

AESTHETIC LEADERSHIP: STORIES OF SUPPORT, RELATIONSHIP, AND  
SUCCESS AMONG NOVICE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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# AESTHETIC LEADERSHIP: STORIES OF SUPPORT, RELATIONSHIP, AND SUCCESS AMONG NOVICE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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University of Nebraska, 2006

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This narrative inquiry examines novice teacher and administrator perceptions of beginning teacher needs and the role of the administrator in meeting those needs. Open-ended questionnaires were sent to 20 novice teachers in their second to fifth year of teaching and to 17 administrators in 20 public and private school districts of various sizes over three Midwestern states. Questionnaires were analyzed for emerging themes in order to develop first round interview questions and to identify 3 novice teachers and 3 administrators who would provide the voice for each group through the interviews. This study moves past the teaching/learning check lists and practical how-to guides to the impact the lists and guides actually have on novice teachers. The intent is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena surrounding the process of beginning to teach and insights regarding ways to concretely address new teacher development and retention. The narratives which result create images that personify the checklists and how-to guides while giving a voice in the literature to novice teachers themselves. Administrator involvement and accessibility was an overarching theme. Other interrelated themes concerned emotional needs and social needs, mentors, classroom management, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning and curriculum. The data revealed that building a culture of trust and relationship is foundational to the development and retention of novice teachers, and the administrator participants emerged as exemplars of what recent literature has identified as aesthetic leadership.

## Dedication

With my deepest appreciation I dedicate this work to my parents, Elmer and Mildred Green of Indianola, Iowa, upon whose shoulders I stand, and to husband Dennis who believed in me, to my children Julie, Gary, Kelly, April, Star, Julie and Jean who encouraged me, and to my grandchildren who inspired me: Brooklyn and Amorie, Bobby and Havilah, Hayden and the baby on the way as well as all those yet to be born. May they desire and enjoy their educational journeys even more than I am mine.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Experience is the result, the sign, and the reward of the interaction of organism and environment which, when it is carried to the full, is a transformation of interaction into participation and communication. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1934

When the distance of several decades separates us from our first teaching experience, we realize things have changed. As a school administrator, teacher, and parent, I have experienced many of these changes first hand. Reflecting on these experiences, I recall moments that encouraged, sustained, and nurtured my teaching/learning practices as well as moments that stalled and deterred them. Cognizant of the value of Deweyan (1934/1980) experience in my career as a teacher, experience that is “the result, the sign, and the reward” (p. 22) of years of interaction and communication with students, parents, peers, professors, and supervisors, I seek out opportunities to foster teacher professional development in my current role as a school administrator. In particular, however, I am struck by how one thing has not changed; new teachers are still new teachers, full of enthusiasm and trembling with fear, certified to fly solo but so in need of a co-pilot.

Each May universities all across the country place a stamp of approval on the newest batch of novice teachers and turn them over to the professional world, and the following August many of those idealistic, energetic, young men and women step into their first classrooms ready to change the world. But by the end of September, they are exhausted, and many are disillusioned, so disillusioned that “one-third of [them will] leave the profession within five years” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 7). According to Darling-Hammond (2003), each year we produce more new teachers than we hire, but since 1990 the number of teachers leaving the classroom each year has surpassed the



number of new teachers. Thus our profession has reached negative population growth just as the largest generation since the baby boomers (Howe & Strauss, 2000) has crowded itself into our schools. Experts agree, however, that the crisis is not in recruitment of new teachers but in retention of those currently in the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2001, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2004). In fact, Ingersoll (2003) calls recruitment both “the wrong diagnosis and the wrong prescription” (p. 182). His extensive review of the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) supports the need for a closer look at retention and, therefore, at new teacher needs and, ultimately, at what we do in schools to meet those needs.

According to Darling-Hammond (2001) our colleges and universities produce approximately 190,000 new teachers every year of which 60 to 70% enter teaching jobs when they graduate (p. 12). If supply is not the problem, perhaps we should look at the demand—not the demand *for* teachers themselves but the demands we put *on* new teachers which, unfortunately, may result in so many leaving the profession forever. Renard (2003) says we set new teachers up for failure when we do not recognize that things they find most “problematic are the things that come with time” (p. 63), and Huberman (1989) cautions that we hold new teachers accountable for skills they have not yet mastered and cannot have mastered because they can only be learned through experience.

After surveying 272 preservice teachers concerning their long term career plans and work perceptions, Young (1995) concluded that “young teachers, especially those who have the most attractive alternatives in the job market, will not persist in the teaching profession if they experience failure in the classroom in their early years” (p. 292).

Darling-Hammond (2001) calls these early years of teaching the “decisive” years (p. 14) during which if beginning teachers do not receive the support they need, they will leave the profession. However, another publication from the Harvard Graduate School study of new teachers by Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, and Peske reports as recently as 2002 that:

Most new teachers we interviewed received little or no guidance about what to teach or how to teach it. Left to their own devices, they struggled day to day to prepare content and materials instead of developing a coherent plan to address long-term objectives. (p. 278)

They also found that “today’s environment of high standards and accountability created a sense of urgency among many new teachers but did not provide them with the support they needed to teach effectively” (p. 279). Johnson and Kardos (2002) warn that “unfortunately, the mismatch between the needs of these new teachers and the support they received reflects the experiences of countless new teachers across the United States” (p. 13).

Failure at teaching or the perception of failure is not from “any single factor, circumstance, or occasion, but from the cumulative effect of events and experiences” (Schmidt & Knowles, 1995, p. 217) which leave the novice drained of energy and discouraged. When there is no one to turn to for help and no one to recognize the signs of stress and provide the antidote of encouragement in those times of discouragement and disillusion, the novice begins to count the days until the end of the contract and look for other employment.

The newly awarded certificate gives permission to teach, but how successful the first years are and, therefore, successive years—and even whether there are successive years—depends heavily on the working conditions at the first school. Administrators need to become aware of just what the new teachers on their staffs need and “surround [them] with a professional culture that supports teacher learning” (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p. 26). Feiman-Nemser (2003) explains that “beginning teachers have legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the context of teaching” (p. 26). School leadership is key to accepting teachers as learners and fostering an environment in which new teachers are free to ask questions and take risks. Enhancing the instructional, professional, and social working conditions may offer the missing sustenance to beginning teachers.

After a review of 93 studies on learning to teach, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) concluded that “learning how to teach is an inherently complex and messy business” (p. 147). Those of us who have not only made the journey ourselves but have aided and abetted others in theirs would wholeheartedly agree. Not only is the process “complex and messy”, but as Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon also found, several studies suggest that however advanced or dynamic the preservice training might have been, “beginning teachers actually learn how to teach when they enter the classroom during the first year” (p. 158). Here it becomes important to confront not just the daily tasks and responsibilities of teaching, but what else it means to learn to teach. Does the preservice teacher learn to teach at the university when she learns to write lesson plans? Has the novice teacher learned to teach when he can “control” the class? How do novice teachers negotiate a teaching style between outside expectations and their own

teaching/learning expectations—expectations for themselves as well as for their students? Just how much of early grappling with these common conventions and realities of teaching is responsible for high teacher attrition during the first few years? And, more importantly, what can we do in schools not just to make the way a bit easier but to walk along side even when the path becomes not only difficult but seems wide enough only for one?

### Statement of the Problem

Since everything new teachers have witnessed and experienced as pre-service teachers was in someone else's classroom where so much was built upon structure already in place by the cooperating teacher, the responsibility of their own classroom is the first time novice teachers experience absolutely everything from the bottom up and from beginning to end. Not only do goals need to be set and lessons need to be planned, but they must also negotiate an entire day, quarter, and year, and no one is sitting in the back of the room taking notes to make suggestions for improvement. Thus the overall process becomes “deeply personal” (Wideen, Mayher-Smith, & Moon, 1998, p. 161), and new teachers can feel “alone and isolated” (Flores, 2001, p. 147).

The attitude I experienced as a novice was one of indifference and apathy on the part of veteran teachers and administrators: We survived our first years and found our way; others will. However, allowing that the process is and always has been “deeply personal” with much of what it means to teach done in isolation, novice teachers today *are* receiving multiple levels of support from administrators and veteran teachers alike; yet, they continue to leave at alarming rates. Therefore, I submit that we begin to look more closely at successful novice teacher/first administrator relationships for clues about

how we might increase retention of our schools' most valuable resource for the future of education in America: the novice teacher.

### Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was (1) to examine the perceptions of novice teachers concerning their needs and their perceptions of how well their first administrators met those needs, (2) to examine the perceptions of administrators working with novice teachers concerning novice teacher needs and what those administrators are prepared to offer to meet the unique needs of novice teachers on their staffs, and (3) to examine the interface and the significance of the novice teacher/first administrator relationship as it contributes to retention and teacher development. A two step process entailing an initial questionnaire and follow up interviews was utilized. Questionnaires were analyzed to determine dominant themes for the purpose of developing the first interviews and reviewed to identify representative interview participants for the second part of the study. Interviews were conducted to probe deeper for richer detail and narrative examples of novice teacher growth and development during those “decisive years” to seek out “storied” exemplars (Creswell, 2002) of what novice teachers and administrators perceive as new teacher needs and storied exemplars of administrative attempts to meet those needs. A second round of interviews was conducted to discuss themes not covered in the first interview because of time and to clarify and expand upon content of the first interview. A third contact was made with participants if needed for clarification as the content of the first two interviews was restored for inclusion in the final paper. Insights were sought regarding the perceptions of school administrators and of novice teachers concerning novice teacher needs in their first one to five years of

teaching and the role of the first administrator in meeting those needs. The research focused specifically on administrator/novice teacher relationships and communications for the purpose of understanding how this unique relationship affects new teacher retention and professional development.

### Research Questions

The aim for our novice teachers should be to perceive particular conditions for personal and professional growth—for learning. Colley (2002) says principals must provide support “as instructional leaders, culture builders, and mentor coordinators” (p. 22). Halloway (2003) lists three strategies to keep new teachers in the profession: “professional development, ongoing mentoring, and fostering teacher empowerment” (p. 88). Johnson and Kardos (2002) describe effective principals as those who are “visibly engaged in both the daily life of the school and the professional work of the teachers” (p. 16); they focus on helping teachers with professional goals and foster a “professional culture in which teachers were collectively responsible for student and teacher learning” (p. 16). Yet, the process remains “deeply personal” (Wideen, Mayher-Smith, & Moon, 1998, p. 161); so this inquiry asks: What are novice teachers’ perceptions of their own needs as beginning teachers and of the role of their first administrator in appreciating and meeting their unique needs as beginning teachers? How well do new teachers believe their first administrators appreciated their unique needs? How well do new teachers believe their first administrators met their unique needs? What do administrators perceive as novice teacher needs, and what are they doing to meet those needs? And how do these factors affect retention and teacher development?

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant because, while much has been written about the needs of novice teachers, the role of mentors and mentor programs in meeting those needs, and what novice teachers expect from their first administrators, teachers who have left the field indicate lack of support from the administrator is part of the problem (Ingersoll, 2003). Current literature provides a multitude of checklists and how-to articles on novice teacher induction and mentorship but lacks storied exemplars of successful novice teacher/administrator relationships. This study moves past the check lists and how-to guides to the impact the lists and guides actually have on novice teachers and, therefore, on students and student learning in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena surrounding the process of beginning to teach and insights regarding ways to concretely address new teacher development and retention. The resulting narratives create images that personify the checklists and how-to guides while giving a voice in the literature to novice teachers themselves.

## Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this inquiry the following terms are defined as:

**Novice Teacher:** A novice teacher is a K-12 teacher in the first five years of teaching.

**First Administrator:** The first administrator refers to the person who was the administrator at the first school or through the first five years. If the teacher moves to another school or the administrator leaves and is replaced by someone else the new administrator takes the position of first administrator.

University: The term university is used to refer to the higher education of the teacher. The researcher acknowledges that some teachers may have attended a college rather than a university.

School(s): A school is a public or private educational facility that includes at least one grade within the K-12 range.

Retention: Sustaining teachers beyond the first few years of initial teaching experience to become career teachers as well as keeping teachers in specific school sties.

### Limitations and Future Study

This research is intended to provide insights leading to enlarged understandings of the phenomena of teacher retention rather than to be generalizable to any population. The sample is purposely small so as to allow for personal interviews and individual stories, analyzed for dominant themes, seeking storied exemplars of the novice teacher/first administrator relationship as well as insight into how this unique relationship affects retention and teacher development.

Future study should examine for possible differences among grade levels, elementary, middle school, and high school, and differences between classroom teachers and specialist. Participants in this study seemed to believe there are differences in needs in these areas. Future study could investigate those differences first to determine if they are real or perceived. Further study might also determine how those differences affect the nurture of teachers in those fields if the differences are found to be real. If the differences are found to be merely perceived differences, further study might determine how we can eliminate the false perceptions.



Future study might also be conducted to determine if particular helps are more beneficial to novice teachers and what is most beneficial to administrators who are trying to work with novice teachers in the most personal and individual ways.

### Summary

Although I gave up on teaching early on, I returned to give it a second attempt and somehow found my way. Many novice teachers are not so fortunate. Since I did eventually amass nearly three decades of experience in education in both teaching and administration, the multiple, continued, guided and practical building of teaching experiences all those years helped me to develop confidence and, more importantly, to ask questions and seek out new and better ways to connect students with subject matter. This experience is what the novice teacher lacks. It is *not* the fault of the university preservice program; it is *not* the fault of the cooperating teachers, and it is *certainly not* the fault of the novice teachers themselves. In fact, it does no good to play the blame game at all because there is no one to blame. New teachers lack experience because they are not experienced. Period. One cannot learn from a book or a lecture or even from a few weeks in someone else's classroom what this experience teaches. This experience is something much deeper—something that permeates every part of my being: body, mind, and soul. And *it takes time!*

As a school administrator and teacher I felt compelled to map out the needs of novice teachers and the frustration that accompanies them because I have seen all too many enthusiastic, intelligent, beginning teachers ground themselves before they really had the chance to make those early, successful, solo flights or perhaps because they became so disillusioned that they did not recognize successful flight when it happened.

The questions raised as I have mapped out the terrain regarding teacher retention have been of real concern to me for many years. However, these questions became more real when, as a new school administrator, I hired two new teachers onto our staff who were, quite frankly, not ready for solo flight; unfortunately neither was I. Seeking answers to those questions of my inadequacy to co-pilot is what brought me to doctoral studies in teacher development. I now believe that seeking answers—and asking more questions—and helping others to seek answers and ask more questions—is the most important role of the school administrator and the only way to create a school culture that is a true learning environment for everyone from the youngest students to the superintendent and the Board of Education. As Ingersoll (2003) said the “diagnosis” and “prescriptions” regarding teacher shortages are not in recruitment but in retention, which I submit may be enhanced through attending to new teacher and administrator accounts of successful novice teacher/first administrator relationships. It is the first solo flight itself that must be supported in order to insure both retention *and* success for novice teachers.

Therefore, the purpose of this narrative inquiry has been to examine the perceptions of novice teachers and administrators concerning the support and nurture of novice teachers through the often difficult years of beginning to teach by seeking out the storied exemplars of successful novice teacher/first administrator relationships which help to increase teacher retention giving those novice teachers their most valuable asset: time to experience.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONTEXT

### Risks and Opportunities in Questioning

When new teachers are launched into the classroom for the first time, they leave behind the comfort of the university setting where it was relatively safe to ask questions and even to fail; cooperating teachers and university personnel were there to help pick up the pieces and answer questions. Indeed, they expected some failure and welcomed the opportunity to guide their students at trying something new in their teaching/learning process. But as Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) found “seven studies confirmed the widely held view that the first year of teaching is a culture shock for beginning teachers,” and “most found teaching more difficult than they thought it would be” (p. 158). But where could they turn, when as Flores (2001) found, every respondent in her study “claimed that there was not a supportive atmosphere at school and that working relationships among staff were not effective” (p. 142)? And why did so many believe they were flying solo?

For many the first clue that questions might not be answered came in the induction time before school began. According to Johnson and Kardos (2002) it is not unusual for beginning teachers to be disappointed in their orientation program; many are given nothing more than information about the district and the union but nothing that would indicate that substantial support would be available for the day-to-day routine of actual teaching. When the induction does not encourage questions, new teachers are in danger of believing that perhaps they should not ask questions. Panic followed by discouragement sets in when they realize as Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, and Peske (2002) conclude “that they lacked ready access to resources that might enhance their own

subject knowledge, and that their private knapsack of instructional strategies was virtually empty,” and they feel “pressure to teach something but were not sure just what that something was or how they should do it” (p. 291). This study found that instead of turning to colleagues or administrators:

These anxious novices searched the Internet, eavesdropped on conversations to discover what other teachers did, photocopied frantically, spent hours preparing handouts, scoured library shelves for relevant background reading, and spent their own money on materials that would help them get by for a day or a week. (p. 291)

Halford (1998), who acknowledges teaching as the “profession that eats its young” (p. 33), reports novice teachers, who know they are on probation, fear that seeking assistance will be seen as a sign of incompetence, and Rust (1994) found that even if support services appear to be available, novice teachers may be embarrassed to ask for help.

Bullough and Baughman (1995) explain that one major difference between “expert” teachers and novice teachers is the willingness to “work at the upper edge of their competence” and to “push boundaries ever outward” (p. 461). However, when there is “no risk-taking, no boundary-pushing, there is no possibility of developing expertise” (p. 473). Yet, much of the research already discussed shows the novice works merely to survive for the day or the week, ever fearful of failure or the appearance thereof. Bullough and Baughman (1995) concluded that professional development and teaching expertise is often thought of as “a state of being, when clearly it is more a matter of becoming, of pushing back boundaries here and there, and

as energy is made available for identifying and confronting new and more complicated problems” (p. 474). When Schmidt and Knowles (1995) examined the experiences of four women who believed themselves to have failed at beginning teaching, they found that the women believed there were no alternatives, and because they “attempted to please nearly everyone around them, ‘who they wanted to be’ was generally submerged to their desire to be what they perceived others expected them to be” (p. 439). They were not able to push against boundaries or to take risks, and, consequently, they lost sight of themselves and who they were as professionals and as individuals within the profession.

“Pushing against boundaries” and “risk-taking” sound more like learning assumptions than teaching assumptions. How much of the fear of failure, the unwillingness to take risks, and the isolation is the result of confused assumptions, assumptions that forget that teachers are learners? As teachers we urge our students to set high goals and stretch toward them, to take risks with a willingness to fail; after all, we remind our students how Abraham Lincoln lost far more elections than he won, and Thomas Edison knew over 100 substances that did not make good light filaments before he happened upon the one that worked. As teachers, shouldn’t we be modeling such inquiry in our practices? Yet we expect, or at least give the impression that we expect, perfection from our novice teachers. Is the problem a real problem or a perceived problem? Either way the result is the same—fearful teachers who do not ask questions or take learning risks, and we must find and work toward the solution, toward making schools safe and friendly places for teacher learning. So I ask: what boundaries do we need to press against as administrators and veteran teachers? What

“upper edges” of our competencies need to be transcended in order to provide an environment where teachers are also free to be learners?

As veteran teachers and administrators, we may forget that “new teachers are exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of unsupportive workplace conditions; precisely because of never having taught before, they lack the resources and tools to deal with the frustrations of the workplace” (Weiss, 1999, p. 869). However, eventually frustration must be relieved or eliminated. Perhaps there are ways to relieve or eliminate the stress that led to the frustration without eliminating the source, which appears to be the only way out for so many of our young teachers. Weiss (1999) suggests “creating a genuine dialogue between teachers themselves and between teachers and administrators” (p. 871) as a part of the solution, creating a school climate or culture that supports and allows for teacher independence, which is one of the most important factors in teacher job satisfaction and retention.

This narrative inquiry specifically examines what novice teachers themselves perceive as their own needs and what they expect of their first administrators as well as what administrators perceive to be novice teacher needs and what they are finding works in meeting the unique needs of novice teachers on their staffs. Current literature suggests several areas of novice teacher expectations and presents possible administrative responses to those expectations.

#### Teacher Expectations

Johnson and Kardos (2002) describe effective principals as being “visibly engaged in both the daily life of the school and the professional work of the teachers” (p. 16); these administrators focus on helping teachers with professional goals and

foster a “professional culture in which teachers were collectively responsible for student and teacher learning” (p. 16). Sargent (2003) stresses the importance of the principal being involved in new teacher workshops before school starts and in the process of mentoring over the first three years. The mentoring can be done by a veteran teacher, but it must include the administrator. Menchaca (2003) warns that a mentor program “has the potential to affect teacher retention, improve the attitudes and instructional strategies of novice teachers and provide professional growth opportunities for the mentor teachers” (p. 26), and it can even be effective in recruitment, but “its success will depend upon how well it is supported by principals. Enthusiasm and support by principals for the program must be evident” (p. 26). Novice teachers are telling us “they do want their principals’ support, encouragement, and appreciation” (Williams, 2003, p. 73); they say that “the respect and support of administrators” were key to their satisfaction (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 23), and “the feeling of being supported and nurtured is very important for novice teachers” (Menchaca, 2003, p. 26). In summary, novice teachers respond best to administrators who are visible, accessible, and involved.

#### Administrative Response

Teachers, the novice as well as the veteran, deserve supervision that promotes professional and personal growth; however, the current paradigm usually falls short in that annual visits and follow up conferences fit neatly into a formula for administrators but often provide little in the way of practical, lasting change in teaching and learning. Leaders who seek to influence change of this kind must be what Heller (2004) calls “keeper[s] of the vision” (p. 89). Sergiovanni (1996) says it

is the leader's primary responsibility to get the vision conversation started and keep it going. He explains that this leadership is "not authoritarian in the sense that it is exercised simply because principals have more power than teachers or students, but it is authoritative. Its legitimacy comes in part from the virtuous responsibilities associated with the principal's role, and in part from the principal's obligation to function as the head follower of the school's moral compact" (p. 93). Since what happens in classrooms is what determines how well the vision of the school is or is not accomplished, I chose to look at curriculum leadership and at the teacher/administrator relationship not as formula but as possibility—for teachers and their administrators and ultimately for students. I submit that possibilities in administrative leadership is the middle ground between the unique needs of the novice teacher and what support the administrator is able to provide—it is in the conversations that examine and live between where we are and where we want to be.

