed after her meeting with the principal but was trying to remain positive. Lisa helped by acknowledging some small successes that Grace was having with her new behavior strategies (e.g., band on chair, quiet ball game).

October 4

Now knowing that there was little student information available from the school, Grace relied heavily on Lisa to talk through plans for individual students. During this mentor session, Lisa discussed Mandated Reporting for one student and showed her how to file a report on a student who bit Grace, since there was not much administrative support after the incident. Grace exhibited some frustration at the lack of building support, but was trying to stay positive. She was again leaning on Lisa for ideas.

October 19

Grace was coming to realize that she might not be able to handle some of the extreme behaviors in her class on her own. She was uncertain about how to proceed and looked to Lisa to come up with next steps (e.g., meeting with the special education teacher to coordinate and then inviting her to parent/teacher conferences; inviting ASD consultant to observe). Grace continued to be frustrated by the lack of district support.

November 11

Grace continued to pull in outside supports for her students at Lisa's suggestion. Since their last meeting, Grace had spoken to the principal, recruited her mother as reading support for one student, scheduled the consultant to come observe, recruited the school psychologist to pull a small group of students to work on behaviors, and spoke with parents at conferences (the special education teacher was unavailable to join the conversation). As usual, at the end of each

mentoring session, Lisa gave Grace tangible steps to take to make progress. Grace continued to be frustrated by the lack of support, but was trying to remain optimistic.

December 9

The extreme behaviors continued, including Grace being hit by a student multiple times. He was suspended for half a day but there was no change or increase in support. Lisa suggested that Grace speak with the principal to ask about the plan and timeline for this student, as he was scaring other children in the classroom. They discussed involving the union representative if things did not improve. "Exasperated" was the word used by Lisa to describe Grace's attitude at this point.

January 11

Grace was still trying to get supports in place for her most challenging students. This involved showing data to the principal and working with the behavior interventionist. Lisa continued to coach Grace about advocating for more support. She also tried to keep Grace positive by pointing out things that are going well (e.g., student seeming more engaged in writing). Grace continued to be frustrated but is a bit more positive than the last visit.

February 7

Grace continued to contact outside help, but met many challenges: the assistant coming to help in the classroom fell and broke her arm, the behavior specialist's help was inconsistent, an ASD consultant observed, but didn't provide any tangible help, Grace no longer met with the special education teacher because the meetings were not productive, the school psychologist went on maternity leave, etc. Despite these, Grace looked physically better than the last mentor session and was "in a better place" according to Lisa. (Lisa recording document, 2/7)

March 1 and 2

Lisa provided classroom support by managing students during instructional time. The next day, Grace talked about her continuing struggle with behaviors. Of note, Grace had to initiate a Protective Services investigation on a student with bruises. Lisa's notes indicated that Grace "has done a fabulous job. She has expectations in the classroom, and most children are doing well. It has been great to watch their progress. She is remaining positive and has invested every bit of energy she has in this classroom." (Lisa recording document, 3/1 and 3/2)

March 30

The parent of a student died unexpectedly. Grace not only had to help the child as she grieved but also coach the other students about how to treat the student when she returned. It was clear that the school did not have a crisis plan in place, so Lisa had to suggest ways to help. Although Grace was seeing progress in some children, many continued to struggle with behavior issues. One student who has missed a lot of class was being very defiant and manipulative. Grace felt stuck as to how to proceed so Lisa brainstormed ways to motivate him. They also discussed writing referrals for other students due to their lack of academic progress. Grace was ready for Spring Break but was pleased about a few successes.

April 20

Grace was still having issues with her most aggressive student and needed to have a difficult conversation with the special education teacher. Lisa helped her prepare for this. Lisa also suggested making a chart to present to the team showing what was going well for this student, where he struggled, and possible next steps. There were some "wins" since break. One student who has missed a lot of school has been getting his work done and Grace was generally pleased to see a rise in some of their math scores. Grace's attitude was much more positive, as she was grateful for her students' successes.

May 16

Grace had some unsuccessful meetings and was frustrated that the plan she had created was not being followed. Grace was very disappointed by the lack of support from the special education teacher in particular and expressed that she hoped this child would work with a different special education teacher next year.

