

Fall 9-2017

Teacher Perceptions on the Utilization of School-Based Mentoring as a Targeted Intervention for Secondary Students Identified as At-Risk

Allison Bradley
Lynn University

Wilnic Gideon
Lynn University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://spiral.lynn.edu/etds>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bradley, Allison and Gideon, Wilnic, "Teacher Perceptions on the Utilization of School-Based Mentoring as a Targeted Intervention for Secondary Students Identified as At-Risk" (2017). *Student Theses, Dissertations and Projects*. 6.
<http://spiral.lynn.edu/etds/6>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by SPIRAL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Theses, Dissertations and Projects by an authorized administrator of SPIRAL. For more information, please contact liadarola@lynn.edu.

Teacher Perceptions on the Utilization of School-Based Mentoring as a Targeted Intervention for
Secondary Students Identified as At-Risk

By
Allison Bradley
&
Wilnic Gideon

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
Of the Lynn University of Boca Raton Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership
And in the Ross College of Education of Lynn University

Boca Raton, Florida

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have on students identified as at-risk. Participants included a total of fourteen secondary teachers with previous school-based mentoring experience at secondary schools located in the southeastern United States. The study was conducted in two phases and the data analyses included transcriptions from audio-taped interviews and statistical analyses from a qualitative questionnaire. The findings of the study indicated secondary students identified as at-risk participating in a school-based mentoring program may improve academically and socially when mentors and mentees build positive relationships; when the mentors hold the mentees accountable; and when the mentors help the mentees to develop self-confidence at school. The findings also indicated mentors believe an effective school-based mentoring program should include the incorporation of standardized procedures for all mentors participating in the program and the importance of providing resources, training and support in order to improve the skills of a teacher serving as a mentor for a student identified as at-risk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the individuals who have mostly influenced me throughout this incredible journey. To begin, I would like to thank my Mom and Dad, who have always taught me to follow my heart and to follow my dreams. Without their unyielding support, I would not be the person and educator I am today. I would also like to thank my twin sister Emily and my brother-in-law Phil for always offering their words of encouragement whenever they knew I needed it. A special thanks to my best friend Gwendolyn Kendricks, who has cheered me on every step of the way and who always advised me “to push past go.” I thank her for the many valuable lessons she has taught me along the way as these lessons have made me a better person and a better educator—I will carry these life lessons with me forever. To my very first teachers, the Sisters of Mercy from my elementary school, thank you for instilling in me the importance of using my time and my talents to serve others. It was at St. Joan of Arc God called me to the vocation of education from the time I was a young girl. To Dr. Geoffrey McKee, who opened many doors of opportunity for me as a teacher and as an assistant principal. It is because of him I learned what it truly means to be a servant leader. I would also like to recognize and thank Dr. Suzanne King, our dissertation Chair; she has been an incredible mentor to me and she is undoubtedly one of the best leaders I have ever had the privilege to work with and learn from. Additionally, a heartfelt thanks to Drs. Kline, Burlison and Lesh for their countless edits and their honest feedback--completing this journey would not have been possible without their presence on our committee. Finally, I would like to thank my “critical friend” and dissertation partner, Wilnic Gideon. I am thankful our shared passion for helping students at-risk made us decide to embark on this journey together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee chair Dr. Suzanne King, who has helped us champion through this dissertation since day one. I would also like to acknowledge the committee members Dr. Kline and Dr. Burlison who have challenged us to produce the best work possible. I would also like to recognize Dr. Lesh who really pushed us to work above and beyond our abilities. Additionally, I want to acknowledge my family who has been supportive of me throughout my journey—through the challenges, though the obstacles and with a lack of time during this process, I thank you for your continuous support until the end. Lastly, I have to acknowledge my dissertation partner Allison Bradley, I am extremely happy that I was able to complete this dissertation with you. We started our program together now we will finish our dissertation together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	6
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION....	8
Background	10
Rationale.....	11
Statement of the Problem	11
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Questions	13
Significance of the Study	13
Theoretical Framework	13
Limitations	14
Definition of Terms	14
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE	17
A Nation <i>Still</i> At-Risk	19
Current Legislation	20
Dropping Out of High School	22
Identifying Students Placed “At-Risk”	26
The History of Youth Mentoring	34
Types of Mentoring	35
Types of Mentoring Programs	35

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	36
Introduction.....	36
Philosophical Perspectives.....	36
Research Design	38
Qualitative Questions	38
Qualitative Instrument.....	39
Procedures	40
Data Analysis	43
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS	45
Introduction	45
Organization of Findings.....	46
Participants	46
Data Collection.....	47
Phase One Findings & Outcomes.....	49
Phase Two Findings & Outcomes.....	50
Summary.....	57
CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS	59
Summary	59
Discussion of Findings	60
Limitations.....	61
Recommendations.....	63
Conclusion.....	65
REFERENCES	66

APPENDIX A	73
APPENDIX B	74
APPENDIX C	75
APPENDIX D	76
APPENDIX E	77
APPENDIX F	78

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law (Bell & Meinelt, 2011). With this legislation, the United States endeavored to respond to the concerns addressed from the Nation at Risk (1983) report roughly three decades erstwhile by incorporating accountability mandates focused on “improving the educational outcomes for *all* students” (Bell & Meinelt, 2011). In order to accomplish this goal of meeting the needs of all students, the NCLB Act (2002) determined “standardized tests would be the vessel used to assess the entire student population in order to ensure schools as a whole would move towards proficiency” (Bell & Meinelt, 2011). Once this legislation outlined its key goals in meeting the needs of all students, the NCLB Act (2002) identified how it would measure its goals, with great emphases on provisions identifying “certain at-risk student subgroups” in order to hold schools more accountable (Bell & Meinelt, 2011). According to Bell and Meinelt (2011), students who were mostly at-risk of not earning a high school diploma under NCLB (2002) were disaggregated into the following student subgroups: economically disadvantaged students; students from major racial and ethnic groups; students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and students with limited English proficiency (Bell & Meinelt, 2011).

Currently, public schools are transitioning from NCLB (2002) to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). According to Zinskie and Rea (2016), “the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which becomes operational in the 2017–2018 school year, may enhance the capacity of educators to help students and schools at-risk of underperforming (Zinskie & Rea, 2016). According to ESSA (2015), students placed at risk for academic failure need special assistance

and support to help them succeed in school, and ESSA(2015) provides new opportunities for educators to address these student's needs (Zinskie & Rea, 2016). ESSA (2015) broadens the definition of success beyond only performance on standardized assessments (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). As with NCLB (2002), ESSA (2015) requires that progress toward meeting or exceeding standards must be assessed for all students including identified subgroups of students who have disabilities, are economically disadvantaged, have limited English language proficiency, and belong to a major racial/ethnic group (Zinskie & Rea, 2016). These four subgroups have historically been underserved by schools and are most likely to need special assistance and support; the data for these student subgroups will continue to be disaggregated for data reporting and accountability purposes (Zinskie & Rea, 2016). Although ESSA (2015) contains numerous references to an "activity, strategy, or intervention" no definition is provided regarding these actions or materials designed to improve outcomes (Zinskie & Rea, 2016). To realize the promise of ESSA (2015) and help students and schools at-risk of underperforming, educators will need to become proficient in finding, evaluating, and applying evidence-based research for school improvement (Zinskie & Rea, 2016).

For schools serving secondary students identified as at-risk under the tenets of ESSA (2015), school-based mentoring programs may be considered as a strategy or an intervention used to improve the educational outcomes for students identified as at-risk. According to Gordon et al (2013), "In an effort to increase students' success, schools and communities have begun to develop school-based mentoring programs (SBM) to foster positive outcomes for children and adolescents" (Gordon et al, 2013, p.227). More and more, mentoring programs are asked to serve higher-risk youth because with the right kinds of support, these young people could put themselves on a path toward bright, productive futures, and make vital contributions to

their families, neighborhoods and nation (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013, p.2). Recent research into school-based mentoring outcomes indicates these programs can achieve the following: improve academic performance; improve the quality of classwork; increase the number of homework and in-class assignments turned in; reduce serious school infractions, such as disciplinary referrals, fighting, and suspensions; increase students' perceptions of scholastic competence; and reduce skipping classes (Gorden et al, 2013, p.228). Student graduation from high school with a regular high school diploma is an important indicator of school success and one of the most significant indicators of student college and career readiness (DOE, 2017, p.4) Provisions under ESSA (2015) coupled with targeted interventions for students identified as at-risk may help to bridge the achievement gap by promoting post-secondary opportunities for *every* student.

Background of the Problem

Mentoring programs for youth are commonplace in today's society with more than 5,000 such programs in the United States serving an estimated three million young people (Dubois et al, 2011). According to Dubois et al (2011), "Mentoring has been widely used as an intervention strategy for policy and practice, including education, juvenile justice, and public spheres, yet questions still remain about their typical effectiveness as well as the conditions required for them to achieve optimal positive outcomes for participating youth" (Dubois, et al., 2011, p. 58). Currently, 70% percent of today's site based programs are in today's schools (Karcher et al, 2006, p. 711). There is no significant information on school-based mentoring programs using teachers as mentors and there is minimal evidence as to whether or not the mentors are adequately trained to serve as school-based mentors for students at-risk. As Lakind, Eddy and Zell (2014) stated, "Youth may derive more benefits from mentoring when their mentors are

better equipped to serve them” (Lakind et al, 2014). In order for a program to benefit students identified as at-risk, the mentors will require appropriate levels of training and ongoing support in order to mentor students exhibiting academic and behavioral risk factors.

Rationale

The majority of research on school-based mentoring (SBM) programs centers on site-based programs where people from the outside community volunteer as mentors (Karcher et al, 2006, p. 711). These particular site-based mentoring programs have challenges regarding recruitment, retention, and lack support and training for mentors who volunteer in school-based mentoring programs (Lakind, Eddy, and Zell, 2014). Educational leaders can utilize teachers as mentors as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk as opposed to using community volunteers to mentor students identified as at-risk. Educational leaders can then recruit teachers within the school-site and train the teachers to work with students identified as at-risk.

Problem Statement

Although there are many site-based mentoring programs taking place at the school site, there is minimal research examining the perceptions of teachers and their views regarding school-based mentoring as at targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have on students identified as at-risk. The researchers aimed to identify areas

of improvement to increase the overall quality of school-based mentoring programs for students identified as at-risk and the researchers may develop a handbook in the future.