#### Complexity and Process as Operating Assumptions

Within the notions of teaching/learning and leading in education, I find value in complexity and process; therefore restoring complexity and process to teaching/learning is a pervasive operating assumption under girding this inquiry. Complexity refers to the given intersections across the social, cultural, political, and personal attitudes that infuse classrooms. Process refers to the work of learning as demanding participation and engagement. Complexity and process, as givens within every teaching situation, explain why so many teachers view what they do as more art than science. For example, when Williams (2003) asked veteran teachers why they stayed in the profession, she found that the teachers she interviewed described



teaching as “an art that offers endless opportunities for creativity and personal expressions” (p. 72). Darling-Hammond (1997) reports that 65% of the teachers in one of her studies “characterized teaching more as an art than a science, suggesting that although there are important principles of good teaching, creativity and judgment are always needed” (p. 71). Others have also described teaching as more art than science (Barone, 1983; Eisner, 1979; Grumet, 1993; May, 1993). The art of teaching and learning is a complex undertaking that often leaves the novice teacher unequipped for the task.

Grumet (1993) explains that “the art of teaching recognizes that each student brings a history of relation to each classroom moment and engages that history in learning” (p. 207). May (1993) says that students have “minds of their own and experiences in/of this world” and that “our primary task is to learn from them so that we may teach well” (p. 210). Learners at all stages in life are the same. Novice teachers each bring their own lives, their own histories within them as they move from the university to their own classrooms for the first time, and none of that history includes personal responsibility for a classroom of students and all that means from August until May. For this reason, those histories create the boundaries which Bullough and Baughman (1995) say must be continuously pushed against, but the assignment is complex and risky at best. According to Darling-Hammond (1997), in order to be successful with students, teachers “need to work in schools that are responsive to students, that foster relationships and that support teacher learning” (p. 32). Administrators, as instructional leaders, are key players in creating schools that are not only responsive to students but to the adults who work with them and in

leading novice teachers toward taking the risks necessary to push against those boundaries. This inquiry sought out the storied exemplars of novice teachers—of how they successfully pushed against the boundaries—and of administrators who have worked with novice teachers for the purpose of seeking a deeper understanding of how the relationships of novice teachers and their first administrators affect novice teacher retention and personal and professional development.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

### Methodological Approach: Narrative Inquiry

Much has been written concerning the problem of novice teacher needs and the difficulties they face in their first years of teaching. Administrators, veteran teachers, educational researchers, and those who work with preservice teachers all have a stake in making these “decisive” years less frustrating and more productive both professionally and personally. However, I find the literature lacks the specific stories of novice teachers and their first administrators as they work through different perspectives to solve a common problem. This narrative inquiry provides those stories as well as exemplars of novice teacher struggles and administrator support. These stories do provide what Barone and Eisner (1997) assert will lead to understanding; they explain that “personal experiences among humans differ and that these differences need not be seen as liabilities but as rich sources from which we can learn to experience qualities of the world that we might not otherwise encounter” (p. 85). For this reason I chose narrative inquiry—to seek out the storied accounts that lead to understanding and meaning within the experience of the unique novice teacher/first administrator relationship. As Barone and Eisner (1997) explain “meaning is achieved as *portions* of the world are construed and organized, and the representation of that world is composed into a telling document” (p. 85). Thus complexity and process are integral to the narrative whole created through this process.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) make the case that narrative inquiry examines “portions of the world” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 85) and is based on the

professional knowledge of teachers, which is often discounted. They contend that “it is not only an understanding of teacher knowledge and the education of teachers that will make a difference but attention to the professional knowledge context in which teachers live and work” (p. 24). The novice teachers and administrators who participated in this inquiry were asked to reflect upon the personal experiences that have developed into personal, practical, professional knowledge for each of them as they navigated the first years of teaching or worked with those who were on that journey. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explain, “the educational importance of [narrative inquiry] brings theoretical ideas about the nature of human life as lived to bear on educational experience as lived” (p. 134). Seeking just such a result, my research examined storied accounts of the perceptions and tensions novice teachers experience as well as the tensions and perceptions of administrators concerning meeting needs of novice teachers for the purpose of making meaning and developing understanding of the teacher/administrator relationship and the mutual role of the teacher and the administrator in teacher development and, therefore, in student learning.

Teaching is a complex task, which requires what Yinger (1990) calls “learning the language of practice” that entails “learning to think and behave in ways appropriate to the demands of teaching” (p. 293). He asserts that this language of practice cannot be learned “until beginning teachers actually engage in teaching” (p. 293). Further he warns that “as a result of classroom experience the novice teacher may become knowledgeable of the general case, the theory, or the rule, but be unaware of how these ideas get worked out in practice” (p. 296). Greene (1984) says,

“Teachers work in multiple contexts, ranging from the immediate contexts of their classrooms to the larger context of political and social life” (p. 283). I submit that this complexity also makes educational research complex as well, and although some critics may label narrative inquiry as therapy (Conle, 2000), it is the complexity within the field of education that lends itself to a variety of research techniques, including narrative inquiry. And as Carter (1993) aptly explains:

For many of us . . . these stories capture, more than scores or mathematical formulae ever can, the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences as teachers and the complexity of our understanding of what teaching is and how others can be prepared to engage in their profession. (p. 5)

The complexity of the teacher/administrator relationship is even more difficult for novice teachers to negotiate since they are experiencing this relationship in a new way for the first time. This relationship is markedly different from their relationship with university supervisors and cooperating teachers from preservice teaching, and most often the only administrators with whom they have interacted were their own K-12 principals who were, all too often, distant, authority figures. Carter (1993) explains that “stories become a way . . . of capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal” (p. 60), which has led to narrative accounts or stories becoming relevant in contemporary educational research as a means of giving voice to those who are often unheard (Creswell, 2002; Carter, 1993). This narrative inquiry sought out the stories of novice teachers and administrators that would exemplify the successful support of novice teachers by their first administrators as they navigate the rough waters of those first few years for the

purpose of gaining insight and understanding of the phenomena that are associated with this vulnerable relationship as it leads to retention or attrition, success or failure, for the next generation of K-12 teachers.

The literature on narrative inquiry does acknowledge potential weaknesses in the design. Carter (1993) outlines “two essential flaws” (p. 8) in explaining that some have argued that because the stories are so personal, they are significant only to the writer and that the use of narrative design “endows their stories with an authenticity that is simply unwarranted” (p. 8). Creswell (2002) acknowledges that because the narratives are re-storied, they could become distorted and, therefore, not relevant or representative at all. According to Creswell (2002) the depth of collaboration can be seen as a weakness by those who might discount the design because of this connection. However, Creswell (2002) says others view this close collaboration as a strength in that it helps teachers to tell their stories, which might actually “help reduce a commonly held perception by educators that research is distinct from practice and has little practical application; they “give ‘voice’ and identity to educators” (p. 531). Giving voice to these, the newest teachers, therefore, seems most appropriate. As the researcher, however, I have committed myself to be cognizant of the trust placed in me by participants and to carefully attend to the ethics of process throughout the inquiry: utilizing pseudonyms for all names, conducting member checks and asking for feedback regarding the narratives being constructed, and communicating and honoring the rights of participants to withdraw words, stories, and themselves from the narrative inquiry as it progressed.

*The researcher in narrative inquiry.* I find that I must, as Reinharz (1992) suggests, acknowledge “the researcher’s position right up front” (p. 263). This inquiry grew out of the personal quest, which brought me to doctoral studies in the first place. I found, as a new administrator, that I was as much of a novice as the novice teachers on my staff; their questions became my questions—I may have answered most of those questions for myself along the way, but I struggled with how to help them find answers without giving them mine. Although other research methods might discourage such personal involvement, Reinharz (1992) asserts that “personal experience can be the very starting point of a study, the material from which the researcher develops questions, and the source for finding people to study” (p. 260). She says we should “not think of objectivity and subjectivity as warring with each other, but rather as serving each other” and admits distrust of researchers who seem to be “hiding” or who “do not know how important personal experience is” (p. 263).

As a teacher, albeit far from a novice, and more recently a school administrator, I have repeatedly seen myself in the narratives uncovered from either perspective. As Connelly and Clandinin (1999) explain, “it is not enough to write a narrative; the author needs to understand the meanings of the narrative and its significance for others and for social issues” (p. 138). My challenge, therefore, has been to allow the objectivity and subjectivity to serve not only each other but the narratives and their significance for administrators, for novice teachers, for teacher educators, and for myself.

## Data Collection

*Permission.* Before beginning research, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln for the research. (See Appendix A.) To obtain individual participant permission an Informed Consent Form (See Appendix B) was included in the questionnaire mailing.

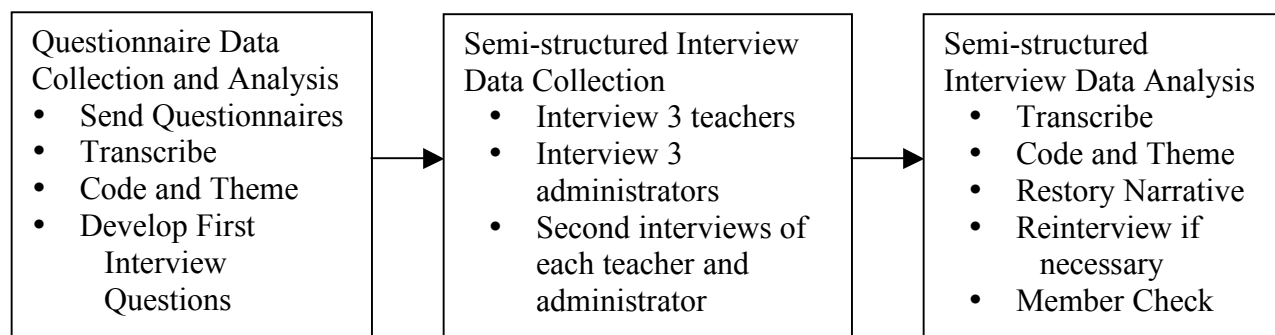
*Participants.* Twenty novice teachers in their second to fifth year of experience and 17 administrators who had worked with novice teachers were recruited as volunteers from 20 public and private school districts of varying sizes across three Midwestern states. Superintendents and principals were contacted by letter and follow up phone calls to introduce the inquiry and recruit participants. These administrators either distributed the information to their novice teachers asking them to contact me if they were interested in participation, or they sent me a list of potential participants and contact information. As this research began in the fall of the year, I did not invite the participation of first-year teachers as their experience would be so new, not having moved through an entire year, that they would not have had the opportunity to experience everything that might or might not be offered to them during that first year of teaching. I chose to cut teaching experience off at the fifth year because the literature suggests that for most the decision to leave or stay is made by the end of the fifth year. The only qualification for administrator participants was that they had worked with novice teachers. Novice teachers and administrators interviewed did not work in the same schools.

*Data collection.* Mills (2003) suggests that questionnaire followed by interview is a productive way to gather qualitative data when interviewees who “have



provided written feedback that warrants further investigation” are chosen from respondents (p.63). My data was collected in this two-step process of questionnaire and interview. The first step included two author-designed, open-ended questionnaires one of which focused on the perceptions of the novice teachers and one of which focused on perceptions of administrators concerning novice teacher needs and the administrator role in meeting those needs. (See Appendix C). Sixteen of the 20 novice teacher questionnaires were returned. One had to be eliminated because the teacher did not sign the Informed Consent Form even after a second attempt to obtain the signature. All 17 of the administrator questionnaires were returned. Each questionnaire was given a participant number and transcribed into like format, leaving a wide right margin for comments and themes. Each was then read noting themes for individual questionnaires. The questionnaires were then grouped as novice teacher or administrator, read again, and highlighted in color code to designate dominant themes within each group. Finally, the two groups were compared to determine if the dominant themes from each group were the same. These dominant themes were then used to create the open-ended follow up interview questions. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Data Collection and Analysis



After the questionnaires were coded and themed, they were reviewed to determine which participants might represent the voices within each group. Three administrators and three novice teachers were then selected from the participants who had agreed to be interviewed and were invited to participate in the interview part of the inquiry. After eliminating questionnaires from participants who had not agree to be interviewed, I also eliminated both teacher and administrator questionnaires that were returned in checklist format in favor of those who had been more articulate in describing their experiences. Then, since I sought positive examples and stories of a successful novice teacher/administrator relationship, I chose to eliminate the participants who indicated difficult relationships, even though their stories are of equal importance, because they did not exemplify my focus.

With this thought in mind, three administrators were chosen from the remaining administrators quite quickly as they were clearly richer detail and example, which resulted in more curiosity in me as the researcher to know the rest of their stories. Teachers were harder to identify as none of them had been as detailed as the administrators. Finally, I chose three who also seemed to represent the voices within their group, but who had alluded to personal stories of struggle, nurture, and success, which I hoped would lead to specific narratives. I was not disappointed. One teacher questionnaire was of particular interest to me because the author who was in her third year of teaching indicated that she had not been supported in her first year, but she had changed schools and was having a more positive experience. I invited her to join the interviewees because of this unique perspective. I discovered during the first interview of one of the other teachers that she had also had a negative experience in

her first school and had left. Although I do not focus on the negative experiences, these teachers did provide rich contrast in experience, and I found since they were able to provide both positive and negative examples of events that have shaped them as educators, my research was enhanced.

The first interviews, which grew directly out of the questionnaire responses, were between 60 to 90 minutes each. Originally I planned to interview each participant one time before I began second round interviews with anyone because I wanted to meet everyone and have input from everyone before I developed the second round of interview questions, which were a mixture of common themes and individual follow up; however one novice teacher participant was unavailable for an interview for several months after the first interviews were conducted. The other teacher participants and two administrators had been interviewed twice before his interview, which was longer than other first interviews and included the second round questions making a second interview unnecessary. One administrator was also only interviewed one time. All interviews were conducted during non-school hours, not on school grounds, and at the convenience of the participants. The interviews were of a semi-structured design to prompt conversation and generate personal, lived, storied accounts for the purpose of giving voice to novice teachers and administrators concerning their unique relationship and how it affects novice teacher retention and personal and professional teacher development. Two teacher participants were asked to clarify personal accounts during the writing phase.

The final step before each story made its way into the dissertation was to take it back to the participants for a member check to be sure I had captured not only the words spoken but the true essence of the event(s).

*Ethical issues.* Participants were assured that all data would be kept strictly confidential. Each was asked to sign the Informed Consent Form, which was mailed with the cover letter and the questionnaire, and return it with the questionnaire. (See Appendix B.) These forms explained the nature and purpose of the study. Participants were assured that their information would be held in strictest confidence and only pseudonyms would be used. Audiotapes of interviews were destroyed after the researcher completed the transcription. Interviews were conducted at times and places that were convenient for the participants during non-school hours. All data will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the dissertation. Narratives were shared with participants on an ongoing basis. This dissertation will remain as permanent documentation.

### Data Analysis

As questionnaires were returned each was examined for emerging themes. Teacher questionnaires and administrator questionnaires were then examined in groups to compare question by question and in total to determine common themes across the respondents, and the two groups were cross referenced to see if themes were consistent from the two perspectives. Six consistent themes emerged from both novice teacher and administrator questionnaires: emotional needs and social needs, mentors or peer support, classroom management including discipline, time management and planning or curricular needs, culture or specific school procedures,

and an involved, accessible, available, easy-to-talk-with administrator. These themes were then used to develop the first semi-structured interviews.

The first interviews with each of the six interview participants were conducted over an eight week period in late fall and early winter and were transcribed as soon after the interview as possible. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed by the researcher. (See Figure 1). Again each interview was coded and themed paying particular attention to stories that provided examples of the emerging themes and to aid in developing direction of the second interviews. Although the second and third round of interviews were more personal in nature, examining personal accounts, the first administrator interviews and the first teacher interviews were examined both within their own groups and together for the purpose of identifying new themes that might be developing and to determine continuance of themes recognized in the initial questionnaire data.

Transcriptions of interviews were written in narrative form or “restoried,” which Creswell, (2002) describes as “the process in which the researcher gathers stories, analyzes them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrites the story to place it in a chronological sequence” (p. 528). Restorying is necessary because when we tell stories we often do not tell them chronologically and the researcher “provides a causal link among ideas” (p. 528) discovered during analysis. In addition to the narratives or stories, the data is discussed in relation to the research literature giving voice, meaning, and understanding to the relationships examined. In this way a reflexive approach to data analysis is considered essential, operating both inductively and deductively

throughout (Usher, 1996), providing a means to address the interface between the narrative data collected and its interpretations. Inductively data-based themes were incorporated and deductively literature based themes were incorporated into the storied accounts.

These stories provide what Carter (1993) calls “situated or storied knowledge” of teaching, informing how I saw this narrative inquiry developing (p.7). Carter (1993) explains:

Expert teachers, in other words, have a rich store of situated or storied knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks, and students’ understandings and intentions. Novices, who lack this situated knowledge, often struggle to make sense of classroom events, and in this struggle, their knowledge is shaped in fundamental ways, that is, their stories are formed. A focus on events, therefore, is likely to capture a fundamental process going on as novices learn to teach. (p. 7)

This narrative inquiry sought out the stories of these novice teachers and of administrators who work with novice teachers during the time they are struggling and finding their way through the newness of the complex tasks of planning instruction and of classroom interactions and of learning to recognize and to tell their own lived stories.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

## Questionnaire Responses

Sixteen of the 20 novice teacher questionnaires and all 17 of the administrator questionnaires were returned for an overall return rate of 89.2%. (One returned novice teacher questionnaire was eliminated because the teacher did not sign the Informed Consent Form even after a second attempt to have it signed, resulting in 86.5% returned and used.) Novice teachers were in their second to fifth year of teaching. Four were in the second year, 4 in the third year, 1 in the fourth year, and 6 in the fifth year. (See Figure 2.)

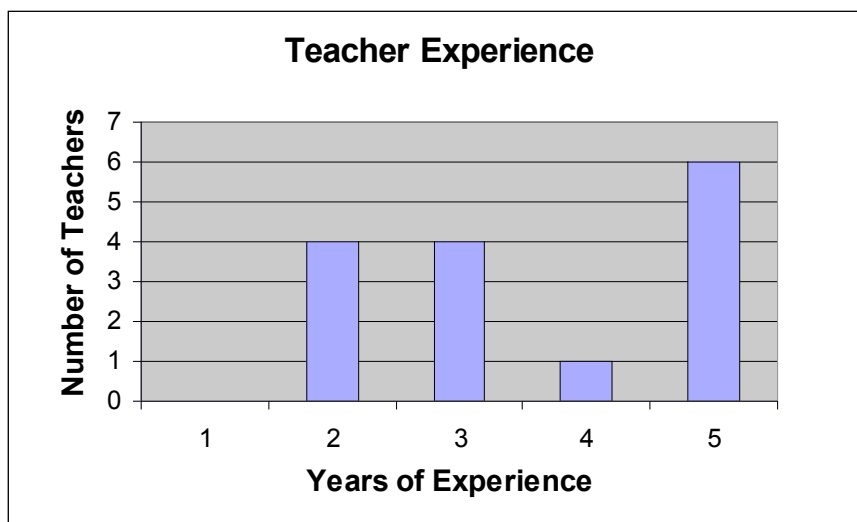


Figure 2: Novice teacher experience.

They teach in a variety of situations: 5 in K-6 schools, 3 in 6-8 schools, 3 in 6-12 schools, 2 in 9-12 schools, and 2 in K-12 schools. (See Figure 3.)

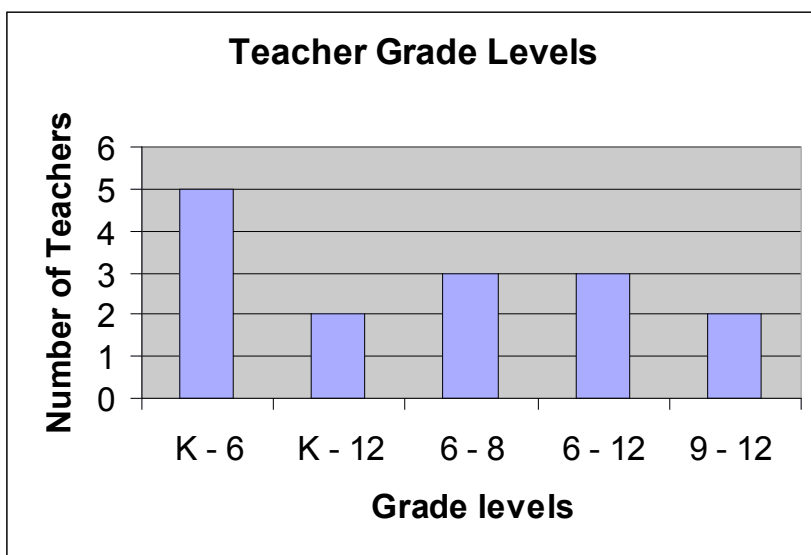


Figure 3: Novice teacher grade levels.

Administrators reported 3 to 38 years of experience in administration: 2 with 1-5 years, 4 with 6-10 years, 3 with 11-15 years, 4 with 16-20 years, and 4 with more than 20 years of experience in administration. (See Figure 4.)