June 7

In their final mentor meeting, Grace and Lisa discussed some disappointing news regarding some of Grace's most challenging students. They also talked about students' summer plans as Grace was concerned that they might lose some of their momentum.

Grace's Ability to Problem-Solve

Generally, Grace displayed a positive attitude toward her continued mentoring relationship with Lisa. She typically approached their sessions professionally, wanting to learn more and seemed to benefit from feedback. She always came prepared with questions and then used the time together to reflect, problem-solve and actually take next steps (e.g., writing emails to appropriate people). Lisa confirmed in her interview that Grace, from the beginning, was very open and receptive to mentoring.

Due to her background in special education emotional impairments, Grace initially approached her students' behavioral issues with confidence. In terms of the continuum (Figure 1), she started at "Can independently recognize problem and suggest possible strategies with guided support" because she was able to identify students who might exhibit challenging behaviors and make suggestions. She did confide in Lisa that despite having some ideas, she was concerned about voicing them as she did not want to appear like a

know-it-all in front of her new peers.

As time went on and Grace witnessed the extreme behaviors of some of her students, in addition to realizing that the school did not have the necessary records or supports in place, her confidence began to wane. On the continuum, we see her move to "Recognizes problem on own and is willing to address but cannot come with strategies on own" as she became unsure about how to proceed. It was at this point that Grace began leaning heavily on Lisa for information, ideas to try and ways to communicate with other professionals about the situation.

Toward the end of the school year, Grace began moving toward being more confident and independent in her problem-solving abilities. She was approaching "Independently recognizes problem and identifies strategies to try" as she felt like she had some systems in place, knew of both internal and external resources to use, and saw some student successes. When a new student was added late in the year, Grace was better able to put supports in place. She also took it upon herself to hold transition meetings for students who were moving on from her classroom.

Teacher Retention

Grace faced some extreme behaviors and a lack of support during this first year. Despite these, Lisa reported that she ended the year on a positive note and will be returning the following year. In her Recording Document from May 16, Lisa described that Grace feels "called to stay in this position." Grace's decision to continue teaching is indicative of the results from the 65 first-year teachers in this study. Table 2 shows that 93.8% of the teachers who received continued mentoring remained in the field after their first year as compared to the national average.

Table 2

National Average: First-Year Teacher Retention Rates

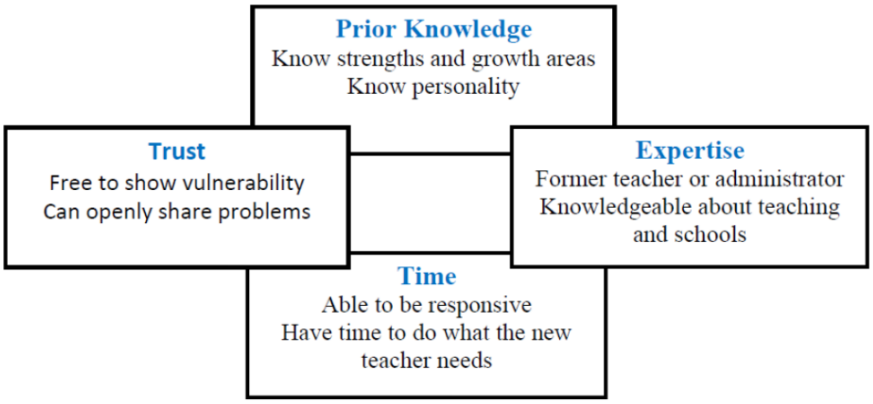
Year	Total FY Teachers	Still Teaching	Retention Rate
Year 1	10	9	90.00%
Year 2	17	16	94.12%
Year 3	38	36	94.74%
Total	65	61	93.85%

Discussion

During the first year of teaching, problems naturally arise. Many of these are not directly related to teaching. As we saw in the Grace's case, the majority of challenges were related to tangential, external factors like student behavior and the lack of systemic support. Beginning teachers don't know how to navigate these obstacles and vary in their ability to recognize and problem-solve solutions. These moments of disequilibrium (Dewey, 1938) caused Grace's confidence to waiver. While Grace started out confident in her abilities, she quickly realized that she would need help asking the right questions and finding external supports. Compounding this is the fact that new teachers want to be seen as professionals in their buildings and are therefore reluctant to ask for help. Showing vulnerability might be seen as a weakness to their peers and administrators. When Grace began, she had some ideas about how to manage students' behavior but was reluctant to speak up for fear of coming across as a know-it-all. Lisa initially gave her the confidence needed to share her ideas with the team. As time went on, Lisa's assistance shifted to helping her navigate the system and communicate with external resources in a professional manner.