Theoretical Framework

The Resiliency Theory is a multifaceted field of study addressed by social workers, psychologists, sociologists, educators and many others over the past few decades. The resilience theory addresses the strengths that people and systems demonstrate that enable them to rise above adversity (Jensen & Framer, 2006). As it relates to educators and public education, the resiliency theory serves as a framework to address the needs of students, particularly students facing a wide-range of risk factors hindering their ability to obtain academic and social success both at school and at home. As stated by Jensen and Framer (2006), “Children, youth, and families face enormous challenges in American society. At no time in the country’s history have young people and their parents been confronted simultaneously by such a wide array of positive and negative influences and opportunities” (Jensen & Framer, 2006). Jensen and Framer (2006) opine, “For some American children and youth, the path to adulthood is a journey filled with risk and uncertainty. Because of the adversities these young people face, the prospect of a successful future is often bleak” (Jensen & Framer, 2006). Since a students’ path to adulthood is a journey that unfolds throughout their compulsory education, this current study will consider the resiliency theory and its applicability for educators interested in designing programs to assist secondary students identified as at-risk. This current study considered the study of protective factors and its relation to youth at-risk. As defined by Farrington et al (2016), “a protective factor is a variable that interacts with a risk factor to nullify its effect, or alternatively a variable that predicts a low probability of offending among a group at risk” (Farrington et al., 2016, p. 64). For educators and policymakers interested in developing programs focused on

counteracting academic and behavioral issues exhibited by students identified as at-risk, this paradigm can be helpful. As Farrington et al (2016) says, “The basic idea of this paradigm is very simple: identify the key risk factors for offending and implement prevention methods designed to counteract them” (Farrington et al, 2016, p.64). Although this paradigm was mostly associated with the criminology movement of the 1990s, there are still tenets of this model that can be applied to a program focused on targeted interventions for students identified as at-risk. The current study considered both the resiliency theory and the protective factors model as frameworks for a school-based mentoring program for secondary students identified as at-risk.

Qualitative Research Questions

1. What are secondary teachers’ perceptions of the effect a school-based mentoring program has on student discipline, grade point averages, and graduation rates for students identified as at-risk?
2. What are the secondary teachers’ experiences participating in a school-based mentoring program?
3. What are secondary teachers’ beliefs on what can improve the overall skills of a teacher serving as a mentor?

Significance of Study

As it pertains to this research, not graduating from high school can have catastrophic outcomes not only on the individual student but also on the future of the United States. In 2014–15, the high school graduation rate reached a record high of 83 percent. Despite the gains, over half a million students still drop out of high school each year (US Department of Education, 2017). Public schools can implement targeted intervention programs such as providing students with a mentor at the school site in order to foster a school environment focused on meeting the

needs of all students. As stated by Cortina and Fazel (2015), “There are an increasing number of school-based interventions targeted at improving children’s well-being” (Cortina and Fazel, 2015). A safe and supportive school environment, coupled with supportive peers and families, is crucial in helping young people reach their developmental potential (Cortina and Fazel, 2015). While it might be difficult to intervene in some home environments, the school environment is one that can be more accessible for interventions to enhance children’s mental health and well-being” (Cortina and Fazel, 2015). This study aimed to examine the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have had on students identified as at-risk. This study was also focused on identifying areas of improvement in order to increase the quality of the mentors own experiences.

Limitations of the Study

The data compiled from this two-phase qualitative study only represented the perspectives of fourteen teachers from the southeastern United States. The semi-structured interview responses may have produced different themes if elementary school teachers were included in this study.

Inclusion Criterion

Only teachers who have participated in a school-based mentoring program at the secondary level in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States were selected to participate in this study.

Exclusion Criterion

Teachers who participated in a mentoring program at the elementary level and teachers who have been involved in mentoring programs in regions other than the southeastern United States were excluded from this study.

Definitions of Key Terms

At-risk- “At-risk” students are defined as those failing to achieve basic proficiency in key subjects or exhibiting behaviors that can lead to failure and/or dropping out of school (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017).

Dropout- Dropouts are students who have voluntarily removed themselves from the school system before graduation (FLDOE, 2017).

Early Warning System-Early warning systems use individual student data to generate indicators of on-track status for graduation, including attendance, behavior, and course performance (FLDOE, 2017).

Integrated Student Supports (ISS)- is an emerging field of practice that are best described as a school-based approach to promoting students’ academic achievement and educational attainment by coordinating a seamless system of wraparound supports at multiple levels that target academic and non-academic barriers to student learning (Child Trends, 2014).

Mentoring- Mentoring can be used as a dropout prevention strategy to provide high school students with supportive relationships from nonparent adults to address their academic and nonacademic needs.

School Based Mentoring (SBM) - Mentoring programs that are located in school settings (Gorden et al, 2013). High schools match at-risk students with adult volunteers from within the school (e.g., teachers, administrative staff) or outside the school (e.g., community volunteers).

Youth Mentoring- Youth mentoring refers to a relationship between youth—particularly those most at risk of experiencing negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood—and the adults who support and guide them (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.1)

Chapter II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A Nation *Still* At-Risk. In 1983, Terrell Bell, the Secretary of Education at the time, created a task force that would focus on highlighting the inequities within the United States public school system. Bell (1983) along with a diversified panel of educational stakeholders spent sixteen months examining the structure of the current educational system with the daunting endeavor of establishing a better future for the citizens of the United States. During this sixteen-month period, *The National Education of Excellence* panel examined curricula approaches, factors hindering educational achievement, the promotion of standards of excellence as well as the lack of preparation of our nations' teachers (Hayes, 2004, p. 4). At the conclusion of their concerted research, a report entitled *A Nation At-Risk* was formulated which transformed education in the United States indefinitely.

Hayes (2004) synthesizes the introductory portion of *A Nation At-Risk* (1983) in saying the overall premise of education in the United States should be “a discussion of the responsibilities of society to provide an excellent education to all children whatever their race, gender, or economic class may be and to prove that our schools are not meeting these challenges” (Hayes, p.22, 2004). At the summation of Hayes' (2004) discussion on this educational report, Hayes (2004) outlines many loopholes within the United States educational system and identifies some of the same loopholes still in existence decades thereafter. In addition to *A Nation At-Risk* (1983), Hayes (2004) also provides other key educational reports and documents from the eighties and early nineties that played a pivotal role in the educational reforms that pioneered the standards and accountability mandates that are currently in effect in today's 21st century classrooms. In 1983, Boyer's *The American Competitive Challenge: The*

Need for a Response opened the public's eye to the United States lack of preparation in dealing with globalization and the United States' rapidly changing economy. In 1986, *The Task Force on Teaching as a Profession* shed light on the importance of defining what constitutes highly effective teaching. Hayes (2004) concludes his overview with the capstone report entitled *America 2000: An Educational Strategy*, a report from 1989 that established long-term goals still in effect today (Hayes, 2004, p.41). In order to examine the barriers still impacting students placed at-risk, it is important to compare these established goals and their impact on educational reform initiatives today: All children will start school ready to learn; the high school graduation rate will increase 90 percent; all students in grades 4, 8, and 12 will demonstrate competency in English, math, science, civics and foreign language, economics, arts, history, and geography; US students will be first in math and science achievement; every adult will be literate; and every school in the US will be free of drugs and violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol (Hayes, 2004, p.42). The aforementioned "gaps" are still driving forces behind school accountability mandates and improvement initiatives throughout the United States.

Current Legislation. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) signed into law on December 10, 2015, reaffirmed the position of the United States Government's commitment to ensuring all students regardless of race, economic background, disability, or home language would receive equal opportunity (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The reauthorizations of ESEA, including ESSA, required greater accountability amongst educational institutions to serve all students by identifying schools and students in need of additional assistance and providing targeted interventions to support those students (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2016) report on the conditions of U.S. education demonstrated more must be done to close the gaps in academic performance, high

school graduation rates, and educational attainment between students of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Condition of Education report (2016) found there are still gaps between the “haves” and the “have nots” and it is up to our educational leaders, teachers, community members and staff members to establish interventions and partnerships to improve educational outcomes for all students.

Dropping Out of High School. The U. S. national high school graduation rate is at an all-time high, but one in five students still fails to earn a diploma on-time (Amos, 2016). If the high school graduation rate increased to 90 percent for just one cohort of students, the country would see a \$7.2 billion increase in annual earnings and \$1.1 billion increase in federal tax revenue (America’s Promise Alliance, 2016). There is an economic reason and an individualistic reason as to why it is important to increase the high school graduation rate (Child Trends, 2014). For future Americans without a diploma, the forthcoming career and economic opportunities are not promising. “Students who graduate from high school are more likely to be employed, make higher taxable income, and aid in job generation” (America’s Promise Alliance, 2016). “High school graduates are less likely to engage in criminal behavior or require social services” (America’s Promise Alliance, 2016). In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found in the 20 to 24-year-old age group the unemployment rate was 20 percent for students with less than a high school diploma. During the same year, the United States Census Bureau found 37.3 percent of students who had less than a high school diploma received governmental assistance such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, and housing assistance. As stated by Sum et al, (2009)“The incidence of institutionalization problems among young high school dropouts was more than 63 times higher than among four-year college graduates” (Sum, Khatiwada et al., 2009).

Although U.S. graduation rates were at 82% in 2014, there is still room for improvement. America's Promise Alliance (2016) goal is to increase the graduation rate to 90% by 2020, which is an additional 2,000,000 high school graduates (America's Promise Alliance, 2016). Increasing the graduation rate and educational attainment for students has a social and economic impact on the individual student and for the U.S. economy (America's Promise Alliance, 2016). Increasing the national high school graduation rate to 90 percent would likely create 65,150 new jobs, boost gross domestic product by \$11.5 billion annually, increase annual earnings by \$7.2 billion, increase annual spending by \$5.3 billion, and increase federal tax revenue by \$1.1 billion (Amos, 2016).

High School Dropouts and Impact on Crime and Cost. Belfield & Levin (2009), studied dropouts and the economic losses from juveniles in California. They estimated that “one new high school graduate generates savings of \$31,800 to the criminal justice system and reduces social and victim costs of crime by \$79,900” (Belfield & Levin, 2009). Those figures are similar across other states in the nation. Sum et al. (2009), found in their study the consequences of dropping out of high school resulted in \$292,000 in lower tax revenues, higher cash and in-kind transfer costs, and imposed incarceration costs relative to an average high school graduate for adults between the ages of 16 and 64” (Sum et al, 2009). Every years' class of dropouts will cost the country over \$200 billion during their lifetimes and the tax revenue lost for students 25 to 64 years of age will cost the United States \$944 billion dollars” (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, n.d.).

The impact of having a high school diploma also plays a role on the rate of pay for individuals (Center for Public Education, 2007). Thirty years ago, a high school dropout could still receive decent paying jobs to support family members (Center for Public Education, 2007).

