University of Alberta

EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING BY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

by

Marlene Elaine Keanie 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

Department of Secondary Education

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2007

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-29642-4
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-29642-4

Abstract

Experiences of Mentoring by School Administrators is a qualitative case study that explores the lived experiences of four school administrators in formal and diverse mentoring partnerships. Additionally, the findings of this study examine the manner in which the needs of these participants were met or not met in their respective mentoring relationships. Data were collected by conducting observations, examining journals and other relevant documents and engaging in conversations and interviews. The individual conversations through semi-structured interviews reveal how mentorship extended the learning of these administrators, shaped their professional and personal identity; emphasized relationships and stressed the importance of fierceness in mentoring. Emerging findings reveal the value of mentoring and encourage consideration for diverse ways to mentor. The findings also highlight the importance of learning and lifelong learning as a major goal of mentoring.

FOREWORD

The Kaleidoscope

In 1817 Sir David Brewster invented the kaleidoscope, a small tube in which one can observe different patterns and designs that are created by coloured pieces of glass (World Book Encyclopedia, 202, p. 174). The kaleidoscope operates on the principle of multiple reflections.

The kaleidoscope in this dissertation is a metaphor representing different ways of mentoring. Just as a kaleidoscope turns and shifts, so can relationships and the phases of one's professional life change. As the glass pieces align and connect with new pieces to form the new patterns, so can one's connections to others be rearranged or changed. At times the kaleidoscope glass remains attached in some manner to the same pieces as in the previous design, but with the shift, a new pattern emerges. In mentoring, individuals can also stay connected to previous mentoring partners while changing to accommodate new directions. Reflection in mentoring adds clarity to these shirting relationships and the mentoring process. The diverse designs of the kaleidoscope further remind us that mentoring is multifaceted and that there is no one right or best way to mentor.

Acknowledgements

It seems appropriate that in a study of mentoring I should acknowledge the individuals, my mentors, who guided and supported me on this journey. I have learned more than I imagined, but one of the most humbling affirmations for me has been the power of more than one. With others at my side, I have learned more about education, mentoring, and myself in relationships both personally and professionally.

My sincere gratitude and appreciation are extended to all my mentors who guided and encouraged me.

To my supervisor, Maryanne Doherty, for her continued sage advice, inspiration, endless energy, friendship, and understanding;

to Marc Arnal, Ingrid Johnston, and George Buck for their thoughtful suggestions, and their genuine care;

to David Blades for his optimism, encouragement and insightful responses,

I thank you.

I am also grateful to Steve, Lori, Yvonne, and Tracey for their willingness to share their mentoring experiences. I appreciate their time, support and involvement so freely offered. I thank you.

To my friends, for extending support, kindness, care and understanding, I thank you.

Finally, to my family, Charles and Chris, I extend my deepest love and gratitude. Your unconditional love, support, and encouragement has helped me continue to grow in my journey of becoming. Thank you.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Coming Full Circle: An Experience Story

A faint, almost apologetic rapping sound on my office door jolted me from my trance. Startled, I responded with a simple, "Yes?" to discover the custodian standing in the doorway. "Are you going to be much longer, or should I come back to clean your office?" he questioned. Looking at the clock, I was shocked to discover that it was early evening. How long had I been sitting here in this daze? I wondered. I couldn't hear any other voices and surmised that the other staff had left for the day.

Earlier, there had been a bustle and chatter as teachers busied themselves with preparations for the coming day. Everyone seemed to know exactly what needed to be done—everyone except for me. Throughout the day I had occupied myself with what I thought should be done and believed that I had managed these tasks well. At least I had survived. Now that the day was done, I was left alone to reflect on the events.

Instead of feelings of excitement, enthusiasm, and accomplishment after my first day, I felt relieved. The anticipated feelings were replaced with feelings of incompetence, frustration, and doubt. According to the questions and responses of the staff and parents throughout the day, they assumed that I should instinctively know my way around and the responsibilities of the job. If I didn't know these things, I imagined that others would wonder why I had been offered this position. I had expected more support from those who know the routine and procedures, but instead I had to discover them on my own.

The disappointment of this first day of my new career as an assistant principal left me questioning why I had wanted to leave the security, the success, and the friendships of

my previous situation. Had I made a mistake in taking this position? I wondered whether I would be offered more support and guidance in the succeeding days, or was I expected to find my own way? Pondering this, I was struck with a revelation.

Despite the passage of time and my successful experiences, I was harbouring familiar feelings from the past that connected me to the first days of my teaching career. At that time, as now, I was left on my own as those with more experience assumed that I should know what was required. Then as well I had hoped to be guided in learning my new role. I was stunned. I might have gained more understanding and knowledge from my past experiences, but now, despite being in a position of some responsibility, I was beginning again. So much had changed, but also so little. I was again uncertain about so much, but one thing that I definitely knew was that, in some ways, I had returned to the beginning. I had come full circle.

Acknowledging My Quest to Explore Mentoring

From this beginning story of my first day as a novice school administrator I have reflected on my quest to explore mentoring. Significant changes are currently at play in all aspects of my life, but they cannot be separated from my past. This understanding has guided me in exploring the complex nature of mentoring and in synthesizing my experiences as they connect to my personal and professional life. According to Bateson (2000):

> Teaching, governing and leadership all build on models set in early childhood, so we need words for styles of teaching like those we use for styles of parenting. Each style . . . is . . . evocative, proposing self-knowledge and setting a process in motion for at least some of the listeners, a process that will come to fruition quickly or slowly and may lie latent for a long time. (p. 235)

Memories of my personal mentoring experiences appear at times as tiny dots on the landscape of my life, yet at other times they loom large. Some evoke pleasant memories, whereas I recoil in thinking of others. Whether small or large, pleasurable or painful, I can conclude that they have all helped to shape my personal and professional being developed through contact and reflection but internally.

I cannot be certain, but I think that my understanding of relationships may have begun as early as my encounter with a frog. I remember when I was four years old, my older sister and her friends left me dangling upside down inside a posthole with only a few centimetres separating me from a frog. Although this act was unintentional and it is understood that children can soon become distracted with newer, more interesting events, it nevertheless created a resolve for me that would direct my future relationships. I believe that this incident helped me to know that I should be with people who support me and work with me. However, growing up, I didn't always understand what this meant. At times I didn't appreciate or acknowledge the support, and sometimes I even rebelled against it. However, this understanding was nestled deep within me, waiting to emerge at a later time. A seed had been planted that would one day direct the paths I chose for myself.

I recall the early lessons of my parents—more specifically, my father—who through stern commands directed me to become self-reliant. On my own, I was expected to recognize my mistakes and learn from all experiences, both good and bad. Whether I was practicing the piano or selecting a career, my parents guided me through my choices, although often without consideration for my views. I complied to the extent that I was required to do so, but, if possible, I would seek ways to demonstrate my resistance or

rebellion because I was not always convinced that my parents' choices were in my best interests.

As I entered school, my ideas continued to be influenced by teachers and coaches who encouraged me with new possibilities. One experience in particular had a profound effect on me and directed me to choose teaching as a career. After rejecting my parents' urgings to pursue teaching, I instead chose nursing as my future vocation. I was excited by the possibilities and remember the day when I was finally introduced to the program. When I had addressed all of the procedures and I was fitted for my uniform, I suddenly froze, realizing what was about to happen. I was going to learn to be a nurse, and I was not certain that this is what I wanted. I was overcome with panic and made a hasty exit from the hospital. Soon after, I found myself on a bus that was headed home. I wondered about these panicky and uncertain feelings, and after some time I realized that I had chosen this profession only to avoid my parents' choice for me. I knew that I would be suited for teaching because I had always enjoyed working with children, and I enjoyed learning and watching others learn. I would not acknowledge my parents' advice that I become a teacher, but chose to believe instead that it was other influences that led me to my decision. However, despite my efforts to dismiss my parents' gentle urgings, their life lessons were imprinted on me.

I entered university and completed the necessary coursework for an education degree before enthusiastically and idealistically embarking on the next phase of my education, the practicum. I recall being enthusiastic and idealistic as I began my field experiences. I was eager to be shown the way by a more experienced teacher who, I believed, would assist me at every step as I learned about teaching. However, this was

not to happen, and instead, I was left to find my own way. Being young and naïve, I struggled in isolation and silence, and I surmised that maybe this was the way it was supposed to be.

This same pattern was repeated as I made the transition into my teaching career after graduation. I am thankful that I was able to survive, and I feel fortunate that I did not become a statistic who left teaching within the first years. Perhaps it was my learned stubbornness or my rebellious nature that urged me to persist. Fortunately, I have continued to grow in knowledge and understanding, but I cannot erase the wondering of how things might have been different if the support was provided to me. As I struggled to learn on my own, I was aware of a void that could not be filled with knowledge from books. As important as this is, I believe that I was searching for meaning that would be revealed in something that could manifest itself in relational knowing. As I continued in my career, I seized opportunities to work with others, to share, to talk, to reflect, to care. After these encounters I would feel a sense of encouragement and completeness. However, these sessions were sporadic at best as other demands intervened.

From these beginnings and the memories that are attached, I have realized a need to support others in their work, especially novice teachers who are embarking on their new and unfamiliar career paths. I realize that teachers enter the profession because they care and need nurturing not only of the brain, but also of the heart and the soul. This support was not always available to me, and I was mindful to help others whenever I could. My wonderings about how things could have been different for me have guided me in my quest to discover effective ways to assist others. I believe that mentoring is one of the ways.

Now, as a researcher, my interest continues to focus on mentoring, but, more specifically, it centres on the experiences of those being mentored. There is an abundance of articles and texts related to mentoring that outline the importance of establishing programs for all teachers. Recently, these reports have called for the establishment of programs for school administrators as well, with information on starting programs, the goals and benefits of mentoring, and suggested methods and activities that are readily available. However, little has been written that includes the individual's voice, perceptions, understanding, and experiences within a mentoring relationship. It is necessary to explore these experiences of individuals to provide a new focus in the literature. These first-person experiences, placed alongside the already recorded material on mentoring, will enrich the understanding of mentoring. Studying experiences of individuals as they are lived, allows us to create meaning and understand from the perspective of the participant. If understanding is key, then studying the experiences is of prime importance to achieve this.

The Current Educational Climate of Mentoring

Education is often the target of public, political, and professional demands for improvement and accountability. School administrators are charged with being the leaders in facilitating changes to address these demands. This is no small task, especially because the situation is compounded by a changing political and educational climate, increasing social demands and changing social values, and decreasing funding (Holloway, 2004; McColl, 1999; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998).

The current situation requires effective leadership. Unfortunately, statistics alert us to a pending leadership crisis with Alberta's current school administrators aging and

many retiring in the near future. As teachers recognize the complexity of administration, fewer are willing to step up to the position (Daresh, 2001; McColl, 1999; McKinnon et al., 1999). The demand for well-prepared and effective leaders is a concern with the few in supply.

School jurisdictions are beginning to realize that they must take a more active role in preparing and supporting administrators. They are moving beyond a typical functional approach that assumes that professional development is the individual's responsibility and offers mentoring as one means of addressing the current needs of both the leaders and the system: "If principals are to participate and to lead in this educational reform effort, they, too, must have opportunities for growth and improvement" (Hansen & Matthews, 1994, p. 2).

Recognizing the value of mentoring in the beginning teachers' mentorship program, Plains School District in 2004 extended mentoring to include the district's assistant principals and principals. Working in collaboration with the Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA], the district created a pilot project to explore mentorship at this level. Here, mentoring is practiced in a variety of forms: the traditional model of novice paired with an experienced mentor or an assistant principal with a principal, and co-mentoring between teams of principals, teams of assistant principals, and others with a mix of both.

As an assistant principal and a member of a mentoring team, I have my own concerns and hopes for myself and for mentoring. My interest centres on the perceptions and, more specifically, the experiences of other administrators within mentoring. As previously stated, little has been written about the experiences of individuals in mentoring. Most research centres on programming and ways to mentor, but the voices of

individuals are not represented. In this study I examined these lived experiences and discovered whether the needs of these beginning administrators, specifically those being mentored, were met within a mentoring partnership.

Defining Mentoring

The literature on mentorship (Crow & Matthews, 1998; McGuire & Reger, 2003; Mullen, 2005) offered many definitions for the term. Prior to the first formal meeting of the district administrators, the steering committee had invested considerable time and effort in researching the literature on mentorship and discussing possible definitions for the district. Because the Plains district had only one novice principal when the administration mentorship program was being considered, the traditional definition of mentor as the expert who imparts knowledge to the inexperienced protégé would not apply to the current situation for the newly formed mentoring partnerships. If mentorship was to be understood, the definition would have to be broader to account for the unique and diverse partnerships beyond the traditional formal mentorship.

The traditional view of mentoring refers to a relationship between two people, the mentor and protégé, who are of differing age, status, and experience (Ragins et al., 2000) and suggests a hierarchical relationship that places one person, the mentor, in the role of teacher and supporter who guides and promotes the career development of the protégé (Reinhart et al., as cited in McGuire & Reger, 2003). "The traditional approach suggests a relationship based on higher authority and expert knowledge" (Mullen & Lick, 1999, p. 13).

Stating the Purpose

The role of administrative leaders in an effective school has been well documented (Alvy, 1998; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2001; Fullan, 2001). Despite the understanding that these leaders are key, Buckner and Jones (1990) agreed that we have done "a poor job in preparing and nurturing principals" (p. 25). At a time when educational controversies exist, effective leadership is essential. Leadership should not be left to chance, but should be nurtured. For example, mentoring programs have been considered for school administrators following the documented successes of mentorship programs for beginning teachers. Studies of existing programs have outlined the success of administrative mentoring (ATA, 2006b). Programs have been described in detail and procedures for planning and implementation outlined, but very little has been available that represents the voice of those experiencing mentoring (Krueger, Blackwell & Knight, 1992; Daresh & Playko, 1989). Examining the experiences of administrators in real situations provided an authentic perspective, and through their accounts we are offered a new frame through which to explore mentoring.