When they can't solve problems on their own, new teachers can become defeated and give up. Trusted Professionals are uniquely positioned to help assist new teachers in learning to become more independent problem-solvers as they have qualities different from school-based mentors. We propose that university-based mentors offer a solution to this problem and can contribute to the retention of new teachers. In particular, they have the ability to help them problem-solve situations that arise because of the unique qualities that they possess (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Qualities of University-based Mentors as Trusted Professionals



While it is not uncommon to find each of these qualities in mentors, we found that the combination of qualities is what makes university-based mentors uniquely qualified to help new teachers learn to problem-solve, allowing them to overcome roadblocks that could discourage and keep them from becoming discouraged and leaving the profession. Lisa clearly exhibited each of these qualities.

Trust

Trust exists between the beginning teacher and university-based supervisor due to their previous experiences during student teaching. This can be a very stressful time for beginning teachers when they feel vulnerable as they invariably make mistakes. As they assume more responsibility for the classroom – moving toward more independence -- they are supported by more knowledgeable others in the form of their college supervisor and their cooperating teacher. Their supervisors work closely with them for 16 weeks and, therefore, know their strengths and growth areas. Because of this history, the beginning teachers feel comfortable with them, as they have proven to be trusted allies.

When Grace broke down three weeks into the school year, this illustrated her trust in Lisa. Grace was able to express her vulnerability because she knew that Lisa was a "safe" person for her to express her uncertainly of not knowing how to deal with some extreme student behaviors. One of the challenges for new teachers is balancing the tension between being a young professional in a new setting and still learning how to navigate the system and to do what's best for her students.

Prior Knowledge

After working with their beginning teachers for at least a semester, and sometimes longer if they had class together, the college supervisor knows the beginning teacher well. This involves understanding who they are as a person, including their personality, life experiences and the way they handle stress. They also know their professional strengths and growth areas, having used the program's assessment tool to document and track development during student teaching. The supervisor goes into induction mentoring with data that allows them to provide targeted support.

Lisa knew Grace to be a competent educator with good instincts so when she saw her confidence waning or exhaustion setting in, she used her mentoring skills to encourage her. We saw this at the beginning of the year when Grace doubted whether she should seek help by reporting students. Lisa reassured her that she was doing the right thing and encouraged her to go with her instincts since they have proven to be accurate in the past. We saw this again later in the year when Grace became discouraged. Lisa knew Grace to be very empathetic and caring toward her students, which was driving Grace's need to get them the help that they needed. Lisa knew Grace well enough to see the exhaustion that was beginning to replace her earlier optimism. Lisa once again shifted the focus of her mentoring by helping Grace see beyond the frustration to all of the successes.

Time

Most supervisors are former teachers or administrators who no longer have classroom responsibilities. As such, their schedules are more flexible allowing them to visit their beginning teachers when needed. This might involve spending a concentrated amount of time to work on a particular element of teaching (e.g. implementing small groups), helping at a regularly-scheduled time or gathering resources or planning outside

school hours. Unlike building mentors, who have their own classroom responsibilities, university-based mentors can be responsive to beginning teachers' needs.

Grace was assigned a building mentor who had the classroom next door. As a busy teacher herself it was challenging to find a time to meet. It wasn't until mid- to late-September before they were able to connect in a mentoring capacity. In contrast, Lisa, had time before school started (8/10 and 8/18) to help Grace set up her classroom and plan for her parent meeting whereas a district mentor might not be working in early August and would need to set up her own classroom. Grace could have brought in a friend or family member to help set up her room, but they may know have had knowledge of instructional spaces. On another occasion (September 19) Lisa was able to spend an hour and 45 minutes during the school day helping Grace debrief and plan so that she can see some progress and not get too discouraged.