For instance, between 1974 and 2004, “The annual earnings of families headed by a high school dropout declined by nearly one third” (Center for Public Education, 2007). In 2014, the National Center for Education Statistics (2014) found year-round workers between the ages of 25-34 with less than a high school diploma had an annual median salary of \$25,000, which was \$5,000 less than a student with a high school diploma and \$10,000 less than the income of a student with an associate’s degree. For young adults ages 25-34 who worked full time, year round higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings; this pattern was consistent from 2000 through 2014 (Kena et al., 2016). For women in the same age group, the median annual salary is far less, at almost a \$6,000 difference between males and females without a high school diploma (Kena et al., 2016). The annual median salary was \$19,900 for full-time female worker ages 25-34 without a high school diploma (Kena et al., 2016). In total, the National Center for Education Statistics published the Condition of Education (2016) report and determined the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor’s degree was 66 percent more than the median earnings of young adult high school graduates. The median earnings of high school graduates versus that of non-high school graduates were 20 percent higher (Kena et al., 2016). In 2015, “89 percent of students ages 20-24 with a bachelor’s degree or higher were employed compared to 51 percent of students who did not complete high school” (Kena et al., 2016).

Graduation by subgroups. The national graduation rate in 2014 was 82 percent and was the highest graduation rate to date; yet, there was a disparity in graduation rates for states and racial subgroups (Kena et al., 2016). Out of the 50 states, 16 had a graduation rate of less than 80 percent and two states had graduation rates of less than 70 percent (Kena et al., 2016). The Condition of Education (2016) report demonstrated there were five states where the graduation

gaps between White and Black students was over 20 percent (Kena et al., 2016). In general, certain racial groups showed better graduation rates than other racial groups, such as for White and Asian students (Kena et al., 2016). For instance, over 89 percent of Asian and 87 percent of White students graduated high school at a higher rate than their peers (Kena et al., 2016). The graduation rate for Hispanic/Latino students was 76 percent; the graduation rate for Black students was 73 percent; and American Indian/Alaska Native students had a graduation rate of 70 percent. The graduation gap was nearly 14 percent between Whites and Blacks and nearly 11 percent between Whites and Hispanics (Kena et al., 2016). There are sixteen states where less than 70 percent of Black students did not graduate high school (Kena et al., 2016). For Hispanic and Latino graduates, there were eleven states where the graduation rate was less than 70 percent in 2014 (Civic Enterprises & Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at John Hopkins, 2016).

The Condition of Education (2016) report also demonstrated there are graduation rate gaps between the rich and poor, between students with disabilities, and between English Language Learner (ELL) populations. Each of the mentioned subgroups demonstrated a significantly lower graduation rate. Low-income students' graduation rates were below 70 percent in 16 states; thirty-three states graduated less than 70 percent of students with disabilities, and six states graduated less than 50 percent; while ELL students graduated at a rate of less than 50 percent in 35 states (Civic Enterprises & Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at John Hopkins, 2016).

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) required further accountability for students identified as homeless. In 2014, reports stated there were 1.3 million homeless students identified (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2016). Ingram et al. (2016) conducted research

on five states and found the four-year graduation rate of homeless students from Colorado, Kansas, Washington State, and Wyoming were less than 55 percent in 2014. The difference between the graduation rates of all students in those states with homeless students was greater than 19 percent and the difference between graduation rates between economically disadvantaged students and homeless students was 10 percent or greater (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Attwell, 2016).

College Attainment. In order for the economy to prosper, more students would have to graduate high school and more students will have to graduate college (Kena et al., 2016). The argument would be the more college graduates the greater the economic impact would be for the United States. Of those seniors who graduated high school in 2014, “68 percent enrolled in college, 44 percent went to four-year institutions, while 25 percent went to two-year institutions” (Kena et al, 2016). Although the numbers represent progress for the American educational system, the National Center for Educational statistics showed in 2014 about 60 percent of students who began seeking a bachelor’s degree at a 4-year institution finished within six years and about 28 percent of students who began seeking an associate’s degree at a two-year institution completed their program within three years of starting the program. There was also a gap of 29 percentage points between high-income families and low-income families as roughly 81 percent of students in higher income families enrolled in college while only 52 percent of students in lower income families enrolled in a higher institution of learning (Kena et al., 2016). The rate of unemployment for 20 to 24 year olds in 2014 with a bachelor’s degree or higher was at five percent compared to 10 percent for students who had a college degree and 16 percent of those with only a high school diploma (Kena et al., 2016). The gap in educational attainment for White and Black students increased from 13 to 22 percentage points from 1995 to 2015 for 25

and 29 year olds who had a bachelor's degree and the White-Hispanic gap increased from 20 to 27 percent (Kena et al., 2016).

Achievement Gaps. Since 2013, there was not any significant gains or drops with regard to achievement in reading and math in the international assessments for the United States (Kena et al., 2016). On the 2012 PISA test for 15 year olds, 29 educational systems outscored America in mathematics literacy, 22 outscored America in science literacy, and 19 outscored America in reading literacy. In 2015, the National Center for Education Statistics (2015) found on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exam 36 percent of 4th graders, 34 percent of 8th graders, and 37 percent of 12th graders were proficient in reading. In math, only 40 percent of 4th-graders, 33 percent of 8th-graders and 25 percent of 12th-graders were proficient. “At grade four, the average 2015 reading scores for White (232), Black (206), Hispanic (208), and Asian/Pacific Islander students (239) were measurably different” (Kena et al., 2016). From 1992 through 2015, it has been a national goal to close the gaps in achievement (Kena et al., 2016).

Socioeconomics & Education. In 2014, approximately 20 percent of school-age children were in families living in poverty (Kena et al., 2016). Nationally, there are more than 15 states where the poverty rate is larger than the national average of 20 percent (Kena et al., 2016). Most of the states are in the southern portion of the United States such as Mississippi, where over 29 percent of their students live in poverty (Kena et al., 2016). Students experiencing poverty and or “homelessness struggle to stay in school, achieve academically, and have difficulty establishing meaningful relationships and connections” (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2016, p. 47). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) showed over the years the rates of poverty have increased for Black, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaskan Natives, two or more races, and Pacific Islander. The poverty rate for White and Asian populations have remained the same

at 12 percent from 2009 to 2014 (Kena et al., 2016). “Parent educational attainment and household poverty are associated with the quality of children’s educational experiences and their academic achievement, whether they are in public school, in private school, or being homeschooled” (Kena et al., 2016). Research suggests living in poverty during early childhood correlates to lower levels of academic performance, beginning in kindergarten and extending through elementary and high school (Kena et al., 2016). Research also suggests that there are “lower rates of high school completion” for economically disadvantaged students (Kena et al., 2016).

In 2014, about 38 percent of school-age children (ages 5 to 17) had parents whose highest level of educational attainment was a bachelor’s degree or higher (Kena et al., 2016). Thirty percent of those students’ parents had a high school diploma or less while 62% had an associate’s degree or less (Kena et al., 2016). Demographically, 49 percent of white students in the year 2014 (5 to 17) age group had parents who graduated with a bachelor’s degree or higher (Kena et al., 2016). Sixty-four percent of Asian students in the same age group had parents graduate with a bachelor’s degree or higher, while only 24 percent of black students and 17 percent of Hispanic students ages 5 to 17 had a parent who graduated with a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2014 (Kena et al., 2016). More than half of school-aged children do not have parents who completed an associate’s degree or higher (Kena et al., 2016). Parents have a profound impact on their children’s educational experience and their academic achievement (Kena et al., 2016). Research from the NCES (2016) shows a clear gap in opportunity, achievement, and educational attainment amongst various subgroups in the United States educational system (Kena et al, 2016). Some factors impacting the aforementioned inequities are parental educational attainment and socioeconomic factors (Kena et al, 2016). Every student who does not graduate is

impacted individually and this influences the progress of the American society economically (America's Promise Alliance, 2016). Some of the targeted supports at the student level include providing health services, mental health services, mentoring, tutoring, and extended learning opportunities (Child Trends, 2014).

Profile of Student At-Risk

According to Vang (2005), "Researchers have found that at-risk students come from every part of the community and have varied needs" (Vang, 2005, p.10). Although there are an array of definitions as it relates to the identification of students placed at-risk, Vang (2005) offers five different approaches when considering secondary students more than likely than their peers to drop out of school. The five different approaches are as follows (Vang, 2005, p.10):

1. In the achievement approach, an at-risk student is one with two or more failing semester course grades.
2. In the age approach, an at-risk student is one who is 2 or more years older than grade-level peers are.
3. In the attendance approach, a student is at-risk who misses more than 20% of required classes.
4. In the discipline approach, an at-risk student is one with one or more school suspensions.
5. In the transiency approach, a student who moves three or more times in one school year is at-risk.

Youth Mentoring

Historical Trends. According to Fernandez-Alcantara (2017), "Youth mentoring refers to a relationship between youth—particularly those most at risk of experiencing negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood—and the adults who support and guide them" (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.1). Historically, "The origin of the modern youth mentoring concept is credited to the efforts of charity groups that formed during the Progressive era of the early 1900s to provide practical assistance to poor and juvenile justice-involved youth, including help with

finding employment” (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.2). According to Miller (2016), “The first mentoring program, *Big Brothers/Big Sisters* emerged at the beginning of the 20th century in New York” (2016, p.4). Miller (2016) accredits Ernest K. Coulter, who served in the first Children’s Court in New York, as the pioneer of youth mentoring because “he felt that the lack and concern shown for children in sending them to the harsh reformatory school contributed significantly to the high rates of recidivism” (Miller, 2016, p.4). Miller (2016) goes on to explain the call to action by Ernest K. Coulter to “civic leaders, middle-class businessmen and professionals” providing the following excerpt from Coulter’s speech regarding the “plight of one young offender” (Miller, 2016, p.4):

There is only one possible way to save that youngster, and that is to have some earnest, true man volunteer to be his big brother, to look after him, help him to do right, make the little chap feel that there is at least one human being in this great city who takes a personal interest in him; who cares whether he lives or dies” (Miller, 2016, p.4).