Stating the Research Questions

In the responses to my research questions, I heard the voices of the participants as together we pulled apart the concept of mentoring to create a new kind of understanding. My research is focused on two questions which are the focus of the research of this study:

1. How have school administrators experienced mentorship within a formal program?
2. Is mentoring meeting the needs of school administrators in these programs

During my studies of mentorship I attended the Banff Leadership Conference, a session for school administrators in Alberta in the spring of 2004. Linda Lambert, author of *Building Leadership Capacity Within Schools* (Lambert, 1998), spoke to hundreds of administrators about their role in leadership. I recalled one quotation that has since troubled me and encouraged me in my decision to examine the experiences of administrators in mentoring. Her comment centred on the effectiveness of relationships. In her talk Lambert said "mentorship is not fierce enough to make a difference." Although I asked for clarification of this statement, she did not offer any. This comment concerned me and left me wondering about the familiar reports of mentoring and how it was reflected in my questions for study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Recognizing that mentoring has many layers just as a kaleidoscope has many pattersn, I limited this review to the relational aspect of mentoring within the identified topics. The focus is primarily on the protégé, whose experiences are crucial to this study. Present studies of mentorship include programming for mentorship, benefits of mentoring, or the role of the mentor, but very little is available referring specifically to the protégé.

The Roots of Mentorship

Mentoring, it is not a recent or a new concept; we can trace its origin as a training and developmental tool to ancient times. The term *mentor* is rooted in mythology, appearing in Homer's *The Odyssey*. As Odysseus prepared to leave for battle in the Trojan War, he entrusted the responsibility of nurturing his son, Telemachus, to his trusted friend, Mentor. Although this was an assigned relationship, Mentor ensured that Telemachus received a comprehensive education to address all facets of his spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical growth. Mentor was challenged with making Telemachus aware of his successes as well as his mistakes without encouraging rebellion. His goal was to guide Telemachus toward wisdom while he learned from his errors in judgment, and not to impose ways dictated by others (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Malone, 2002; Playko, 1991).

This initial account of using an experienced, older person has continued throughout history, and today it is perceived as a method of assisting the novice with entry into a profession (Mullen & Cairns, 2001; Playko, 1991; Wilmore, 1995). Receiving personal assistance from an expert, the newcomer quickly learns the culture

and criteria for success and is assimilated into the workplace. The individual becomes efficient and a bigger asset to the organization because he or she is motivated to succeed (Fullan, 2001; Hansen & Matthews, 1994). This may be an effective way to mentor, but it can lead to dependency and a perpetuation of the "old boys' club".

Since this early mythological relationship, other famous pairs throughout history have practiced mentoring: Freud and Jung, Lorenz de Medici and Michelangelo, Hayden and Beethoven, Plato and Aristotle, Socrates and Plato, and Anne Sullivan and Helen Keller. This diverse group suggests that mentoring has encompassed many professions, as it continues to do today. Businesses, social services, and other institutions have adopted a mentoring component because they understand the value of this practice (McIntyre, Hagger, & Wilkin, 1993; Mullen & Cairns, 2001). More recently, the educational community has begun to integrate mentoring into preparing teachers for their new roles.

Mentoring as an Educational Practice

As recently as 30 years ago, mentoring was not commonplace in educational practices. In the early 1970s ideas related to teacher preparation began to shift, and formal programs were created to link new professionals with mentors. Mentoring programs are now the norm, and jurisdictions throughout North America have adopted them. The recognition and implementation of mentorship programs for beginning teachers is now prevalent in Alberta, and over 145 districts in this province embrace the concept (ATA, 1999). Since the beginning pilot project between Plains School District and the ATA in 1998, there has been a concentrated emphasis on mentoring beginning teachers. In the ATA News (Garvey, 1998) the project was explained as "focusing on

developing a framework and supportive processes that promote the personal and professional wee-being of both experienced and beginning teachers. The project puts processes in place to support the professional growth of teachers to encourage mentorship." Ironically, whereas the administrators were offering their support for the program, they themselves were receiving little if any support through similar programs. Patterns are emerging that indicate that educational administrators desperately need and want mentoring (Cale, 1993; Daresh, 1983; Holloway, 2004). The complexity and variety of demands and expectations placed upon school leaders have mushroomed in recent years. Bloom (1999) directed our attention to the need to support teachers while also supporting administrators:

> School leaders are expected to coordinate, nurture and lead highly diverse student, staff and community groups all of this in a climate that is increasingly politicized and driven by the call for accountability. Today's leaders are expected to function as educational professionals, teachers, supervisors, etc. (p. 15)

This assumes that beginning administrators are expected to be fully competent and equipped to handle the varied responsibilities of the job when, in fact, many are experiencing stress because of the increased and endless demands (Spence, 2000). However, Holloway (2004) encouragingly suggested that school jurisdictions are recognizing this daunting responsibility of administrators and are beginning to answer the call to provide support for their leaders.

If a primary goal for education is to encourage school effectiveness, as Howarth (2002) and Mullen and Cairns (2001) contended, and if principals are proclaimed to be instrumental in leading this reform, then they too must be offered opportunities for appropriate growth and improvement. Daresh (1986) and Bloom (1999) echoed this concern and noted that school administrators are the cornerstones for improvement and

reform. Schools are not capable of improving themselves, and reform cannot occur if systems are narrow and restricting in purpose and vision (Hansen & Matthews, 1994). As more educators recognize this, they also realize the importance of providing programs for administrators. Mentoring is one way that this support can be offered. However, it is essential for all individuals who work in a mentoring program to agree on the concept and terms of mentoring if they are to work effectively towards a common goal.

Mentoring Defined

People often conduct conversations using the same words, but they do not necessarily 'speak the same language.' The term *mentor* has become commonplace, but we cannot assume that everyone will understand the term *mentoring* in the same manner. Various writers have outlined diverse attributes associated with the word mentor.

As I mentioned earlier, the term mentor originates with Homer's *The Odyssey*, in which he described a relationship in which one person passed on knowledge to another. This is a generally agreed-on basic premise of mentoring. However, the word mentor conjures up varying visions and definitions, in part because the diverse nature of mentoring has further expanded the role of the mentor. Krueger, Blackwell, and Knight (1992) described the mentor process as "a dynamic reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career development of both" (p. 56).

Walker and Stott (1994) supported the concept of fundamental professional benefits and noted that career development is a primary goal of mentoring. These writers framed mentoring as a way to climb the career ladder. Daresh (2001) focused on mentoring as a process that contributes to the organization but suggested that age does

not have to be a factor. However, he recommended that mentors be experienced and knowledgeable to be able to assist the newcomer.

Other writers described a variety of roles that include, but are not limited to, the following: leader, coach, role model (McGuire & Reger, 2003); trusted colleague, collegial collaborator (Mullen, 2000); and promoter, teacher, sage, sponsor guide, counsellor (Kochan & Trimble, 2000). Willis and Dodgson (1986) concur with this list and add that a warm, caring, and helping relationship is critical to an effective partnership.

Mullen (1997) linked mentoring to leadership as both are about empowering others. She suggested that leadership is "becoming powerful to accomplish your own goals and spreading the power you possess so that other people become able to accomplish their goals as well" (p. 185). Empowering others is a theme that others have stressed, such as Barry and Kaneko (2002), Fullan (2001), and Hibert (2000). Daresh and Playko (1991) further emphasized the role of empowering others: "The key to a successful mentorship is the extent to which the protégé becomes comfortable with taking greater control of his or her learning experiences" (p. 29).

Mullen (2000) alluded to the act of reciprocity in stating that mentoring is "an opportunity for professionals to become directly involved in each other's learning and to provide feedback while developing along an agreed path (p. 4). Those involved in the mentoring process can benefit because they each have different strengths that can be demonstrated as well as needs that can be addressed through the strengths of others.

Specifically with regard to school administrators, Crow and Matthews (1998) stated that

> a mentor in an administrative context involves a person who is active, dynamic, visionary, knowledgeable, and skilled; who has a committed philosophy that keeps the teaching and learning of students in focus; and who guides other leaders to be similarly active and dynamic. (p. 2)

Kealy and Mullen (1997) supported the concept of more than one mentor, more than one setting, and more than one novice protégé. They viewed mentoring as a means of performing a variety of roles and added that the form may be expanded beyond one-on-one to include one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many. This view shifts our understanding of the traditional model and encourages new ways of knowing mentoring.

Such are the brief history and textbook meanings of mentoring, and the descriptors reflect the purpose and intent of the process. Mentoring today parallels the original intent, but, because of the complex nature of mentoring, it may take many forms. Depending on the context, it may assume any number of shapes within both informal and formal mentoring.

Informal Mentoring

Historically and traditionally, mentoring has been an informal process (Davis, 1992; Krueger et al., 1992). Informal mentoring is "not managed, structured nor formally recognized. Traditionally, they are spontaneous relationships that occur without external involvement" (Chao, Waltz, & Gardner, 1992, p. 2). Individuals connect through common goals and interests, and mentoring addresses an immediate need. Interchanges are often limited in scope and approached in a casual manner. As this need is addressed, the mentoring relationship often dissolves or recedes, although lasting friendships may result. Fleming (1991) suggested three ways that this relationship can be created: (a) It is mentor initiated, (b) protégé initiated, and (c) in the "serendipity method" (p. 29) which

Fleming credited to Dodgson, a boss-employer relationship is formed. More often both proximity and personality facilitate this third relationship (Krueger et al., 1992). Fleming noted that, although the third relationship may have benefits, it also brings problems. Mentor selection may overlook talented, capable individuals who are willing to offer their time to provide the needed support, because protégés gravitate to the most visible, popular, or available person for help. Often the relationships are homogeneous, which perpetuates the "old boy's network" (Fleming, 1991; Gardiner et al., 2000) and thereby excludes or limits the involvement of women or minorities. At times relationships may also be founded on favouritism when mentors, using their personal time and resources, choose to select the individuals to whom they wish to devote their efforts. Kram (1985) suggested that informal partnerships are the result of developmental needs, and their shape varies with the degree of need.

Despite the drawbacks with informal mentoring, there are still benefits to be recognized. It can help people to achieve professional and personal success. However, organizations are turning to formalized mentoring programs because they realize that this form of mentoring occurs at a greater pace (Krueger et al., 1992). The organization facilitates the matching of mentors and protégés, and mentoring commences after pairing. The protégé grasps skills more quickly and with greater confidence as he or she moves towards and achieves both personal and organizational goals. The success of these formal mentoring programs has led to their continual increase. The results are as varied as the individuals who participate.

Traditional Mentoring and Beyond

The traditional view of mentoring refers to a relationship between two people, the mentor and the protégé of differing age, status, and experience (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). This hierarchical relationship places one person, the mentor, in the role of teacher, supporter, guide, and promoter of the protégé's career development (McGuire & Reger, 2003). Typically, knowledge and assistance flow in one direction, to the protégé, and Mullen (1999) noted that "the traditional approach suggests a relationship based on higher authority and expert knowledge" (p. 13). McGuire and Reger agreed that, because the mentor is generally in control, traditional mentoring reinforces an imbalance of power. Although the protégé is assumed to be the main recipient of benefits within this relationship, the mentor may also receive benefits. Protégés express appreciation to the mentor, and the school district recognizes the contributions of the mentor as they become more visible. There may also be reciprocal sharing of information and knowledge between the protégé and the mentor, but this is not guaranteed.

In summary, traditional mentoring is limited in a variety of ways. In addition, McGuire and Reger (2003) cautioned that traditional mentoring includes risks; for example, the protégé may become dependent on a high-status mentor. This may limit the growth of the protégé or it may develop into a relationship wherein the protégé becomes a clone of the mentor. Recognizing this concern, other researchers have shifted the focus to collaboration as a way to address some of the problems of mentoring.

The current emphasis on collaboration has redirected the course of mentoring. "Collaboration implies that both parties bring an expertise to the activity, where neither

party dominates" (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991, p. 69). Collaboration is done with, not to, individuals, according to Mullen (2000).

The basic premise of a collaborative relationship centres on support and help and encourages reciprocation. Reciprocation is the process through which both parties benefit in the relationship (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991). The mentor enhances his or her professionalism through a process of dialogue, feedback from the protégé, and self-reflection (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001), while continuing to exercise the responsibilities of traditional mentorship. A trusting relationship is created through sharing and permitting vulnerability (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991). Zachary (2000), Barth (2004), and Playko (1991) suggested that the principles of adult learning support this shift from simply guiding the novice to creating strong mentoring relationships. Facilitation supersedes transfer of knowledge in this form. At its best, the relationship is mutual because the protégé shares in the responsibility and accountability for the relationship while working with the mentor towards common goals. This mutualism is the cornerstone of co-mentoring.

Co-mentoring

Co-mentoring can be viewed as working alongside others as members contribute their strengths to achieve a common goal. The protégé is in the process of discovery and is a co-learner. Mullen and Lick (1999) offered a popular definition of co-mentoring: "a process of expanding and deepening liberatory practices and habits with and alongside others" (p. 13). Because those in a co-mentoring relationship interact and learn together, they empower each other to explore new possibilities toward achieving the intended goals. It replaces the traditional hierarchical model because the focus is not on position

and control, but on mutual empowerment and learning (McGuire & Reger, 2003). McGuire and Reger affirmed that "co-mentoring emphasizes the importance of cooperative, egalitarian relationships for learning and development" (p. 13). Collaborating (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Jipson & Paley, 2000; Kochan & Trimble, 2000), recognizing interdependence (Kochan & Trimble, 2000), and building a sense of community (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991; Sergiovanni, as cited in Kochan & Trimble, 2000) are key characteristics of such relations.