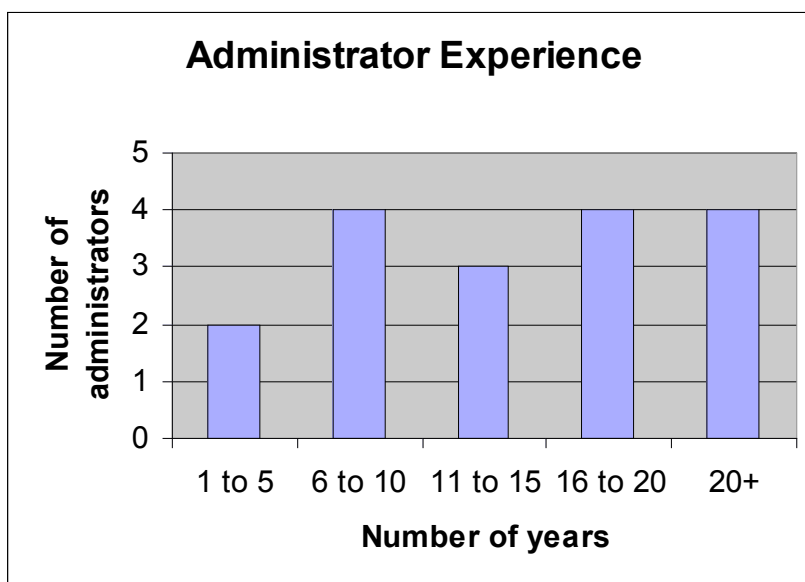


Figure 4: Administrator Experience



They work with teachers at a variety of grade levels: 7 in K-8, 5 in K-12, 2 in 6-12, and 3 in 9-12. (See Figure 5.)

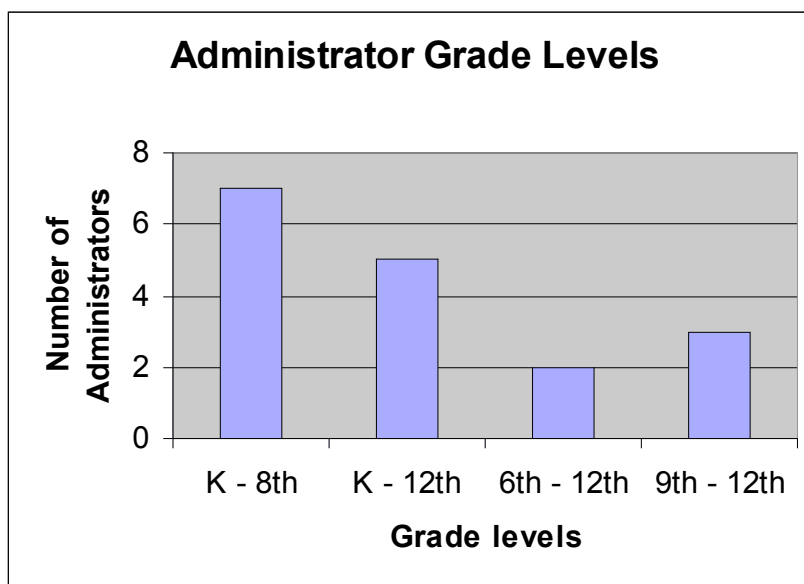


Figure 5: Administrator grade levels.

### Emerging Themes

Six themes emerged as the questionnaires were examined both as separate sets and together. These novice teachers and administrators confirmed what current literature states as novice teacher needs. The dominant themes were emotional needs and social needs; someone to talk to or a mentor; classroom management including discipline; culture or specific school procedures; time management, planning, understanding curriculum, and administrator support.

*Emotional needs and social needs:* In her examination of a New Jersey school where novice teachers were recruited and nurtured in an environment where their special needs were understood and met, Sargent (2003) found a school culture that not only offered meaningful professional development but provided “a social

setting in which teachers enjoy working” (p. 45). Even new teachers in this environment were able to “form relationship that will tie them to the school for years to come” (p. 45). When novice teachers form relationships with veterans on their first staffs, they benefit from years of teaching experience as well as life experience. They are nurtured through discipline problems and instructional disasters as well as through learning to balance life outside the classroom with the extensive demands of teaching. The veteran teacher is also encouraged and energized by the fresh, innovative ideas the novice brings to the relationship. This type of culture, where veteran and novice are simultaneously learning and growing as respected colleagues, is what Johnson and Kardos (2002) refer to as integrated professional cultures.

The questionnaires used in this inquiry were open ended and resulted in a variety of responses from both teachers and administrators; however, many comments referred to these emotional needs or social needs. Five teachers made clear references to emotional needs or social needs referring to affirmation and encouragement they received or did not receive. They made comments like: “. . . my whole staff was amazing in helping me along. . .” (teacher #5 questionnaire) and “I was also scared of the first day of school” (teacher #14 questionnaire). One said, “I found that the more I had people letting me know that I was on the right track and doing the right things for students, the more confident I became . . .” (teacher #16 questionnaire). In response to what her needs had been during the first year, one high school teacher said, “Everything! . . . emotional support from the staff throughout the year. In many ways they were my lifeline” (teacher #6 questionnaire). One of the novice teachers whom I later interviewed said, “At my first school, I really had a lot of pressure to be perfect”;

she also confessed that at that school she “always felt like an outsider” (teacher #15 questionnaire). These experiences were part of the reason she left. In her first interview she said she knew teaching should not be like this because her mother had been a teacher for over 30 years, and she had several friends who were teachers (interview, teacher #15, 12-30-05). These comments led to one of the first round interview questions that I asked of both the novice teachers and the administrators. In the next chapter, I will discuss their responses concerning what there is about teaching that creates this need for emotional support and connection.

Administrators are apparently aware of this important need since 9 of the 17 administrator participants specifically mentioned emotional needs or social needs and others included phrases that could be interpreted as recognition of this need such as “come along side”, “confident they have administrative support”, and “find a ‘nitch’ in the community.” In fact, it was often the case that administrators were able to articulate this need even more effectively than the novice teachers. One said, “Novice teachers tend to be more insecure and thus need more encouragement and feedback” (administrator # 3 questionnaire). Another said, “They are overwhelmed by the complexity and detail of their assignment. They need lots of support right away in the beginning of the year” (administrator # 6 questionnaire). A K-12 administrator said she tries to “welcome and ‘protect’ [novice teachers] to a degree” (administrator #15 questionnaire). One of the administrators I later interviewed expounded on or touched on emotional needs or social needs in nearly every question. One comment he made on his questionnaire was:

One of the most important needs of a novice teacher is to receive emotional support. In order to be successful, new staff members need to build relationships with co-workers so that they can become colleagues.

Relationships are friendly first, professional second. When an individual is emotionally secure and happy, they are more likely to be effective in their professional tasks. (administrator # 1 questionnaire)

His questionnaire was clearly an example of what Mills (2003) said “warrants further investigation” (p.63). I will introduce this administrator and other interview participants in more detail in the next chapter.

*A mentor or someone to talk to.* Mentors for new staff have become so common that I am surprised to find a school that does not have a formal mentor program. Much has been written, and many studies have been conducted concerning the benefit of mentors not only to novice teachers but to veterans who switch schools. However, Wong (2004) explains “there is confusion and misuse of the words mentoring and induction. The two terms are not synonymous . . . . Mentoring is an action. It is what mentors do” (p. 42). He acknowledges that mentors are the most important component of any induction program but that the principal must be personally involved in the process or the program to be successful and that:

What keeps good teachers teaching is structured, sustained, intensive professional development programs that allow new teachers to observe others, to be observed by others, and to be part of networks or study groups where all teachers share together, grow together, and learn to respect each other’s work. (p. 52)

This type of mentoring is becoming more widespread in K-12 education.

Therefore, it is not surprising that novice teachers in my inquiry praised those they considered mentors whether they were formally assigned or simply stepped up and helped them out on a regular basis. Eight of the 15 teacher respondents specifically said they needed support or help from other teachers or someone in their teaching area to talk to. Perhaps because in smaller districts, each specialist is a department unto themselves, the specialists were particularly interested in having others in their field with whom to talk. One high school music teacher said, “I would like to have an experienced music teacher, not in my district (possibly not in my part of the state) so I could have bounced ideas off this person and his or her feelings would not have been hurt” (teacher #8 questionnaire). When asked who helped, one participant said, “The kindergarten teacher and the first grade teacher . . . helped me and gave me ideas on discipline and were just good friends” (teacher #14 questionnaire). These comments also indicate the meeting of the emotional needs and social need as well. Middle school teachers particularly espoused the benefit of being on a team during those early years. A teacher participant who had taught at a K-12 school first and then at a middle school said, “I have an assigned mentor, and I teach on a team—what a difference it sometimes makes to have others with you in things!” (teacher #6 questionnaire). Two specifically mentioned very helpful secretaries, and one of them said the school counselor helped her a lot.

Fifteen of the 17 administrators specifically discussed mentors in their questionnaire responses, and many of them recognize the social and emotional help the mentor provides as well as the professional help. A K-8 administrator said, “We

participate in entry-year assistance programs as well as use a ‘buddy’ system so the novice teacher has someone with experience to ask questions and get guidance from” (administrator #16 questionnaire). A high school administrator who was later interviewed said, “I assign veterans who have similar interests to the new teachers to develop a ‘kinship’” (administrator #10 questionnaire). The elementary principal identified earlier as an interview participant, said, “I am responsible for assigning mentors. I am intentional about selecting building mentors who will take the responsibility seriously and focus on relationships first, job responsibilities second” (administrator #1 questionnaire). Clearly mentors have multiple tasks to perform. Two administrators even said they assigned two veteran teachers to work with each novice.

*Classroom management and discipline.* Classroom management is often difficult for novice teachers. Menchaca (2003) warns that “novice teachers often step into a classroom afraid and unsure of how to manage a classroom effectively. Many questions run through their minds” (p. 25). As mentioned above, one of the novice teacher participants in this inquiry expressed fear of the first day of school.

Novice teacher participants in this inquiry said they struggled with classroom management. One elementary music teacher said she needed help “creating an effective classroom management plan” (teacher #3 questionnaire). A secondary English teacher said, “Classroom management was often trial and error” (teacher #6 questionnaire). Another teacher said he needed help with classroom discipline and then corrected himself by saying, “better yet, classroom management” (teacher #5 questionnaire).

Here again administrators were better able to articulate this need and seemed to have a grasp on classroom management as more than discipline; their comments prompted questions for the interviews, which will be discussed later. Their comments on the questionnaire included, “Novice teachers typically have poor classroom management skills. Many are willing to sacrifice rigor for affirmation . . .” (administrator #8 questionnaire), and novice teachers lack “knowledge regarding how to interact with/discipline students” (administrator #14 questionnaire). Sixteen questionnaires mentioned classroom management or discipline skills, 4 novice teachers and 12 administrators.

*Culture or specific school procedures.* Perhaps the most difficult of new teacher needs to pin down is assimilation into the school culture and the community, which reflects both the emotional and social needs discussed above and the need to become a part of and understand the local school culture. Colley (2002) charges the school principal with being the “culture builder”; yet, she admits that “because school culture remains largely unwritten and informal, new teachers often find themselves frustrated by their inability to grasp this elusive norm” (p. 23). As Colley (2002) suggests, knowing the history, traditions, legends, and myths of a school do help a newcomer, whether a novice or a veteran, become a part of the culture. However, school culture runs deeper and involves more than shared experiences and stories. As Feiman-Nemser (2003) says, “For the novice, the questions are unending” (p. 26), everything is new, and, unfortunately, life for the “beginning teacher revolves around several themes: reality shock, the lonely struggle to survive, and a loss of idealism”, and as they try to make sense of school and schooling, teaching and learning, the attitudes, behaviors, and values

of veteran teachers on the staff have a profound influence on the development of “new teachers’ professional stance and practice” (p. 27). For this reason Feiman-Nemser warns that:

Keeping new teachers in teaching is not the same as helping them become good teachers. To accomplish the latter, we must treat the first years of teaching as a phase in learning to teach and surround new teachers with a professional culture that supports teacher learning. (p. 25)

And the influencers of culture must recognize the unique needs of beginning teachers. Zimmerman (2003) reminds us that “when you are new to teaching, everyone is a stranger. You have entered a school community that has a history of social dynamics and relationship that does not include you” (p. 76). A major danger is the isolation Halford (1998) exemplifies in her chronicle of Julia and her first teaching position. However, if as Weiss (1999) states, the conditions of the first workplace “may leave an indelible imprint on the structure and quality of teaching itself” (p. 862), what conditions of culture should we strive for in our schools, and how do we incorporate the beginning teacher into the culture in a positive, productive way?

Five novice teachers in this inquiry expressed concerns about learning how things were done in the school where they were working. They wondered about traditions, rules, and procedures. A high school band instructor found it difficult to learn, “traditions that are in place for different band activities such as chair placements, parade participation, etc.” (teacher #8 questionnaire). An elementary art teacher said novice teachers need to “understand the rules and guidelines of a particular school or staff” and that she “needed to be informed of when and where and



how to do things like copies, laminations, schedules etc.” (teacher #7 questionnaire).

Five administrators also listed culture or school expectations and novice teachers, but they were not as specific.

*Time management, planning, and understanding curriculum.* Freiberg (2002) groups the instructional needs of new teachers into three categories: organizational strategies, instructional strategies, and assessing strategies. He suggests that administrators provide organized, continued mentoring and staff development in these areas over the first two or three years of the first position. Everything suggested here has already been introduced during pre-service preparation at the university and perhaps even tried out during practicum or preservice teaching, but new teachers need support as they seek to work out theory they have learned at the university and in their preservice teaching as they build the infrastructure and lay the groundwork for what will become their daily practice in their own classrooms.

During pre-service experiences, university teacher education programs typically provide examples of organizational strategies that Freiberg (2002) explains include planning, lesson design, time use, and classroom management. The problem arises when the novice sets out alone because these “organizing strategies are hidden from most classroom observations” (p. 57) given that the pre-service teacher often observes the outcomes of effective planning and years of experience with students. Therefore, new teachers often spend many more hours planning than veteran teachers do because *everything* is new to them (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Freiberg, 2002). As Freiberg (2002) points out veteran teachers are able to “make decisions on the basis of learner, content, and context” (p. 57); they consider their students, the concepts, and

the conditions of instruction in ways that novice teachers cannot because new teachers “lack knowledge about and experience with students, curriculum, pedagogy, and the daily routines of school” (Johnson & Kardos, 2002, p. 14). Although the more informed decision making process may come with time, the novice needs support from mentors and administrators to facilitate its development in a more systematic way, both to alleviate frustration, which leads to attrition and to increase students’ learning by enhancing teacher learning.

Planning and timing of lessons as well as guidelines for curriculum were sources of frustration and concern for eight of the novice teachers who responded to the questionnaires in this inquiry. These concerns ranged from the tremendous amount of time it took them to plan lessons to the unpredictability of how long what they planned would actually take during class time to how to actually be sure content was covered over the course of the year. A middle school math teacher said, “It would have been nice to have more time, as all teachers would say, but it is really difficult the first years to do lesson planning, homework, etc, and kept the students’ best interests in mind” (teacher #16 questionnaire). But a high school English teacher summed it up best when she said, “I was often doing good just to keep my head above water. I needed more time, more preparation, and more mentoring . . .” (teacher #6 questionnaire). The teacher quoted earlier as saying she was afraid of the first day of school that first year, said “It was hard to figure out how to time things out for lesson planning,” and she had difficulty “making sure I got everything accomplished during the day that was needed without too much time left” (teacher #14 questionnaire). Two teachers acknowledged what Reynolds (1995) refers to as a need to see the

bigger picture. The middle school math teacher above also wanted “time to discuss the overview of the year with a timeline in order to make sure that all goals were achieved and all standards have been met” (teacher #16 questionnaire). Similarly the English teacher above said, “I could plan lessons and units, but not a curriculum that would make sure everything would be adequately covered in the space of a year” (teacher #6 questionnaire).

As with other novice teacher concerns, administrators covered the same topic. In fact nine administrators discussed time management, lesson design, or theory-into-practice in their responses. Perceptive comments included “Novice teachers often have unbridled enthusiasm for what they do, but a poor understanding of fundamentals of quality lesson design” (administrator #8 questionnaire). Others said that needs of novice teachers include “conversion of theory into effective classroom activities/discussions that are productive” (administrator #13 questionnaire) and “presentation of subject matter to make it understandable to students” (administrator #16 questionnaire). And yet they recognize that “expertise in areas of curriculum and standards-based assessment is learned over time and from experience” (administrator #10 questionnaire). They understand that another issues is simply “time management” (administrator #1 questionnaire), particularly “time to reflect and make adjustment for next time” (administrator #7 questionnaire).

*Administrator support.* As the administrator, it is not my personal responsibility to *teach* the teachers all they need to know; that is not possible. However, it is my professional responsibility to provide opportunities for growth and professional development. And as Darling-Hammond (1997) says, “there is no single silver bullet”

that creates conditions in schools, which lead to learning in students, and it follows that there is “no single silver bullet” that works for all novice teachers in all circumstances.

New teacher needs are as varied as the individuals in the roles. However, one thing is certain: new teachers are learners who are just one step from having been students themselves. As such they need leadership that creates a learning environment in which they are free to struggle, to make mistakes, and to reach out with questions.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) says the “creative process starts with a sense that there is a puzzle somewhere, or a task to accomplish” and warns that without the conflict or tension that results, “the creative process is unlikely to start” (p. 95). As mentioned earlier, it is in this tension where the administrator must meet the novice teacher and, as Evans (1996) says, “principals need to provide the same thing for teachers that good teachers give students: real challenges—goals that stretch you, but that you can reach; and real inspiration—encouragement to keep trying no matter what” (p. 289). We do this while knowing that “no matter what” usually means not the certainty of equilibrium but the uncertainty of the tension of still more questioning, more searching, and more uncertainty—even in the successes.

I must admit that since the focus of my inquiry is on the role of the administrator in the nurture and support of novice teachers, the questionnaires were worded in such a way that administrator support was discussed by all participants. For the most part novice teachers who returned the questionnaires were complimentary of their first administrators; however, they were also able to identify other ways their administrators might have helped. Although they may not have used

the exact words, they agreed with the literature already discussed that they appreciated administrators who were visible, accessible, and involved. One said he “answered my questions—always took time for me, never appeared annoyed to answer even the most basic questions” and he “made frequent classroom visits and followed up with a positive email” (teacher #19 questionnaire). Two said they appreciated their principals checking often to see if they needed anything and how they were doing, and four said they had received affirmation from the principal during the first years. Five novice teachers said they were glad their first administrators were easy to talk with, and in contrast one, specifically said it would be nice “to have an administrator who was easy to talk to” (teacher #14 questionnaire).

Most administrator participants indicated they are determined to be visible, accessible, and involved. Many acknowledged the importance of frequent walk-throughs with some form of follow up and/or feedback even if it is short. Comments included: “I make myself viewable in the room many times a day in case advice is needed” (administrator #16 questionnaire); I try to make myself available for questions and make frequent visits to the room” (administrator #7 questionnaire), and “I use lots of walk-throughs combined with formal observation and lots of conversation throughout” (administrator #8 questionnaire). A private school administrator said he made “frequent classroom visits . . . (not to ‘harass’ but to get a full picture of the teacher’s competencies)” and that “accessibility to the administrator for frequent counsel” was also important (administrator #17 questionnaire). One high school principal acknowledged that novice teachers need to have “confidence that they have administrative support” (administrator #5 questionnaire).

## Questionnaires to Interviews

As mentioned above, several administrator questionnaires were quite detailed making it easy to narrow the pool for possible interviewees while teachers were a bit harder to identify. Eventually I invited three administrators and three teachers to participate in the interview stage of the inquiry. Two administrators are secondary principals, one at a large 9-12 high school and one at a smaller 9-12 school. The third is principal of a two-track K-5 school in a mid-sized city. The three teachers include a middle school math teacher, a high school band teacher, and a 7-12 business teacher. These participants work in four districts in a Midwestern state. As a reference for readers, Appendix D contains a summary chart of interview participants.

Comments on questionnaires were instrumental in development of the interview questions. Each interview included several generic questions as well as specific questions generated as a result of that individual questionnaire. Interview questions were stated in such a way as to lead toward narratives of novice teacher nurture and support with specific emphasis on the six themes that emerged during questionnaire analysis. Other questions of explanation were also asked. For example, each participant was asked to define classroom management and to discuss what they thought there is about teaching that brings out such deep emotional or relational needs. These and other questions seemed to be foundational to narratives that might develop during the interviews.

First round interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and resulted in 20 to 25 pages of transcription each. Stories began to develop, which led to the questions for second round interviews which were typically much shorter in duration.

Introductions to these participants and their personal encounters with the nurture and support of novice teachers will be the focus of Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Introduction of Interview Participants

Three novice teachers and three seasoned administrators who work with novice teachers agreed to be interviewed and to share their stories of novice teacher support. The teachers included a young woman who returned to school to pursue a career in teaching high school business after first trying work in the business world herself, a middle school math teacher who had a difficult first year at one school and is enjoying a different experience in a new school district this year, and a very busy second year high school band director. The administrators bring a combined total of 46 years of administrative experience in a large 9-12 high school, a smaller 9-12 high school, and a K-5 elementary school; all were teachers for several years before becoming administrators.

*Michaela.* Michaela grew up in a teacher's home in a midsized Midwestern city but chose business as her profession. She finished her degree in business at the university in her hometown and went to work in a local energy company where she soon realized she was not cut out for the cubicle; she wanted more. After a couple more years at the university, she was technically prepared to teach but found the first year more frustrating than she had expected. She admitted to me that had it not been for the support of her mother and other teachers, especially the business teachers in the high school where her mother taught family and consumer science, she would have quit. After all, she had experienced the business world and knew she was fully capable of earning a living there; however, she also knew that "there was more to teaching" than what she was experiencing in that school (interview, 12-19-05). She



had witnessed the pleasure her mother derived from teaching all her life, and several of her friends had become teachers and were having different experiences from her own. So rather than jump ship as so many do, she found a new school and is progressing and enjoying the support and nurture of not only her administrator but teachers on the staff as well. The contrast between her first year and her second at the new school drew me to invite Michaela to be an interview participant. Although Michaela is in only her third year of teaching, her second school now has a new principal; so she is in the unique situation of working with a third administrator in just three years.