In conjunction with the Big Brothers movement of 1904, another charity group emerged and was entitled *Ladies of Charity* (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, n.d.) This initiative also sought to provide support to vulnerable youth. According to the *Big Brothers Big Sisters of America* (n.d.), “This group befriended girls who had come through the New York Children’s Court and the group would later become *Catholic Big Sisters* (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, n.d.). As a result, these two movements, which focused on “helping kids stay out of trouble,” the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was founded in order to meet the needs of youth calling for “caring role models in their lives” (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, n.d.). Although BBBS “continues today as the oldest mentoring organization in the country” there are other historical movements responsible for “the contemporary mentoring movement” focused on assisting

“vulnerable youth” in the United States (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.2). According to Miller (2016), “In the 1970s, “mentoring was viewed as an effective way to boost the achievement of women in corporations” and this movement helped to cultivate an industry of ‘how to’ manuals and seminars with the goal of incorporating mentoring programs for minority employees” (Miller, 2016, p.5). A decade later, Miller (2016) attributes the success of the contemporary mentor movement to the nation’s focus on assisting “disadvantaged and at-risk youth” as a result of a report entitled *A Nation at Risk* (1983) produced by the National Center of Educational Excellence (2016, p.5). Miller (2016) goes on to provide other key “milestones” positively impacting the contemporary mentor movement in the United States. Some of these key milestones include the following support from prominent politicians and national organizations (Miller, 2016, p.5):

- 1989: President Bush endorsed mentoring on a television commercial;
- 1990: the United Way of America and the National Education Association announced their support of mentoring;
- 1994: The Office of Juvenile Justice launched the Juvenile Mentoring Program;
- 1997: The President’s Summit for America’s Future announced that every child in America should have access to an ‘ongoing relationship with a caring adult mentor, tutor, or coach; and
- 2001: President George W. Bush backed a big expansion of Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

In addition to the aforementioned chronological history highlighting the key trailblazers regarding the youth mentoring movement, Karcher et al (2006) attributes “Popular national initiatives, such as America’s Promise, and federal legislation promoting mentoring, including

the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act, which provides funding for the Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program, as other important initiatives for the foundation of the youth mentoring movement and its current impact on society today. As Karcher et al (2006) states, “the widespread belief that the presence of a mentor in the life of a young person not only supports healthy growth and development, but also serves as a protective factor against many of the risks facing today’s youth” (Karcher et al, 2006). As it currently stands, “Approximately 2.5 million youth today are involved in formal mentoring relationships through Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America and similar organizations (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p3). The remaining literature will examine youth mentoring current youth mentoring programs.

Characteristics of Youth Mentoring Programs

Contemporary Mentoring. Mentoring is an increasingly popular way of providing guidance and support to young people in need (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013, p.2). The HSS defined a mentor as an adult assigned to a high school student to ensure that the student stays on track academically, help raise the student’s educational goals and improve behavior and attendance, and offer a sounding board for the student’s personal concerns (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017, p.1) More and more, mentoring programs are being asked to serve higher-risk youth because with the right kinds of support, these young people could put themselves on a path toward bright, productive futures, and make vital contributions to their families, neighborhoods and nation (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013, p.2). Especially in a time when “higher risk youth are in need of support” (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). According to the U.S. Department of Education, one in four students drops out before he or she finishes high school—

that is one every 26 seconds or more than one million students a year (MENTOR, 2017). The majority of contemporary mentor programs currently in practice “have a prevention or intervention focus and are designed to serve different at-risk populations, such as children living in high-poverty neighborhoods, children of incarcerated parents, children in foster care, abused and neglected youths, and youths who have disabilities (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). The risk factors that place youth along a low- to high-risk continuum include, but are not limited to, being disconnected from school and/or work, lagging in academic achievement, lacking positive role models, being involved in the justice system, and transitioning out of foster care (MENTOR, 2017). The remaining literature will examine two commonly used program models as well as examine the infrastructures of youth mentoring programs which have produced research based results and positive outcomes.

Mentoring program models. There is some significant evidence that suggests programs that provide high school students with mentors may help students progress in school (i.e., accumulate credit or get promoted to the next grade) or stay in school (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017, p.2) Contemporary mentoring programs seek to improve outcomes and reduce risks among vulnerable youth by providing positive role models who regularly meet with the youth in community based or school based settings (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.1). When a program is community-based (CBM), it usually takes on the following structure: volunteers are carefully screened and matched with an at-risk youth and the pair usually meet for at least 4 hours per month (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.2). During the time of each meeting, the pair will engage in a variety of activities within the community (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p.2). According to Rhodes (2016), “Evidence suggests that mentored youth enrolled in community-

based mentoring programs experience greater health and social benefits compared to non-mentored youth” (Rhodes, 2016).

School-Based Mentoring Programs. Another popular model is a form of site-based mentoring which takes place on school grounds. According to Gordon et al (2013), “In an effort to increase students’ success, schools and communities have begun to develop school-based mentoring programs (SBM) to foster positive outcomes for children and adolescents” (Gordon et al, 2013, p.227). Gordon et al (2013) says, “Mentoring programs that are located in school settings are referred to as school-based mentoring programs” (SBMs). Gordon et al (2013) outlines the four prominent characteristics associated with the implementation of SBMs which are as follows: school personnel refer students for mentoring; an adult mentor meets with a student for one hour per week during the school year; mentors meet with their mentees on school grounds during the school day; mentors and mentees engage in both academic and social activities during their time together (Gordon et al, 2013, p.) These distinguishing characteristics are helpful in setting SBPM apart from other forms of site-based mentoring as roughly 45% of mentoring programs are site based, and 70% of site-based programs are found in schools” (Karcher et al, 2006, p. 711). Perhaps SBM is a favorable setting for the implementation of a youth mentoring program because research indicates additional advantages of SBMs include: reduced program costs, increased supervision available for mentors and mentees, increased safety for mentees, increased advocacy for students, increased academic focus, and increased opportunities to reach higher-risk children and families (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017). Similarly, The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & the National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2007) says, “There is compelling evidence that school-based mentoring produces many positive outcomes for youth. Recent

research into school-based mentoring outcomes indicates that these programs can: improve academic performance, in general, with significant improvements demonstrated in the subjects of science and written and oral language; improve the quality of class work; increase the number of homework and in-class assignments turned in; reduce serious school infractions, such as disciplinary referrals, fighting, and suspensions; increase students' perceptions of scholastic competence; and reduce skipping classes (2007). Both school- and community-based models have inherent value, and the presence of one does not reduce the need for the other. As one prominent research report put it, "different children and communities have different needs that neither option can fully address alone (The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & the National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2007, p.4)

Infrastructure. Once a program model is established, the other key components to youth mentoring programs are a program's infrastructure. According to Fernandes-Alcantara (2017) "Infrastructure refers to a number of activities including identifying the youth population to be served and the activities to be undertaken, screening and training mentors, supporting and supervising mentoring relationships, collecting data on youth outcomes, and creating sustainability strategies" (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017, p. 3).

Mentors. According to Garringer et al (2015), "When recruiting potential mentors, it is important for mentoring programs to set realistic expectations regarding what a mentoring relationship is and what it can achieve" (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015). Garringer et al (2015) believe it is important to establish realistic expectations for a prospective mentor by providing him or her with written eligibility requirements and by recruiting mentors who share the core beliefs, goals, and values of the organization (The National Mentoring Partnership,

2015). Creating an effective and enduring mentoring relationship begins with the matching of a mentor and mentee and formally establishing the mentoring relationship (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015p.55). In addition to establishing expectations and core values, mentoring programs should create recruitment materials designed to attract and engage appropriate target audiences whose skills and motivations best match the goals and structure of the mentoring program (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015). Specifically, “the information regarding eligibility criteria for being a mentor in the program needs to be clearly and publicly communicated to avoid misunderstanding by mentors, and optimally used to balance staff time and effort related to recruitment activities” (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015). To date, High schools more often used existing school personnel to serve as mentors: teachers (74 percent), school counselors (48 percent), or administrative staff (46 percent). A smaller proportion of schools used mentors from outside the school (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017).

Training. Training helps to orient mentors to the goals of the program, informs them about program rules and expectations, and gives them essential information on how to be effective mentors of youth. (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015, p.25). Mentor training is a vital component of any successful mentoring program (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015, p.38). More training and support provided with a coherent approach is related to increased mentor effectiveness when compared to less training implemented with a nonspecific approach (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015, p.44). Training should also focus on developing and sustaining these relationship-enhancing behaviors (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015, p.43).

Program outcomes. Several program practices have greater effectiveness according to current studies and research. These practices included recruiting mentors with backgrounds in helping roles or professions, clearly communicating expectations for how often mentors should be in contact with youth, hosting activities for mentors and youth, supporting and involving parents, allowing community settings to be utilized for mentoring, providing ongoing training for mentors, and systematically monitoring the implementation of the program (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015). Programs also were found to be more effective when they targeted youth with backgrounds of environmental risk or disadvantage, either alone or combination with individual manifestations of risk (e.g., academic failure, behavior problems). Among the small number of studies that included follow-up assessments, the benefits of mentoring appeared to extend a year or more beyond the end of a youth's participation in the program(The National Mentoring Partnership, 2015).

Current Study on Youth Mentoring. The U.S. Department of Education sponsored a national study designed to help at-risk students graduate and collected data in the 2014-2015 school year from a nationally representative sample of 2,142 public high schools about 13 specific high school improvement strategies designed to improve the likelihood of high school graduation for at-risk students (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017). The survey collected data from high school principals at sampled schools with a response rate of 90 percent (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017). The study found high schools to be using mentors to assist students as a dropout prevention program (U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, 2017).

Summary

The results are in and the message is clear: the presence of a mentor is critical to the future success of America's youth and to society overall (The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring, 2014). Unfortunately, too often, these vital relationships are left to chance. Too many young people —including nearly nine million at-risk youth — do not have access to a mentoring relationship (The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring, 2014). The consistent, enduring presence of a caring adult in a young person's life can be the difference between staying in school or dropping out, making healthy decisions or engaging in risky behaviors, and realizing one's potential or failing to achieve one's dreams (The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring, 2014). Mentors can make a profound difference in the lives of their mentees — and in turn, strengthen our communities, economy, and country (The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring, 2014). In a country dedicated to ensuring that where a child starts in life does not determine how far he or she will climb, we must close this mentoring gap, and ensure all children have the mentoring supports they need to grow, thrive, and succeed (The Mentoring Effect: Young People's Perspectives on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring, 2014).

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this two-phase exploratory qualitative methods study was to examine the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have on students identified as at-risk. The researchers aimed to identify areas of improvement to increase the overall quality of school-based mentoring programs for students identified as at-risk. This exploratory qualitative design incorporated in the first phase qualitative semi-structured audio-taped interviews and in the second phase the researchers created a qualitative questionnaire for the participants to complete based on the themes derived from the semi-structured audio-taped interview responses from phase one.

Philosophical perspectives. According to Schuh and Barab (2008), “Philosophical perspectives are worldviews that define the nature of the world, the individual’s place in it, and the possible relationships to that world and its parts (In Spector, 2008, p. 68). Learning and instructional theories are developed with respect to a particular set of assumptions regarding what it means to know and learn (In Spector, 2008, p.68). The researchers assume the teachers participating in this study will have valuable input on the impact school-based mentoring programs can have on students identified as at-risk. The researchers’ worldview as it relates to this study is in alignment with the philosophical perspectives of the late Dewey (1952), a progressive pioneer in the field of education. Dewey (1952) believed education could improve society and he believed it was the job of education to encourage individuals to develop their full

potential as human beings (Devendorf, n.d.). Both researchers conducting this study believe education has the potential to improve society by first improving the educational experiences and outcomes for all students.

Rationale for the study. A qualitative study is an appropriate design for this study as it provided the researchers with a complete picture of the teachers' perceptions on the impact a school-based mentoring program may have on students identified as at-risk. The researchers conducted the study in two phases and the researchers may create a mentoring handbook in the future for schools considering the use of teachers as mentors for secondary students identified as at-risk.