Co-mentoring transcends the boundaries of traditional mentoring in both form and context. Relationships do not have to be limited to dyads, but can be extended to include triads or groups (Mullen & Lick, 1999). Individuals who use these collaborative models learn from synergistic relations with one another (Portner, 2001) as they work to dissolve any hierarchy and work toward reciprocal learning. In such groupings, each person serves as a guide, advocate, and sponsor, supporting and encouraging the other partners within the relationship. In ideal situations the individual's and group's understanding and the group's effectiveness and productivity increase (Mullen, 1997). Mullen advocated for co-mentoring relationships but cautioned that, to become effective and synergistic, teams must be committed and willing to work at being proactive through the concerted efforts of all members.

Creating Partnerships: The Matching Process

Some researchers have stressed that matching a mentor with a protégé or selecting a co-mentor is an important issue because it is a critical component of the learning of those in a mentoring relationship. Walker and Stott (1994) contended that "the most

critical element in program success is the right choice of mentoring personnel" (p. 73). This is, however, no easy task.

Historically and traditionally, mentorship has been an informal process that involved a chance relationship based on common goals. The mentor was approached to assist, and when the task was completed, he or she either departed or lingered because a friendship had been forged. This continues to be true of present-day informal mentorship.

Fleming (1991) noted that there are typically three ways that mentorship relationships are formed. First, a mentor initiates the selection, usually with a younger individual who demonstrates potential. Malone (2001) cautioned that this process may promote the maintenance of the status quo because the mentor may mould the protégé into a clone. This can delay the growth of both participants as well as the school district because it fails to breathe new life into the system.

Second, Fleming (1991) stated that the protégé selects a willing and able mentor usually for his or her experience or solid reputation. If, however, the mentor is selected simply on the basis of the number of years of experience, Malone (2001) warned that this may do little to promote renewal.

The final approach is the serendipity method (Fleming, 1991), in which mentoring is facilitated through a boss-worker relationship. This relationship forms naturally and may last until one or the other leaves the position to assume another job.

At times personnel from the central office of the school district may make or facilitate the match. This may be necessary in a larger school district, in which it is more difficult to meet or get to know others. Although helpful from the perspective of the

protégé, it is a potentially risky way to develop a mentoring partnership. Fleming (1991) suggested that allowing protégés the luxury of interviewing mentors during the assigning process may alleviate this risk. However, he continued, this assumes that the protégé has the knowledge, experience, and predisposition to make a match that is suitable to his or her needs and purposes.

In alternative forms of mentorship such as co-mentoring, partnerships may be formed for a common purpose or project, to confer, or to observe one another (Hansen & Matthews, 1994). In these situations individuals seek each other out based on similar job assignments or because they have similar styles of thinking (Crow & Matthews, 1998). A co-mentoring relationship is developed from mutual consent.

Whatever the method of creating the relationship, researchers have agreed that the most productive relationships balance a systemic need with a human need (Hansen & Matthews, 1994; Malone, 2001). However, the matching process is a challenging task that should not be considered lightly.

Benefits of Mentoring for Protégés

Previously, researchers have identified four main categories of benefits to protégés from a mentoring relationship: career advancement (Daresh, 2001; Kram, 1985), psychosocial development (Daresh, 2001; Kram, 1985), professional development (Crow & Matthews, 1998), and affective support (Mullen, 2000).

Daresh (2001) explained that the career-advancement benefit involves "mentoring that stresses skills that individuals need so that they can get and keep a job" (p. 24). This includes sponsorship and coaching (Kram, 1985), guidance and advice (Monsour, 1998), access to resources (Playko, 1991; Spence, 2001), exposure to strategies (Crow &

Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2001), and opportunities for challenging activities (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Krueger et al., 1992; Spence, 2001). Spence summarized these ideas and suggested that the main goal within career advancement is to transmit complex knowledge in an effort to gain awareness and a clear understanding of the role and organization that lead to competence.

Fleming (1991) agreed:

> Mentorship relationships have been found to be critically important to developing professionals. They are especially important in overcoming reality shock—the conflict that arises when the differences between what one thinks a job is all about and what it is really about. (p. 71)

The second category, psychosocial development, is "the approach to mentoring that stresses a holistic approach to adult learning and encourages individuals to grow professionally as well as personally" (Daresh, 2001, p. 24). Researchers have elaborated on this idea to include role modeling (Daresh, 2001; Krueger et al., 1992), acceptance (Daresh, 2001; Krueger et al., 1992; Monsour, 1998), counselling (Krueger et al., 1992), and friendship (Kram, 1985; Krueger et al., 1992; Monsour, 1998).

Professional development is concerned with the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and values associated with the role of the protégé (Playko, 1991; Spence, 2001). The protégé gains confidence and competence and develops a professional identity as he or she internalizes the occupational values and norms of the organization (McGuire & Reger, 2003). Krueger et al. (1992) stress that the protégé is more completely and realistically prepared for the leadership position with the increased understanding of the organization.

The final category has not received much attention in the literature. Affective or emotional growth has not been explicitly mentioned but has been recognized as a vital

benefit because it further promotes confidence. Performing tasks with the support of the mentor, the protégé gains self-awareness and competence as he or she engages in reflection, either separately or with the mentor, in a safe, nurturing environment (Crow & Matthews, 1998). Spence (2001) and Daresh (2001) referred to the need for emotional support through guidance and advice to address the issues of isolation and loneliness. McGuire and Reger (2003) concurred and added that the most valuable benefit in mentoring is empowerment.

Cale (1993) was not specific in his reference to the benefits, but instead recognized the following as the needs of protégés: (a) leadership behaviour, (b) management skills, (c) instructional leadership, (d) theories of instruction and planning, and (e) goal setting. In examining these, we discover that the benefits previously described align with these needs. Therefore, we recognize that the perceived needs identified in the literature are consistent with the documented benefits of mentoring for protégés.

The benefits to protégés may seem obvious and numerous, but it should not be assumed that they are guaranteed. This individually of experience suggests that more research is needed on the experiences of mentoring. It is also important to understand that the experiences and benefits for each protégé will not be identical. Each protégé has different needs and brings varied experiences to his or her role as the mentoring begins (Ragins et al., 1999). Therefore, each protégé will experience mentoring and reap the benefits in his or her own way and own time.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This research focused on depth of experiences, and I used a qualitative case study approach to guide my work: "'Qualitative' implies a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman & Webb, 1990, p. 7). Bogdan and Biklen (1992) further defined qualitative research by adding that the goal is to better understand behaviour and experiences. In qualitative research, the researcher strives to accurately represent the participants' perspectives of their experiences as he or she mediates and interprets them. Qualitative research focuses on developing a deep understanding of the experiences of people in their worlds and the meaning that they have constructed. Meaning is of prime importance (Creswell, 1994) and is gleaned from interactions with the participants, and probing questions encourage a dialogue or a conversation between the participants and the researcher. Kvale (1996) referred to this method of data collection as a qualitative interview between the researcher and the interviewee. As the two engage in guided conversation, they develop meaning. The participants become an integral part of the process because they are seen as "meaning makers, not passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel on answers" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 83). Qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding to create a richly descriptive product. Rich description is conveyed by means of excerpts, conversations, pictures, or citations from documents, which assist the researcher in discovering more about the phenomenon. The goal of qualitative research is to better understand behaviour and experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). More specifically, this research was guided by the case study method. Qualitative research is

an umbrella concept that encompasses several approaches; narrowing this focus, I framed this research from a case study perspective.

Some researchers have identified *case* as an object of study (Stake, 1995), whereas others such as Merriam (1998) considered it a procedure of inquiry. Merriam explained that case studies are used to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. Researchers have agreed that case study can be distinguished in terms of its form and have described it as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). *Bounded* means that the case focuses on a specific activity, event, process, or individuals in terms of time, place, or some physical boundary. My study centred on four school administrators in one school district who participated in a mentoring program that was housed in their district office.

Burns (2000) suggested that case studies focus on process rather than outcome and on discovery rather than confirmation: "The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it. 'Thick description,' 'experiential understanding', and multiple realities' are expected in qualitative case studies" (p. 460). Typically, case study is identified by how, who, what, or why questions to reflect real-life situations.

An interpretive case study contains rich, thick description to create conceptual categories or to support, challenge, or illustrate theoretical assumptions or theorize about the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). Because qualitative interpretive research is hermeneutic in nature, we look to hermeneutics to discover what an interpretive inquirer does. Smith (1993) set the stage by explaining that the work of the

inquirer is to interpret "all manner of human expressions not only in terms of motive, intentions and purposes of people involved, but also in terms of the inquirer's own motives, intentions and purposes" (p. 185).

Scheirmacher (as cited in Smith, 1991) proposed three themes in hermeneutics. The first is the inherent creative nature of interpretation. Hermeneutics does not focus on reporting, but rather on making meaning. Ellis (1998a) referred to this holistic work of the interpreter as recognizing "meaning behind another's expression" (p. 15). Listening intently to what was said as well as what was not said was important. Also, noting tone and expression in the voices of the participants, as well as the body language of the participants offered further insight.

The second theme is the key role of language in understanding. Gadamer (as cited in Smith, 2001) clarified that we begin to understand others by questioning. In doing so, we must be attentive to the language because we know little without understanding language. Smith (1991) added that "we speak with the language into which we were born" (p. 193), and he urged researchers to take notice of how we, as well as others, use language. Embedded in this language are our beliefs, values, and traditions. Language is the basis of understanding and can expand or limit our understanding. Ellis (1998b) explained that "a fusion of horizons takes place through the medium of language since our horizons are linguistic" (p. 9). For Gadamer (as cited in Smith, 2001), "[r]esolution of human action fails until both actor and actors reach what he [Gadamer] calls a 'fusing of horizons' because resolution and understanding do not result from individual closed decisions" (p. 4).

The result of this fusion is a continuous examination of events with no possible resolution. Ellis (1998a) reminded us of the temporality of understanding that results in the changes in our life as a consequence of new experiences. Furthermore, "the aim of interpretive inquiry is not to write the end of an existing story, but to write a more hopeful beginning to new stories" (p. 10). Solutions will result, but these solutions should serve to direct new inquiries. Solutions were generated from the explicit or the explicit concerns of the participants. For example, during conversations, several references were made to the undefined role of the assistant principal. This presented a recommendation for consideration as noted in Chapter Eight.

It must be understood that the main goal in qualitative case study is to illuminate meaning or extend meaning. As Stake (1995) asserted:

> We try hard to understand how the actors, the people being studied, see things. Ultimately the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those being studied, but the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the multiple realities, the different and the contradictory views of what is happening. (p. 17)

As I conducted my research, I was mindful of the intent of a case study. My purpose was to explore the experiences of school administrators within the context of an established mentoring program. I remembered that the focus was on a bounded system and therefore did not elaborate to create a metanarrative of mentoring to create a story that would represent mentoring as mentoring experiences will be unique for each individual who participates and therefore the stories will also be varied and unique.

Sampling: Selecting the Participants

This study focused on individuals within a formal mentoring program for school administrators. I selected a jurisdiction that had recently implemented such a program

and was currently involved in a pilot project on mentoring with the ATA. I invited four administrators who were each involved in different models of the mentoring relationship. Two assistant principals were part of a triad within the same co-mentoring relationship, one assistant principal was working with two principals in a co-mentoring relationship, and a beginning principal was paired with an experienced principal from within a traditional mentoring relationship. The participants were from different sites, and they had varying degrees of experience at their locations. Selecting these individuals created a varied and enriched research opportunity because they shared some commonalities in their mentoring while also illustrating the uniqueness of each relationship.

Patton (Merriam, 1998) suggests that purposeful sampling be implemented in information-rich cased so that much can be learned about the issues that are central to the purpose of the research. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Using this to guide me, I selected my participants for the study as I believed that they would offer the most insight into the experiences of mentoring. I discuss sampling in further detail in Chapter Five.

Data Collection

Prior to and during the study, it was vital that I develop a relationship of trust, caring, and respect to create spaces for the participants to feel safe as they shared their stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) acknowledged that "what is told as well as the meaning of what is told is shaped by the relationship" (p. 94). Within a trusting relationship, interviews are likened to conversations, and important stories emerge to illuminate ideas on the issue being investigated in this study.

Carter (1993) explained the importance of stories and how they help us to understand the lives of others: "Story is a mode of knowing that captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances in human affairs. . . . It can only be demonstrated or evoked through story" (p. 6). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) described storytellers as people who instinctively use stories to make sense of their experiences and their lives. They suggested that storytelling is a reflective practice, which presumes that both the participant and the researcher are engaged in the process in some way as co-researchers. Along with my participants, I worked to uncover and write stories of their experiences in mentoring relationships, and I ensured that the voice of each participant was heard in the research. These voices are represented in the excerpts that are included in the following chapters. In doing this, I considered the advice of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). They urged the researcher to consider the multiplicity of voice:

> We must not see our participants as univocal, not tied to one theoretical structure or mode of behaviour that would leave them with the appearance of being one-dimensional. We . . . live and tell many stories. We are all characters with multiple plotlines. (p. 147)

As I began my research, I established rapport with each participant. It was important to create a trusting, caring relationship in which the participants felt respected and that their voices would be heard. I kept in mind Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) assertion that the relationship shapes what is told as well as its meaning (p. 94).