*Jeff.* Jeff is a second-year high school band director in a small Midwestern city with a 9-12 high school of approximately 300 students. He had some experience substituting before he was hired for his first solo teaching job. When he substituted for a K-6 vocal music teacher who was on maternity leave, he gained valuable experience in that he was responsible for the final preparations and the presentation of the spring program, which gave him the opportunity to “work out all the logistics and do all the administrative things *behind* the program to get it to go” (interview, 1-19-06). Jeff did have the advantage of substituting for his predecessor the year before he started at Bentley High; so he experienced the flow of a day in that district before he took over the band the next fall. Jeff was among several specialists to fill out the questionnaire, and I invited him to interview be a voice for those teachers who had indicated some of the same concerns as classroom teachers as well as other concerns.

*Sara.* When I asked Sara to participate in the interview part of the study, I did not know that she had also changed school districts. The first year, Sara taught eighth grade pre-algebra and science on a two-member team in a middle school in the eastern

part of the Midwestern state where she has lived all her life. They saw approximately 50 students each day as a team. She also team taught 70 students in a physical education class and was assistant volleyball coach. After one year, she was able to relocate to the city where she had attended college and where her fiancé lives. Since they plan to be married this summer the move was made for that reason rather than dissatisfaction with her first situation; however, she has found the second school to be more supportive in many ways. She says the “two years have been different in so many ways that it is hard to even relate them—being in different grades in different schools, in different situations” (interview 12-3-05). This year Sara is teaching sixth grade math on a team with four veteran teachers; together they are responsible for approximately 100 students each day. At her interview they joked that together they had 100 years of experience and were excited that Sara would make that 101.

*Wayne.* Wayne has been an elementary principal for 24 years. Before that he taught fifth grade. The transition between teacher and administrator was a time when he was half-time teacher and half-time principal. Over those years Wayne has seen his district grow to the point where the applicant pool is relatively large, and they hire very few first-year teachers; however, many teachers come with only one or two years behind them, thus fitting this inquiry’s definition of novice teacher. Wayne is particularly attuned to the emotional needs and social needs of not only novice teachers but any who are new to his district or even his school. It was his description of some of the things he does for anyone who is new to his school that lead me to believe he might be an excellent interview participant.

*Daniel.* After 16 years as one of the two assistant principals in a Midwestern high school of approximately 1,500 students, Daniel is experiencing his first year as the leader of that team. With nearly 100 certificated staff and several dozen classified staff, he has had many opportunities to work with novice teachers as well as veterans who move in and need to learn the culture and operation of a larger school. Daniel's questionnaire touched on all of the themes that emerged during questionnaire analysis making him an excellent prospect for the interview level of the inquiry

*Mark.* Mark is the high school principal in a district that is different from all the others represented in the study. His district is a school that serves as the hub of multiple small prairie communities who recognized in the 1960's that none of them was able to sustain a quality school district on their own; their solution was Manner School which now educates approximately 1,500 K-12 students. Mark, with only five years of administrative experience, could be considered the representative novice among the administrators interviewed. Yet his questionnaire indicated that he is recognizing the same things as more experienced administrators, which was why I sought out his input with follow-up interviews. He currently works with four novice teachers on his staff: two English teachers, one of whom student taught approximately 10 years ago and then had children and stayed home while they were small; one Spanish teacher, who worked as an interpreter in South America for several years before returning to the United States and going through the new transition program at a state university for those who have worked in the private sector to transition into teaching in minimal time, and one math teacher.

## Recap of Themes

Dominant themes that emerged during questionnaire analysis became the basis for the first round interview questions. (See Appendix E.) Although the initial interviews were similar in content to the emerging themes, they differed according to what had been included on the individual questionnaires. Themes discussed during the interviews were emotional needs and social needs; someone to talk to or a mentor; classroom management to include discipline; culture or specific school procedures; time management, planning, and understanding curriculum, and administrator support. Each of these themes produced a variety of insightful stories both from the novice teachers during their first years of teaching and from the administrators who attempt to make those first years as smooth as possible for novice and new teachers in their schools.

### Emotional Needs and Social Needs

By far the most prominent theme of those discussed in both the questionnaires and the interviews is that teachers have a high need for social and emotional support at work. In fact, discussion of other themes often brought us back to this overarching belief that in order to be successful, novice teachers need emotional support especially in the early years of teaching. Since this theme had been so prevalent even in the questionnaires, I asked each interview participant what they thought it was about teaching that required so much support at work before I asked for their stories of this type of support. Answers often followed the longest pause for thought of any throughout the interviews.

*Rationale for the need.* Having the advantage of observing a teacher for 25 years before she became one herself, Michaela knew that teaching was more than a way to earn a living. She said, “Teaching requires so much time and energy that it is more of a lifestyle than a job. It is a career; education is your field, but it is a lifestyle” (interview 12-29-05). Her mom had always said she had two sets of kids, those at school that changed periodically and Michaela and her brother. It was this emotional connection to work that brought Michaela to teaching from the business world. She realized that if she were going to spend most of her life working, she had to make it count and working in an office just was not doing that for her. But if most of her life were spent working *and* in a work that drew so much out of her, there would have to be connections and attachments at work.

One of the comments that made Jeff’s questionnaire stand out was that one of his greatest needs was simply “to know that I would survive” (teacher #8 questionnaire). I wondered about his choice of words. He explained that this year he thought it would be better because he would have last year to draw on for ideas or just procedures, but he found that as he tried to think about how a particular event had worked the year before, he continually reverted to what happened the year before in student teaching because he had blocked out that first year of teaching. Somehow he had survived, but he had been so overwhelmed with so much happening so fast in the first quarter—three marching contests, five football games, pep band, the parade—that he wasn’t even sure how it had progressed. These extras besides just getting through the day with lesson plans, upset students who preferred their former director and his ways, and daily marching band practices before school is enough to spin heads even among veteran teachers. Of course,

Jeff needed emotional support at school. Student teaching had been a good experience and the long-term substitute situation had added to his confidence, but he was not prepared for things like the last few moments before the band marched onto the field for that first football game, the fruits of his labor on display for nearly the entire town to judge just a week and a half after school started. Even the second year when students were asking him for direction on when to remove their hats and when to sit, he realized he couldn't remember. How did he know? Yes, that sounded good, whatever she had said. He felt isolated and expressed a desire to have a mentor in his own field even if that person were halfway across the state, someone he could call to talk to, someone to bounce ideas off who didn't have an emotional attachment to how this band had always done it, someone to tell him it is a big job, but he can do it.

Sara had said that her most important need was "guidance and reassurance" (teacher #16 questionnaire). During the interview she explained that for her it was a matter of "being a success or being a failure" (interview 12-3-05). She found it difficult to judge if what she was doing would result in success in the long run because she simply wasn't sure she was on the right track. She needed reassurance. But she also needed companionship especially since she had moved halfway across the state to take that first job, and her friends who worked those neatly packaged 8 to 5 jobs with an hour off for lunch just don't understand why she can't run out and grab dinner somewhere or go to the university volleyball game. Other teachers know; they understand; they have been there.

Mark said that he had actually had a conversation with his novice teachers concerning emotional needs and social needs. He says one of the things that is most perplexing about teaching is that it is so unlike any other profession and is hard to

compare to other professions precisely because it *is* so emotional. Perhaps other helping professionals such as doctors and nurses might also understand the emotional connections; however, the nature of teaching differs in the length of time spent with the students. In spite of the fact that we have tried to make teaching quasi-scientific, it remains mostly art and depends so much on relationship. Although education has moved to become more objective and uniform and aligned as we work toward equity in education, one cannot dismiss the fact that education is still basically a teacher in a classroom with kids trying to make things happen through rapport and relationship. And teachers need support to foster resilience so they can give and give and give because it is nearly always just one of you and 30 of them all day in a single room or one of you and 150 of them filing through in fifty-minute intervals all day long, every day, for nine months of the year. During those first years when new teachers come smack up against the magnitude of the task before them, they become vulnerable because they care so much for kids and about what they do, and suddenly they realize it is impossible; yet somehow they must find the precarious balance between maintaining high expectations and doing what is feasible for one person to do. They need relationships with other educators because only other educators understand the fundamental absurdity of that situation, of pushing kids to be and do the very best that they can be and do and then being so excited to see what they have done that you push just a little harder, which, of course, means you spend nights and weekends pouring over those amazing papers and projects.

For Daniel and his district, emotional support begins in the hiring process. Someone is there to meet and greet each applicant; small talk and a tour around the

building allow the applicant to ease into conversation and become accustomed to the surroundings before the heat of the actual interview. Daniel says teaching requires this type of systematic emotional support from the very beginning because teaching is a matter of the heart. Acknowledging that it sounds simplistic, when he is interviewing, he is looking for a people person, someone who will make connections, go to ball games, be able to say to a student, “Hey, I saw you at the concert last night. You really looked like you were enjoying yourself.” All of this can be draining, and this is not even considering the physical and mental exertion involved in the actual teaching part of the job; so it requires refueling by someone else pouring into them, someone else asking how they are doing and offering assistance or a conversation or just a pat on the back.

Wayne explains that the irony of the possibility of an emotional and social vacuum for educators is that we work in such a busy place with lots of people; yet we are in isolated situations much of the time. Others must have a hard time imagining how teachers might feel isolated and alone when they spend their days surrounded by people participating in lively conversations and interactive activity, but it happens unless we are proactive about connections and relationships among the adults who spend so many hours together in this building. Most elementary schools do not have the advantage of team planning like in middle schools or common work rooms where teachers gather during planning periods in high schools. The day is spent in one room with the same kids who go to other teachers for shorter periods of time and usually when all the other children are with their classroom teachers leaving the teacher isolated in the classroom frantically working to get ahead in grading or to prepare for the science demonstration or literature lesson that will take place right after the students return.



*Stories of emotional support or lack thereof.* Although understanding the reason emotional needs and social needs overshadow much of what we should be offering novice teachers may help us recognize the connections or lack thereof, whatever the reason, emotional and social support appears to be the thread that surfaces again and again either on its own or interwoven with the other support necessary for success in the classroom. The teachers and administrators in this inquiry provided an abundance of stories outlining emotional needs and social needs and how they were met or ignored in their districts. The primary purpose of this inquiry is to examine positive examples of novice teacher support; however, it is impossible to ignore the fact that two of the interviewees had negative experiences before they found themselves in nurturing districts. I include occasional mention of these to provide contrast as we peer into the lives of these teachers with the objective of reaching a deeper understanding of what it means to teach and to nurture teaching in others.

*Michaela moves from neglect to connection.* Even before school started her first year, Michaela was beginning to wonder about the decision she had made. During new teacher orientation, the principal drew a map of the state on the board and asked the new teachers where they were from. The battle she was waging with homesickness overcame her usual shy nature in new surroundings, and she proudly called out the name of the town where she and her family had lived since she was in grade school thinking that everyone would do the same. Unfortunately, it was either not the response the principal wanted, or she had played directly into his hand allowing him to embarrass her by drawing a big circle around the city in which they all now lived and say, “No, now you are from Walnut. We brought you here, and this is where you live now.” He went on to

say that teachers come from 9 different communities each day to teach at the school, but we need to be a team. Instead of feeling a part of something, Michaela was crushed and thought, “You just negated the last how many years of my life?” Suddenly she found herself in a community where she “always felt like an outsider” and believed that basically it was because she did not grow up there. Four new teachers started the same year she did; the only one who stayed past one year had graduated from that school several years earlier.

No one helped her with lessons or curriculum, and Michaela was forced to find her own support group on the Internet with other business teachers and at the school several hours away where her mother taught. But not willing to give up on teaching altogether, she decided to try again and began year number two in a different school. Fortunately she found greater support both emotionally and academically. Michaela moved to a community closer to home that was more familiar to her since she had lived there as a young girl. Ironically she moved from a place where she believed she would never fit in to the school where her own mother had taught for 20 years. Now she was teaching children of her mom’s students. The seven new teachers who started that year became friends, attended ball games together, just hung out, and, most importantly, discussed school and students, ideas and problems. Michaela found the teachers’ lounge was not the den of iniquity she had been warned about during preservice teaching but a lifeline to adult relationships. Lunch took on new meaning as she connected with colleagues in a school where, unlike her first year, most teachers ate together, and Michaela found that she missed the interaction if other duties or helping students kept her away many days in a row.

*One teacher penetrates Sara's loneliness.* The first year started out pretty lonely for Sara as well. Although she made it through the first quarter before she actually broke down and cried at school, there had been private tears many times before that. She had moved nearly 150 miles from home to the big city where she didn't know anyone and didn't have time to make friends, and she admits that it didn't help that she tried to go home as many weekends as possible to visit her fiancé and her friends. Volleyball practice as the assistant coach was the highlight of her day because she could get some physical exercise and be with the coach and even the students in a more relaxed atmosphere. But the school days were long and difficult; then a teacher began to stop at her room and drag her to eat lunch with the other teachers. She told her it just was not worth it—she needed adult contact. Overwhelmed with lesson plans and papers to grade, Sara was sure she simply could not afford time to eat lunch away from her desk but later realized that teacher was her lifeline; lunch with people who became her friends kept her sane in what she now sees was a very unorganized school. This year seems easier for many reasons, not the least of which is simple organization on the part of the school so that she doesn't feel she is constantly running after loose ends by herself.

*Jeff breaks past isolation.* Isolation was part of what bothered Jeff about his first year as band director. Being so visible and on display was another problem. Discontent among the students also weighed heavily on him during the first few months of school. As he looked around at other teachers, he felt they simply could not understand his situation. He felt that if he had been a math teacher, he could walk across the hall and visit with another math teacher, but what he did was so different from classroom teaching, he didn't know who to turn to except to reach out to others he knew who taught

band across the state: a friend from college who taught 20 miles to the west, a college professor, his cooperating teacher, directors of the band directors' camp he had attended. These people knew exactly what he was experiencing. Also the vocal music director stepped up with lots of hints and became a reliable colleague and friend.

The band begins before school starts and performs right away at the football games and at contests where the town was used to them receiving superior ratings. Each day 60 plus teens met together to practice, expecting him to lead them, answer questions, fix broken instruments, pick music, and make decisions they did not know he was unprepared to be asked about such simple things as how to enter the stadium, when to sit, and when to remove hats. A few words of praise from the principal at the end of the first game and from the choir director the following Monday meant the world to him.

Not long into the year students began complaining. He wasn't doing things the way Mr. Longman had. He chose the wrong music and classroom procedures had changed. All of this produced questions for Jeff. How could he ever really lead the band if they continued to praise the ways of the last director? What things could he compromise and do their way to show he was trying to listen to them without losing who he was and how he wanted to structure the class? This became so frustrating that he took it to the principal who had been around long enough to know what his predecessor had experienced when he had arrived six years earlier. Those kids, especially the seniors, had also given him a hard time because he wasn't like the former band director. Simply knowing this was enough to make Jeff realize he could get past it.

*Working on relationships from day one.* Administrators who embrace individuality in teachers, fellow teachers who pull novice teachers into the circle of adult

relationships, and colleagues who acknowledge a job well done can make a difference as young teachers encounter the vulnerability of teaching and leading in those first classroom and performance experiences. As Daniel said, it should begin during the hiring process. Candidates should be made to feel welcome. He says he tries to joke around a bit as he shows them the building before the interview. He says if they get the job, he will give them keys whenever they want so they can get started. Then he introduces them to a few people who will be around in the summer. With a staff of nearly 100 teachers, they must be proactive in making sure new people do not feel isolated or left out. Many of the teachers have been there for several decades and have taught each other's children; they have much to talk about. Something as simple as having teachers from their departments introduce the new people at the first staff meeting gives them one more connection to someone who will work closely with them each day. Mentors are assigned so as to connect people with like interests, but he makes frequent personal contacts himself and tries to personally mention any social events such as staff parties or breakfasts at school on teacher work days. This type of contact might have helped Michaela through that first year when she felt forgotten in her classroom at the end of a hall as far from the office as anyone could be. In fact, on many occasions she was forgotten. She was never called to have her picture taken that first year and had to do it on retake day. She had three scheduled formal observations before the administrator actually remembered the appointment.

Mark does not assign official mentors in his school, but he meets personally with new teachers 8 to 12 times during their first year. He acknowledges that events such as breakfasts and lunches before school starts and celebrations such as the holiday party

before winter break are necessary and beneficial; they simply are not sufficient. He is purposeful about meeting with the new teachers at the end of the first day, the end of the first week, weekly during the first month, and approximately once a month throughout the year. He says he believes the four he has this year are going to be excellent teachers, and he hopes they are all still working together right there at Manner High School in 15 or 20 years. Breakfasts and holiday parties are nice, but they don't develop that kind of commitment, people who pour into them does.

It is easy to see why there is very little turnover at Wayne's school. Wayne believes the most important thing he can do for a new teacher is help make social contacts, and he is purposeful about it. He jokes that there are one or two people in the building that nearly everyone has to check in with sometime during the day; they just have a knack, or maybe it's a gift, of hospitality. They draw people in and make them feel comfortable. These are the people Wayne invites to make contact with new staff members until they have time to make connections themselves. Sometimes a relationship develops with the mentor or the teacher across the hall or someone who likes the same sports, but eventually maybe a couple months into the year, he notices that somehow they have been connected with the right people to begin a friendship. This is one example of how emotional needs and social needs will thread through the entire discussion of these interviews. Most of what Wayne does to set up the year for new teachers will be included when we look at acclimating new teachers to the individual school climate.

#### A Mentor or Someone to Talk to

Those emotional needs and social needs find their way into nearly every aspect of working with new or novice teachers, and for many novice teachers, one of the functions

of a mentor is to help them make connections to the school or the community and to be someone to talk to when things get rough. Yet, mentors wear many hats for those they mentor. Mark says Manner School District does not have a formal mentor program in place, but a couple of teachers have begun to work on a plan for mentoring within the district since they foresee quite a bit of turn over in the next five years because of retirements and new hiring that will be necessary with projected enrollment growth.

*Taking mentoring seriously.* Daniel has the advantage of a large staff when he assigns mentors for novice or transfer teachers in his school. One of the things he looks at is what they might have in common with somebody else in their area. Typically this individual will be a department person or perhaps somebody who might be coaching or sponsoring a similar type of event. For instance this year he had a new teacher come in who had three years of experience. He is a speech coach and is teaching speech and debate, those types of programs; so Daniel paired him up with a seasoned veteran of the speech area who is also the head speech coach because they would have some similar interests. She has done a fantastic job of mentoring him, not only because she has been there to answer his questions about speech and debate but also in the areas of some of the day-to-day operations such as how the whole program works and how to enter grades. This novice teacher and his mentor also did a school visitation together. They drove to a larger city and went to a couple of schools there just to see how speech and debate are done in those schools. That mentor really took it to heart. Daniel paired another novice with another English teacher who he felt was really strong. One of the things he says has worked well for that pair is peer evaluation in the classroom.

The mentor program in Daniel's district is fairly new. It includes an evaluation the mentors are asked to fill out to give to the principal and to district administrators who are taking a look at the program so someone is involved at every level to review the program. Daniel admits that he does not always get those forms in a timely manner, but he knows the guidelines are being followed, and he can go to talk to the mentor or the new teacher from time to time to see how it is working. He believes he has good teachers working with the new teachers who take their responsibility very seriously so he can relax a little in that area. The mentors will do what they need to do to make sure the new teacher fits in well.

*Wayne assigns two mentors.* Wayne, who is in the same district as Daniel, gave me a copy of their district's mentor guide at the interview. The guide is a tool the district is piloting this year that gives teacher mentors a kind of a checklist of monthly ideas of things to talk about. The district has eliminated the induction lecture that typically takes place a few days before school starts, which lists everything new teachers need to know from fire drills to parent teacher conferences, and given that responsibility to mentor teachers who meet one-on-one with new teachers to discuss school procedures in a timely manner. For example, preparing for parent teacher conferences is on the agenda to be covered about three weeks before the first conferences. The guide is essentially a starting point for conversation.

Novice teachers at Wayne's school are assigned two mentors because he believes job function is one thing and school culture is totally different. Although sometimes the same person can fill both roles, often it requires two different people. This year he has a new kindergarten teacher. Since kindergarten is a half-day program, she teaches both



sections; there is no other kindergarten teacher in the building. Kindergarten is unique enough that he sought out a mentor from another elementary school in the district, but he also assigned a mentor in the building who could help her with school culture and go through the district mentor guide with her. He did the same thing for a new speech therapist whom he thought would benefit from a relationship with the seasoned speech therapist at the middle school nearby. One year one of his fifth grade teachers was asked by another building principal to mentor another male fifth grade teacher because here are two guys who can relate to each other. He couldn't help with what was going on at the other building, but he certainly understood establishing relationships with fifth graders, and they had the unique link of being males in elementary education.

*Official and unofficial mentors.* Jeff does not have an official mentor, and although he says it would have been nice to have someone paired up with him to have a direct line, he ended up relying on classmates from college and others throughout the state who have formed a rather tight network of band directors. Jeff said he felt kind of lost in the wash most of the first year and someone coming in periodically to say, "How are you doing?" or "You're gonna make it" would have been nice. It took a while to get together, but the vocal music teacher has stepped into that role. Their schedules made it difficult because early in the year Jeff was busy with marching band and contest, and in the winter Larry coached basketball. In the spring they worked together on district music contest, which was held at their school. Hosting the district contest was new for Jeff, but Larry guided him through it. His 28 years of experience, 9 in that district, have been a source of knowledge and wisdom as well as encouragement for Jeff. Jeff was nervous about an early contest where the band had typically received superior ratings. When they

returned to school the next day with their superior rating untarnished, Larry had written a congratulatory note on the board for Jeff and the band. Jeff was impressed that he would take the time to leave a note for the students *and* for him. They have formed a team and become friends, and Larry says he appreciates that Jeff does not see the two areas of music as a contest as other band directors with whom he has worked have.