Researchers' interest in the study. The researchers who conducted the study are both assistant principals currently employed at secondary public schools located in the southeastern United States. Before becoming assistant principals, both researchers were secondary classroom teachers working with students identified as at-risk. Both researchers are dedicated practitioners seeking viable research-based solutions for developing programs to assist secondary students identified as at-risk.

Addressing Bias. To ensure the information gleaned from the interviews were unbiased, the researchers only utilized information pulled from the semi-structured audiotaped interviews and qualitative questionnaires and neither phase included the researchers' own opinions. The triangulation process ensured the validity of the data drawn from the semi-structured audiotaped interviews was from the participant's perspectives and not from the researcher's own opinions. The researchers were interested in identifying new content or inquiries from this study and the researchers believed it was important to conduct this research because effective strategies and key elements could enhance the overall quality of school-based mentoring programs focused on

providing targeted interventions for secondary students identified as at-risk and this research may have improved the overall quality of the mentors own experiences. The researchers avoided unexplained biases or deliberate practices and the researchers cross checked research procedures as needed in order to ensure completeness of the research effort.

Qualitative Research Questions

1. What are secondary teachers' perceptions of the effect a school-based mentoring program has on student discipline, grade point averages, and graduation rates for students identified as at-risk?
2. What are the secondary teachers' experiences participating in a school-based mentoring program?
3. What are secondary teachers' beliefs on what can improve the overall skills of a teacher serving as a mentor?

Qualitative Research Design

This study used a two-phase exploratory qualitative design and the study was conducted in two phases. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), "When applying qualitative research methods, the emphasis is put on the natural settings and the points of views of the research participants" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The three characteristics of qualitative methodology are as follows: a naturalistic approach, or studying real-world situations; an emergent design and flexibility, or pursuing paths of discovery as they arise; and purposeful sampling, where the sampling is aimed at insight about the research question, not necessarily generalizable to a population (Stuckey, 2013). Stuckey (2013) also explains the data collection methodology for a qualitative design stating, "The typical data collection methods in qualitative research (the use of interviews, long-term observations, and the use of documents or artifacts that add meaning to, or

are used or created in the research context) focus on how participants make meaning of their lives individually or in social contexts “(Stuckey, 2013).

Participants

The researchers used purposive sampling for this study as the researchers needed participants who were secondary teachers with mentoring experience at secondary schools located in the southeastern United States. The researchers randomly selected high schools in a large urban school district located in the southeastern United States and the researchers directly emailed the principals of these randomly selected high schools from the researchers’ personal email accounts. The contents of the email (Appendix A) seeking participants for this study explained the intent of the study and the researchers asked willing principals to disseminate the flyers (Appendix B) in teacher planning rooms in order to attract participants related to the study. The flyer included the researchers’ personal contact information for participants who voluntarily self-selected to participate in the study.

Exclusion. Potential participants were excluded if they did not fully meet the criteria of this study. For example, teachers who had participated in mentoring programs at the elementary level or teachers who were involved in mentoring programs in regions other than the southeastern United States were excluded from this study.

Qualitative Instrument

The researchers developed five semi-structured interview questions (Appendix C) based on the researchers’ literature review on school-based mentoring programs at secondary schools for students identified as at-risk. The purpose of phase one was for the researchers to explore the participants’ perceptions and beliefs on the impact a school-based mentoring program have on students identified as at-risk. The semi-structured interview questions also explored the

participant's perceptions on key components essential to the improvement of the overall quality of school-based mentoring programs utilizing teachers as mentors. The five open-ended, semi-structured questions are listed below:

1. What made you decide to become a school-based mentor?
2. As a mentor, what do you believe helped or did not help students to academically and socially improve as a result of having a mentor at school?
3. What do you believe can improve a student's ability to academically and socially improve while participating in a school-based mentor program?
4. What do you believe can improve the overall quality of a school based mentoring program?
5. Do you have other suggestions that would be relevant to any other educational stakeholder interested in implementing school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk?

Qualitative Procedures

To ensure the protection of the participants, the researchers received approval from Lynn University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). To build trust and credibility, the researchers safeguarded the anonymity of the participants in both phases of the study. The researchers did not ask for any names or for any identifiable information from the participants and the researchers did not ask for any identifiable information regarding the participants' schools or for any information regarding the participants' students. Participants were listed according to the numbers they were interviewed. For example, the participants will be called participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, etc. The number was the number in which the participant was

interviewed. The researchers adhered to Lynn University's policy and procedures as it related to protecting the rights of the participants and ensured the participants were free of risk and harm. The researchers were hopeful there would be participants who enjoyed explaining their work as a mentor at a secondary school for students identified as at-risk.

Phase one. The researchers scheduled one-on-one interviews at a convenient time and place for each participant. Before the interview, the researchers provided a consent form to each participant (Appendix D) and the researchers explained the interview process and the researchers let the participants know they had the right to withdraw at any time during the interview. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and the researchers recorded the participants' responses on recording devices and then uploaded to a password protected laptop computer. The signed consent forms were placed in a locked filing cabinet at the completion of each interview. Only the researchers had access to the password for the laptop computer and only the researchers had access to the locked filing cabinet. The researchers requested a personal email address from each participant which was used for phase two of the study. The audiotaped interviews were transcribed, analyzed, coded and themes were drawn out to create an online survey by the researchers. The researchers electronically sent the follow-up survey to each participant's personal email accounts for phase two of the study.

After completing the interviews, the researchers triangulated the data pulled from the research and identified common themes and facts compiled from the interviews. "Triangulation helps to combat threats to validity in qualitative research" (Yin, 2011, p. 79). Once each interview was completed, the researcher individually transcribed the information into a Word document on a password protected computer. The researchers carefully listened to each audiotape at ¼ seconds speed to ensure all words were transcribed accurately. Once all

interviews were carefully transcribed, the researchers triangulated the information and pulled common themes identified through the interviews into codes. The researchers utilized the codes to develop a survey to provide to the same participants previously interviewed to complete and rate. The researchers left the field once the participants' responses to the interview questions became redundant

Phase two. An email (Appendix E) was sent by the researchers to each participant who participated in phase one of the study. The email contained the purpose and objective of the survey as well as a link for the participants to self-select to complete the survey. The survey lasted approximately 15-20 minutes long and it was generated based upon the information gleaned from the participants' interview responses from phase one. The participants were asked to rate and complete the survey questions and then submit once the survey was complete. The researchers used *SurveyMonkey* to generate the survey. The researchers were able to view the participant's responses which were sent directly to the researchers' private password protected email accounts and only the researchers had access to the account. The survey was anonymous and did not require the participant's name or any other identifiable information. The information about the security of *SurveyMonkey*, which is the online tool used for this study, was explained in the email.

Procedures for accessing the survey online and submitting:

1. Log into your private email account.
2. Click on the email sent by the researchers.
3. Read the contents of the email.
4. By clicking on the survey link, this will serve as your consent.
5. Click and self-select to participate in the survey.

6. Answer and rate each question.
7. Click the submit button to send answers to the researchers.

Data Collection & Analyses

In phase one, the researchers transcribed audio-taped interview data, then coded it, and pulled out themes. In phase two, the researchers sent the *SuveryMonkey* link based on the themes derived from phase one and consent form in an email to the participants and asked the participants to rank the importance of the phase one data using an anonymous Likert scale. The triangulation of the phase one and phase two data confirmed results of participants. The researchers performed descriptive statistics on the phase two data.

Ethical Issues

The researchers anticipated minimal to no risk. One such risk factor may have been a teachers' discomfort with the questions they were asked during the interviews. This may have caused an increased level of stress. The researchers would have been empathetic and would have reassured the participants they could have withdrawn from the audiotaped interviews at any time. The audiotaped interviews would have been destroyed in case of such risk. The researchers understand if any significant issues regarding the study arose where there were potential hazards they would have notified Lynn's Institutional Review Board immediately.

Summary

In today's secondary public schools, there are arrays of academic and behavioral challenges exhibited by students identified as at-risk. To ameliorate these problems, one such consideration for administrators and teachers may be the utilization of a school-based mentoring program to assist students identified as at-risk. Using the qualitative data collected during this

study, the researchers were hoping to identify additional content and inquiries and possibly create a mentoring handbook in the future.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

This study examined the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have on students identified as at-risk. The questions asked during this study were intended to provide a deeper understanding of the impact a school-based mentoring program may have on students identified as at-risk through the lens of secondary teachers who served as mentors at a secondary school. This chapter represents the findings of the qualitative study based upon the researchers' three fundamental research questions used for this study. The three research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. What are secondary teachers' perceptions of the effect a school-based mentoring program has on student discipline, grade point averages, and graduation rates for students identified as at-risk?
2. What are the secondary teachers' experiences participating in a school-based mentoring program?
3. What are secondary teachers' beliefs on what can improve the overall skills of a teacher serving as a mentor?

Organization of the Findings

The researchers' approach to gathering and analyzing the data was conducted as a two-phase exploratory qualitative design. The qualitative methodology was utilized because it created a complete picture of the teachers' perceptions for the researchers by honing in on each participant's experiences as it relates to school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk. There were fourteen secondary teachers from the southeastern

United States who agreed to participate in the study and the semi-structured interview questions (phase one) were designed to answer the three research questions and the semi-structured interview questions specifically addressed one or more of the three fundamental research questions. The semi-structured audio-taped interviews were then used by the researchers to pull common themes or facts used to create a qualitative questionnaire (phase two) to determine which factors would be most important for a secondary school utilizing school-based mentoring programs as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk.

Participants

The researchers used purposive sampling to find participants for this study and the researchers specifically sought participants with school-based mentoring experience at secondary schools located in the southeastern United States. The researchers emailed principals with a flyer advertising the study and the researchers had fourteen self-selected participants who met the criteria for this study.

Data Collection

The semi-structured interview questions were derived from the researchers' literature review and were created to answer the researchers' three research questions. Each of the five semi-structured interview questions below were correlated to one of the three research questions driving this study. The five interview questions were also designed to explore the participants' perceptions on key components essential to improving the overall quality of school-based mentoring programs utilizing teachers as mentors. The semi-structured questions were also designed to answer the three fundamental research questions guiding this study. The five open-ended, semi-structured questions are listed below:

1. What made you decide to become a school-based mentor?
2. As a mentor, what do you believe helped or did not help students to academically and socially improve as a result of having a mentor at school?
3. What do you believe can improve a student's ability to academically and socially improve while participating in a school-based mentor program?
4. What do you believe can improve the overall quality of a school based mentoring program?
5. Do you have other suggestions that would be relevant to any other educational stakeholder interested in implementing school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk?

All of the audio-taped interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers. The interviews provided in-depth information pertaining to the fourteen participants' experiences and viewpoints on school-based mentoring and the responses from the interview questions were used to find common themes for phase two of the study (Turner, 2014).