Gathering Meaning

If experience is one of the underlying qualifications of the participants in qualitative research, then the researcher must recognize how to record and interpret these experiences. The type of information needed depends on the research problem. Guba

and Lincoln (1981) suggested three main methods of data collection: interviewing, observation, and nonverbal communication.

Over a period of three months, I gathered my data from the four school administrators through interviews, observations during mentoring meetings, personal journal entries, and reviews of other related documents, such as their mentorship plans and evaluations of the plans. Added to this were my personal reflections on the process.

Interviews

Kvale (1996) described the research interview as "an interview whose purpose is to obtain description of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 5). My intent was not to get answers to questions or to test hypotheses or to evaluate. Rather, within hermeneutics, I interviewed to understand the perspectives of the participants and to make meaning of their experiences. Merriam (1998) explained it as follows:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. . . . We cannot observe feeling, thought and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing then is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 72)

I interviewed the four administrators at a location convenient for them for an hour to three hours. I had second interviews with Tracey, Lori and Yvonne to clarify and I made appropriate changed to the data.

I expected that each participant would have had experiences that were unique to him or her and would therefore bring different perspectives to a situation, and I encouraged them to describe the events, make connections, and explain their views so that others would be better able to understand their personal perspectives and experiences. As a qualitative researcher, I was concerned with the ways that various individuals make sense of their lives. I worked to ensure that my open-ended questions would encourage the participants to share their stories accurately to capture their perspectives. The Questions to Guide the Conversation are included as Appendix E on page 156. Seidman (1991, p. 33) offered guidance in his statement that understanding someone explicitly is impossible. Recognizing this, I posed thoughtful questions to encourage the participants to provide descriptive responses, to better understand the experiences of others, and to "seek to grasp the process by which people construct meaning and to describe what those meanings are" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 49).

To understand, it was important that I collect data using good questions. Examples of good questions, according to Merriam (1998) include hypothetical questions; devil's advocate questions; ideal position questions; and interpretive questions (p. 77). The key to interviews rests in the interactions between the researcher and the participants. Interviews present a way to share, and open-ended interview questions stimulate conversation in informal or semistructured settings and permit the researcher to view the world through the participants' eyes. Merriam (1998) defined *interview* as "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 71).

In my interactions with the participants, I created spaces to ensure that the participants acknowledged as safe to share in our conversations and relationships of

genuine care and trust through "openness and humility" (Ellis, 1998b, p.18). I did not assume a position of power, but allowed the participants to speak freely without interruptions or directions. I listened intently and waited in the silences so as not to urge the participants to respond. My intent was to gather data, "not change people" (Patton as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 214). Establishing a trusting and caring relationship was central to the interview and fieldwork. Throughout the interview sessions I was guided by the central research question to discover school administrators' experiences of mentoring. Yin (1994) suggested, "As you do your fieldwork you must constantly ask yourself why events appear to have happened or to be happening" (p. 7). It was necessary to ensure that the participants clarified the ideas that they presented. Employing open-ended questions allowed me to ask probing questions that grew out of further wonderings. I created a space for the administrators to share their stories which encouraged them to engage in conversation. This required a fine balance between establishing a rapport and ensuring that they would feel free to respond as an independent participant. I was respectful of the participants, and listened intently demonstrating empathy. I did not judge responses, nor did I interject to direct the answers. As the researcher, it was critical that I remain sensitive to the interrelationship.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) reminded us that: "conversation entails listening" (p. 104). In hermeneutics, listening to others is fundamental. We must listen with an open mind to allow deeper meanings and interpretations to emerge. During the interviews it was important that I listen not only to what was being said, but also to what was not being said as well as the silences to "consider the voices heard and the voices not heard" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 174). Yin (1994) insisted that researchers need

to consider "whether there is any important message between the lines" (p. 57). For example, I listened intently to discover the tensions that Steve was experiencing as he wished to continue the relationship, but he also wanted more from it. Recognizing this, I acknowledged the importance of being a good listener and keeping an open mind. It was important to hear the stories of the participants from their perspectives and so I listened intently and guarded myself about making judgements, or displaying any visible sign of acceptance or rejection.

Soon after the conclusion of each taped interview, I transcribed the conversations and noted further questions that I wanted to ask. From these transcriptions, I again interviewed the participants to ensure that I clearly understood their intended meaning. In this follow-up member check, I encouraged the participants to elaborate or to clarify information that they had previously offered and informed them that they were at liberty to edit any comments for clarification or to delete any that they did not wish to have included. I followed this process a second time if I intended to include the information in the written research report.

Observations

Observations represent a firsthand encounter with a phenomenon and further promote understanding of the case (Merriam, 1998). Recording events provides a reference to further analyze a situation. The researcher may also record behaviour as it occurs. Ultimately, the observations must coincide with the purpose of the research. Whatever the purpose, the observations provide knowledge about the context or identify concerns or questions that need to be addressed in future interviews. It is also necessary to create a rapport to ensure the participants' comfort and ease, allow them to perform

naturally, and avoid contrived or invented situations. Once this rapport is established, the observations can commence.

To create rapport I first met with each participant for an informal talk over coffee. At this time I shared my idea for the research and the process I hoped to use. We then moved to more informal and casual conversation. When I began my observation sessions, I would first engage the participants in casual conversation in topics that included plans for the summer and recent events in the family. Once the activity began, I would disengage myself from the proceedings so as to allow the participants to interact while I observed. Another time I was invited to one of the participant's homes for a breakfast she was hosting before the session began. At this time, the conversation was casual and friendly, and I was able to show my interest for the participants by participating and by asking questions that related to their personal life. These noted interactions are examples of how I established rapport with each of my participants.

Merriam (1998) cautioned that observations require intense work and great concentration. In the beginning, "everyone and everything is new; you do not know what will be important, so you try to observe everything" (p. 99). Boostrom (1994) concurred and referred to this stage as the researcher's video camera. With time and practice, everything becomes more familiar, and observations are refined to focus on actions specific to the research question.

Observing my participants was one of my greatest challenges. I observed the mentor and protégé and the members of the co-mentoring group during their meetings to record their behaviours and interactions. I was mindful of the connection or relationship from both the participants' points of view and my own (Merriam, 1998), and I strove to

use a narrow lens (Merriam, 1998), to capture a specific activity or interaction. I also implemented Merriam's further suggestions that researchers note key phrases and concentrate on first and last remarks. During these observation periods I made notes to record what transpired. The pacing of events at times made it necessary to use a system of codes to capture the activity and the rapid exchanges between the participants. I also recorded my immediate reactions related to my feelings, hunches, and initial interpretations.

I observed each of the four participants in their respective mentoring relationships at least once for an hour. The longest observation lasted for three hours. There were three participants that I observed twice. These observations were recorded on a plan sheet that I had designed. The page was divided in half with a vertical line allowing me to record the observations and comments of the participants in the right column. In the left column I jotted my comments, key words and sometimes questions to direct my further explorations at another time.

I elaborated on these observations in my field notes, which helped me to remember them more accurately and capture the substance and essence of the session. The purpose of analyzing observation is to take the reader into the observed setting (Patton, 1990, p. 26), and I ensured that I was thorough in my recordings and explanations. A detailed description of the space offered more depth. According to Stake (1995), "To develop vicarious experiences for the reader, to give them a sense of 'being there,' the physical situation should be well described" (p. 63). Descriptions, quotations, and my own comments added to the richness of the observation. The comments from the observation are noted in Chapter Five.

Data From Documents

Documents, or artifacts, according to LeCompte and Preissle (as cited in Merriam, 1998), are "symbolic materials such as writing and signs and non-symbolic materials such as tools and furnishings" (p. 112). In my study, I included different artifacts to add to the substance of the study and to present congruence to the other data collected. I examined the administrators' mentoring plans and laid this information alongside the questions that I would ask to determine how the plan contributed to what was being observed and shared in the interviews. I also previewed the reflection forms on the mentoring plans to attempt to align the goals with the experienced outcomes. Examining the journals of the participants and my personal journal of the experience provided other data.

I encouraged the participants to record in journals their perceptions, feelings, and wonderings as they reflected on the mentoring experience. Merriam (1998) described journals as a "reliable source of data concerning a person's attitudes, beliefs and view of the world" (p. 116). I also kept a record of my own "experience of the experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 87), to explore my own thoughts and perceptions during the study. By reviewing the comments I had noted on the observation sheets and in the field notes, I was able to reflect on the interactions with my participants as well as the information that they shared with me. This served as a reminder to guide my own reflections.

Hermeneutics is used to find a model for understanding the present through reflection. Journaling presents opportunities to reflect on the development of interpretive

inquiry to report how a researcher's identity interacts with his or her understanding of the phenomenon.

Documents not only furnish descriptive information, but they also provide stability within the study. As Merriam (1998) explained, the presence of the observer does not alter the information being collected through document content analysis. Guba and Lincoln (1998) concurred that documents "are a stable, rich and rewarding source" (p. 232). They are a natural source of information in that they locate the issue in context.

Stake (1995) cautioned that, as in interviewing and observing, the researcher must "have [his or her] mind organized" (p. 68), yet be receptive to the evidence being presented. Documents can offer information about the participants' values, beliefs, and intentions that may not be available through other means. Merriam (1998) agreed that being sensitive and open to data is necessary as the researcher guides with questions, educated guesses, and findings that emerge throughout the study.

Triangulation

In this study, triangulation, or using multiple sources of data, strengthened the study. Stake (1995) supported the need for triangulation that includes interviews, observations, and reviewing documents: "Data source triangulation is an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances" (p. 113). Webb (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 1981) concluded that triangulation is challenging but worthwhile because "it makes data and findings credible" (p. 107).

The triangulation in my study from my use of multiple sources of data which were interviews, observations and artefacts, and methods of data collection fostered a variety

of perspectives. Several opportunities to observe their work further enriched the data presented.

Rigour

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) referred to *rigour* in qualitative research:

> The use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy for validation, but an alternative to validation. The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspective and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth and depth to any investigation. (p. 2)

Triangulation was important to strengthen this study and ensure rigour. For this I triangulated the data strategies by incorporating interviews, observing the participants, and reviewing documents.

Analysis of Data

Analysis, simply put, refers to taking something apart and then, after examining it, through interpretation, putting it back together. Stake (1995) agreed that in analysis "we take our impressions, our observations apart" (p. 71). Furthermore, the "qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully—analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation" (p. 75). Interpretation works to make sense of things, and researchers perform a kind of dissection "to see the parts separately and how they relate to each other" (p. 72).

Data collection and analysis are best conducted simultaneously. Before the study commences, the researcher identifies the problem to be investigated, but what will be discussed is unknown. The outcome will depend on the information gathered and the manner in which the data are analyzed. Merriam (1998) emphasized the importance of

the simultaneous collection and analysis of data: "Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of materials to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating" (p. 162). In my first interviews I attempted to analyze the data while it was being collected, but this proved to be challenging as I was focused on the conversations. In the latter interviews, I began to analyze some of the data presented, but to be thorough; I reviewed this process after the interviews were completed. This analysis involved noting key idea that would be coded using a word. During observations, I immediately began the analysis using the form I previously noted.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) described the process of data analysis as "systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other materials to increase your understanding of them and to enable you to present your findings to others" (p. 157). Moreover, analysis requires that the researcher search for emerging patterns while organizing the data into manageable units (p. 157).

Therefore, it is understood that analysis commences with the first activity, whether it is an interview, an observation, or a review of a document. It is not a linear process, but one that is guided and directed by emerging insights and hunches. The following describes how these thoughts directed my next steps in the data-analysis process.

I began my analysis with the first interview, which I audio-taped to give me an opportunity to listen more attentively at another time. I simultaneously wrote descriptive details, noted queries, or recorded connections that I made during the interview. I identified key words, phrases, themes, and concepts so that I could identify and analyze

patterns by using a narrative analysis approach. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) used the term *analysis of narrative* to describe the analysis of interviews. They reported that interviews are the most often used source of narratives and that narrative analysis requires that several stories be shared. Thus this level of analysis presented possibilities for descriptions of the themes that emerged from the administrators' stories.

Through inductive analysis, I developed concepts from the data as I noted relationships among the categories. I respectfully directed my attention to the respondents to impart my sincerity and concern for what they were sharing. Immediately after the interviews, I transcribed and reviewed the tapes to identify key ideas and further wonderings that would direct subsequent interviews. For example, the concept of relationships was evident in all of the conversations with the participants, and I wondered how each administrator defined this. I also noted that the participants alluded to the importance of reflection and so in further interviews I encouraged the participants to elaborate on these concepts.

Stake (1995) wrote, "The search for meaning is often a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call correspondence" (p. 72). He explained that, as researchers search for these patterns, they "have certain protocols that help them draw systematically from previous knowledge and cut down on misconceptions" (p. 72).

While analyzing the data, I captured emerging patterns. These included themes of learning and building identity. From these patterns such as studying together and discussions on leadership, I pulled themes and coded them within categories, and I worked to create meaning from the information. I acknowledged that my own

understanding framed the interpretations, and I represented the intent of the respondents as accurately as possible without losing my purpose in the study. I then invited the administrators to confirm what I had written by completing member checks.

Finally, I wrote for a particular purpose that directed my interpretations. My purpose was to include the voices of those who were being mentored to add authenticity to the situation. Although much has been written about mentoring, little has been presented in the literature to include the voices of those in the relationship. Hearing the voices of the participants further defined mentoring for me and created new ways for those who were in a mentoring relationship or were seeking to become part of one to view it.