Expertise

One of the most important qualities of a trusted professional is that they have P-12 school experience either as school administrators, classroom teachers or both and as such, they understand the realities of the classroom. This includes first-hand knowledge of district and school contexts, cultures, logistics and policies, in addition to an innate understanding of teaching and all it entails. This allows them to help beginning teachers navigate things like difficult conversations with other professionals, classroom challenges, implementing progressive pedagogies in ways that a parent or friend could not.

We saw multiple examples of Lisa using her expertise to guide Grace. As someone with extensive knowledge of the P-12 referral system, Lisa was able to give Grace concrete steps to take in order to advocate for her students. Drawing from her previous experience as an administrator, Lisa immediately recognized that Grace had not been given any transition information for the struggling students. If Grace had received the documentation prior to the start of school, she could have reviewed the data and the previous plans. Instead, she was struggling to understand her students' needs and enlist support while also managing the rest of her classroom responsibilities. Together they created a plan to enlist more support. This included preparing for professional conversations, mapping out management strategies for the most difficult parts of Grace's day, selecting appropriate incentives for positive student behaviors, and identifying times to begin collecting data on the students with the highest-needs. At the conclusion of the mentoring session, Grace's outlook had improved as she felt better have a plan in place.

The Value of Trusted Professionals

Trust and Expertise

In order to improve their practice, beginning teachers need a safe person to be vulnerable with, but that person also needs to know something about teaching. The new teacher needs to be able to share problems and brainstorm options with someone who has the expertise to help. Our college supervisors, who all have considerable teaching and administrative experience, have already-established close relationships with their new teachers. We saw numerous examples where the new teacher felt comfortable (even early in the year) sharing challenges and getting timely advice about what to do next. Lisa and Grace were able to make so much progress because of their established relationship. Rather than spending multiple sessions building trust or getting to know one another, Lisa was immediately able to recognize the exhaustion on Grace's face and Grace trusted Lisa enough to be transparent with her struggles. Grace was able to place her trust in Lisa, not only because she is a confident, one step removed from the school community, but also because she is a respected professional with years of experience in education.

Beginning teachers often have other people in their lives who are trusted advisors, people with whom they can share their successes and vulnerabilities. But often these supporters do not have experience with or understand the world of education. This limits the extent to which they can help, as their supports tends to lean toward cheerleading since they are not able to offer tangible ways to solve issues or improve practice. College supervisors, on the other hand, have established trust with the beginning teacher while also having the ability to offer teaching-specific help that will help move the new teacher develop their practice.

Expertise and Time. Induction mentors are typically fellow teachers in the building. They have the necessary P-12 experience to help their beginning teacher but often not the time. As teachers with full-time teaching responsibilities, the new teacher only gets a certain amount of their time and their advice/assistance is not always timely. Trusted professionals have the dedicated time to mentor in addition to the P-12 teaching/administrative experience to be helpful. We saw this when Lisa came in to help Grace with running records.

In many states, districts are required to provide new teachers with a mentor. As fellow educators, these building mentors have knowledge of both teaching and that particular district and, as such, are positioned to assist beginning teachers with everything from understanding the culture of the building to working on growth areas. Unfortunately, building mentors don't often have the time required to support new teachers as they have classrooms or building obligations of their own. This limits the extent to which they can observe and co-plan and makes it almost impossible for them to get into beginning teachers' classrooms on a regular basis or for long periods of time. Trusted professionals have both the time and experience that allows

them to help beginning teachers in real time by being flexible enough to be there when and how they are most needed.

Trust and Prior Knowledge

In traditional induction mentoring pairs, it takes time for the mentor to get to know the beginning teacher both as a person and as an emerging teacher. Building this relationship and trust is further complicated because the mentor is a peer in their building with whom the new teacher may feel uncomfortable showing weaknesses. Trusted Professionals already know the strengths and weaknesses of their new teachers so there is nothing to hide. The beginning teacher is free from the beginning to be vulnerable because they already know one another. While a newly assigned mentor may have been taken aback and even concerned by Grace's emotion, Lisa possessed significant prior knowledge of Grace's capabilities. She was confident in Grace's potential success, and did not hesitate before reassuring Grace that they would find ways to respond to these challenges. Other mentors were able to make connections between the first-year teacher's classroom challenge and prior learning from their education courses.