Coding Process

The researchers used priori codes for phase one of this study. The participants were coded based upon the order in which they were interviewed (participant one, participant two, etc.) and any other identifiable information regarding the participants' identity was kept anonymous. The participants' race, gender, or age was not a consideration for the data collected during this study. The researchers used a content analysis approach while transcribing the audio-taped interviews. Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique (NCBI, n.d.). The researchers utilized a summative approach when transcribing the interviews in order to pull common phrases helping the researchers to establish common themes. A summative content

analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context (NCBI, n.d.). To ensure the information gleaned from the interviews were unbiased; the researchers only used the information pulled from the semi-structured audiotaped interviews.

Semi-Structured Interview (Phase One) Analyses

The final constituent in the interview design process is that of interpreting the data that was gathered during the interview process (Turner, 2010). During this phase, the researcher must make “sense” out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes (Turner, 2010). These themes or codes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants (Turner, 2010). The researchers analyzed the data by identifying common themes and subthemes within each of the five semi-structured interview questions.

Qualitative Survey (Phase Two) Analyses

In phase one of the qualitative study, the researchers transcribed the audio-taped interviews, coded the data, and pulled out common themes to create a follow-up survey for phase two of the study. According to Hansen (2010), “The qualitative type of survey does not aim at establishing frequencies, means or other parameters but at determining the *diversity* of some topic of interest within a given population” (Hansen, 2010). This type of survey does not count the number of people with the same characteristic (value of variable) but it establishes the meaningful variation (relevant dimensions and values) within that population (Hansen, 2010). The researchers sent an email to the fourteen participants and the survey was generated using *Survey Monkey*. The participants were asked to answer and rate each question.

Semi-Structured Interview Findings (Phase One) & Outcomes

The researchers codified themes based upon the overlapping responses from the 14 participants during the transcription process. Among the 14 participants interviewed, 14 out of 14 participants identified the importance of building a relationship focused on trust, care, and concern as an integral component to effective school-based mentoring programs for students identified as at-risk. Below provides data in support of the first theme pulled from the interviews.

Theme I: Building Relationships

“First and foremost is forming a relationship...forming a relationship not because you have to but you want to” –Participant 1

“What I thought helped was building relationships with the kids, being able to see them and get to know them academically and personally definitely helped with mentoring” - Participant 9

“Once the relationship is built, the kids work that much harder at persevering and doing the right things and keeping up with their academics because they don’t want to let that person down. Academically the students begin to do their homework, socially they improve and begin to check themselves and they are very proud of themselves” –Participant 2

“I decide to become a school-based mentor because I saw the need of being able to one on one effectively reach these kids” – Participant 1

Fourteen out of 14 participants believed mentoring can establish a culture of high expectations and can hold students accountable. As evidenced below, the participants’ responses support the second theme pulled from the interviews:

Theme II: Accountability

“I think holding them to those high expectations that you would want for your own child helps. I think it helps them the most when you treat them how you would treat your own children.” – Participant 11

Twelve of the 14 participants also believed mentoring can provide ongoing support by consistently “checking in” on students identified as at-risk participating in a school-based mentoring program. Below shows one of the participants’ responses supporting the theme of support.

Theme III: Support

“It helps the students to know that within the school community they have someone in house that they could communicate with and they have someone in school keeping an eye on them” –Participant 2

The fourth theme pulled from interview questions one-three was the importance of helping students identified as at-risk to build greater self-confidence by having a mentor. Twelve out of 14 participants sighted this as an important component to a student’s overall success. Below are the participants’ responses relevant to this theme.

Theme IV: Building Confidence

“I think the first thing that they need to know is that they can achieve anything”- Participant 3

“I feel like students are always criticized where they are falling short, but seeing and recognizing their growth is extremely important to build that confidence to succeed” –

Participant 4

“I think that even making or showing recognition for even the smallest improvement whether it be behavior or academics is huge because in my population I think kids in general thrive when they think you are proud of them” – Participant 8

The fifth theme pulled from the interviews was the theme of care and concern, which also coincided with each participant's desire to become a school-based mentor. Fourteen of the 14 participants interviewed in some way believed they witnessed a student identified as at-risk in need of a mentor and fourteen out of 14 participants also stated this was a contributing factor regarding their desire to participate in a school-based mentoring program. The participants' responses below support why 14/14 participants decided to become mentors:

Theme V: Exhibiting Care & Concern

“My decision in becoming a school-based mentor was pretty much based on my experience as a student growing up at school and knowing that I needed someone and I wanted to be that person for the kids that I knew I wanted and needed” – Participant 2

“Looking around and seeing the students in need and the population of the school that I'm at there is a huge cry for help and I recognize it and want to help them” – Participant 8

“I think there are some students that need someone to talk to someone who cares for them and I think I can make a difference for those students” – Participant 10

The researchers were able to determine from the common phrases and common themes in relation to questions one through three the participants decided to become mentors because they believed it was important to build sustainable relationships; it was important to hold students at-risk accountable; it was important to provide additional support where gaps may be evidenced as it relates to behavior and achievement; having a mentor can help a student identified as at-risk to build self-confidence; and it is clear students at-risk may require more care and concern at the school site.

The researchers were also able to acquire areas in need of improvement based upon questions four and five from the semi-structured interview questions. From the semi-structured

interview questions, the participants believed the areas of greatest concern and in need of improvement regarding best practices for school-based mentoring programs are areas exhibited in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Factors Hindering the Overall Success of a School-Based Mentoring Program

Conflicting schedules;
Low-expectations of students;
Mentors enabling students;
Mentors providing excuses; and
Time constraints for meeting with his/her mentee.

From questions four and five, the fourteen participants also provided specific suggestions to specifically improve the areas of concern for teachers serving as mentors for students identified as at-risk. Among the fourteen participants, the following words and phrases were repetitive during the interviews and are listed in Table 1.2:

Table 1.2 Common Words and Phrases Stated During the Participants' Responses from Questions IV & V

Interview Question IV	Interview Question V
What do you believe can improve the overall quality of a school based mentoring program?	Do you have other suggestions that would be relevant to any other educational stakeholder interested in implementing school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk?
Funding; Sounding boards for teachers; Improve time to meet students; Getting students early in the year; Starting as early as 9th grade; Standardized procedures;	Open line of communication; More teacher participation; Building partnerships with the community; Incentivizing students; Providing opportunities for students; Have a purpose, mission, or vision;

<p>Accessibility to a manual; and Resources for teachers and students.</p>	<p>Communicating with parents/guardians; Educational development; and Resources, training, and support.</p>
---	--

From the aforementioned key phrases exhibited in Table 1.2, the researchers established two broad themes pertaining to interview questions four and five. These two themes were supported by the participants’ responses included below regarding the theme of standardized procedures:

Theme 1: Standardized Procedures

“Finding those members (teachers) who are truly dedicated to helping students” – Participant 2

“Not overloading the mentors with 15-20 students because it is difficult when a seventh day period have.” – Participant 6

“I think we need to number one we recruit teachers that are passionate about students. Really get the teachers who students like and have a good rapport with the teachers and vice versa that is number one” – Participant 13

“We may have to look at quality time with the students definitely making sure that we have structured allotted time so teachers are able to meet with their students consistently” – Participant 6

“I think we need to share experiences and basically standardize some procedures. We have individual experiences but we need to make some standard procedures... in a sense that we

all know what kind of things we could do in certain situations. Like a manual that says this are the options that are available to do for certain situations” – Participant 10

As it relates to standardized procedures for a school-based mentoring program, the fourteen participants found it was important to identify mentors who would buy-in to the program and eleven of the 14 participants believed a manual could be beneficial.

In the responses below, thirteen out of 14 participants believed it was important to have access to resources, thirteen out of 14 participants believed it was important to have opportunities to learn how to be an effective mentor, and fourteen out of 14 participants felt it was important to have some sort of recognition by the school and support from their communities. The second theme is supported by some of the participants’ responses regarding their perspectives on the importance of having access to resources, ongoing training, and support.

Theme II: Resources, Training & Support

“I think one of the things when we talk about mentoring, social and academic mentoring is the social services and the social structures that the kids don’t have at home. We have done that piece meal here where we provide food and clothing the services that help with FAFSA and those kind of things but really outreaching to social services, to the community, and the parents” – Participant 11

“Mentors should be recognized throughout school and community” – Participant 8

“There should be some type of training to build the mentor mentee relationships because it is important for everybody” – Participant 8

“I think we are stretched really thin so more collaboration which will require more time so it is a double edge sword. But I think ourselves we need support and also having an outlet for if we feel like we are not just getting there [pause] and support we need support amongst the

caregivers because the caregivers need support as well as resources. Any kind of resources or maybe coming together as mentors and bringing all of our kids together and becoming a team approach is probably helpful” – Participant 12

Qualitative Survey (Phase Two) Findings & Outcomes

The researchers used the findings from the phase one interviews to create a qualitative survey for the same fourteen participants to complete. Twelve out of the 14 participants from the phase one interviews participated in the survey. The common themes pulled from the interview responses answering the first research question were the themes of building positive relationships, the importance of holding students accountable, and the theme of fostering self-confidence in order for students identified as at-risk participating in a school-based mentoring program to improve academically and socially. The tables below provide data from the follow-up survey questions supporting each of the themes pulled from the fourteen interview responses and their correlation to the three research questions guiding the study.

Table 1.3: Descriptive Statistics from Survey Questions 1-9

Survey Questions:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Participants
Question 1: School-based mentoring programs promote positive student behavior	9 75%	2 17%	1 8%	0	0	12/12
Question 2: School-based mentoring programs can improve student grades.	8 67%	3 25%	0	0	1 8%	12/12

Question 3: School-based mentoring improve student graduation rates	6 50%	3 25%	0	0	3 25%	12/12
Question 4. Establishing high expectations is most important to help students improve academically & socially.	9 75%	2 17%	0	0	1 8%	12/12
Question 5. Student mentees improve academically and socially when they know that someone cares	10 83%	1 8%	0	0	1 8%	12/12
	Extremely Important	Very Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important	Not Important	Participants
Question 7. Providing students with mentor support is	12 100	0	0	0	0	12/12
Question 9. Providing recognition for student success is	8 67%	3 25%	1 8%	0	0	12/12

Table 1.4 Descriptive Statistics from Survey Question 10-18.