From the responses of the participants in the interviews and observations, and the analysis of the documents, the questions I posed to frame this study were addressed. I discovered how the four administrators experienced mentoring albeit in different ways, and I learned how their needs were met or not met in their mentoring relationships.

Consideration of Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was given by the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. Appendices B and D were completed by the invited participants before the study began.

The purpose of a code of ethics, according to Merriam (1998), is to "alert the researcher to the ethical dimensions of their work" (p. 37). Dilemmas may arise from either the collection of data or the reporting of information and findings. Guba and Lincoln (1981) made us aware of problems with ethics specific to case studies. I took care to select from only available data and did not take the liberty to choose anything that

I wished. This data stemmed from the interviews with the participants, the observations of the mentoring groups, and analysis of the documents that included the plans and evaluations for each of the mentoring groups, the journals of one participant and my own journal. While I shaped the inquiry, I also guarded against bias (p. 378). Gadamer refers to bias as prejudice. "For Gadamer, prejudice (pre-judgment) is ... a sign that we can only make sense of the world from within a particular 'horizon' which provides the starting point for our thoughts and actions " (Smith, 1991, p. 193). By keeping the stated questions noted in Chapter One at the centre of my research, and by being open and honest with my participants, I was able to achieve this.

I also used bracketing to guide me. Bracketing, according to Miller and Crabtree (1992) is used by the researcher to "bracket her/his own preconceptions and enter into the individual lifeworld and use the self as an experiencing interpreter" (p. 24). By identifying preconceived beliefs and opinions, I was able to clarify how personal biases and experiences might influence what is seen and heard. I put aside my assumptions so that the true experiences of the participants were reflected in the analysis of the research. This allowed the voices of the participants to emerge authentically. I was careful to act in a respectful and caring manner. As Stake (1995) cautioned, "The researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 244).

Merriam (1995) offered some further ideas. During the interview the case researcher must be aware of the respondents' feelings to avoid the concern that their privacy has been invaded. In the analysis stage, the decision to exclude or include parts of the observation rests with the researcher. The decision to include or exclude was

partially done through member checks in which the participants reviewed the written information, and made revisions or edits. These changes were minor and only included a revision to change a date, and another to clarify a comment. Again, by focusing on the questions intended to guide my research, I was able to select the information that would relate. I was also aware that some of the information the participants shared with me was confidential, and to respect their privacy, I did not hesitate to exclude this from the research. Finally, the concern for anonymity was critical especially because the samplings were small. I addressed this issue by using pseudonyms for the participants and the name of the school district.

I was diligent in my efforts to establish a genuine, caring, and respectful relationship. I presented the results with as little distortion as possible while staying true to the purpose of the research, and I took care to disseminate the results in a respectful manner while understanding that this process might be subject to manipulation in my doing so. In addition, I used member checks to ensure that the administrators confirmed the accuracy of my interpretation of the information that they had reported. After the taped interviews were transcribed, I asked the participants to review them for any revisions or edits they felt were necessary. Again after I wrote the chapters, the participants were given these to review to make revisions and edits. If there were any suggestions, I considered these and made the changes, but the suggestions were only minor.

Ethics dictate action within interpretative work. I was open, genuine, respectful, trustworthy, and honest. I continually examined my values alongside those of others. The

need for reflection in hermeneutics guided me to examine my actions and beliefs and served as a check to ensure that I conducted my research ethically.

Establishing Trustworthiness

This study was not intended to provide generalizations on the mentoring of school administrators, but, rather, to provide rich details of the personal experiences of the selected participants in a mentoring relationship. The questions that guided the study were: how have school administrators experienced mentoring in a formal program, and is mentoring meeting the needs of school administrators in this program? Guba and Lincoln (1994) presented four general criteria for ensuring trustworthiness within qualitative research: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability. These criteria guided this research.

Credibility

Sandelowski (1986) described the first criterion, credibility: "A qualitative study may be deemed 'credible' when it presents such faithful descriptions or interpretations of a human experience that the people having the experience would immediately recognize it from those descriptions or interpretations as their own" (p. 30). In this study, I interpreted the data and reconstructed the experiences to represent the reality of the situations as the participants experienced them.

To ensure credibility, I worked with the participants over a three-month period and gathered data from a variety of sources, including transcripts from taped conversations, notes from observations, and content analysis from artifacts. I taped the interviews with the participants, immediately transcribed them, and shared the transcripts with each participant to provide an opportunity for clarifying, adding, or deleting material

and refining the text to validate the message. I examined the transcripts with my field notes and artifacts such as the year plans and evaluations to further support the comments. If the participants requested them, I made revisions to the transcripts. Yvonne and Steve suggested revisions, but they were minor to include a change of date or revise some wording to clarify a statement.

Transferability

Morse and Field (1995) referred to transferability as "the criterion used to determine whether the findings can be applied in other contexts, settings, or with other groups" (p. 143). Guba and Lincoln (1985) asserted that it is not possible for the researcher to foresee the context in which other researchers might apply transferability. Therefore, it is paramount that the researcher "provide the data base or thick description necessary to make judgments about application possible" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 298). Thick description resulted from the data that I gathered from several sources: transcripts, field notes, summaries, and evaluation summaries; it will assist readers in deciding on the appropriateness and applicability of the findings of this study to their own contexts.

Dependability

The third criterion, dependability, determines whether the research process is well documented so that the results would be consistent if this study was replicated in a similar setting. If consistency is to be examined, it is necessary to consider the uniqueness of each human experience. It was therefore necessary that I present clear and sufficient details in the completed document to provide readers with a clear understanding of the process. The process included collecting data through interviews,

observations, and analysis of documents. I believe that my explanations of these methods ensure that this research can be replicated in a similar setting. In addition, I gave the participants the typed transcripts of the interviews, which I verified to support the accuracy of my written summaries of their experiences.

Confirmability

Confirmability, the fourth criterion to establish trustworthiness, establishes that the findings are representative of the participants and the situations being studied (Morse & Field, 1995, p. 144). The process must be made explicit by maintaining a detailed record of the information gathered for reference. I have kept the transcripts, field notes, summaries, and evaluation summaries in a locked file, analyzed these sources, and used them in writing the final document. Morse and Field stressed the importance of this to "clearly document the researcher's decisions, choices and insights" (p. 144). The data will remain in a locked cabinet for five years.

Conclusion

In summary, through a qualitative case study in which I surveyed four school administrators, I explored their experiences within a mentoring relationship. Combining their stories with the available research on mentoring results in an authentic perspective that is currently missing from the literature and creates a deeper and more enriched understanding of the experiences of mentoring in a real and meaningful manner.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING MENTORSHIP TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

For the past 13 years I had been an employee of Plains School District. As a teacher, and more recently as an assistant principal, I have had many opportunities to work in different capacities within the district, and I am familiar with many of its operations, especially the mentoring program for school administrators because I was a member of the steering committee. To ensure that I did not permit bias to influence this study, it was important to bracket my preconceptions.

Bracketing was discussed in the ethics section in Chapter Two. To do this, I first noted my assumptions. As a member of the school district and mentorship steering committee for the Plains School District, I had hoped that all of the participants in this study would have successful experiences in their mentoring relationships. As much as this was my hope, I did not let this influence my interactions with the participants, but put these assumptions aside as my intent was to allow the true experiences of the participants to be reflected. During interactions, I also was careful not to allow my reactions influence the participants. For example, when Tracey referred to herself as a fraud when she first began her principalship, I did not respond, nor did I allow my body language to relay my feelings as I wanted to allow her voice of subjectivity to emerge authentically.

Plains School District includes ten to twenty schools that offer diverse programming to accommodate the students in a middle- to upper-class community. It is situated in a suburb of a major city that is rapidly expanding, as is enrolment in the district's schools. A principal and an assistant principal administer each of these schools. The majority of the administrators have served in this capacity for several years, and there has been little attrition. In the past there were very few opportunities to move from

teaching into administration because those who assumed these positions generally remained in them until retirement. Notwithstanding, many of these individuals planned to work for only three to five more years before retiring, but 2003 saw new appointments to both levels of administration.

In the fall of 2003, Plains School District was like many other school jurisdictions in Alberta in that it did not have a mentorship program for school administrators. Like many other school districts, it offered a variety of other opportunities for administrators, ranging from leadership sessions to professional development workshops. These sessions, guided by needs or interest, were often one-day activities that focused on such topics as interviewing techniques and staff evaluation. Beyond this, administrators were responsible for their own professional development.

Through informal relationships the school administrators might contact another administrator or several for advice on a specific concern or issue, but these relationships did not extend to a formal process. Connections were often brief and lasted only until the issue was resolved.

In the same year the school district entered the third year of a very successful mentorship program for beginning teachers that had been initiated in response to the overwhelming success of the teacher mentorship pilot project between Plains School District and the ATA. The program was well received throughout the province, which resulted in many other jurisdictions implementing their own programs. However, this program was not considered for school administrators until the school district office was approached with a proposal to implement a parallel program in partnership with the ATA.

After months of initial meetings with the ATA, a proposal was drafted and presented first to the current district administration in an effort to gauge the response to such a program and then to the school trustees for approval. The jurisdiction had embraced the work of professional learning communities in and among schools and had begun to offer limited support for administration in the form of professional development. Professional learning communities are an educational model centred on the core mission that ensures student learning through a culture of collaboration focusing on school improvement and results (DuFour, 2004). The administrators are essential to the support of this process. "If school leaders promote the development of dynamic school leaders who cultivate a learning community" (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 84), then a mentorship program for administration was a natural extension of the previous work.

The concept was greeted with resounding approval from the administrators, and the district administration was then invited to participate in a steering committee that would shape the program. The associate superintendent and seven principals and assistant principals from all school levels registered their interest in participating in this group. Because of the busy schedules that are typical of all administrators, three of the members regretfully withdrew after a short time.

With the first step in place, the question of how the program should be shaped now challenged the committee. Kram (1985) cautioned that this process must be carefully thought out: "Organizations, structure, norms and processes influence behaviour in relationships with peers, superior and subordinates . . . [that may] encourage or impede effective relationship building" (p. 18). Understanding this, the steering committee

carefully considered its role as well as the role of the district office in organizing and operating the program. The members agreed that these groups would guide and support the process, not mandate or direct it.

Another matter to consider was the lack of new administrators. Therefore, a program styled for beginning administrators would not be meaningful to the district's administrators who had expressed an interest in mentoring because many of them had been in this position for more than one year. Therefore, the group examined the available literature on administrative mentorship that described the guidelines, the benefits of mentorship programs, and suggested activities traditional programs, but they were more suited to novice administrators. Further research led to the committee's discovery of the current interest in alternative ways to mentor (Eby, 1997; Jipson & Paley, 2000; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Mullen, 2005). These researchers expanded traditional mentoring in a hierarchical dyad relationship to reciprocal, collaborative approaches involving the participation of dyads and triads in co-mentoring relationships. Lifelong learning is at the centre of these collaborative partnerships that reach beyond the initial years of a new career to extend throughout one's career. Recognizing that these models offered a possible context for this varied group of administrators in Plains School District, the steering committee revised the initial proposal, and at the second meeting with the administrators, it received approval. At this same meeting the participants decided that the task of choosing a mentorship partner or group would be left to the individuals. It was believed that administrators would make the matches for themselves based on common assignments or a common goal they wished to pursue.

In the following two years the 10 diverse mentorship groups experienced varying degrees of success with their goals for their own partnerships. In my review of the final reflection forms that each group submitted at the end of each year of the program, it was evident that the experience was beneficial to all of the participants.

This study examines the journeys of four of the administrators in these partnerships. The following chapter introduces the reader to the participants and describes their beginning journey as administrators and their participation in the mentorship program.

CHAPTER 5: PROFILING THE PARTICIPANTS

I selected the four participants for this study for varying reasons. The reasons for choosing a purposeful sample (Patton as cited in Merriam, 1998) were that: Each demonstrated different qualities, both professionally and personally, and each brought different experiences to his or her role as a school administrator. This in itself intrigued me to learn more. In addition, because each of these administrators had formed a different style of mentoring partnership, a new and rich layer was added. In this section I introduce these participants, briefly describe the interview meetings, and follow with the stories of the participants. I wanted readers to learn more about each participant. Each section concludes with an epilogue that describes the current situation of the mentoring partnership and the place in which each administrator finds himself or herself in the continued journey of learning. These descriptions are my interpretations of the participants to provide additional, holistic information about each participant so that readers have additional detail about the context in which they were living during the mentoring. Each participant in this study is identified with a pseudonym. Following is a chart that provides information related to each participant.

Chart of Research Participants

Name of Participant	Years of Teaching	Years in Admin Prior to Mentoring	Gender	Age	Population of Participants' Schools
Steve	12	1.5	Male	32	250
Tracey	15	**2.5**	Female	44	250
Yvonne	13	6	Female	49	500
Lori	28	4	Female	47	500

Tracey

Before I became acquainted with Tracey through the mentorship program in Plains School District, I had heard of her from several sources, including teachers and district office personnel. Tracey has a reputation as an industrious and eager learner who is aware of current issues and trends. Many have admired her pursuit of lifelong learning and would identify her as a true leader. Her commitment to serve others is demonstrated in an ethical, professional, and nurturing manner that has made her a popular leader in the many groups with which she is associated. I invited Tracey to participate in the study because I was intrigued to learn about her experiences as a new principal who was a protégé in a formal and traditional mentorship in which the mentor is perceived to have the experience to pass along to the novice. I wondered about the similarities and differences between this relationship and the others that I would be exploring.