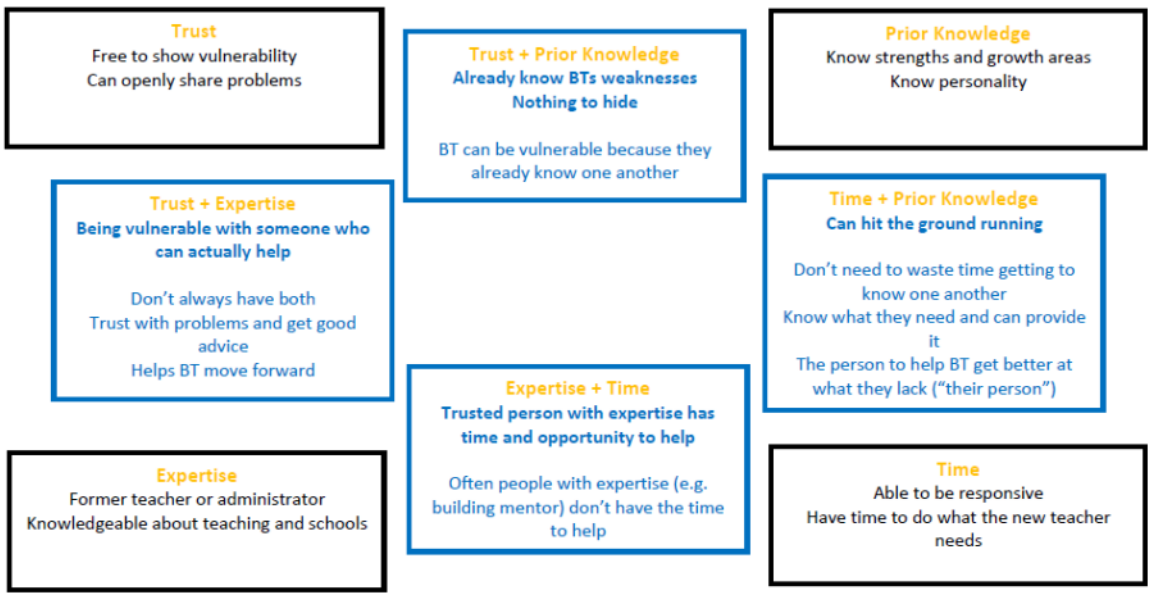
The first years of teaching are a vulnerable time as beginning teachers are expected to be accomplished professionals who can effectively teach, but are, in reality, still learning to teach. Trusted professionals already know their beginning teachers' weaknesses and have gained their trust during previous mentoring experiences in which the supervisor supported the new teacher. Because of this combination of established trust and prior knowledge of strengths and weaknesses, the beginning teachers have nothing to hide from their supervisors. Instead, they are free to show their vulnerability, ask for help and actively work to improve.

Time and Prior Knowledge

It takes time for mentors to get to know their mentees. This can be especially slow in P-12 buildings where the mentor is a busy teacher with a class of their own. Trusted professionals are able to hit the ground running because they didn't need to "waste time" getting to know one another. Instead, they already know what the new teachers need and have the time (because they are not a currently-practicing teacher) and they know how to approach the student teacher (i.e. how to direct to be). Lisa already knows how to approach the Grace so she recognized that her tears were unusual, she took notice, knew something was amiss and reacted accordingly.

Due to the fact that Trusted professionals already know their beginning teachers, both as people and as learners, they can hit the ground running. They don't need to spend weeks getting to know one another, so supervisors can use the time effectively right from the beginning, including

Figure 3
Trusted Professional



focusing on growth areas. In this way, supervisors become the person who knows the needs of the beginning teacher and has the time to help.

Conclusion

This study offers one possible solution to the current teacher shortage by introducing a more effective approach to induction mentoring, one that reduces the demands on K-12 schools, while increasing the skills and confidence of beginning teachers that will lead to their retention.
College supervisors are perfectly positioned as trusted professionals to provide this type of support, as they already know their beginning teacher. With previously established trust and goals, pairs can dive right into mentoring sessions. As seasoned educators, themselves, these mentors are also able to help their new teachers learn ways to work professionally within the education system to problem-solve and advocate for their students.

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