Survey Questions:	Extremely Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Not Important	Participants
Question 10. Overall my mentor experience was...	9 75%	2 17%	1 8%	0	0	12/12
Survey Questions:	YES		NO		TOTAL Participants	
Question 12: Have you had formal training on school-based mentoring?	7 58%		5 42%		12/12	
Question 15: Do you believe there should be standardized procedures for school-based mentoring?	10 83%		2 17%		12/12	
Question 16: Do you believe having a mentor manual would be helpful to mentors?	9 75%		3 25%		12/12	
Question 18: Do you believe there should be built in time for mentor and student meetings?	10 83%		2 17%		12/12	

The common themes established in response to the third research question were the themes of incorporating standardized procedures and the importance of providing resources, training and support in order to improve the skills of a teacher serving as a mentor for students identified as at-risk. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 provided data from the follow-up survey questions supporting each of the themes pulled from the interviews and their correlation to the second and third research questions.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have on students identified as at-risk. Through the lens of the secondary teachers who participated in this study, the researchers were able to conclude the following: school-based mentoring programs may be more successful in helping students identified as at-risk to improve academically and socially 1) when mentors and mentees build positive relationships; 2) when the mentors hold the mentees accountable; and 3) when the mentors help the mentees to develop self-confidence at school. The researchers were also looking for ways to improve the overall quality of a school-based mentoring program for teachers serving as mentors for students identified as at-risk at a secondary school. The researchers were able to conclude based on the responses from the qualitative survey the mentors believe an effective school-based mentoring program should include the following best practices: 1) the incorporation of standardized procedures for all mentors participating in the program and 2) the importance of providing resources, training and support in order to improve the skills of a teacher serving as a mentor for a student identified as at-risk.

Chapter V

CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the experiences of secondary teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and the study also explored the participants' perspectives on the impact this targeted intervention may have on secondary students identified as at-risk. The researchers also aimed to identify areas of improvement in the hopes of increasing the overall quality of school-based mentoring programs for secondary students identified as at-risk. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are secondary teachers' perceptions of the effect a school-based mentoring program has on student discipline, grade point averages, and graduation rates for students identified as at-risk?
2. What are the secondary teachers' experiences participating in a school-based mentoring program?
3. What are secondary teachers' beliefs on what can improve the overall skills of a teacher serving as a mentor?

The researchers used a two-phase exploratory qualitative methodology to answer the three aforementioned research questions. To attract participants, the researchers utilized purposive sampling to find participants who met the criteria for this study. The researchers sought secondary teachers with previous school-based mentoring experience working with secondary students identified as at-risk and the researchers specifically zoned in on secondary schools located in the southeastern United States. A flyer was directly emailed to principals and the principals were asked to disseminate the flyer advertising the study on school-based mentoring. The researchers found fourteen willing participants who met the criteria for this

study. The duration of the study was four weeks in length and the data collection method was conducted in two separate phases. The first phase consisted of transcriptions from audio-taped interviews which were then coded in order to pull out themes. The data compiled from phase two used descriptive statistics generated by the responses from a qualitative survey.

The researchers examined and analyzed the data from the audio-taped interviews and reoccurring themes emerged during the transcription process. Through the lens of the fourteen participants, key characteristics for effective best practices for school-based mentoring programs used as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk were established during both phases of the study. In chapter four, the researchers presented the results from both phases of this exploratory qualitative study and in this chapter the researchers present a discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and concluding thoughts.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question I: What are secondary teachers' perceptions of the effect a school-based mentoring program has on student discipline, grade point averages, and graduation rates for students identified as at-risk?

In response to the first research question, the researchers found 67% percent of the participants believed a school-based mentoring program can improve a student identified as at-risk's academics by having a school-based mentor to provide additional support on campus. In relation to the first research question, the theme of establishing positive relationships and the theme of holding students identified as at-risk accountable through the use of high expectations also emerged from the participants' responses. From the survey responses, 83% of the participants believed students may improve academically and socially when they know someone

on campus cares about them and 75% of the participants believed it would improve a secondary student identified as at-risk's behavior by having a mentor. The researchers were also looking to see how graduation rates may be increased through the use of school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk. Interestingly, only 50% of the participants believed school-based mentoring could increase the graduation rates for secondary students identified as at-risk. Previous literature on school-based mentoring and current studies have also supported the findings from this study regarding school-based mentoring and its potential to assist students identified as at-risk to improve academically and socially by having a mentor. One recent meta-analysis on youth mentoring conducted by the Congressional Research Service in 2011 evaluated 73 youth mentoring programs in order to determine the overall effectiveness of youth mentoring programs (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017). According to the analysis, the programs tended to have positive effects on outcomes across multiple categories, including academics and education, attitudes and motivation, social skills and interpersonal relationships, and psychological and emotional status, among other categories (Fernandez-Alcantara, 2017). Akin to this current study and the study conducted by the Congressional Research Service, The National Mentoring Resource Management Center states, "Regardless of the structure, staffing, and goals of the program, mentoring programs in schools have shown to be a cost-efficient way of increasing the positive relationships students have in their lives, while also having the potential to boost factors that can lead to educational success, such as connectedness to the school environment and peers, improved relationships with teachers and staff, improved feelings of academic competence, and greater access and use of other supports, such as tutoring, credit tracking, counseling, and postsecondary planning (NMRMC, 2017).

Research Question II: What are the secondary teachers' experiences participating in a school-based mentoring program?

In response to the second research question, 75% of the participants reported having an extremely positive experience serving as a mentor to a student identified as at-risk and 12% of the participants regarded their experience as a school-based mentor to be positive. The findings from this research question support much of the literature on the mutual benefits mentoring can have for both the mentor and the mentee. As stated by The National Mentoring Partnership, “Many mentors say that the rewards they gain are as substantial as those for their mentees, and that mentoring has enabled them to: have fun; achieve personal growth and learn more about themselves; improve their self-esteem and feel they are making a difference; gain a better understanding of other cultures and develop a greater appreciation for diversity; feel more productive and have a better attitude at work; enhance their relationships with their own children (MENTOR, 2017).

Research Question III: What are secondary teachers' beliefs on what can improve the overall skills of a teacher serving as a mentor?

In response to the third research question, 83% of the participants believed there should be standardized procedures to assist a mentor working with a student identified as at-risk and 75% of the participants felt a mentoring handbook on best practices would be useful. The findings from this study support a great deal of research and literature on best practices and approaches for implementing a school-based mentoring program. According to the National Mentoring Resource Center, there is a list of helpful webinars and guidebooks, such as “The ABC’s of School-Based Mentoring” to provide strategies for those interested in implementing a school-based mentoring program. With a great deal of literature and research on best practices and

strategies for youth mentoring programs there is still a lack of extensive research and studies for researchers interested in studying school-based mentoring through the lens of teachers serving as mentors for a student identified as at-risk at a secondary school.

Limitations

The small sample used for this two-phase exploratory study. More participants throughout the United States may be able to provide greater the feedback for future studies.

Recommendations for Research

The researchers were able to identify essential key characteristics for school leaders interested in implementing a school-based mentoring program as well as offer important guidance for teachers at secondary schools serving as mentors in a school-based mentoring program targeted in assisting students identified as at-risk. Future researchers may be interested in conducting a longer study as this study was only four weeks in length. Future researchers may also study specific school-based mentoring programs using a specific group of teachers as mentors to evaluate best practices when using a school-based mentoring program as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk at a secondary school.

The literature past and current as well as the results from this study on school-based mentoring programs used as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk may assist school leaders interested in utilizing a school-based mentoring program as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk and the researchers believe the following to be important considerations regarding the use of school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for secondary students identified as at-risk when teachers are utilized as mentors:

1. A school-based mentoring program for students identified as at-risk may be used as an academic or behavioral intervention for secondary exhibiting risk factors hindering the

student from graduating from high school with the skills necessary to be a productive adult citizen.

2. The school-based mentoring program should have a clear mission, goals, and objectives in alignment with the school districts' mission, goals, and objectives for meeting the needs of all students.
3. School leaders should know whether or not a school-based mentoring program needs to be approved by the superintendent or district leaders prior to implementing the program.
4. When recruiting teachers, the school leaders or program coordinator should recruit teachers who will be willing participants because monetary compensation for participation may not be included for the mentors.
5. The teachers serving as mentors will require training prior to working with the student one-on-one. Teachers at the school setting are already fingerprinted and cleared with background checks but this does not necessarily ensure teachers are equipped to assist students who may have emotional or academic challenges exceeding the teacher's qualifications or areas of expertise. This is why training and ongoing support is of paramount importance for the teachers participating in the school-based mentoring program so the teacher is not at-risk of being put in a compromising position.
6. The focus of the school-based mentoring program should be focused on providing academic and social support for students identified as at-risk and should not be the only intervention for students requiring more intensive emotional and academic support.
7. The school leader should have a clear matrix when identifying students to participate in the school-based mentoring program and may want to use a school-based team approach when selecting students who would mostly benefit from this targeted intervention.

8. Parents or guardians should be notified and should grant permission for their student to participate in the school-based mentoring program and contact between the teacher and parent/guardian should take place prior to the first mentor/mentee meeting.
9. School leaders should monitor the progress of all students participating in the school-based mentoring program to ensure the program is adhering to the schools' mission and to ensure the students identified as at-risk are exhibiting ongoing progress.

Conclusion

The results from this study showed school-based mentoring programs utilized as a targeted intervention for secondary students identified as at-risk may help students to improve academically and socially when positive relationships are established between the participating student and mentor. The results also showed it can help to hold students at-risk participating in a school-based mentoring program more accountable and the results also showed participation in a school-based mentoring program may improve the student's self-confidence by having the support of a mentor at school. There is a great need for effective mentoring relationships in today's culture, and the potential for academic influence is tremendous (Lindt & Blair, 2017). There are an increasing number of parents/guardians who divide their time and attention between social responsibilities and providing basic needs for their children, specifically quality care, attention, and support to help them succeed in an ever-changing society of innovation (Lindt & Blair, 2017).

References

- America's Promise Alliance. (2016, May 9). High School Graduation Facts: Ending the Dropout Crisis | America's Promise. Retrieved from <http://www.americaspromise.org/high-school-graduation-facts-ending-dropout-crisis#endnote12>
- Amos, J. (2016, January). THE GRADUATION EFFECT: Increasing National High School Graduation Rate Key to Job Creation and Economic Growth, New Alliance Analysis Finds | Alliance For Excellent Education. Retrieved from <http://all4ed.org/articles/the-graduation-effect-increasing-national-high-school-graduation-rate-key-to-job-creation-and-economic-growth-new-alliance-analysis-finds/>
- Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and Evaluating Qualitative Research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*.
- Bartlett, L., & Vavrus, F. K. (2017). *Rethinking case study research: A comparative approach*.
- Belfield, C. R., & Levin, H. M. (2009, September). High school dropouts and the economic losses from juvenile crime in California: California dropout research project report #16. Retrieved from <http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2009-Levin-Report.-High-school-dropouts-and-the-economic-losses-from-juvenile-crime-in-california.pdf>
- Bell, A. L., & Meinelt, K. A. (2011). A past, present, and future look at no child left behind. *Human Rights Magazine*, 38(4). Retrieved from https://www.americanbar.org/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/human_rights_vol38_2011/fall2011/a_past_present_and_future_look_at_no_child_left_behind.html
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. (2017). History - Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Retrieved from <http://www.bbbs.org/history/>

Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2014). *The mentoring effect: Young people's perspectives on the outcomes and availability of mentoring*. Retrieved from Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises with Hart Research Associates for MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership website:

https://www.mentoring.org/mentoringeffect/the_mentoring_effect_full_report/

Center for Public Education. (2007, April 5). Keeping kids in school: What research tells us about preventing dropouts. Retrieved from

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Keeping-kids-in-school-At-a-glance/Keeping-kids-in-school-Preventing-dropouts.html>

Center for Teaching, Research & Learning Research Support Group at the Social Science

Research Lab American University. (n.d.). Qualitative Research Introduction. Retrieved from <https://www.american.edu/ctrl/upload/Qualitative-Research-Introduction.pdf>

Child Trends. (2014, February). Making the grade: Assessing the evidence for integrated student supports. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2014-07ISSPaper2.pdf>

Civic Enterprises, & Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at John Hopkins.