Beginning the Conversation

The first session with Tracey took place in late July. It was early in the morning on a warm summer day. When we met in her office I set the tape recorder between us on the round conference table beside the window facing the street. From the neat arrangement of the work area, I assumed that Tracey was an organized person. Professional and curriculum books occupied the bookshelf behind her desk, and other personal objects and pictures hinted at Tracey's other interests. Pictures decorated the walls and added to the inviting, comfortable, and professional space. Because it was summer, there were no interruptions that would typically occur during a busy principal's day. With only the quiet hum of the computer as our backdrop, we began our conversation. The following is a summary of the story that Tracey shared.

Tracey's Story

Opportunities for advancement to a principalship are few in this district because those who become principals usually stay in the job until retirement. However, in 2005 one such position became available, which prompted several assistant principals to apply. The school in need of a principal is a small elementary site with about 250 students and 30 staff. English is the main program, and there are also some special education programs. Enrolment at the school had declined over the years, in part because of an aging neighbourhood community, which challenged the administration to attract new students. It was assumed that the enrolment would probably never be very high at this site but there was certainly room to accommodate more students. However, the area was beginning to rejuvenate itself as newer residential areas were springing up nearby, offering the promise of potential future increases in the enrolment.

Tracey was selected as the new principal of this school. She had been with the district for 13 years, working mainly as a language arts and social studies teacher in a junior high where she had a leadership role and had informally assumed the responsibility as department head for these subjects. Her interests expanded beyond the school, and many senior administration soon took note of her abilities in the classroom and beyond.

In late 1994 the principal of the junior high school moved to a high school, and the assistant principal then became the acting principal. This move left the assistant principal position open. Encouraged by many of the staff, Tracey applied and was offered the acting position. With the acting principal and Tracey new in their roles, they learned their jobs by supporting each other and managing situations one day at a time. There was not a great deal of support from outside the school office, but because Tracey is an organized person, she found that in this role she was able to manage the operation of the school: "I learned to do a lot of things on my own. You teach yourself to do that when you have to." She was also given the freedom to try new ideas. What Tracey enjoyed the most was working as part of an administration team.

During that time Tracey taught herself much of what was required to operate the school. She learned about scheduling and budgets, and the following September when her acting assignment was extended, she learned how to open a school for the new year: "We [the acting principal and Tracey] were learning together. We had never done a lot of these things, so we learned together."

When the previous principal returned from his position at the high school, the two acting administrators resumed their previous positions. It was then that Tracey decided

that she needed a change. Having been educated in elementary education, she decided to apply for a transfer to an elementary setting and was accepted.

After two years as a teacher at her new school, Tracey became the assistant principal there. A year later the principal took a deferred leave, and Tracey became the acting principal for the year. During that year she managed the school the way that it had been in the past because she felt that she could not implement any new procedures in the role of acting principal: "You don't go into a situation and expect to make changes right away."

At the end of the year Tracey returned to her previous job for three more years. During this time she worked closely with the administration as part of a team. Each member had specific roles, and each supported the others in their new leadership roles. In an effort to discover more about her role, Tracey attended sessions that the district hosted and learned about leadership.

Everything that Tracey had worked on in the past prepared her for being the principal of her own school. She had experience in administration at different schools, and to some degree at both the assistant principal and principal level, and she felt confident when she applied for and received a principal position at an elementary school.

Tracey had not taken any formal education beyond a bachelor's degree, but she kept abreast of current trends through the literature and professional development sessions. Others in the district had supported her by providing her with opportunities that would further allow her to develop her administration skills. In the first few months Tracey was devoted to learning the routines and building relations with the staff, students, and parents. It was a huge job, and at times she felt overwhelmed. No matter

how much she worked to broaden her experience and learn more, she could not help but feel like a "fake" at times. She did not have the answers to all of the concerns that she felt others expected of her. She was, after all, the principal:

> When you're a teacher you are in this comfort zone, and now as a new administrator you're out there on a limb, and you're exposed to the public and your staff. You're more out there compared to the relative safety of your classroom.

In the late fall of 2003 when the administrators' mentorship program was introduced, Tracey was excited by the possibilities and the opportunity to work with an experienced principal whom she admired and respected. She felt that she had a great deal to learn: "The administrator role is so multifaceted and complex, interwoven and layered. I was anxious to learn more so I could be more efficient as a principal." The associate superintendent encouraged Tracey to consider participating in the program. She eagerly accepted and suggested a senior female principal as a possible mentor, and this principal agreed. Tracey and her new mentor knew each other, but had never worked together. Tracey was eager to begin the partnership to develop the necessary skills to become a better principal. She was also eager to discover who she was as a principal.

Initially in this relationship, Tracey assumed the role of the inexperienced protégé who was eager to gain knowledge from the practiced and wiser mentor. During the first six months the two administrators examined the role of the principal while they built their mentoring relationship. Tracey began to discover herself as a principal, and the first year saw the two spending a great deal of time working on management issues related to the role.

In the second year the relationship shifted as new issues emerged for all of the district administrators. As mentor and protégé worked together on new policies such as

lockdown procedures, the relationship moved towards a reciprocal one, and they developed plans together and exchanged ideas in both directions. They worked on projects to create new strategies that would benefit both of their schools while reflecting on refining, adjusting, and altering procedures. It developed into a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

After two years the formal partnership was dissolved; Tracey had become more confident and had built a strong foundation for her job as principal. However, Tracey still called on her mentor. They both realized that Tracey was no longer the inexperienced protégé, but instead a valued and equal partner. She had become more confident in her role and more assured of her abilities. Although both administrators felt that they had accomplished a great deal in their mentorship partnership, they still believed that they had not achieved all of their goals or addressed the issues and concerns as they had hoped. They would have welcomed more opportunities to engage in philosophical discussions about education, but because time is often at a premium for administrators, this did not occur.

Serving as a principal for three years has made Tracey feel more confident and realize that her ideas have value. As her career advanced, she learned by doing, supported by her mentor/colleague. She knows that there is still much more to learn and believes that she will always seek opportunities to do so.

Though they are no longer in a formal relationship, Tracey knows that she can always call her former mentor for advice because she knows that she can still learn from her wisdom and experience: " I still have a lot of questions, and she has lots of answers."

She knows too that this colleague will call her for help as well because their relationship has developed this reciprocal component.

Epilogue: After the Mentorship

Tracey's need to create her own identity as a principal was key in her mentoring partnership. Working collaboratively with her mentor and her new staff, Tracey welcomed opportunities to explore different ways to enrich her leadership skills. Central to her development as a leader was her quest for lifelong learning.

Demonstrating this commitment, Tracey continued to collaborate informally with her mentor-colleague beyond the two-year formal program. She also extended her learning by beginning a new mentoring relationship that included two new administrators, one a novice principal and the other a beginning assistant principal. Tracey has enriched her understanding of mentoring to include the connections that occur throughout one's life that are not limited to a relationship with only one. She has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the practice of mentoring that is centred on learning and sharing. The three individuals in this new partnership have formed another unique relationship in which they support the novice while continuing to nurture Tracey's ideas and values. Tracey's journey on the path of mentorship and lifelong learning is ongoing.

Steve

Steve is very active on committees in school and within the district. Colleagues have commented on his boundless energy and enthusiasm and his unselfish willingness to help others who seek his wisdom. Perhaps it is his acknowledged drive to serve that first encouraged Steve to work with the mentorship steering committee. Working with Steve

on this project, I discovered his passion for learning. This passion, along with his varied experience, prompted me to include him in this study. The following is Steve's story.

Beginning the Conversation

Steve invited me to meet him at his home during the day in the early summer. Before we settled down to work, Steve was pleased to conduct a tour of him home and garden. It was obvious that he was proud of his accomplishments in creating a unique space that reflected his personal interests. He had recently finished painting parts of the house and shared his plans for future renovations. Steve had also recently designed and planted the garden with meticulous thought and care. While we were on the tour, Steve's two pets, a dog and a cat, sunned themselves on the warm deck. The fact that these two creatures existed in harmony spoke of Steve's personality that demonstrated his care and concern. It was a peaceful and pleasant way to introduce us to the work ahead. We settled ourselves at the table with a summer drink and began our conversation.

Steve's Story

Steve is relatively new to administration. When the administrative mentorship program began in his district, Steve had been an assistant principal for just over one year. He welcomed the opportunity to become part of a mentorship team because he had always prided himself on staying current, but he felt that he still had much to learn to become an effective administrator. He believed that a mentorship program would guide him as he learned about himself as a leader and assist him in building on his strengths while diminishing his weaknesses: "I'm not afraid to admit my weaknesses. I know I have these, and I can take criticism because that will help me to change and do a better job, so I welcome suggestions."

To become part of the mentorship project, the principals and assistant principals of the district were encouraged to create their own partnerships. Steve was interested in working with any of a number of individuals, but several were already part of a team by the time Steve approached them. Two principals in the district had not been matched, however, and Steve suggested that the three of them band together in a unique relationship. One administrator was a junior high principal at the time with many years of experience, and the second was a young elementary principal with few years of experience. He had taught for five years before becoming an assistant principal, a position he held for six months before becoming an acting principal when the senior administrator at the school became ill. Steve had 10 years of teaching experience, but was relatively new to administration.

Following eight years of teaching a variety of subjects at one junior high school, Steve taught in South America to gain different experience. During his three years there, he completed his master's degree in education, which he found rewarding because he enjoyed learning and working with others. When his three-year term ended, he returned to his old teaching assignment in Alberta. Steve had always enjoyed this diverse assignment because it allowed him to work with many different students and staff. However, he was ready for a new challenge, and two years later he applied for an acting assistant principal position. "I was ready for a change, and I thought that administration would offer me that change as well as a challenge."

Steve is well known in the school district, having sat on several committees, and has earned a reputation for his dedication and commitment to producing good work. The

school district has recognized this and rewarded him with this new position as an acting assistant principal.

This school of 250 students and 28 staff holds many challenges for Steve. First, an elementary school was unfamiliar territory for him. He would learn that not only the students, but also the staff and parents responded differently from those at the junior high level. He had always been capable of developing good relationships with parents and students and discovered that he could transfer this skill to his new position. Working with different staff has proven challenging, and to survive, Steve felt that he spent a great deal of time learning how to manage the school. In addition to his administrative duties, Steve maintained a heavy teaching load. Help was not always available, and he felt overwhelmed because 70% of his time was assigned to teaching curriculum with which he was not familiar. He was forced to learn many things on his own with little help. "At times I felt like I was drowning. There was so much to learn and do." Steve understood that the other teachers were very busy with their own assignments, and though from time to time the principal would come to his aid, Steve felt that he was expected to find his own way.

Survival was his goal during the first year and, realizing that he could not satisfy everyone, he decided to step back and allow others to make decisions that affected their classrooms. This administrative experience, although intense, was rewarding for Steve, and he learned new skills through being challenged. He was not hesitant about the work but was not always certain about the right direction to take, and he would have welcomed a trusted person who would listen and offer guidance. Steve believes that he learned many things that year despite not having had assistance. He was more secure and

confident and, when offered the permanent position of assistant principal, he readily accepted. The new year would give him an opportunity to hone his skills and learn new ones. He would also be working with a new principal.

Steve's second year as an assistant principal was more rewarding because he did not have to learn another curriculum, and he could devote more time to other areas. He had also gained the approval of the school community and found that interactions were more comfortable and easy. He was not assigned any new duties. The administrative style of the new principal is also different, and he feels that he has been included in more of the discussions related to administration. However, for Steve, there was something missing. He still wanted to learn more about the role of assistant principal, how to better support others, and how to empower others to assist them in leadership opportunities. When the mentorship program was introduced, Steve was eager to take part for the support and guidance he needed so that he could help others.

Epilogue: After the Mentorship

Steve was the youngest member and the only assistant principal in a mentoring triad consisting of an older, experienced female principal and a relatively new and younger male principal. The partnership was created at Steve's invitation because of his desire to learn from the wisdom of these administrators. Although the goal for the group was specifically to learn about leadership styles, Steve added his own personal goals related to serving and empowering others. Initially, the group met bi-monthly for breakfast meetings to discuss their concerns and issues. Later they agreed to include a study of Fullan's book (2001), *The Culture of Change*. These activities were important to Steve, but he was disappointed with the group's progress because he believed that they

"only touched on surface issues" and never addressed the difficult questions related to administration. He believed that trust had been only superficial, and the two principals were reluctant to divulge information or share their knowledge. After two years the group dissolved, but Steve remained hopeful that he could find meaning in the mentorship process by taking on the role of mentor to a novice assistant principal.

Yvonne

When I first met Yvonne I noticed that she spoke eloquently with conviction and purpose; she displayed her knowledge of the subject being discussed and alluded to her ability as a leader. Our encounters were at first brief and our association developed only after the Plains district mentorship program was initiated. During this time my earlier perceptions of Yvonne were validated. I believe that she is a dedicated, talented, and extremely intelligent woman who confidently embraces new ideas.

Yvonne joined two other assistant principals to form a co-mentoring team. Hoping to discover more about themselves personally and professionally, this group chose to study leadership by using three books: *Jesus CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (Jones, 1995), *Leading Every Day* (Kaser et al., 2002), and *Finding Your Leadership Style: A Guide for Educators* (Glanz, 2002). At first they examined leadership styles and then embarked on a discussion that required reflective responses to questions raised at the end of each chapter. Finally, they seized opportunities to practice the lessons learned from the reading and then sought feedback in their sessions. I was intrigued with Yvonne's commitment to the program and her own learning, and I invited her to become part of this study. I was also interested in her experiences with one of her co-mentors, another participant in the study, and in discovering whether these two

assistant principals would have the same perceptions of their mentoring experience. I present Yvonne's story as she told it to me.