Michaela did not have a mentor at her first school, but she does now. The first year she relied on her mom and the business teachers at her mom's school to help her with lessons and curriculum especially when she was assigned the task of creating an entirely new business course that she would teach beginning in January. She says if she had not had her mom and that school to fall back on and the excellent input from the network of business teachers hooked together by the Internet, she would not be teaching today. In fact, when she began to look for other jobs, it was for this reason alone that she decided to stay in her home state even though she could have made more money elsewhere. At her first school, the school counselor and the secretary were the ones within the school who reached out to her. They even invited her to join a bowling league when they saw her bowling bag as she was moving things into her room. The second school assigned the English teacher across the hall to be Michaela's mentor. She felt less like she was intruding when she went to ask questions since she knew this person had agreed to work with her. Like at her first school, though, she is the only business education teacher so she takes specifics about her content area to her network of business teachers on the Internet or at her mom's school.

Sara has had an assigned mentor at both schools, but she has found that often the relationships that develop through work result in the real mentors. The assigned mentor

the first year was her other team member. It seemed natural since it was a two-person team, but she cautions that principals should be careful about assigning mentors who might give one-sided information. He was very well liked in the school, but he didn't always agree with what was happening in the school. The pre-algebra teacher on the other eighth grade team became a constant help as Sara moved through her first year of teaching with just the state standards as her curriculum. This year she has two mentors. One mentor is on her team, and since she is in the same district as Wayne and Daniel, one of her mentors is working through the pilot program they outlined. That person, who is not on her team, came to her before school started and said she was there to go through the mentoring program with her and because it is often difficult to talk to those so close to you. Sara says it is much more beneficial to have the information her mentor gives her in manageable, timely chunks than in the induction workshop she attended at her first school. She remembers sitting through a long talk about school procedures for things like fire drills and conferences and thinking about all the work she could be doing in her classroom to get ready for school to start. This year, her mentor seems to show up just before she has a question with the information she needs.

Administrators, who want to help the novice teachers on their staffs through that first year or two, should take mentoring seriously. Michaela, Sara, and Jeff have expressed the value of their mentors, official and unofficial, and nearly every teacher who filled out a questionnaire expressed gratitude for those who came along side them that first year.

## Classroom Management and Discipline

Teaching encompasses so many aspects. Teachers need content knowledge and research skills to continually broaden that knowledge base. They need a basic understanding of pedagogy, of how children learn, and of childhood or adolescent development. But as the administrators in my study pointed out, it all falls apart if they do not have good classroom management skills. This is one of the areas these administrators seemed to be most personally involved. They often recognized real potential for excellence in teaching that just needed an adjustment in how the classroom was managed. Since it was prominent on the questionnaires of both the novice teacher and the administrators, I began this part of each interview asking how each participant defined classroom management. I also asked the administrators what early warning signs they might expect to see if novice teachers are having trouble in this area.

*Defining classroom management.* Michaela and Sara both recognized procedures and routines as a part of classroom management. They observed that students are calmer and more involved if they know what to expect in the classroom and things keep moving at an appropriate pace. Sara said having good classroom management means not only that everything goes smoothly but that her students leave at the end of the day knowing what they need to know. Jeff realized he had some classroom management problems right away and asked fellow band directors for input on how they got 60 plus social high school kids to begin practice on time. Their suggestions turned things around very quickly.

Perhaps it was a result of the years of classroom and administrative experience, of looking at education through multiple lenses, and of reading about and researching best

practices that enabled the administrators I interviewed to go both broader and deeper when the discussion turned to classroom management. Suddenly we were involved in so many other areas: time management, social environment, lesson planning, use of space. Daniel said much of classroom management is the social environment of the class—how students interact with each other, how they interact with the teacher, and how the teacher interacts with the students, which results in the learning environment. A quality learning environment develops when those interactions are based on mutual involvement in the processes and procedures of the class. Mark discussed creating a structure in the classroom that promotes learning effectively including routines, activities, and transitions. Classroom management begins in the lesson planning stage. Teachers may come to class prepared with amazing activities that would move students toward deeper understanding of concepts and principles, but the lessons get thwarted because they neglected to plan for transitions. For example, a common mistake of novice teachers is moving kids into groups *before* they give the instructions for what should happen once they get into those groups. Thus, planning not just the activity but how to prepare the students for the activity is crucial. Wayne would agree. He says classroom management is management of time, space, activities, and behavior. Behavior is just one part of it. Activities are the curriculum and how the teacher presents the curriculum. But time is the big one. Good classroom managers just don't waste time. They don't have breaks or gaps between activities that allow behavior to go bad. They have everything locked together almost like a jigsaw puzzle throughout the day. They have procedures and routines; they are not rigid but routine driven and force themselves to do pretty much the same thing every day.

*Warning signs and administrative intervention.* Each of these administrators was well aware of the difficulties novice teachers might encounter with classroom management. Mark said one of the first warning signs is that a significant number of students are engaged in off-task behavior, which he is able to recognize because he is committed to spending lots of time moving in and out of these classrooms. He happened to do a walk through just the day before we met for the interview as one of the new English teachers was introducing an essay assignment about the themes in *Romeo and Juliet*. The next day he saw her in the hall after that same class and asked, “Hey, how’s it going?” She was visibly upset and said, “Things are just terrible. It was just really hard to get these kids motivated to write in the lab.” She named off a half dozen kids and explained, “I had to throw these kids in detention because they weren’t doing it. They don’t want to write, and I don’t know why they don’t want to write.” He agreed in the few minutes they had that he would talk with a few of them, which he planned to do, but more importantly, he made a mental note that the more important meeting would be to discuss instruction with the teacher. He had seen her set up another writing assignment that worked well and wanted to help her compare the two to see if she might be able to see how she had set herself and her students up for the frustration they were all experiencing as well as to help her understand that when there is off-task behavior, especially by multiple students, she should begin with how she might change instruction.

Being in a large high school as assistant principal allowed Daniel to see early warning signs quickly since he was the one to whom discipline referrals came. Excessive numbers from one teacher was a signal to him that he needed to be more involved with that teacher. A large school also has other levels of supervision in place for help both in

discovering needs and in working to meet those needs. Department heads and others who work with novice teachers often pass on that someone might be needing help or ask for advice in how to help themselves. But Daniel believes the best way to find that a teacher needs help is to keep both the communication lines and the office door open so that those who need help not only have access but are not afraid to come in and say, “I have a problem I need to run by you for your input.”

One of his success stories involves a young teacher who is still on the staff and has become the “shining star” Daniel knew he would be if he could just get the classroom management problems under control. He saw potential because as a new teacher he had a very special way of interacting with the students. He was kind of a Pied Piper; kids just liked him. He had that spark, the energy it takes to be successful. He was really putting time into improving. He genuinely wanted to be a better teacher and was willing to work hard. His lesson plans were fine; what he did in the classroom was fine. It was just how he handled kids. He seemed to want to be their buddy, just one of the guys. He needed to learn that if he did something to focus on behavior by imposing logical consequences for it, the students would respect him for it. That is what he was afraid of at the time. It wasn't easy stuff that he went through, but he had to do it. Daniel knew the district was considering nonrenewal of contract but suggested a course for over the summer that focused on teacher behavior, things like proximity and seating changes and tricks of the trade that great teachers use sometimes without even knowing it. He had recommended the course to others over the years, but for that teacher it was exactly what he needed. It changed his life. He came back to school in the fall and asked for a few weeks to get it going and then an observation. He was a changed man and is a master teacher today.

Although the day flows a little differently in elementary schools, where children and teachers are together all day, Wayne knows that finding out what is going on requires the same strategy as in the high school: an unwavering commitment to be in the classrooms on a daily basis. And all that walking around has paid off. Wayne says it allows him to watch for patterns. Anyone can have a bad day, but if he is in the same classroom about 9:15 every day for 3 or 4 days in a row and it looks like different worlds, he will start to wonder what is going on. It doesn't have to be quiet with kids in desks reading or writing, but there has to be planned and directed activity. He might ask, "So what are you working on right now?" And the teacher should be able to say this is our activity; this is what we are doing right now, and this is where we are headed. If he hears, "Ah, we're just messing around with something," that's a bad sign. But he says we're all allowed a bad day here and there; that's why watching for patterns is important. He says he'd check what the teacher turned in for a classroom schedule and weekly lesson plans and then visit at the same time several times that week. Usually all it takes is asking if they think it seems okay to have all that off-task or undirected activity. Then they look at cause and effect. Why are they off task or undirected? Because they haven't been given direction. This is a really common problem with novice teachers because they need to look at how to connect activities together or to move students from one activity to another quickly.

An excellent example of how planning and routine work well to create a learning environment free of off-task behavior can be found in one of the fifth grade classrooms in Wayne's school. The major goal of the first three or four days of school is to establish routine: This is how we line up for lunch. This is how we go out to recess. This is how



we hand in papers. They don't just talk about it, as you might think with students who would be perfectly able to understand verbal instructions; they do it—over and over and then over again for three or four days! It is not uncommon to see this class filing out for recess three times in a 15 minute time period on the first day of school. He is imprinting on their minds and physically modeling what is expected. Another thing he does is to play music at transition times. He has a CD he uses to let the kids know it is time to put things away and get ready for the next subject or activity. He explains on the first day of school, "I am going to play this CD, and when you hear it, you know you have about 45 seconds to put away what you have out and get out what you need for the next subject or be ready for the next activity." Then they practice it. Wayne smiles and says, "It's magic, and, of course, it's not magic; it's an organized plan with auditory cues that kids get hooked into." It is all about preteaching and then being consistent from day to day. He sees that kids are learning to be organized themselves and to listen and do things on someone else's agenda, not whenever they get around to it. They are learning self discipline. It is one of the greatest benefits we can give them, and we aren't threatening them with anything. This routine and organization is a great advantage for children in our fast-paced society who are often not living in routines and order anywhere else in their lives.

*Multiple meanings of classroom management.* Michaela, Sara, and Jeff each struggled with problems in classroom management, and each found that routine and consistency are a major part of the solution. Michaela realized she had set herself up for frustration but began to tackle one concern at a time realizing that she couldn't expect perfection but should pick her battles. She started with instilling that the students simply

must raise their hands instead of calling out her name for attention. Thirty high school students working on business projects do need a lot of help, but with five or six calling out at once, she couldn't even always tell who it was; so she picked that as her first battle. Eventually she began hearing, "Oh, yeah, I need to raise my hand, don't I" after someone had called her name several times, and she walked right past.

Sara had bought into the "Don't smile until Christmas" philosophy and started her first year determined that no one would get the best of her, which she admits now is not her personality. It made the year very difficult. This year she has been more proactive about making sure the students know what she expects and then holds them accountable, but she is more relaxed, and in her room they don't have to raise their hands to get her attention; she just wants to know they need help. Not only is it working better for the students, but she is more relaxed now that she is allowing herself to be herself. She has tried to get to know them on a more personal level and to let them know who she is—to have a relationship with them. The stress level is down considerably because she is not trying to be some ideal of what she thought a teacher should be.

Classroom management for Jeff takes on several different meanings. There is the "classroom" outside before school with the marching band; there is the "classroom" with 60 plus band students who are supposed to be ready to respond to his downbeat precisely at 8 a.m., and there are all those "classrooms-on-the-go" where the band is marching onto the football field or down Main Street or a small ensemble is preparing for district competition. He had to establish his presence early in spite of the fact that the students wanted everything to be the way it had been under their other director, the director who had worked with them since middle school. This was especially difficult for the seniors,

and Jeff understood that, but he still had to be the leader. He went to his principal with that one and to his network of band directors with the classroom problems, and things did get better especially in year number two.

#### Culture or Specific School Procedures

Even when veteran teachers move to new school districts, the culture of the school and the district can be quite different from where they have taught before, but at least they have navigated those waters before and might at least know what questions to ask. Novice teachers are overwhelmed with so much that things veteran teachers take for granted can be quite stressful. Things like where to find Post It notes and overhead markers or how to call out on the phones or use the intercom to call the office can be what pushes them over the edge on any given day.

*Details, communication, and information.* Jeff told me about the frustration he had with the telephones. He simply wanted to order a book and tried dialing from his room: 9-1-800 and the number, over and over. But it didn't work. Later he found out that his phone was the only one in the building that didn't require dialing a 9 to get an outside line. Ordering music had caused him grief in another way. He needed samples and then the actual music. He knew he was to call the music supply store in a neighboring town, and they would bill the school, but how did it get taken out of his account? He was glad that he had been hired early enough to figure these things out over the summer. He asked the secretary a lot of questions like, "Where do I put outgoing mail?" and about the large red and green cards by the door in his room. They were the cards teachers held up for fire drills: green for all present, red for missing students, and both for I have extra students. He would have eventually found these things out, but he

was trying to find out all he could before school started. He said it was the little things of day-to-day survival that everyone else knew. He felt lost for a while because there were just too many things that he didn't know.

Sara has found acclimation to her second school much easier than the first. Even the interview was more relaxed, at least after the initial intimidation of learning of their combined 100 years of experience. They asked what role she thought she might have on the team, and her first thought was, "Well, I wouldn't be the leader, that's for sure." But that was okay with them. Being on a team in a middle school setting where they plan together and she can ask questions anytime one comes up, makes it much easier. She also benefits from the mentor who has that schedule to meet with her periodically throughout the year. Yet, there are still times like just the day before we talked, she had received information about a health unit that was to be taught the following week. Everyone else seemed to know it was coming, but it was all new to her on Friday and was to be done on Monday and Tuesday. No matter how proactive the district, the administrators, or the mentors, things fall through the cracks.

The two schools provided different experiences for Michaela as well. She said the first school planned a meeting for new staff that was supposed to last about an hour and a half, but for some reason it ended up being only half an hour and the principal was in and out because of something that came up that he had to take care of. Much of what was to happen in the day-to-day of school she had to learn as it happened. The second school, however, provided a full day for the new teachers. The seven of them were given a tour of the building and information on procedures; then they were taken to the country club for a long lunch where they got to know each other. In the afternoon they were

taken to the three elementary-only rural districts that fed into their secondary-only district. Michaela was also in a unique situation in that the superintendent who was there had been there when her mother taught at that school 15 years earlier. Also she had already met several of her students at the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) national conference the spring before. In fact their sponsor was called home for a family emergency, and since she had been hired as her replacement for the next fall, the school allowed the students to stay under her supervision. She said at her first school the principal *talked* a lot about how the staff was a family, but she didn't see it. At the new school they really were close. They actually talked to each other and were genuinely interested in each other's families and what was happening both in and out of school.

*Attention to detail, frequent communication, and timely information.* Wayne takes his role as principal very seriously when it comes to bringing new staff into the culture of the school. Once new teachers are hired in the spring, he puts them on the email list, and they begin receiving staff daily bulletins and newsletters so they can get a feel for the school and what kinds of things are happening there. He has a checklist of everything from where to park to staff dress code, and he adds to it every time someone has to ask a question that could have been answered on that checklist. Little things like if it is okay to run the copy machine yourself or to turn in a request can make a new person feel completely out of sync with the rest of the staff. These unnecessary stresses need to be taken care of before you can get to bigger issues like the reading or math curriculum.

However, Wayne goes the extra mile whenever he can. He did something new this year for the kindergarten teacher who was coming in from outside the district. He created a roster of what he knew about each student. He thought she would need to know

some background about the neighborhood as well as the students. The unique situation this year is that of the 50 kindergarteners she would have, about 30 were the oldest in their families; so the families would be new to the school. He wanted to tell her things like Jeremiah has a brother in third grade, but Sarah is from a brand new family that just moved to town in February.

The district does events for the new teachers that include giving out information about insurance or district discipline philosophies, but the real purpose is just to get those 25 or 30 new staff members together in a room for a whole day to let them get to know each other. They have found over the years that friendships begin on that day that would never have happened since they are teaching in different buildings. Wayne says he still remembers the people he sat near at that first induction event several decades ago even though it was much shorter. Those people are some of his good friends to this day.

Besides what the district does, Wayne tries to have at least one social event like a barbeque or ice cream social at his home before school starts for the new people to meet the staff in a relaxed environment. He says he tries to change it from year to year, and he tries to do smarter things not necessarily more things. The years of sitting down with new teachers and going over the handbook are gone. The mentor will take care of those things. Wayne is more concerned with connecting his new teachers whether they are novice or veteran teachers than with the handbook. He believes those connections will sustain them not only through the first year but throughout their time in his school.

#### Time Management, Planning, and Understanding Curriculum

After we consider the perimeter, things like emotional support and assimilation into the school culture, we are left with the fact that teachers must teach. Since even

veterans of many years struggle with the immense amount of time and energy involved in the task of teaching, it is only natural that one of the problems novice teachers acknowledge is managing their time so that they are not consumed by the task. Novice teachers have had little experience with planning little more than a unit of study, and now they are faced with multiple preps that encompass the entire school year. As Mark says, when he asks new teachers on his staff the day before school starts if they are ready for tomorrow, they are almost always prepared with an enthusiastic, “Yes.” But he finds that he is constantly reminding them that teaching is not a sprint but a marathon. Learning to understand curriculum and plan in ways that use time more wisely rather than just *use* time both in the planning and the teaching are keys to success for novice teachers.

*Setting the pace.* Mark spends a lot of time with his novice teachers before school starts and during the first week. All too often he has witnessed them come out of the starting blocks at a pace that causes them to hit the wall by Labor Day. They are exhausted and often say they have used all they know of teaching by then. He assures them he does not expect perfection and that he knows they will make mistakes. He tells them to get in there and talk with their colleagues about what they do; ask questions. He has seen great relationships develop in this way. And there have been a few accidental helps. The new math teacher has a harder time working with slower students and those who are not self motivated. During his plan period one of the special education teachers instructs a low level algebra class in his room. Daily, as he works in the back of the room, he has the chance to observe someone who knows how to reach those kids. Even though it was not planned, it has been powerful.

Another observation Mark has made of the years is that time management is often related to life experiences of the novice teacher. Often those who begin to teach after their own children are in school have learned time management skills because they have had to. This year he has a third-year teacher with whom he has visited about over involvement. She has taken on too many extra curricular activities all of which she loves. He has told her to pick one or two and tell him which ones he should be looking for someone else to do, even if he has to hire someone outside the faculty.

Mark also cautions that we realize the time management piece is not just a novice teacher problem. He says that conversations he has with even the most veteran members of his staff include the fact that teaching is not getting easier. It is harder because we are continually challenged to provide higher quality instruction to standards, which means we must constantly find smarter ways to present curriculum and make those connections between the students and the curriculum. We know more about teaching and learning; so we are being held to a higher standard. Also parents are more active than they have ever been, demanding more and more all the time.

*Time and timing.* Michaela says she had always thought of herself as a pretty good time manager, but in teaching there is *always* something to do. Now it is a matter of knowing where to stop. The thing is that you can't just leave it though, even if you are sick. To take a sick day, you have to leave a plan, and *then* you can be sick. The first year learning how to plan for 90 minutes was difficult; then the second year managing seven preps was difficult and checking papers for so many students was overwhelming. The first year Michaela said she worked after volleyball practice until 5 or 6 o'clock and then went home to eat and work until nearly midnight. There was just so much to cover



in these books with which she was not familiar. She was determined not to use filler worksheets or puzzles; she wanted everything to have a purpose, but filling 90 minutes took lots of planning on her part. Finding activities was difficult because all she was given was the textbook. Had she not had the Internet support system of other business teachers and the Department of Education to rely on, she is not sure how it would have worked out.

Sara says the problems that come with timing lessons is probably something novice teachers just need to experiment with. How long things will take is a matter of experience not something we can be taught. That type of time management is already better in just the second year. Personal time management was not a problem for her; she just devoted herself to teaching that first year. She prioritized by saying, “Okay, I’m going to bed at 11 o’clock; what can I get done before 11?” She did, however, figure out that she needed to plan her lessons around her own time management. Everything she asked kids to do came back to her to correct until she learned to assess in ways that do not require teacher checking and grades. When she would fall behind and assign a worksheet to see what they knew, she ended up with more to check. The problem really compounded when she realized she had given worksheets during class or as homework all week resulting in more work for her. Learning more creative assessment helped tremendously. Also she is really looking forward to teaching the same thing next year rather than something totally new.

One of the things Jeff struggled with that first year was timing in class. He said he had the same problem in student teaching. He would find himself really flying and leaving the students behind; then he would realize he had slowed it down too much. Part

of solving that problem was learning to read the kids. If they were practicing a march and he stopped to work with the woodwinds because they had a little more involved part, he might lose the others. Now he knows to keep an eye on what is going on and will just say, “You know what, let’s just go back to the beginning and just play,” and he gets everyone involved again.

Personal time management was another story. The band director is involved in so much of school life in an active high school. The band plays at all the football and basketball games, and district contests and playoffs and concerts keep them busy until winter break. He was working long hours at school and taking work home everyday as well. He sees improvement this year and credits talking to other band directors at conventions and calling friends to find out how they manage it all, and he agrees with Sara, that you just have to experience it all for a year to see how it works.

Curriculum and planning for classes was a part of the time management problem for Jeff as well. He knew he was going to teach music but *what* to chose was difficult because in music there are *thousands* of choices and so much to consider. Last year there were 17 strong seniors; this year the band was more evenly distributed among the grades with more new people. The tuba player was young. To choose music one had to consider so much. Seventh grade music and the high school theory class had no curriculum. Jeff’s predecessor had created his own curriculum, leaving Jeff no clue as to what they had done before. He finally found a course description online while searching through the school Web site and designed a course from that.