(2016). Building a grad nation: Progress and challenge in raising high school graduation rates. Retrieved from

http://www.gradnation.org/sites/default/files/civic_2016_full_report_FNL2-2_0.pdf

Cortina, M. A., & Fazel, M. (2015). The Art Room: An evaluation of a targeted school-based group intervention for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 42, 35-40. doi:10.1016/j.aip.2014.12.003

- DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12(2), 57-91.
doi:10.1177/1529100611414806
- Farrington, D. P., Ttofi, M. M., & Piquero, A. R. (2016). Risk, promotive, and protective factors in youth offending: Results from the Cambridge study in delinquent development. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45, 63-70. doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2016.02.014
- Fernandez-Alcentara, A. L. (2017, February 17). Vulnerable Youth: Federal Mentoring Programs and Issues. Retrieved from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34306.pdf>
- Florida Department of Education. (2016). PK-20 Education Data Warehouse. Retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edw/>
- Garringer, M. (2015). Elements of Effective Practices for Mentoring. Retrieved from http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf
- Gordon, J., Downey, J., & Bangert, A. (2013). Effects of a school-based mentoring program on school behavior and measures of adolescent connectedness. *School Community Journal*, 23(2), 227-249. Retrieved from Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1028864.pdf>
- The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & The National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (2007). The ABCs of School Based Mentoring. Retrieved from <http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/abcs.pdf>
- Hayes, W. (2004). *Are we still a nation at risk two decades later?* Lanham, MD: ScarecrowEducation.

- Herrera, C., Dubois, D. L., & Grossman, J. B. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. Retrieved from https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Role%20of%20Risk_Final-web%20PDF.pdf
- In Spector, J. M. (2008). *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology*. New York, NY: LEA.
- Ingram, E. S., Bridgeland, J. M., Reed, B., & Atwell, M. (2016, June). Hidden in plain sight: Homeless students in America Public Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.gradnation.org/sites/default/files/HiddeninPlainSightFullReportFINAL.pdf>
- Karcher, M. J., Kuperminc, G. P., Portwood, S. G., Sipe, C. L., & Taylor, A. S. (2006). Mentoring programs: A framework to inform program development, research, and evaluation. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(6), 709-725. doi:10.1002/jcop.20125
- Kena, G., Hussar, W., McFarland, J., De Brey, C., Musu-Gillette, L., Wang, X., ... Dunlop Velez, E. (2016, May). *The Condition of Education 2016 (NCES 2016-144)*. US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved October 22, 2016, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>
- Kenziora, K., & Yoder, N. (2016). When districts support and integrate social and emotional learning (SEL): Findings from an ongoing evaluation of districtwide implementation of SEL. *American Institutes of Research*. Retrieved from <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/When-Districts-Support-and-Integrate-SEL-October-2016.pdf>
- Lakind, D., Eddy, J. M., & Zell, A. (2014). Mentoring Youth at High Risk: The Perspectives of Professional Mentors. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 43(6), 705-727. doi:10.1007/s10566-014-9261-2

- Lindt, S., & Blair, C. (2017, January). Making a Difference with At-risk Students: The Benefits of a Mentoring Program in Middle School. Retrieved from <https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/763/The-Benefits-of-a-Mentoring-Program-in-Middle-School.aspx>
- MENTOR. (2017). National Mentoring Summit - MENTOR. Retrieved from <http://www.mentoring.org/national-mentoring-summit/>
- Miller, J. M., United States, & United States. (2012). *Researching the referral stage of youth mentoring in six juvenile justice settings.*
- National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. (n.d.). National Dropout Prevention Center. Retrieved from <http://dropoutprevention.org/resources/statistics/quick-facts/economic-impacts-of-dropouts/>
- National Institute of Justice. (n.d.). From Juvenile Delinquency to Young Adult Offending. Retrieved from <https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/Pages/delinquency-to-adult-offending.aspx>
- The National Mentor Partnership. (2015). Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring. Retrieved from http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf
- NCBI. (2008, March 8). Qualitative Research and its Uses in Health Care. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3087733/>
- NprED. (2016, October 17). The High School Graduation Rate Reaches A Record High — Again : NPR Ed : NPR. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/17/498246451/the-high-school-graduation-reaches-a-record-high-again>

- Oregon State University. (n.d.). PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION.
Retrieved from <https://oregonstate.edu/instruct/ed416/PP2.html>
- Rhodes. (2016). Importance of Community-Based Mentoring Programs - TRUE Mentors.
Retrieved from <http://truementors.org/importance-of-community-based-mentoring-programs/>
- Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., McLaughlin, J., Palma, S., Center for Labor Market Studies, & Northeastern University. (2009, October). The consequences of dropping out of high school. Retrieved from http://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf
- Sutton, J., Austin, Z., & The Canadian Journal of Hospital Management. (n.d.). Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis, and Management.
- Turner. (2010). Research Design Using GTM. *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide*, 55-77. doi:10.4135/9781526402196.n4
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service. (2017, January). Issue Brief: Mentoring. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/high-school/mentoring.pdf>
- U.S. Department of education. (2015). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) | U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>
- Vang, C. (2005). Minority Students Are Far from Academic Success and Still At-Risk in Public Schools. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ727794.pdf>
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Zinskie, C. D., & Rea, D. W. (2016). The every student succeeds act (ESSA): What it means for educators of students at risk. *National Youth-At-Risk Journal*, 2(1). Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1050&context=nyar>

Appendix A

Dear Principal,

We are contacting you in the hopes you will consider passing along a flyer advertising our research based study on school-based mentoring programs. Currently, we are employed as assistant principals in the southeastern United States and we are also doctoral students pursuing a degree in Educational Leadership at Lynn University and our study seeks to examine the experiences of teachers who have participated in school-based mentoring programs. Should you approve, please place the attached flyer in your teacher planning rooms so your teachers may contact us directly if they have any interest in participating in this study.

Educationally yours,

Allison Bradley and Wilnic Gideon

Appendix B

*Study Seeking Secondary School Teachers Who Have Been Mentors
to Students At-Risk in a School-based mentoring Program*



***YOUR PERSPECTIVES & EXPERIENCES CAN HELP TO
IMPROVE THE OVERALL QUALITY of School-based mentoring
Programs for STUDENTS identified as at-risk***



To participate in our study, which will include a 60 minute one-on-one audio-taped
interview and follow-up survey, please contact:

Allison Bradley: [REDACTED]

Wilnic Gideon: [REDACTED]

Appendix C

1. What made you decide to become a school-based mentor?
2. As a mentor, what do you believe helped or did not help students to academically and socially improve as a result of having a mentor at school?
3. What do you believe can improve a student's ability to academically and socially improve while participating in a school-based mentor program?
4. What do you believe can improve the overall quality of a school-based mentoring program?
5. Do you have other suggestions that would be relevant to any other educational stakeholder interested in implementing school-based mentoring as a targeted intervention for students identified as at-risk?

Appendix D

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

Lynn University

Teacher Perceptions on the Utilization of School-based mentoring Programs as a Targeted Intervention for Secondary Students Identified as At-Risk.

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Allison Bradley and Wilnic Gideon. The purpose of this research is to acquire the perceptions and experiences of teachers who have participated in school-based mentoring programs.

Risk and Discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research. However, you may enjoy discussing your experiences as a mentor.

Potential Benefits

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on what helped or hindered students to academically and socially improve as a result of having a mentor. Also, the researchers are aiming to identify what can improve the overall quality of the mentors own experiences.

Protection of Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept secured. We will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant in the study. Research records will be kept in a locked file and only the researchers will have access to the file. Should your interview be recorded, the recording will be destroyed after it is transcribed.

Voluntary Participation

Participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Allison Bradley or Wilnic Gideon at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, please contact our Chair, Dr. King Lynn University at-----.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and I have received answers to any questions I may have asked. I consent to participate in this study.

Your signature_____ **Date** _____

Your Name (printed)_____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature_____ **Date**_____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____ **Date**_____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____ **Date**_____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix E

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in phase one of our study. Your responses helped us to create this survey for phase two. We are hopeful you will consider completing the survey on *SurveyMonkey*, which will last approximately 20 minutes. Please note the following regarding *SurveyMonkey* and its privacy policy:

According to the Privacy Policy of SurveyMonkey (2017), the data in a survey is owned by its creator. Additionally, all the surveys are treated by the website as if they were kept private. The email address of the respondents are safeguarded, and SurveyMonkey does not sell them. The data is kept in servers in the United States, and are stored under the instructions of the owner.

After reading the aforementioned privacy policy, if you should agree to participate in phase two of our study, **by clicking on the link provided in this email, this will serve as your consent.**

As with phase one of our study, we greatly appreciate your time and participation.

Educationally yours,

Allison Bradley and Wilnic Gideon

Appendix F

Phase Two Consent Form for Participation

Lynn University

Teacher Perceptions on the Utilization of School-based mentoring Programs as a Targeted Intervention for Secondary Students Identified as At-Risk.

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in phase two of the research study conducted by Allison Bradley and Wilnic Gideon. The purpose of this research is to acquire the perceptions and experiences of teachers who have participated in school-based mentoring programs.

Risk and Discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research. However, you may enjoy discussing your experiences as a mentor.

Potential Benefits

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of teachers who participated in school-based mentoring programs and their perspectives on what helped or hindered students to academically and socially improve as a result of having a mentor. Also, the researchers are aiming to identify what can improve the overall quality of the mentors own experiences.

Protection of Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept secured. We will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you as a participant in the study. Research records will be kept in a locked file and only the researchers will have access to the file. Should your interview be recorded, the recording will be destroyed after it is transcribed.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in phase two is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Allison Bradley or Wilnic Gideon at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, please contact our Chair, Dr. King Lynn University at-----.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and I consent to complete the survey.

Your signature_____ **Date** _____

Your Name (printed)_____

This consent form will be kept by the researchers for at least three years beyond the end of the study.