Beginning the Conversation

We met at Yvonne's school at 4:10 p.m. on a Tuesday in June. The halls were quiet; both staff and students had completed their work for the day, and, in addition to Yvonne, only the secretary and principal remained. She suggested that we meet in the counsellor's office because it would allow more privacy.

The room was small, and I marvelled at the amount of furniture that occupied this space. Every wall had a desk, bookshelf, or filing cabinets, but somehow they did not clutter the space. The walls sported posters proclaiming the virtues of good study habits or suggestions on how to be a friend. From my perspective, it was a comfortable space that invited and offered safety. Yvonne noted that she used this room from time to time when she had larger meetings with students, teachers, or parents. However, her main office was next door.

Yvonne offered coffee before we began, and then we settled in to begin our session. The principal, who was unaware of the proceedings, interrupted us and promptly apologized. He asked Yvonne to follow up on a phone call before she left for the night. I thought about this small interaction and noted that Yvonne plays an important role in the school in her work with the principal as part of a team. I was excited to proceed.

The next time that Yvonne and I met, I visited her home on a warm summer day during the school break. As we sat at the dining table sipping tea, the family dog vied for attention and was soon discharged to the outdoors. Sunshine spilled into the room,

beckoning us to join the dog outside, but we resisted and set to work. The tape recorder started, and Yvonne began to share her story.

Yvonne's Story

Yvonne is an assistant principal who is in a co-mentoring relationship with two other assistant principals. When she chose to apply for administration, she had been working at the school for 13 years teaching various subjects in Grades 3 to 6, including special education. Her interests extended beyond the classroom to include school-wide activities, something that she enjoyed, and others felt that she did well at them. During this time Yvonne never considered anything but teaching because she enjoys the work and being with students, but when one of the retiring administrators at her school approached her to apply for the position of assistant principal, she gave it serious consideration. The retiring administrator felt that the new administration should come from within to provide the continuity needed to run the school efficiently. Recognizing Yvonne's potential and leadership skills, she encouraged her: "I was flattered. Looking back, I see that she was very good at recognizing when people needed a change or a challenge. She saw that I was ready, and she felt that I would be good for the school."

Yvonne had taught across the hall from the office for several years and had a good sense of the role of assistant principal. Adding to her confidence was the fact that she already knew the school's staff and many of the parents and students, and she did not have to establish these relationships: "We had worked together on a major project for the school, so the staff was very close both personally and professionally."

Yvonne had also previously added new responsibilities such as scheduling with support from her new principal. She did not find many surprises in her new role. For

five years, Yvonne worked as assistant principal at this school with a new principal and in some ways guided this individual in matters related to the school. Yvonne felt that this provided her with good experience and allowed her to grow professionally and personally.

After five years as an assistant principal, Yvonne took a leave of absence to travel with her husband. As is the policy when someone takes a leave from this district, Yvonne was assured the same position when she returned. However, in May of that year, when she affirmed with the superintendent her intentions to return to this position, he informed her of his plan to place her in a different school that had a French immersion program because she was fluent in French. This school had the two tracks, English and French immersion, and it had almost twice as many students and staff as Yvonne's previous school had. She knew that she would have more responsibilities and would need to learn more, but she was ready for a change and a new challenge. She agreed to take the position.

Returning to the city in early summer, Yvonne found that the former administrators had moved to new sites, and she was left to learn about her new school on her own: "There were only a few folders containing lists of items that needed attention, but other than that, there wasn't much to help me."

Both the current principal and Yvonne fell into their new positions and began to invent their roles at this site together. Reworking old policies and procedures and developing new ones was beneficial because she was forced to learn quickly.

In many ways this was a very different experience from her first assignment as an assistant principal. Because it is a larger school than the previous one, the issues and

concerns also increased. In the smaller school Yvonne always knew what was happening, but at this larger site she felt that she did not always have the same control. Even the physical size of the school made communication more challenging than previously: "Sometimes I would learn about a situation only after a parent made me aware of it. The communication was very different from my previous school." From all this, Yvonne learned to be patient and to gather the facts first rather than responding immediately.

Another big difference between the positions was her relationship with the staff. Yvonne did not know any of them at the new school and discovered that she spent much of her time building relationships. These relationships with the staff were very different from those at her previous school because Yvonne had been a teacher there before an administrator, and, even after her change to administration, many of the staff still regarded her as a colleague first. She had worked closely with the staff, and discussions were open and easy. This created a trust that allowed others to come to her with problems. Yvonne also had social connections in her former school, but she knew that she would now have to prove her worth before the new staff would accept her.

Moving to the new school as an administrator, Yvonne discovered that the staff viewed her differently: "I was the newcomer and not their colleague." Many no longer saw her as a teacher despite the fact that she was still teaching one quarter of the time. She understood that others were watching how she performed her duties as both a teacher and an administrator. It was only after two years in this new position that Yvonne began to feel that others were becoming more comfortable with her, but she felt that the

relationships were still very different from the ones that she had established in her previous school.

Yvonne eventually began to feel more at ease in her new role but admitted that there was still more that she could learn. Of prime concern to her were leadership and learning about her own style to discover ways to better assist her staff and students. This had always been her interest, and she had participated in professional development related to leadership, but it was not until she was invited into a mentorship relationship that she set defined goals. Yvonne was not new to administration when she joined a mentorship team with two other assistant principals, but she continued to have needs and concerns about her position, and for these reasons she agreed to become part of a co-mentoring team.

Epilogue: After the Mentorship

Initially, Yvonne was content with her work and had no aspirations beyond her role of assistant principal. However, after the formal mentorship concluded, she began to feel differently. During the two-year period Yvonne gained many insights into leadership and her own abilities. The discussions and reflections that resulted from the interactions in her mentorship group encouraged her to examine her own beliefs, values, and hopes for herself for the future. She concluded that she wanted to be able to achieve more than was perhaps possible in the position of assistant principal.

Working in her current role of assistant principal, however, Yvonne began to feel frustrated with her inability to explore some of the ideas that she had studied in her mentorship. These ideas were fine in theory, but she felt that it would not be feasible for an assistant principal to put them into practice. In the past Yvonne had always received

instruction from the principal and was never encouraged to offer new ideas related to the vision for the school. Implementing some of her own ideas seemed impossible, and she was frustrated that this newfound knowledge might never be explored. Therefore, Yvonne decided to return to the classroom to complete her teaching career.

However, her exit from administration was not about to transpire. The principal announced his retirement, and Yvonne felt obliged to stay on to assist the new principal as he became acquainted with the school. This act is typical of Yvonne, who sees mentorship as extending beyond the traditional meaning to embrace new and unusual situations that would include assisting the incoming principal. Yvonne would still be part of her previous mentorship team because mentoring is what she knew, believed, and practiced.

Lori

It was during my first teaching assignment that I met Lori, a Grade 5 teacher, though I did not get to know her well at that time because of our busy schedules. She was involved with committees and her teaching, and I was trying to survive yet another new teaching assignment in a new school in a new city. Two years after I arrived, Lori left for a new school, but when a computer course was offered for credit, Lori and I teamed up to work on a project because by then we were familiar with each other. During our collaboration, Lori and I had several opportunities for conversations that ranged from the subject we were studying to education in general, and I soon learned of Lori's interests in and concerns about teaching. Lori prefers to work with others, and we expected that the mentorship program would pique her interest.

Lori and Yvonne connected in the mentorship program and invited a third administrator to participate in a co-mentoring triad. The group met regularly to support one another on matters related to school management, to share best practices stemming from reflections on their readings, and to discuss insights into aspects of administration and leadership. According to their accounts and the information I received from the mentorship coordinator, the partnership was successful because its members had achieved their goals and were satisfied with the results. Studying these two assistant principals' experiences in this successful partnership encouraged me to explore the reasons for their success and offered me a different perspective on alternative ways to mentor. For these reasons, I invited the two members of this triad to participate in my study.

Beginning the Conversation

For the sessions Lori agreed to meet me in my office after school hours. This time would ensure that we would have few interruptions, and after some casual conversation, we quickly set to work. Working without interruptions is unusual for administrators, and we enjoyed the quiet and took advantage of the opportunity to quickly complete the first interview.

Lori was immediately at ease and appeared almost grateful for an opportunity to discuss her experiences in mentoring. She spoke eloquently, elaborated on every question, and offered many insights into her work with her partners and her beliefs about mentoring.

Lori's Story

For the previous four years Lori had been an assistant principal at a large elementary school that has three tracks: English, French immersion, and Logos, a Christian-based program. Although Lori has duties that involve all three of these programs, she is most responsible for Logos. The school has close to 500 students and 45 staff who occupy every available space. The English program has the smallest enrolment, and each year the other two programs have significant increases. Space is at a premium, and even the staff room is now being used as a classroom. Plans were in place to include detached portables to accommodate the growing numbers and relieve some of the crowding that the school was experiencing.

In addition to teaching almost half time, Lori's other responsibilities include discipline, bus supervision, ordering resources, staffing, scheduling, working with the fundraising parent group, and other duties that the principal assigns. The previous year Lori had worked with staff to implement a program that would track and respond to discipline situations. The staff also selected a book to study to better understand issues and how to respond to them. Lori enjoys working with others, and this, coupled with a desire to move into a more instructional leadership role, prompted her to apply for her first assistant principal position.

Administration was not something to which Lori had always aspired. After graduating from education, she began working in Plains School District teaching a range of subjects in Grades 2 through 9. She stayed in her first assignment for six years before requesting a transfer to rejuvenate her teaching. She eventually worked at three different schools and at times assumed non-administration leadership roles such as committee

chair to further her development as a teacher. Staff in the schools where she taught and throughout the district noted her leadership abilities and began to encourage her to consider administration.

This encouragement and her own desire to take on a greater leadership role prompted her to apply for the position of assistant principal in 1997. She enjoys working with people and felt that she had different ideas that she was not able to address as a teacher; perhaps as an administrator she could make a difference. Lori also enjoys working with curriculum and invited opportunities to assist others in this area. All of these factors, she felt, were reasons to apply.

Two elementary schools were advertising for assistant principals, and it was understood that although selected applicants would be interviewed for both schools, the individual school administrators would make the final choice. The schools were different in many respects. One was a relatively large elementary school in the district and the other the second smallest.

During the interviews the candidates were informed that they would be considered for both positions, so Lori did not know at which school or for which principal she might be working. Her experience was a match for the smaller school, and when she was offered the position, she accepted. That summer she spent time preparing for her new position by investigating the school facilities and her possible duties: "I did what I could, but I wasn't sure that I was on the right track." Some help was available from the former assistant principal, but this person was also taking on a new assignment, and they spent little time on orientation to the school or the role. This was a somewhat unsettling time for Lori because she prided herself on being prepared. She began her new

position in the fall with the hope that new information and training would be offered; instead, she found that she was expected to jump in and learn along the way.

Lori soon became disappointed and frustrated with her new position and began to question her decision to become an administrator. She felt that she was not serving a purpose in this role, and she rarely had the opportunity to demonstrate her leadership ability. Discouraged and feeling defeated, after two years Lori decided to return to the classroom. She had been happy as a teacher and was pleased to return to a more positive and familiar role.

After four months of teaching at the new school, Lori was asked to take on an acting principal position for a short time. The assistant principal had no desire to step up, and after some persuasion, Lori agreed to take the job. The move to a principalship was a huge leap, but, with the support of many individuals, she managed and began to regain the confidence that she felt had been diminished in her earlier assignment.

During this time Lori also began studies for a master of education degree. When the six-week session as acting principal concluded, Lori happily returned to the classroom; and with this experience, she began to view administration with a renewed interest. When an assistant principalship became available in that same school for the following term, Lori received the job. It was a different experience from the first one in that she had some help and was given more responsibility. She also had opportunities to learn and grow as an administrator: "I finally felt I knew something about what I should do as an administrator." However, there were still gaps in her understanding of her role of assistant principal, and she wanted to know more.

Lori had been in her new position for two years when the district began to offer the mentorship program for school administrators. She knew that mentorship programs have many benefits because of her involvement in the beginning teachers' program, and she became involved in the steering committee to set up the program for administrators. When she was invited to participate in the program, she readily accepted and set about finding a partner with whom she felt that she would be able to work. She invited another assistant principal and then a third assistant principal to join them. Lori believed that in working with others she would have the opportunities that she sought to improve her skills to become a more effective administrator. This, she felt, would be the link that had been missing in her preparation for the role of administrator.

Epilogue: After the Mentorship

The coordinator of the administrators' mentorship program considered the mentorship triad of Yvonne, Lori, and a third administrator one of the more successful partnerships in Plains School District. The trio met regularly to address their goals and worked together to support each other professionally and personally. They addressed all of the goals that they had set out in their mentorship plan, and because mentoring is valuable to them, they agreed to continue the partnership beyond the formal program. Their plans included working together on scenarios related to issues at each of their sites, attending a major conference together, and continuing to study the literature on leadership. This triad discovered that a book study offered many valuable opportunities for discussion on leadership and their own practices to enhance their own growth as administrators. Other administrators in the district learned of the activities of this group and wanted to join their book studies in the coming year.

Lori felt that the mentorship opportunity met her expectations. She wanted to work with a team that would promote her learning as a leader to help build her strengths. At one time she had considered applying for a principalship when one became available, and she initially thought that mentorship would help to advance her career. Lori has since changed her mind and now has no plans to advance, but she is eager to move to a different site to gain experience in a new setting with a different principal so that she can continue to enhance her skills.

Conclusion

Each participant had different hopes and expectations for himself or herself and their partners in a mentoring relationship, and each of them was successful to varying degrees.