### Administrator Support

I must admit that, because of the nature of my research and the fact that everyone knew I was really looking at the novice teacher/first administrator relationship and how that affects teacher development and retention, the role of the administrator has threaded itself throughout this discussion. However, it has also manifested itself as a separate theme. One thing I wanted to know of each novice teacher participant was just how they knew it was safe to be so open with their administrators.

*Acceptance, trust, and frequent contact.* Sara's experience in her first school led to several comparisons. Her first administrator was more distant and even harder to make contact with. She said the very *first* time he stepped into her classroom he took over the class and began teaching it for her. She wondered what she was doing in this situation, watching him teach her class. Had she done something wrong? Later he explained that he had taught high school math for a long, long time and he just loved to teach; he certainly hoped he hadn't made her feel uncomfortable. Well, yes, he had, but, of course, she did not say so.

Another situation arose on the day of the first parent teacher conferences. Sara had taught all day and had volleyball practice until 5. She had just returned to her classroom, knowing the first parent was coming at 5:30, and she would be busy until 9 with parents and then have to prepare for the next day. The principal came in and looked at her floor and said, "You really need to vacuum in here; you need to go to the janitor's closet and get the vacuum, *and* you need to clean off these counter tops." She told him she had tried several things that she had brought from home but nothing seemed to work on that surface. He said, "You go ask the janitors; you take care of it, and you vacuum

this room.” So instead of eating supper, she vacuumed her room, and although she could see that he was right that the room had to be cleaned, she kept thinking, “How dare he?” Of course, I asked her about the whereabouts of the janitors and why they had not cleaned the rooms, but that is another story of mismanagement. She said the building was always dirty, including what she described as *disgusting* bathrooms. One of the joys of her new school is that it is *always* clean.

So after an experience like that, how does a young teacher know that the new principal is approachable? Sara said she began to pick up on it at the interview, and then she backtracked and said it was even before that. He was so casual and laid back even when he called to set up the interview that she first wondered if he had been unprofessional. Later she learned he was just a trusting and trustworthy person. She was out of town, and bad reception on her cell phone caused them to play phone tag all day when he called to set up an interview, but that wasn't a problem to him; he could joke about it and help her to feel more comfortable. Then when he called to offer her the job, *he* was on the road, and she could hear his kids in the background, but the connection was so bad that he had to tell her three times that she had the job before she actually heard it all. Also since there are two administrators at her new school, they are more accessible and available. They also move in and out of classrooms on regular basis, but instead of taking over the teaching, they actually join the students in activities, often participating in an activity through its completion, making mistakes and asking questions right along with the students. She never feels either of them is there to check up on her.

One day one of her administrators came into the room as she was experimenting with an activity to work on one of the school goals of improving reading in the content

area. She wanted to help her students learn to read a math book and understand what to do from the directions. She had taught them what to look for in a good text and then given each group four different books to read about long division. They were then to choose which text was easier to read and understand and tell why. The students were running through packets, trying to do examples on the board, and conferring with each other. The principal looked at Sara as if to say, "What's going on in here?" She told him, "I'm just trying something new to see if it works," and explained to him what was going on, and he said, "That's awesome. I would much rather you would take a chance and fail and see how it works and fix it for next time than not to take any chances at all." He said, "Take risks; we like risks here." Sara finds this attitude refreshing because she does not want to be the kind of math teacher who explains the process on the board and then assigns the odd-numbered problems on pages 43 and 44.

Michaela and Jeff also indicated open communication and frequent contact helped to build a trusting relationship with their administrators. Jeff said just being able to start on things early in the summer and come to the principal and secretary with those early questions, which often resulted in longer conversations, helped build a trusting relationship. I asked him about a comment he had made on his questionnaire. He said the principal helped him with a difficult co-worker. Jeff explained that basically he helped him understand the co-worker's personality and how to work with him. But I was interested in how Jeff knew he could approach his new boss about a person who had been in the district many years. Jeff said he already felt a relationship building even that early in the school year. It was September, but he had already had many conversations with the principal, and he had gone out of his way to compliment and encourage him after the

band had played at the first football game. He knew he had to do something about the situation, and he felt Stan was the one to help him with it.

*Be there—in the classroom, daily if possible.* Mark says that he cannot overstate the importance of being *in the classroom* on a consistent basis and unannounced and interacting positively with that teacher and not just in the classroom but in between classes, in the halls, at lunch, seeing those people. He likes to drop in informally, just to drop in, where all he's doing is saying, "Hey, how's it going? It's good to see ya; have a great day." That kind of thing—it's important just because it is recognition and affirmation on a really basic and fundamental human level—people need that, and that's good to do. Plus it is really easy *not* to do as an administrator. It is easier not to do than it is to do as an administrator because we have so many other things going on in the office that we really don't need to interact with anyone. Administrators could just return phone calls, deal with paperwork, process student discipline, and respond to email *all day*. So getting out there is extremely important because teaching at the secondary level is still incredibly isolated. He says if he doesn't make the effort to go out there, they don't get that basic interaction in their classroom and the recognition from an administrator, from a colleague, a fellow educator who says, "Hey, we know you're here." That's really important informally but then formally—and even though it is informal in that it is unscheduled, making a conscientious attempt to get into those teacher's classrooms constantly to provide them a 10- to 20-minute informal observation where all he is really doing is looking for all the things that are going right and then trying to come up with a question to ponder that is a reflective question about their instructional practice. Typically he tries to avoid any overt criticism but to ask them a

question that is probably implying “How about you think about this for next time.” It might be a question like “How might you incorporate a visual learning strategy to engage all learners next time you do this activity?” That kind of thing—just to get them to think a little bit more about their instruction but also just being there is hugely important, and giving them affirmation however he can is so important. They know someone is with them.

Mark also works at being involved in novice teacher extracurricular activities. The new English teacher is also coaching one-acts and has done a great job; so Mark drove halfway across the state to attend the one-act contest to support her and to support the kids who were involved. He says this kind of support is important for any teacher, but for a new teacher in particular, it means the world to them to know that “Okay, cool, this guy knows I exist; this guy cares about what I do; this guy understands instruction.”

Mark explained that his support in this area is really interwoven into all the themes we have discussed. He wants to see growth over time and to make sure that the feedback he is giving teachers documents and shares that growth with them. That included him mentoring them at times and providing emotional support at other times. It’s recognizing a change in instructional behavior that changed student behavior and saying, “Not only is that good teaching for today, this is something you should always use. It is not just a tool; you should say ‘It’s part of who I am as a teacher; it is something I do *every* day.’ ” He said the teacher he had that conversation with liked hearing it. He complimented another teacher on a great lesson, and she admitted she had gotten it from another teacher in the department, which, of course, gave him the opportunity to praise her again. You have to steal as much as you can. If a teacher says,

“I did this, and it worked,” then ask her for it because you can’t do it all by yourself.

No one can. There isn’t enough time in a lifetime to find it all on your own.

*Investing time in growing relationship.* Wayne agrees with Mark that building a relationship with new teachers is foundational to any help he can give. He says he is never able to be in classrooms as much as he would like to be but that it all goes back to the emotional support; he works toward being comfortable with each other as friends, as acquaintances, which is why he starts before school starts. He tries to be more and more proactive every year to connect with the new staff so that their reaction to him isn’t “Who is this guy?” Of course, he can’t know everything, but he tries to get as well acquainted as possible before school starts and then to do frequent “dip-sticking” interactions including quick questions like “How’s it going?” “How can I help you?” “What things do you need now?” Or this is how we do things at critical points in time: “This is how we make up report cards.” He talks about that closer to the end of quarter time. “This is how we’re going to do parent teacher conferences.” That type of thing.

He says that for the most part the knee-jerk reaction is going to be “I’m okay.” But if he asks often enough and tries to be tuned in to their needs, there is a point at which they will respond with a question or may even come to him. He says he finds they “just want to live in this house for awhile. They don’t need company all the time.” He checks in, but he is not doing any formal evaluation in the first weeks of school. They need time to just “move in” and become a part of the new neighborhood.

The district evaluation process is set up so that they never do observations with new teachers until they have walked through the entire process with them on paper, showing them how the process works, what the teaching model looks like, this is what



the administrator will be doing, the kind of feedback they can expect and so forth.

Wayne says they really try to harp on the fact that “the district hired you from a large pool of applicants because of your skills. We didn’t hire you so that we could pick at you. We’re vested in your success.” They say that for one reason: It’s true. He says if he hires a teacher and then spends the first semester picking at all the things he thinks are wrong so that he can dismiss her, it would reflect more on his hiring skills than on her teaching skills. He says being a larger district gives them the luxury of selecting people of high quality and experience level so part of that is just let them do their job, let them get somewhat comfortable, a month or two in, then something formal can start.

Obviously if he walks through a classroom three times in a week and things are wild and crazy, he is going to be watching, but he is also going to give them a chance to kind of settle in.

Daniel shares that district philosophy with Wayne. He says if the district is going to invest in teachers to hire them in the first place then he certainly has to be willing to invest in them to make sure they are the best they can be. And he admits that it is part of his personality to see that people are the most important part of the equation. He says the students and the staff and the most important part of all of what he or anyone does. Of course, he recognizes the purpose of education is the academics, but perhaps even academics are sometimes secondary to relationship. Being in the same school for 23 years helps in the fact that people know him. First, he was a teacher, then an assistant principal, and now principal. He knows the school culture and how it has developed. He tries to be in classrooms as much as possible and to have his door open for any conversation, but it is a very large school; so he also has to have others who work with

him in this. He relies on the two assistant principals, the counselors, and the department heads for information as well as to be there to help each other and new staff.

These conversations do not happen between administrators and teachers unless the administrator is out in the classrooms on a regular basis and accessible for questions. Both the novice teacher and the administrator participants in this inquiry confirm that relationship and the time it takes to build those relationships are foundational to helping the novice experience success both as a better, more confident teacher and in becoming a part of the local school culture.

#### Ask the Novice

As the second round interview questions were evolving, I began to wonder what these novice teachers realized they had learned in the first few years of teaching and what they might want to pass on to colleagues or to administrators. I opened the end of the interview up for whatever they might want to say with the following scenario: Suppose it is March and your best friend just landed his or her first teaching job. What would you tell him or her, and what would you hope the first administrator would know or do?

*Ask lots of questions and hope your administrator communicates.* Michaela said she would tell her congratulations. Then she would advise her to find somebody at that school with whom she could work, maybe the secretary because they know everything. She would suggest reading the handbook—the teacher handbook if there is one *and* the student and parent handbook. There is a lot of good information in those books that can prepare a new person to fit in. And she says she hopes the administrator would *assign* a mentor. At her first school the attitude was that she could ask a question if she had one, but she was assigned a mentor at the second school. For her it helped just to know that

this person had agreed to answer questions for her; she didn't feel like an intrusion. It would also be helpful if administrators would communicate their observation style. Are you a walk-through person who will show up often, or are you the type who will stay away until needed or a formal observation is planned? Communication is key, and it starts with clarity of expectations right in the interview.

*Ask lots of questions and hope your administrator is accessible.* Sara laughed as she said, "I'd tell her, 'Good luck.'" She said she would help her friend understand that if the first year wasn't the great, fun year that she planned, that she would be there to talk to when she was needed. She says there probably isn't anything to prepare new teachers for all they will experience that first year. She explains that when we student teach, we are never truly alone because there is someone to help you *all the time*, but when you are on your own that first year, *you're on your own*. It is just something new teachers have to do to get that experience.

Sara says the most important thing an administrator can do is to be easy to talk to and accessible. When new teachers have questions, they need to ask them quickly. Being able to catch an administrator in the hall or at lunch is a great benefit. However, the key is knowing it is safe to ask the questions. She credits her administrators with making contact with the staff at lunch nearly every day and stopping in to the classroom on a regular basis. She knows and trusts them and sees a personal relationship building like she is trying to build with her students—they should let the staff see them as people just like she is letting her students see her personal side as well as her teacher side.

*Ask lots of questions and hope your administrator is accessible and will establish relationship.* Jeff said he would have to admit that it was hard and that he would tell his

friend that it might seem rough at times but to hang in there; it would get better. He also agreed that learning how to do things in that school helps a lot. He said he would advise his friend to go in as soon as possible and get to know people and ask questions. For band directors there are so many things to know like not just what equipment is there but what shape it is in. What music has been done recently and in the past is good to know. If his friend had the job in March, Jeff would suggest that he go in and meet the current director and find out how things run now. He said he emailed his predecessor many times during the first few weeks asking questions about procedures. Jeff was able to spend an afternoon with the director who was leaving just as school got out in the spring. He was given a demo CD of music and a CD with student information like addresses and who played what instrument, chair assignments, and section leaders. The information on those CDs helped bolster Jeff's confidence. He said he thought, "This is great; I really know what's going on." Of course, he said, he really *had no idea* at all what was going to happen in the next six months, but at least he didn't feel caught in the center of a storm that was whirling out of control. Jeff would recommend spending a day at school with the former director if possible, just to see how things work. He might have been able to eliminate some of the "We do it this way" complaints at the beginning of the year that way.

Jeff said he hoped his friend's administrator would get to know him right away and show him around the school. He appreciated the day all the new teachers and the administrators spent together before school started. He was available and accessible for questions. He kept saying, "If you don't know something, please ask." Jeff also said a new teacher handbook would be *fantastic*, something that would just get the new guy up

to speed because everyone else is in the school culture, but you aren't. And if there is another music teacher, introduce them and try to set up a mentor relationship right away. If there isn't anyone else in the field, if the district is so small that he is teaching all the music, maybe connect him with a neighboring district, someone who knows where he is.

Even in these final musings by my participants, most of the six themes emerged, but I find significance in what they mentioned. They hoped those who follow them would have emotional support, connection to the school culture, a mentor, and an understanding, accessible administrator but none of them mentioned curriculum or time management or discipline. The crafts of the trade, the skills, are important and necessary, but that first year remains what we have always known: a year of survival. Jeff said he blocked much of it out and wonders why. Sara's final comments to me were to defend her first year. She was afraid she might have led me to believe it was all bad, but it wasn't an awful experience. No, you couldn't pay her enough to do it over, but she said she learned so much and after all, "*Somehow* I got through it." I had asked them to bring an artifact to the second interview if they could think of something that represented their first year of school. Hers was a red pen because she spent a *lot* of time grading assignments, but she laughed and added that this year the first thing she did was to go out and buy a stock of purple pens. She is putting the red stuff behind her and moving on.

Perhaps Michaela's artifact sums up what all teachers know. She wore an organ donor pin, a small heart on her collar. In December after her first year when she had already moved to a new school, one of her former students died in a rollover accident on loose gravel. She told me about Derrick. He had come to sit with her in the FBLA fireworks stands in the early mornings before he went to work—no one wanted to work

the morning shift. He was ornery, but she loved him. He was third in state speech; so she had recommended speech in FBLA. His class had forked her lawn that first year when he was a sophomore. Derrick was an organ donor, and now so were Michaela and other teachers at the school as well as many of his classmates. Michaela knows teaching is about students.

### Capturing the Complexity through Aesthetic Leadership

Although schools are institutions created for student learning, they function well only when the adults involved are also learning. The participating administrators and novice teachers in this study have revealed their personal stories of novice teacher support and success spanning a variety of areas. Emotional and social support has dominated the discussion which also included mentors, classroom management, school culture and procedures, time management and curriculum, and administrator involvement and accessibility. Their stories confirm that novice teacher needs are both unique to the early years and to the individual as well as similar to those of veteran teachers, especially those who transfer to new schools. Although these stories of novice teacher struggle and success are “deeply personal,” they also resonate with the familiar as they provide names and faces to exemplify accounts of novice teacher nurture and support in the research literature. Sara, Jeff, and Michaela confirm that “experience that is the result, the sign, and the reward of the interaction of organism and environment” can be transformational (Dewey, 1934/1980, p. 47). As Sara acknowledges, the struggle has been worth it. She recognizes that she is becoming not only more capable but more confident as she navigates through her days in just her second year.

Sara and Michaela provide both stories of disappointment in their first teaching situations and stories of support and success in their new schools. Jeff shows that determination to understand his surroundings helped but that building a relationship with his administrator was foundational to his success. His administrator reached out to him with encouragement and open communication, but Jeff proved the story is really one of reciprocity as he reached back with questions and concerns when he needed guidance.

*Meeting complexity with aesthetic seeing.* Stories of Mark's success with teachers in his school help us to understand the difference commitment from an administrator can mean for novice teachers full of enthusiasm but short on practical experience. His caution to be in the classrooms as much as possible and to stay personally involved in the lives of novice teachers should be inspirational to others who are willing to put forth the effort required to grow the people around them. Daniel's and Wayne's stories of support through those first years of teaching or a transition to a new school are deeply personal events, which must be acknowledged as just that, deeply personal, and yet, the administrator must seek the balance between allowing the privacy and keeping a watchful eye out for signs of struggle and of success. Either should bring encouragement from administration.

These administrators embrace the complexity of teaching/learning and leading in education. Dewey (1938/1997) terms the capacity to embrace complexities as *seeing*. He clearly distinguishes between *seeing* and *recognizing*. Recognizing entails categorizing and labeling, but seeing demands attending to the specifics of situation and the role of temporality. Participating administrators see that the art of teaching and learning as complex; therefore, the art of instructional leadership must be seen as

complex—complexity that merges the intellectual with the aesthetic whereas “the enemies of the esthetic are neither the practical nor the intellectual. They are the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure” (Dewey, 1934/1980, p. 40). Recognition in education is often associated with the teaching and administrative managerial demands. Seeing is characterized by Dewey (1934/1980) as aesthetically living life, a guiding philosophy, attending to process, meeting and working with the complexities inherent within the process. The aesthetic embraces possibilities—the possibilities in the uncertainty and unpredictability of teaching and learning—the possibilities of educational teams of teachers and school administrators who work together toward teacher development and, therefore, student achievement.

The common ground between teacher and administrator is integrated through Dewey’s (1934/1980) assertion that “esthetic” refers “to experience as appreciative, perceiving and enjoying” (p. 47). Reciprocity is assumed between self and other; interaction is not one way but an interplay between self and other, for this inquiry, between novice teacher and first administrator; between novice teacher and what it means to teach, to learn; between administrator and what it means to teach, to learn, to lead. In this inquiry I have uncovered what the storied acts of appreciation, perception, and enjoyment may entail for teaching/learning and leading in K-12 schools today, acknowledging that these are not descriptors usually associated with the teacher/administrator relationship. Dewey (1938/1997) explains, “Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. . . . in terms of *Either-Ors*” (p.17)—the proverbial *us* and *them* of teachers and their administrators, of administrators and



anything aesthetic. Although I have crossed over from teacher to administrator—to the “other”, I submit that teachers and educational leaders should be able to bridge the often polar concepts of teacher and administrator—to bring together a team of educators that is “appreciative, perceiving and enjoying”. Curriculum leaders like Wayne, Daniel, and Mark, who are appreciative of the circumstances of the novice teachers on staff, who are perceptive of novice teacher needs, and who promote an enjoyable workplace will encourage those qualities in the staff as well.

*Aesthetic leadership.* For novice teachers like Sara, Jeff, and Michaela finding their way through the uncharted waters of their first teaching experiences, fresh perceptions and acute awareness include appreciation, perception, and enjoyment of their own personal strengths and those of their colleagues and supervisors as well as their own weaknesses and learning to enjoy the challenges that lead to personal and professional growth. For administrators endeavoring to support novice teachers, fresh perceptions and acute awareness start in three areas: appreciation, perception and enjoying who novice teachers are, who we are as administrators, and what we provide together for the students entrusted to us for a time. Irwin (2003) calls this *aesthetic leadership*, digging deeply into this notion stating:

Perception is about receiving sensations. Aesthetes are individuals who perceive, are responsive to, and deeply appreciative of, beauty in art, nature, and other aspects of life experiences. Aesthetes cultivate habits of admiration for beauty and art. Closely associated with aesthetics is the notion of curating. Typically, a curator is seen as an individual who is in charge of a museum. Yet if we return to the Latin *curae*, we learn

that curator originally meant to care for. In museums, curators care for art. In schools, perhaps curators would care for the curriculum. (p. 2)

Using Eisner's (1991) definition of curriculum as "a mind-altering device . . . a vehicle that is designed to change the way in which the young think" (p. 42), we see the necessity for such care. The beauty, the art, of curriculum seen in this light is that it is not only strong and vibrant but fragile and vulnerable—in need of care, of a curator, but there is another dimension to Irwin's notion of aesthetic leadership. She reminds us that "leaders are oftentimes called administrators. Though the common usage of this word refers to those in authority, the Latin root of the word comes from 'ad' meaning to, and 'ministrare' meaning to serve" (p. 3). Noddings (1984) asserts that "as human beings we want to care and to be cared for" (p. 7), and she uses the "expression 'aesthetical caring' for caring about things or ideas" (p. 21)—caring for people and for things or ideas. I submit, therefore, that it is not only the curriculum for which the curator/administrator cares but for all that the curriculum encompasses—the content, the context, and the people of the school: students, teachers, classified staff, parents, and community members. And the curator/administrator, as caretaker, as servant, must be willing to operate in the "in-between" learning, searching, stretching, growing—not only setting the example for others but pulling them into the process as well.

Aesthetically this means the willingness, the persistence to work the "puzzle" that Csikszentmihalyi (1996) says causes the "tension" that leads to "creativity". For novice teachers *and* their administrators, that tension is in the questioning, in the searching, in the uncertainty of reflexive practice, which is part of the art as it moves

between self and other. As Oberg (2004) explains reflexive practice “is more a state of mind than a set of skills” (p. 229) that requires “physical space” and “psychic space” (p. 231) in order to develop. It is imperative that administrators move to include novice teachers who often feel “isolated or philosophically out of sync with colleagues” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 22) in reflexive conversation that draws them into the greater framework of the school as well as into reflexive thinking concerning their personal practice. Yet Irwin (2003) assures us, as overwhelming as it sounds, “humans are capable of receiving the world with fresh perceptions and acute awareness through both felt and imagined understandings” (p. 4).

Mark, Daniel, and Wayne have exemplified both Irwin’s (2003) aesthetic leadership and Dewey’s (1938/1980) notion of experience as aesthetic. They have been both servant and curator for their schools and their novice teachers, cultivating relationships with teachers as well as facilitating the building of relationships between novice teachers and other staff members and caring for the environment in which teachers live and function. Each of these administrators has been willing to dig past recognition to perception and appreciation of the uniqueness of each novice teacher as well as the unique situation in which these novice teachers find themselves. Wayne, Mark, and Daniel exemplify the passion which Dewey (1934/1980) says is the hallmark of the aesthetic. As Day (2004) asserts, this “passion is not a luxury, a frill, or a quality possessed by just a few teachers. It is essential to all good teaching” (p. 11). This passion spills over into not only all that good teachers *do* but into all that they *are* since, “at their best . . . teachers display, through who they are and how they act, a deep and passionate commitment to their work” (p. 14). If good administrators provide for

teachers what teachers provide for students, the cultivation of this passion begins with leadership—aesthetic leadership. Teachers who are supported in this way can afford the vulnerability of investing “their personal and professional selves in their workplace” (Day, 2004, p. 45) because their passion helps them to “remain hopeful” (p. 20). This hope is what Sara displayed when she defended her first year at the end of her final interview. She knew it was not for nothing—it had purpose in her life both personally and professionally. She had survived and was stronger, better, hopeful because of it. Although it had been painful in many ways, because it had been so “deeply personal,” it was a deep part of whom she had become, and she wanted to own that.

This deeply personal aspect of the process of learning to teach permeates every theme discussed and every story revealed, confirming that what nurtures novice teachers toward professional growth is personal, sustained, reciprocal attention from a seasoned educator they trust and respect. This attention to process is the work of aesthetic leadership, leadership that, like good teaching, is a matter of “the head *and* the heart” (Day, 2004, p.105). Jeff knew he had found this type of leadership early enough to go to his administrator with a serious problem with a colleague. Sara and Michaela were not so fortunate in their first schools, but both moved and found school leaders who were committed to the nurture and professional developments of novice teachers. Process is what Mark is attuned to as he leaves a novice teacher with a question to ponder. Those questions foster reflexivity and inquiry as novice teachers learn that questions can guide their professional development and foster both personal and professional growth.

In unpacking these narratives of novice teacher support and success, I have consistently reviewed my own stories of struggle and success, struggle and success both

as a teacher and as an administrator. The process—both of becoming a seasoned educator and of working through these narratives of teacher support and success—has been deeply personal for me even as it has been for each of the participants. These personal accounts of novice teacher support and success have captured some of “the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon” surrounding the first years of teaching (Carter, 1993, p. 60).

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

## So What?

Students of teaching spend four or five years perfecting their craft—the craft of being “students of teaching,” and then one day in May they walk across a stage and someone hands them each a paper and shakes their hands, and when they leave the stage, they are teachers, not students of teaching but *teachers*. At least that is what the piece of paper says. But the learning has just begun, and as the literature indicates and these narratives exemplify, the quality of communication and relationship with the first administrator is foundational to novice teacher retention and professional development. Mark, Daniel, and Wayne have emerged as exemplars of Irwin’s (2003) “aesthetic leadership.” These participant administrators and the administrators who are guiding Sara, Jeff, and Michaela toward personal and professional success exemplify Deweyan aesthetics in that they dig past the surface toward perceptive appreciation of the novice teachers on their staffs and allow schools to be fulfilling places for teachers.

As administrators, we are first and foremost the instructional leaders for our schools, and it is integral to our leadership that we have a practical, working knowledge of where we hope to lead our teachers and, therefore, what we hope to achieve in and for our students. Our personal understanding of curriculum is the foundation for that leadership. Eisner’s (1991) notion of curriculum as a mind-altering device brings curriculum alive; not merely the text and scope and sequence, but every aspect of every day both in and out of school work together to develop thinking in our students. Dare we accept a lesser definition for development of our teachers? As Irwin (2003) explains, “in our leading we are teaching” (p. 3), teaching the teachers. Sergiovanni (1996) says the

“aim of teaching is to provide the conditions for learning” (p. 134). According to Halford (1998) “educational leaders who understand the typical realities of new teachers can anticipate and address the needs of these novices” (p. 34). The depth of understanding referred to by these researchers is not superficial as it moves beyond recognition to perception; Dewey (1934/1980) says that “bare recognition is satisfied when a proper tag or label is attached”, but perception actually “replaces bare recognition” (p. 53.) Perception looks beyond the surface for meaning and connections. Aesthetic leaderships demands such perception in seeking to reach toward those deeper meanings for the purpose of making connections between the novice and his environment—between the novice and her self—between the novice and content—between the novice and students. Sara shared her surprise at how personable her new administrators were, at how they entered into class with the students, making their presence acceptable to both the students and her as the teacher, and she recognized that just as she hoped her new students would become more comfortable with her as she worked toward being real with them, toward showing them she was human and not just a “teacher-person,” that it was important that she know these educational leaders in a personal way. They were showing her that personal relationship was important enough to warrant their time—and plenty of it.

Perhaps we make it harder than it needs to be. Beyond induction and mentoring, novice teachers need what all teachers need: leadership that promotes a culture of professional development, professional respect, and a place in the decision-making processes of the school, leadership that is willing to wrestle with the tensions of questioning, searching, and uncertainty both in self and in others, leadership that truly

appreciates the struggle. Aesthetic leadership attempts not merely to bridge the gaps but to live in the gaps—moving freely from self to other, from searching to uncertainty and back again. In this way, perception is active, receptive, and mutual.

For Wayne, Daniel, and Mark one of those gaps is the space between the office and the classroom. Each of them stressed over and over the importance of being in classrooms, of knowing the teachers and what was happening in their classrooms personally, of keeping the door open and the communication frequent. And each was able to present multiple examples of how those efforts had paid off in the lives of individual teachers and, therefore, for their schools and, of course, for student learning.

Perhaps the most important thing that any of us learn in higher education is the fact that there is always more to learn. Naïve, cocky eighteen-year-old high school graduates head off to college often believing themselves ready for anything and expecting to have whatever else they might need for their careers poured into their brains by intelligent professors—and to be done with it. Several years later, if they have really paid attention, they walk across a stage to accept a diploma they wonder if they deserve, knowing all too well that there is so much left to learn—there are so many questions left to ask, and the task is to enjoy the ride even more than the stop-offs along the way. Somewhere along the way the true professional makes a “lifelong commitment to inquiry” (Day, 2004, p. 105) because the passion that sustains is nurtured “through continuing learning” (p. 109).

Teachers are no exception. Each of us works through the process in our own way. As a researcher in a narrative inquiry, I acknowledged early in the process that I saw myself in the stories both of the novice teachers and the administrator. As a novice



teacher, I needed so much; I didn't even know how to ask the questions much less how to find the answers. Even after all those college literature courses, each new assignment would invariably include a novel or two I had never read or a theory I had never understood; therefore, content was a major obstacle. I also struggled to understand how courses fit together, how "school" flowed, how I "fit", how my students "fit," and how to make sense of learning. The context of school confused me. And just as Darling-Hammond (1997) observed, I was " 'teaching' without regard for learning" (p. 4). I did not know my students; I did not know their learning styles or their educational backgrounds; I did not know their interests or their hopes and dreams. But of more concern upon reflection, I did not comprehend the role and place of these considerations within teaching and learning. I did not know how teaching and learning work together, how real teaching and real learning is about building relationships between self, others, and subject matter; living "in-between" these entities (Macintyre Latta, 2001)—living in the tension between questions and more questions, between seeking and finding, between certainty and uncertainty. In order to work effectively with students, to live "in-between" these entities, I needed to learn content—subject matter; I need to learn context—the how and why and flow of school, and I needed to learn about my students—students in general as well as specifically, individually. More importantly I needed to learn to embrace process as a becoming teacher, seeking enjoyment in the tensions between finding and growing—to enjoy the curricular ride. Dewey (1934/1980) says "to be truly artistic, a work must also be esthetic—that is, framed for enjoyed receptive perception" (p. 48). And, of course, as an administrator, I had to build on those lessons as my "teaching" assignment broadened to educational leadership.

The aesthetic leadership encouraged by Irwin (2003) should be enjoyable simply because “there is an element of passion in all esthetic perception” (Dewey, 1934/1980, p. 49). This exercise of passion should provide enjoyment—not the pleasurable enjoyment of final achievement but the working enjoyment of “shaping and reshaping” (p. 49) of the artist working *toward* completion. Although aesthetic leadership enjoys victories along the way, even deeper joy is found in the work of teachers in furthering the furthering work of learning. This is why Wayne is able to say he tries new things all the time and tries to do smarter things rather than more things when he is working with new teachers on his staff. His passion for providing the best learning environment for students is tied up in providing the best working/learning environment for teachers which not only benefits them personally and professionally but the school and the district as well when they are able to retain the teachers in whom they have invested.

With no curriculum guide, no list of state standards, and no government policies entitled “No Novice Teacher Left Behind” how does the administrator find that place of tension, where frustration meets creativity without remaking the teacher in her own image? And if “guidelines” have been suggested, how does a perceptive administrator, who is working to appreciate the needs of novice teachers, assure that they are just that—guidelines—and not rules of engagement that could stifle not only creative leadership but creativity in others? How does what administrators know of teaching and learning meld with their own creative tension to encourage growth in others? More importantly, what will novice teachers see as help, and what will they see as restrictive or as neglect? These are questions with which the administrator participants in this inquiry seem to have

wrestled. None of them sought to remake themselves in their novice teachers. In fact, Mark said as painful as it was not to make some curriculum decisions for one of the new English teachers, he let her decide but was there to walk through the process with her as she worked out the daily consequences of her decision.

Precisely because the process, the journey, is so personal, in order to wrestle with possible answers to these and other questions administrators must be willing to live “in-between” these entities with/for teachers. The need is the same: as curriculum leader I must know my content, my context, and my students/teachers. Content for the new teachers on my staff includes each of these—they need to learn *content* or their subject matter, *context* in which teaching/learning happen, and about their *students*—both in general and specifically. Since for teachers context is the particulars of this school in this community, these students, their ethnic or racial diversity, their learning styles and differences, and just plain “How we do things around here”, they become part of what I must know as an administrator if I am to work with novice teachers. My students are the teachers—both the novices and the veterans on my staff: Who are they? What are their academic and experience backgrounds? Where are their strengths and their weaknesses? What tensions are influencing them from outside the classroom? And, more importantly, how do I move “in-between” these characteristics to creatively fuel the point of tension to promote creativity and growth? This inquiry provides three very personal, very different examples. Daniel even mentioned that it was just his personality to be out in the school and learning about new people. He acknowledges not only the personal aspect of what he does and who he is but of how he might work out the daily aspects of educational leadership in a way that would be different from others. In the same way, he would not

only welcome but encourage teachers to do the same as they work through who they are and how they go about this job called teaching.

As I seek out ways to improve my own creative/aesthetic supervision of instruction, I am comforted by Oberg's (2004) assertion that "we begin with what is, but we are not limited by it" (p. 227). She explains that "re-creation begins on the ground and pushes through present horizons into new territory. It begins as two educators (usually a teacher and a supervisor) come together to ask ground-breaking questions about teaching as they know it" (p. 227). Having never taken part in such discussions from the other side, I am breaking new ground—both professionally and personally—as I invite teachers and administrators to dialogue with me in reflexive terms, all the while knowing that "reflection as often leads to uncertainty as to certainty" (p. 228)—to more questions rather than answers, and I am, therefore, immensely grateful for the examples of reflective practice I have experienced in this inquiry. Since as Oberg (2004) says, "anyone who wishes to facilitate other's reflection must herself be reflective" (p. 229), I must ask: How do I become reflexive in my approach to leadership? How do I negotiate the time and space for personal, professional reflection while leading others in the endeavor? The participants in this inquiry have provided multiple examples of their own reflexivity as they have pondered the questions presented them. Their stories give voice and meaning to the checklists and manuals for working with novice teachers. When Jeff says he had to find his own mentor and Michaela compares the effectiveness of being assigned a mentor and struggling with the feeling of intruding when she had to just find someone to ask her questions, we have a story that plays out the importance of checking off that item on the "To Do for Novice Teachers" checklist. It becomes more personal,

more meaningful, even more necessary as the accounts give voice to the novice teachers themselves and exemplify the impact made on teachers' lives.

The consequences of living aesthetically in teaching/learning situations are multi dimensioned. Wineburg and Grossman's (1998) research is based on the principle that "schools cannot become exciting places for children until they first become exciting places for adults" (p. 350). Creating exciting places for adults falls to administrators. I was fortunate to find three excellent examples of administrators who are willing to enter the "complex and messy business" of the school day. Living "in-between" is not easy, not neatly packaged in formula. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) followed 50 new teachers in Massachusetts over a four-year period and found that many second career adults migrated after finding their schools inadequate mostly because they had "assumed that principals would be respectful, accessible, and involved in the life of the school" (p. 21). Michaela puts a face on that research for me. She left business to find more meaningful work; she left her first school to find a more personally fulfilling and more nurturing place to pursue that new work. Life experience told her there was more, and she found a place where the leadership works to move her along on her personal journey to success.

This leadership that Irwin (2003) calls aesthetic is also a "complex and messy business" into which we must be willing to invest time and energy; living "in-between" requires commitment—to self, to learning, and to others and their learning. To embrace the aesthetic of leadership we must acknowledge that it is complex because the questions are not multiple choice with neatly packaged answers from which to choose, and it is messy because the searching usually begets more searching. But aesthetic leadership is not about matching problems to solutions, it is about connecting living, breathing

complex human beings to pathways of growth, and it is about recognizing those pathways for ourselves as well. It is about possibility which in and of itself is far more exciting than pre-determined formulae.

#### Where Do We Go from Here?

What of the novice in all of this? How does the perceptive administrator juggle all the pieces of the puzzle, knowing which ones to move today and which ones to leave alone? As one of those pieces, often feeling tension and creating tension, how does the novice connect with the other pieces—especially the administrator—who is often seen as an authority figure rather than a colleague? And where is the creativity in the tension—the questioning, the searching, the uncertainty—between curator and administrator—between caretaker and servant? Aesthetic leadership invites participatory thinking and engagement that embraces uncertainties as part of process. Aesthetic leadership works with what is given toward what might be. Aesthetic leadership is invested in forwarding learning for all. Although he acknowledges that it is dangerous to pretend to know what another is thinking, Wayne says he tries to watch the new people on his staff, to give them time and space to settle in, but to be there ready to help if needed, before he moves in with any formal help, evaluation, or suggestions. He equates it to moving into a new home where if the neighbors drop in every evening, the boxes will never get unpacked and the family will never feel at home. The time and space he gives them allows for their personal growth as well as for his more informal interaction to build trust.

Sergiovanni (1996) explains that “underneath every school culture is a theory, and every school culture is driven by its theory. Efforts to change school cultures inevitably involve changing theories of schooling and school life” (p. 3). The culture of isolation

for new teachers is being replaced in schools such as those headed by Daniel, Mark, and Wayne with a culture of inclusion and respect. Although new teachers are making their desires known, the information is processed too late when it comes from the Teachers Followup Survey. But are we listening so as to scaffold the next generation of novice teachers? Novice teachers are telling us “they do want their principals’ support, encouragement, and appreciation” (Williams, 2003, p. 73); they say that “the respect and support of administrators were key to their satisfaction” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p. 23), and “the feeling of being supported and nurtured is very important for novice teachers” (Menchaca, 2003, p. 26). Jeff, Sara, and Michaela confirmed these findings. Jeff said one of the most important things a new administrator can do is just be willing to answer questions, be available. Sara said she was frustrated when she would often wait over half an hour to ask a simple question at her first school but is encouraged by the fact that she knows she will run into an administrator in the hall between classes or at lunch every day at this school. When I asked Michaela that last question in the interview about what she hoped her best friend would find in her first administrator, she said she hoped he would do what he said; he would actually show up for scheduled observations or at least let her know why he hadn’t. Michaela explained that her administrator missed at least two, maybe three, scheduled observations the first year, and she had to go ask him what had happened. Once or twice he had just plain forgotten all about her.

Sergiovanni (1996) encourages leaders to “concentrate on people first. Build them up by increasing their capacity to function and by increasing their commitment” (p. 35). As curators/administrators who embrace aesthetic leadership, we must acknowledge the unique needs of novice teachers and concentrate on meeting those

needs. We recognize the tension; we see the puzzle; we know what we know; we want to care; we seek to serve. I asked Wayne about the fact that he was one of the few administrators who did not mention classroom management among the needs of novice teachers. He said he would certainly watch those areas in a novice teacher, but for him, relationships and connections are basic to everything. Wayne “concentrate[s] on people first.” He says until they are connected to other people, the reading curriculum will not receive the necessary attention, until they feel part of the new school culture, the math curriculum will be secondary to them. Once their personal, emotional, social, and cultural needs are being met, they can find the time and energy to concentrate on curriculum and skills.

So if there has been a disconnect between what we offer and what the novice needs, is it because we have focused on the wrong pieces of the puzzle? It is the same puzzle, with the same pieces, but am I looking at the brilliantly colored, conveniently patterned side and leaving the novice to search out the dull tan of the uncooperative cardboard side? How do I turn it around so they can see what I see? Must I be willing to work the cardboard underside? Perhaps. In other words, if perception is reality, do our perceptions/realities match? Returning to Sergiovanni’s notion of vision conversation, I submit that the solution lies within these conversations that bridge where we are and where we want to be, in examining the narratives of novice teachers and the administrators who work with them for the stories that bring that puzzle together. If the puzzle is overwhelming or too confusing for the novice, perhaps the veteran educator must be willing to help connect the outer edges of the puzzle through the productive conversation of aesthetic leadership—conversations which both appreciate the



circumstances of the novice and seek the depth of perception necessary to move beginning teachers toward maturity. And perhaps that outer edge is just where Wayne is working when he addresses the emotional, social, and cultural needs expressed throughout these interviews, or perhaps it is in those closing comments as the novice teachers reflected upon their hopes for future novice teachers. And slowly as the other pieces are foraged out and brought into the light through these frequent conversational interactions between novice teachers and administrators or novice teachers and veteran teachers the puzzle becomes a very personal mosaic of the practical skills and knowledge required to mature as a professional educator.

So I have asked: If issues of retention and issues of professional development become issues of administration as suggested earlier, where is the fine line between what we do as school administrators and what the staff perceives that we do—especially the new teachers—and between what we perceive them to need and what they really need? Do we sometimes miss the mark of meeting new teachers' needs because of sins of commission or sins of omission—or both? Where is the connection point between the experience of the administrator and the lack of experience of the novice teacher? And are we still looking for the “silver bullet” or the magic formula into which I should plug A (new teacher) and B (training) and C (a mentor) and expect to come up with D (a veteran teacher)? Administrators like Mark, Wayne, and Daniel certainly are not merely looking for a formula. If learning is not that simple for students, why do we expect it to be that simple for teachers? How willing are we to reach inside ourselves—and outside ourselves—to embrace the tension that will lead to creativity in our leadership—creativity that will productively connect with the tension experienced by the novice

teacher? The narratives discussed in this inquiry confirm that relationship through communication is key to novice teacher retention and professional development, and if we sincerely want to turn the tide in both of these areas, we must be willing to accept the challenge to move toward the aesthetic in school leadership.

In so doing we will be forced to reconsider the culture of schooling and reframe the role of the administrator. The conversations about relationship and school culture that will really count are those that are beginning to take place in schools of education, in administrator workshops, and in schools across the country—conversations that move beyond management and standards to relationships and connections, conversations that dig deeper than what has always been toward what can be in schools, for students, teachers, and administrators. Hope for novice teachers and our schools can be restored through such leadership, but it is dependant upon restructuring what is expected of school leaders. School leaders must be free to move from the formulas they have memorized in the science of leadership to the aesthetic possibilities found in living “in-between” the tensions and the complexities of the uncertainty in teaching and learning as it could be—to continue the conversation of vision that lives between where we are and where we want to be—as Wayne says to seek out the smarter things to do. Issues of retention *and* issues of professional development, then become issues of relationship, issues of the aesthetic—issues of appreciation, perception, and *especially* enjoyment for the love of learning for administrators, teachers of all levels of experience and, therefore, for students.

## Afterword

As Conle (2000) explains, when a researcher engages in narrative inquiry, it often begins or becomes a quest as much as an inquiry. As I have had both the honor to sit with Jeff, Sara, and Michaela and with Daniel, Wayne, and Mark and the luxury of “lingering” (May 1991) with both current literature on the topic and our conversations concerning novice teacher support and development, I have come to realize that this inquiry has been both. It *began* as a personal quest—a quest to develop my personal knowledge about and my skills for and understanding of novice teacher nurture, development, and retention. It *became* a quest—a quest to continue the conversations and the inquiry that will further my own professional growth as well as that of others.

*Insights.* I have called on others to be reflective as they have dialogued with me concerning their struggles and victories as novice teachers or as administrators who work with novice teachers, and from the beginning I acknowledged that I am a stakeholder in the inquiry as well. I must also be reflective concerning my own practices. However, I have also moved beyond reflection on my own practices to reflexivity since I can now take each theory, each struggle, each victory, each story and hold it up beside my own theories, my own struggles, my own victories, and my own stories to ask what has been challenged, what has been confirmed, what can be commingled, what can be eliminated, what can be highlighted.

*Implications for personal practice.* As a result, things I do as an administrator will remain and others will be added; some will be eliminated—or delegated. I will continue to do walk-throughs as often as possible—far more often than I allowed for in the past. However, they will be more purposeful and productive. I will look for patterns

as Wayne suggests and ask more probing questions as Mark exemplifies and follow up with notes and emails of affirmation for teachers. I will assign mentors, follow up on their progress, and work with them concerning how to help novice teachers. I will pay more attention to relationships and to school culture, a phenomenon I always took for granted. The process of this inquiry has also given me skills in research and a vocabulary that will enable me to become a more effective and more efficient leader of learning so that walk-throughs and more formal evaluations can be followed up with research based input for teachers. This seems to add up to what Day (2004) would call a “lifelong commitment to inquiry” (p. 105) which, he says, is the mark of a true professional and fundamental because “continuing learning” (109) is what sustains the passion for what we do as educators.

*Implications for future research.* Both Michaela and Jeff said they would advise a friend entering the profession to ask lots of questions, and, indeed, there are many questions left to ask, including some that are specific to this inquiry. Perhaps the administrators in this inquiry were affected by having lost novice teachers either to other schools or from the profession. How might this affect their behavior with novice teachers now and, therefore, the findings of this inquiry? I made it clear from the first contact that I was examining the administrator role in novice teacher support and development. How did knowing this affect the content and/or focus of the participants’ answers?

The quest that brought me to doctoral studies resulted in this inquiry, and this inquiry cycled me back to the quest—but better equipped to further the quest.

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APPENDIX A  
IRB Compliance Documents

November 3, 2005

Sandra Dop  
Dr. Margaret Macintyre Latta  
4502 Avenue E  
Kearney, NE 68847

IRB # 2005-10-038 EP

TITLE OF PROJECT: **Novice Teachers and their First Administrators: Stories from the Trenches**

Dear Sandra:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study. Your proposal seems to be in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46).

Date of EP Review: **10/24/05.**

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 11/03/05. This approval is Valid Until: 11/02/06

1. You have the IRB approved Informed Consent form for this project. Please use this form when making copies to distribute to your participants. If it is necessary to create a new informed consent form, please send us your original so that we may approve and stamp it before it is distributed to participants.


We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:


- Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact Shirley Horstman, IRB Administrator, at 472-9417 or email [shorstman1@unl.edu](mailto:shorstman1@unl.edu).

Sincerely,

  
Dan R. Hoyt, Chair  
for the IRB

  
Shirley Horstman  
IRB Administrator

cc: Unit Review Committee  
Faculty Advisor

APPENDIX B  
Informed Consent Form



Phone (308) 236-0796

IRB#2005-10-038 EP  
Date Approved: 11/02/05  
Valid Until: 11/01/06

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### **Identification of Project:**

*Novice teachers and their First Administrators: Stories from the Trenches*

### **Purpose of the Research:**

*This is a research project that will examine novice teacher perceptions as well as administrator perceptions of new teacher needs and the role of their first administrators in meeting those needs. Participants will include novice teachers and administrators, who have worked with novice teachers; however, administrators interviewed will not be administrators of the teachers interviewed.*

### **Procedures:**

*Participation in this study will take approximately 30 minutes for the questionnaire and 60 to 90 minutes each for up to 3 follow-up audio taped interviews.*

### **Risks and/or Discomforts:**

*There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. In the event of problems resulting from participation in the study, psychological treatment is available on a sliding fee scale at the UNL Psychological Consultation Center, telephone (402) 472-2351.*

### **Benefits:**

*The information gained from this study will provide storied exemplars of novice teacher support and may help us better understand the unique needs of novice teachers and how the first administrator helps to meet those needs.*

### **Alternatives:**

*N/A*

### **Confidentiality:**

*All data gathered during this study will be kept strictly confidential. The results of this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at professional meetings, but if this happens, your identity and that of all participants and institutions will be kept strictly confidential. Pseudonyms will be used. Audio tapes will be kept securely locked in a cabinet and will only be accessible by the researchers. At the end of the analysis period, all original audio tapes that might identify the participants will be destroyed.*

### **Compensation:**

*There will be no compensation for participating in this research.*

### **Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

*You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time at 308-236-0796. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska—Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.*



IRB#2005-10-038 EP  
Date Approved: 11/02/05  
Valid Until: 11/01/06

***Freedom to Withdraw:***

*You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.*

***Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:***

*You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.*

Check if you agree to be audio taped during the interview.

***Signature of Participant:***

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Research Participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

***Name and Phone number of Investigator(s):***

*Sandra J. Dop, MA, Principal Investigator*

*Margaret Macintyre Latta, Ph.D. Secondary Investigator*

*Phone: 308•440•1905*

*Phone: 402•472•9958*

APPENDIX C

Questionnaires



As a new teacher, we would appreciate your participation in this study to examine your perceptions of the role of the first administrator in the nurture and support of novice teachers. Participation in this study is voluntary and your individual answers will be anonymous and completely confidential.

If you need to use the back of the paper, please number your continued responses.

**Start Here**

1. How many years have you taught, including the current year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What grade levels have you taught? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What would you say were your most important needs during your first years of teaching?
  
4. Did anyone on the staff of the school help you during those first years? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, who (provide job title only and not specific names) and in what way?
  
5. Please describe briefly how your first administrator supported you.
  
6. In what other ways would you have liked to have experienced supports to enable your teaching career?

As an administrator, we would appreciate your participation in this study to examine your perceptions of the role of the first administrator in the nurture and support of novice teachers. Participation in this study is voluntary and your individual answers will be anonymous and completely confidential.

If you need to use the back of the paper, please number your continued responses.

**Start Here**

1. How many years have you been an administrator, including this one? \_\_\_\_\_  
At what grade levels? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What would you say are the most important needs of novice teachers?
4. Briefly describe how you believe the needs of novice teachers differ from the needs of veteran teachers.
5. Briefly describe how novice teachers are supported in your school.
6. Briefly describe how you are personally involved with the support of novice teachers on your staff.

APPENDIX D  
Interview Participants

Summary Chart: Interview Participants

Novice Teachers	Years of Exp.	Subject/Grades	Other identifying information
Sara	2	Math 6,8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade math and then moved to a different system to teach 8<sup>th</sup> grade math.</li> <li>• Principals can make the experience of learning to teach easier through encouragement.</li> <li>• Encourages novice teachers to ask lots of questions and realize it will not be easy.</li> <li>• Encourages administrators to be accessible.</li> </ul>
Michaela	3	Business 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggled in first school where she felt like an outsider and moved to a new school after one year.</li> <li>• Mom is a teacher so she knew things should be better than they were.</li> <li>• New school has a new principal this year so she has her third principal in 3 years.</li> <li>• Encourages novice teachers to ask questions</li> <li>• Encourages administrators to communicate</li> </ul>
Jeff	2	Band 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Felt alone at first especially since he is the only band teacher in the district.</li> <li>• Relied on his network with other band instructors and his former teachers.</li> <li>• Believes encouragement is key to novice teacher survival.</li> <li>• Encourages novice teachers to ask questions.</li> <li>• Encourages administrators to be accessible and establish relationships.</li> </ul>

## Interview Participants, continued

Administrators	Years of Exp.	Grades	Other identifying information
Daniel	18	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support begins at the interview.</li> <li>• Assigns mentors according to common interests like clubs sponsored or sports coached.</li> <li>• 17 years as assistant principal, first year as head principal.</li> <li>• Others assist him in working with novice teachers.</li> </ul>
Wayne	24	K-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connection is first priority</li> <li>• Establishes communication immediately after hiring in the spring.</li> <li>• Assigns 2 mentors, 1 for content/grade level and 1 for social and emotional support.</li> <li>• In classrooms almost on a daily basis.</li> </ul>
Mark	5	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meets with novice teachers 8 to 12 times during the first year.</li> <li>• In classrooms almost on a daily basis.</li> </ul>

APPENDIX E  
Interview Protocols

Interview #1: Teacher #8 1-19-06 (Jeff)

I received 17 administrator questionnaires and 15 novice teacher questionnaires. When I read the questionnaires looking for themes, 6 themes emerged from both groups. Emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum were evident in both sets of questionnaires. And these findings are consistent with current literature in the field.

1. You said that one of your needs the first year was to know you were doing an acceptable job of teaching. You also mentioned moral support. I would categorize these as emotional needs. Before we get into talking about those needs, I'd like to ask a related question. What do you think it is about teaching that creates such a need for emotional or social support at school?
2. How did you receive the feed back you needed to know that you were doing an acceptable job?
3. You also said you needed to know you would survive? Why? How did you survive?

Another of the six themes was having a mentor. You mentioned the choir director.

1. Was he an official mentor, or how did it develop?
2. Can you give me an example of how he was a moral support when times were "rough" or "good"?
3. You said you would like to have had a mentor outside the district who could help you. How do you envision that working?

Administrative support was another theme and the main focus of my research.

1. How did your administrator help you?
2. One thing you mentioned was a difficult co-worker, can you tell me about that?

You also said he helped you manage your classroom more efficiently and improve teaching. That was actually one of the other themes—classroom management including discipline.

1. How did you know you needed help in this area? What was happening?
2. How did your administrator help?

Time management, planning lessons, and understanding curriculum was another theme.

1. You have a little different system from a classroom teacher. Was this a problem for you? In what way?
2. Do you see progress? How did that happen? What do you do differently now?

The final theme that developed in the questionnaires was learning the culture and procedures of the specific school.

1. You alluded to this when you said the choir director helped you understand kids' backgrounds and past successes and failures. How did you find out about culture and procedures?

Two final questions:

It's March, and your best friend just landed his first teaching job to start in August.

1. What would you tell him?
2. What would you hope his administrator would know or do?



## Interview #1: Teacher #15 (Michaela)

I received 17 administrator questionnaires and 15 novice teacher questionnaires. When I read the questionnaires looking for themes, 6 themes emerged from both groups. Emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, classroom management to include discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum were themes that were evident in both sets of questionnaires. And these findings are consistent with current literature in the field.

1. You said at your first school you felt “pressured to be perfect.” How did that affect you emotionally?
2. You also said that you “always felt like an outsider.” In what way? Looking back can you pinpoint examples of events that lead to that feeling?
3. What do you think there is about teaching that creates such a need for emotional and social support at work—for relationships?
4. Can you give examples of how that support was or was not there for you? Since you indicated that you have been at two schools with different experiences, perhaps you can give an example of a time you needed emotional or social support and it didn’t happen as well as a positive experience when you were supported.

Another of those themes I mentioned at the beginning was administrator support.

1. You said your first administrator devoted time to you at the formal evaluation. Were there other informal visits and/or other times when you felt you had his complete attention?
2. What about your new school, is there a difference?
3. Specific examples.

## Mentors

1. Did you or do you have a mentor, and how does that work?
2. Is your administrator involved in that relationship?
3. I realize the secretary is not a mentor in teaching, but you mentioned the secretary and the counselor—how did they help you?

## Social, cultural, specific school procedures

1. How were you assimilated into daily life of each of these schools—to the culture, the social structure, the specific school procedures?

Other questions

1. How many years were you at the first school?
2. How did you come to the decision to leave and look for another school and not to leave teaching all together?

Interview #2: Teacher #15 (Michaela)

Last time I told you that six themes emerged in the questionnaires. We talked about emotional or social support, mentors, administrator support, and assimilation into the local school culture. The other two themes were classroom management to include discipline and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum.

Acknowledging that some things may blend together from these two areas, let's look at time management, planning, and understanding curriculum first.

1. Thinking about your first couple of years, did you have problems with time management, planning, and understand the curriculum? If you had problems in these areas, what were they?
2. How did you work past those problems? Did anyone help you?
3. You are in your third year now; what is different? Do you see progress? What kind of questions/concerns do you still have?
4. Can you tell me a story? (If not included so far.)

The other area was classroom management to include discipline. Actually teachers referred to needing help with discipline more often than with classroom management and administrators referred to classroom management.

1. So before we move on to your specific stories, can you tell me how you would define classroom management?
2. How does this affect discipline? (If not included in answer to #1.)
3. How would you describe your classroom management the first year, and how has it progressed to where you are now?
4. Are there areas of classroom management you would like to improve, and if so, how might you get tips or pointers on how to do that?

Knowing that what I am really trying to uncover here is stories of nurture and support of novice teachers, have you thought of any other experiences you might want to share with me about your development as a teacher so far?

Two final questions: It's March, and your best friend just got hired for her first teaching position for next fall.

1. What would you tell her?
2. What would you hope her new administrator would know or do?

## Interview #1: Teacher #16 (Sara)

I received 17 administrator questionnaires and 15 novice teacher questionnaires. When I read the questionnaires looking for themes, 6 themes emerged from both groups. Emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, classroom management to include discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum were themes that were evident in both sets of questionnaires. And these findings are consistent with current literature in the field.

1. You said your most important need was guidance and reassurance. I would put that in emotional and social as well as some of the other areas. Let's look at emotional or reassurance first. What do you think there is about teaching that requires so much emotional support?
2. Can you give examples of how that support was there for you?
3. What about a time when you needed it but it did not happen?
4. You also said you needed time to discuss the overview of the year and goals and standards. How did that happen for you?
5. Tell me about how your team helped you?
6. What developed that let you know it was okay to talk to your administrator?
7. How else did your administrator help?
8. Tell me about the meetings with other new teachers in other schools? How were they beneficial? Did you meet people with whom you continue to have contact? How is that helpful?
9. Tell me about time constraints and lesson planning?

Interview #2: Teacher #16 (Sara)

Last time I told you that six themes emerged in the questionnaires. We talked about emotional or social support, mentors, administrator support, and assimilation into the local school culture. The other two themes were classroom management to include discipline and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum.

Acknowledging that some things may blend together from these two areas, let's look at time management, planning, and understanding curriculum first.

1. You touched on this last time, but thinking about your first couple of years, did you have problems with time management, planning, and understand the curriculum? If you had problems in these areas, what were they?
2. How did you work past those problems? Did anyone help you?
3. You are in your second year now; what is different? Do you see progress? What kind of questions/concerns do you still have?
4. Can you tell me a story? (If not included so far.)

The other area was classroom management to include discipline. Actually teachers referred to needing help with discipline more often than with classroom management and administrators referred to classroom management.

1. So before we move on to your specific stories, can you tell me how you would define classroom management?
2. How does this affect discipline? (If not included in answer to #1.)
3. How would you describe your classroom management the first year, and how has it progressed to where you are now?
4. Are there areas of classroom management you would like to improve, and if so, how might you get tips or pointers on how to do that?

Knowing that what I am really trying to uncover here is stories of nurture and support of novice teachers, have you thought of any other experiences you might want to share with me about your development as a teacher so far?

Two final questions: It's March, and your best friend just got hired for her first teaching position for next fall.

1. What would you tell her?
2. What would you hope her new administrator would know or do?

Interview #1: Administrator #1 (Wayne)

First, may I ask how many students are in your school? How many teachers? And what is the approximate population of the city?

I received 17 administrator questionnaires and 15 novice teacher questionnaires. When I read the questionnaires looking for themes, 6 themes emerged from both groups. Emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, classroom management to include discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum were themes that were evident in both sets of questionnaires. And these findings are consistent with current literature in the field.

1. You mentioned when we set up the interview that you have new mentor guidelines in the district. Since mentoring is one of the needs listed why don't we start there? Did you bring the guidelines you mentioned?
2. How have these guidelines changed the way you do mentoring on your staff?
3. The literature indicates that novice teachers want mentors, but they also want their administrator to be involved in the process. How are you involved in the process in your school?
4. Can you give me an example? (Tell a story.)

You indicated in your questionnaire that you are particularly in tune to the emotional needs of novice—actually all—teachers on your staff.

1. First, before we go to specific examples, let me ask a related question. What do you think it is about teaching that brings out such deep emotional or relational needs?
2. You gave some pretty specific examples of things you do to make teachers feel welcome at your school: email faculty notes in the spring, summer faculty events, mailing photos of the staff and students. How long have you been doing these types of supports, and how did they develop?
3. Have you noticed differences in how novice teachers adjust or assimilate into the school or the profession since you have become more diligent in these areas?
4. Can you give examples about how these emotional supports have helped novice teachers? (Tell a story.)
5. You are obviously trying to be proactive in this area. However, if there have been times when new teachers on your staff have become discouraged, how do you

recognize it—early warning signs? And what do you do then? Do you have an example?

Another theme on many questionnaires was classroom management, but you did not mention it. I am interested in the fact that your questionnaire was the most thoroughly answered—the longest and the most thoughtful—and yet you did not touch on that topic.

1. First, how do you define classroom management?
2. Then I would just like to give you opportunity to comment—any idea why you didn't mention it?
3. What do you consider to be early warning signs that a novice teacher needs help in this area?
4. So what do you do then? How has this played out in a specific case? (Tell me a story.)

Literature and my questionnaires agree that novice teachers want their principals to be visible, accessible, and involved—my questionnaires specifically said they appreciated an administrator who was “easy to talk to.” They know their mentors will help them out, but the administrator does the evaluation.

1. How do you accomplish these at your school—how are you visible, accessible, and involved?
2. Stories?

## Interview #1: Administrator #8 (Mark)

First, may I ask how many students are in your school? How many teachers and administrators? And what is the approximate population of the city?

I received 17 administrator questionnaires and 15 novice teacher questionnaires. When I read the questionnaires looking for themes, 6 themes emerged from both groups. Emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, classroom management to include discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum were themes that were evident in both sets of questionnaires. And these findings are consistent with current literature in the field.

1. Let's look at the mentor program first. You mentioned an informal network of department heads and colleagues. But does your district or your school have a formal mentor program?
2. The literature indicates that novice teachers want mentors, but they also want their administrator to be involved in the process. In your school do you have assistant administrators? How are you all involved in the process in your school?
4. Can you give me an example? (Tell a story.)

You said you have a formal process of support that involves 8 to 12 meetings with you during the school year.

1. Is this a district program, or have you developed it yourself?
2. Do you do these meetings all yourself, or do other administrators participate?
3. How does it work? Do you have an agenda for the meetings?
4. Can you give me some examples of how individuals have been helped through these meetings—perhaps problems that have been warded off or concerns that have been addressed?

One of the things novice teachers focused on more than administrators in my questionnaire was lesson design and understanding of the curriculum.

1. Since you said novice teachers often “have a poor understanding of fundamentals of lesson design”, I would like to hear what you consider early warning signs in this area.
2. What do you do about it?



Another theme on many questionnaires was classroom management.

1. First, how do you define classroom management?
2. What do you consider to be early warning signs that a novice teacher needs help in this area?
3. So what do you do then? How has this played out in a specific case? (Tell a story.)

Literature and my questionnaires agree that novice teachers want their principals to be visible, accessible, and involved—my questionnaires specifically said they appreciated an administrator who was “easy to talk to.” They know their mentors will help them out, but the administrator does the evaluation.

1. How do you accomplish these at your school—how are you visible, accessible, and involved in such a large school?
2. Stories?

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Interview #2: Administrator #8 (Mark)

Perhaps you remember from last time that I said my questionnaire resulted in six dominant themes concerning novice teacher needs: emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, classroom management to include discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum. Last time we talked about mentors, administrator support, and classroom management.

1. Today let’s start with emotional and social support. First, before we get to specifics about novice teachers, can you tell me what you think it is about teaching that creates such a need for emotional and/or social support at work?
2. You talked about some things that might fall into this category, but I would still like to ask how those emotional and/or social needs are met at your school.
3. Specific examples.
4. Also we started to get into planning and curriculum right at the end of our discussion about classroom management last time, but could you go a little more into that area for novice teacher needs. Have you seen gaps in their knowledge about or ability to plan and/or understand curriculum? Can you give examples?
5. Have you ever had to help a novice teacher with time management? How?

I don’t have any more questions right now, but if you have thought of other stories, I would be glad to hear them.

## Interview #1: Administrator #10 (Daniel)

First, may I ask how many students are in your school? How many teachers and administrators? And what is the approximate population of the city?

I received 17 administrator questionnaires and 15 novice teacher questionnaires. When I read the questionnaires looking for themes, 6 themes emerged from both groups. Emotional needs and social needs, someone to talk to or a mentor, administrator support, classroom management to include discipline, culture or specific school procedures, and time management, planning, and understanding curriculum were themes that were evident in both sets of questionnaires. And these findings are consistent with current literature in the field.

1. Let's look at the mentor program first. You said you try to connect people who have similar interests to "develop a 'kinship'". Why is that important?
2. The literature indicates that novice teachers want mentors, but they also want their administrator to be involved in the process. In your school you have 2 assistant administrators. How are you all involved in the process in your school?
3. Can you give me an example? (Tell a story.)

One of the prominent themes was emotional or social or relational needs which you alluded to when you mentioned "kinship".

1. First, before we go to specific examples, let me ask a related question. What do you think it is about teaching that brings out such deep emotional or relational needs?
2. What is your school doing to meet the emotional needs of novice teachers?
3. Can you give examples about how these emotional supports have helped novice teachers? (Tell a story.)
4. You are obviously trying to be proactive in this area. However, if there have been times when new teachers on your staff have become discouraged, how do you recognize it—early warning signs? And what do you do then? Do you have an example?

Another theme on many questionnaires was classroom management.

1. First, how do you define classroom management?
2. What do you consider to be early warning signs that a novice teacher needs help in this area?

3. So what do you do then? How has this played out in a specific case? (Tell me a story.)

Literature and my questionnaires agree that novice teachers want their principals to be visible, accessible, and involved—my questionnaires specifically said they appreciated an administrator who was “easy to talk to.” They know their mentors will help them out, but the administrator does the evaluation.

1. How do you accomplish these at your school—how are you visible, accessible, and involved in such a large school?

2. Stories?

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Interview #2 Administrator # 10 (Daniel)

1. I'd like to hear about the evaluation process you referred to last time. You mentioned formative and summative evaluations. Can you tell me about how that works and how it is different from what happens with tenured teachers?
2. Can you give me an example of how this process helped a novice teacher?
3. Have you thought of any other stories about novice teachers that have had a positive outcome after a struggle?