In the following chapter I present the findings that connect the participants as they began their careers and then became involved in mentorship.

CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCING THE FINDINGS

As the four participants in this study described their involvement in mentoring, I discovered the complexities of the mentorship process and how varied these experiences were for each of them. Although each administrator believed that he or she had developed and grown as both an individual and a school leader, these experiences were as unique as the individuals. This section introduces the experiences of these four administrators, beginning with their reasons for becoming administrators.

During the analysis, themes emerged that identified the participants' reasons for becoming administrators, their experiences and frustrations as they embarked on their new journey, and their beliefs related to mentorship. The second section describes each participant's view of mentorship and details the preparations for mentorship specifically related to the needs of the participants, the functions of mentoring, and the building of relationships. In other words, this chapter address the research question which was " what were the experiences of the administrators in a mentoring relationship?"

Becoming an Administrator

Answering the Call

As discussed previously, all the participants identified a common reason for becoming administrators: They "answered a call."

There may be many idealistic reasons for assuming an administrative position in a school (Wilmore, 1995). The participants in this study confirmed this as each embarked on the path to administration for different reasons. One of these reasons is the desire to, and the belief that they can, effect change.

This was true for Steve, who, as an administrator, hoped to make a difference in the school. Working in collaboration with the staff at his school, he hoped to discover ways to help others by empowering them to come forward with their suggestions and ideas that would, ultimately, make a difference. He recognized that teachers have energies and talents that, if tapped, could benefit the school. He had been fortunate to have the support and direction of a few administrators and central office staff when he was a teacher, and now he hoped that he could do the same for his staff.

Lori also aimed for administration as a means of implementing different ideas about issues that she had not been able to address as a teacher:

> I like to work with people, and I really felt frustrated that I had lots of ideas on different issues, but I was just a teacher. I could take leadership roles and I could help with administrative decisions, but often I was in a position where I couldn't do much as just a teacher.

Lori admitted that she desired administration because she enjoys working with people, but she felt that as a teacher she did not have the authority to make a difference for teachers. As a teacher-colleague, others had often approached her with concerns or issues because they felt at ease with her and trusted her judgment, but she was frustrated that she was not in a position to do as much as she wanted. Her hopes as an administrator were to take a greater leadership role that would allow her to implement some of the decisions that she thought staff needed and wanted, and she felt that she would have more authority to bring about change as an administrator.

All of the participants agreed that the change for which they worked was not for their own purposes but would empower staff to assume leadership roles. These four administrators sought a role that was professionally satisfying and would make a difference in the work of teachers and the learning of students. Yvonne echoed this goal:

"I think that administrators are there to support the teachers and students. They are there to help and to show that they care."

Wilmore (1995) suggested that teachers who are seeking administration believe that their abilities as master teachers will benefit others. Lori demonstrated this as she worked with staff to implement new discipline policies and then initiated a book study to help staff to understand bullying. Lori had been recognized for her management skills in the classroom and her work on school and outside committees, and when the school staff re-evaluated the current discipline policy, she was pleased to take the lead in researching new strategies. During this time she facilitated the group but also worked to ensure that others had the opportunity to use their expertise.

Through the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI), Steve supported his staff by searching for and experimenting with new strategies that he then shared. AISI is a collaborative partnership of the education community that began in 1999 with a goal to improve student learning and performance by fostering initiatives reflecting the unique needs and circumstances of each school district. Steve was especially interested in the work of professional learning communities, and, using this model, he organized schedules for teams of teachers to work collaboratively. He is very knowledgeable on a number of subjects, having worked on several district and school committees and because of his motivation to discover more and different methods to enhance learning. Staff had constantly approached him for assistance with resources or ideas because of his expertise and his willingness to help. However, Steve believed that he would be more helpful as a curriculum expert if he were in administration, where he hoped he would be able to make more meaningful changes.

Learning new curriculum with staff also provided opportunities for Yvonne to work collaboratively. She too is known for her expertise in curriculum, and as an administrator she felt that she could make better use of her skills to assist others. Encouraging "others with more expertise to take the lead," she further demonstrated her understanding of strategies to encourage others in the process.

Tracey, Steve, and Lori spoke of a need for change as an important factor in their decision to apply for administration. Working with different committees and different projects made them realize that other opportunities were available, and they were anxious to explore the possibilities beyond the classroom. All were passionate about teaching but desired something new and more challenging. Wilmore (1995) recognized this as yet another reason to enter administration because some individuals search for change from the familiar or the increasing demands of the classroom. This was not the case for these four administrators, however, because each enjoyed the classroom and saw teaching as exciting and rewarding.

The participants came to their new assignments in different ways and at different times in their career as classroom instructors, where they were perceived as master teachers. Tracey's education was at the elementary level, but her first teaching assignment was at a junior high where she taught language arts. Her skills in this subject were soon recognized, and she was elected as the language arts coordinator for her school. Beyond the school, Tracey embraced any opportunity to learn more from the varied professional development sessions offered. Working on a number of different committees within the district, she teamed up with others who soon recognized her talents

and abilities as a teacher and a leader. Tracey had taught for 15 years and had built on her expertise in curriculum before becoming an assistant principal.

As teachers, each of the four administrators enjoyed the challenges of curriculum and working with others in ways that reflected their interests or strengths. Others on staff and in senior administrative positions throughout the district recognized their leadership abilities, but the four did not see themselves as exceptional. They believed that what they did was nothing out of the ordinary, but only the responsibility of a teacher, and that this was what other teachers do in their daily work. They contended that they were simply good teachers with no aspirations for advancement because they were content in the classroom. It was only after others' encouragement that all of the participants seriously contemplated administration. Yvonne explained:

> I hadn't really thought of administration. I was really happy in the classroom. I knew they were looking for people to fill some upcoming administrative positions, and I was flattered when the current principal suggested I apply. She was a good principal in that she saw potential in people and encouraged them to pursue other things outside of the classroom.

Tracey echoed this thought:

> I had always taken a leadership role in language arts as well as in many aspects of the school and was surprised but pleased when I was encouraged [to apply] by a former principal and others who worked at the school district office.

Lori reported, "People kept talking to me about the fact that I have leadership skills and abilities, and because I like to work with people, they felt that I would be a good assistant principal."

Steve agreed that administration had not been his first consideration:

> I always knew that I would want to try administration one day, but I didn't think that it would be so soon. I wasn't too happy to be assigned this one position at my school, and so when a position for an assistant principal became available, I

> was encouraged by others on staff to apply. They felt that I had what it takes for this job, and so I decided to give it a try.

These responses reflect the group's common theme of answering the call. They were content in the classroom and became administrators only with the encouragement of others who recognized their propensity for leadership.

Lost in Transition

While they were attempting to learn about the students, the staff, the community, and the school procedures and policies, the novice administrators were constantly bombarded with the need to make decisions, which fragmented the day. Each was expected to be proficient and professional in his or her new assignment and to work with the ordinary day-to-day routines while they addressed the constant disruptions. Often they handled this work and the constant interruptions in isolation. The four participants learned on their own because there was no defined source of support to assist them with their new tasks.

These participants agreed that the transition from classroom teacher to administrator or from assistant principal to principal was overwhelming. They had little support, but the expectations of the district office, the school staff, parents, and students in carrying out their duties were high. Everyone whom they served assumed that these individuals would have the answers to all of the questions, and they were concerned that, if they did not, others might wonder why they been selected for these positions. The stress to perform as others expected was daunting and stressful. Tracey expressed these feelings:

> I was a person looking like a deer in the headlights and looking frazzled because I was being bombarded with a lot of outside pressures and sometimes other

> people's expectations. I was the person trying to deal with many different things including the day-to-day administration of the school and trying to come up with the answers to all the questions as well as trying to think ahead.

Lori echoed these sentiments:

> That was me, rushing along all alone, in isolation, and always feeling like I was about to fall off the edge of a cliff. There's a lot to do and there are a lot of questions I had and a lot of answers I didn't have. There were a lot of decisions to make and no real cushion of comfort to make them in, and I felt that I was not really free to contact anyone to ask them for advice or to get ideas for things I needed.

The participants had hopes and aspirations for themselves and their new role that others had expressed and were part of their personal expectations of themselves, but instead of sustained excitement at the possibilities, each person felt "shock when the realities of the position became apparent," as Tracey described it. It was not that they were not capable of achieving what was necessary; rather, it was a matter of not understanding the role. Working alone, they learned how to manage and survive.

Why Mentorship?

Embedded in the vision statement that is evident in documents and materials from Plains School District is the goal of *learning for all*, supported by collaboration. This is not dissimilar to other jurisdictions within Alberta, but one distinguishing feature for the Plains district is the creation of a formal mentorship program for administrators to address their professional development needs.

Its support for a mentoring program indicates that Plains School District considers its administrators professionals with knowledge, skills, and experiences to share. It views mentorship as meaningful professional development to support the vision of lifelong learning. Enhancing the administrators' development signals the importance of learning

to their individual school staffs, students, and community. Barth (as cited in Crow & Matthews, 1998) proposed that administrators be encouraged to work with others in their schools to create a community of learners. Additionally, as administrators learn to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently, greater productivity should result, which will benefit the schools and the district.

The four participants in this study also considered the benefits of mentorship. Tracey was interested in working with an experienced administrator who would help her to "acquire the knowledge, skills, behaviour, and values necessary for identifying with administration." Yvonne and Lori wanted to explore current practices and strategies to improve their skills, share information related to their specific jobs, and offer support within a friendship. Another aspect of administration that they hoped to investigate was leadership to help them develop and strengthen their own abilities. Steve also wanted to learn more about leadership and ways to empower his staff. Each of these individuals was eager to participate in the program, but making a match to create a partnership was the first step.

As noted in Chapter One, there are many ways to select mentorship partners. In situations such as those in Plains School District where several individuals wished to work together in a co-mentoring relationship, the method of selection was to partner with someone who had similar interests or ideas or with someone in a similar school setting. However the process was to be implemented, the administrators were encouraged to give serious thought to forming their partnerships for mentoring.

Daresh (2001) emphasized matching and suggested that what may appear to be a simple process is complicated and must be given serious consideration to avoid future

problems: "If individuals are cognizant of the values of mentorship, if they have a regard for mutual respect and trust, and if there is an open and positive interaction, there is a possibility of the development of a strong relationship" (p. 62).

Understanding that there is not just one way or a "one-size-fits-all" approach to mentoring, as Lori described it, the Plains district encouraged the formation of partnerships for mentoring that would satisfy the goals of the individuals and groups. Crow and Matthews (1998) suggested that the most effective relationships develop when individuals are allowed to freely select one another: "People tend to increase their interactions with those similar to themselves and limit their interactions with those with whom they feel dissimilar" (p. 160). However, the best situation represents a balance between facilitating choices and needs (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2001). The choice of selecting another administrator or perhaps more than one to participate in mentoring was at the discretion of each administrator who chose to participate. The process for matching is valued as much as the partnerships, and the selection of partners within the groups was as diverse as were the individuals involved. Some relationships were formed based on a common project, others on the basis of previous relationships or friendships. Lori explained:

> I think there was a list of people who were available, but even before we looked at the list, the three of us decided we could work together. Having worked on a few projects with one of these administrators, I knew [she] had expertise that I did not, and we would be able to share. I also respected the other administrators' opinions and thought she would be someone I really would like to work with.

The coordinator for the district encouraged Tracey to participate, and, after suggesting a partner, approached this individual on Tracey's behalf. However, not all matches were made as easily. When most of the partnerships were already formed, some

still had not asked anyone to form a mentorship group. This situation prompted Steve to approach two others who had also not yet formed a group: "It was almost a forced group though because there were basically the three of us left, and so I initiated it [the partnership]."

Once the matches were made, the work of defining the purpose for mentoring became the responsibility of each partnership and was outlined in a plan that reflected the unique goals or needs of the individuals within the partnership. To set common goals, the participants were encouraged to reflect on their ideas of mentoring and to articulate this understanding to the other members of the group. Identifying the specific purposes ensured that each group had a focus and a direction for their mentorship. If the project was to be successful, all members would contribute to the process and carefully consider the goals. The following section reveals that this would prove to be a source of frustration for some individuals.

Preparations for Mentoring

Understanding and Defining Mentoring

When I attended the initial planning meeting for the mentorship program, administrators were encouraged to share their understanding of mentorship. A few suggested that it involves supporting others, sharing expertise, and walking side by side with others as equals, with which the other administrators seemingly agreed. The participants in the meeting then assumed that they all had an understanding of mentorship, and although they did not explicitly define the roles and responsibilities in the partnerships, they assumed that everyone understood these as well. During the

interviews with the participants in this study, however, it became evident that there were still some uncertainties about the concept of mentorship. Yvonne stated:

> When you think of mentors or mentorship, you think of the mentor and the learner, the one who needs guidance. . . . But as soon as we worked together, the definition changed for me. I don't know if you were to look in a dictionary that it would define mentorship as we did.

Yvonne likened her perceptions of co-mentoring to the coaching in which she had been involved many years prior to the initiation of the mentorship program:

> Peer coaching was exactly the same thing: You mentor one another because you do have skills to share. You have skills that the other person doesn't have, and they have things that you don't have. You have different life experiences. . . . I think it is just a matter of semantics.

Yvonne viewed mentoring as synonymous with coaching. Crow and Matthews (1998) suggested that coaching is an activity that mentors undertake (p. 65) and that mentors as coaches focus not only on the tasks and results, but also on individuals and their development (p. 3). Within this context, Crow and Matthews pointed to an aspect of care and nurturing of individuals.

Lori offered her understanding of mentoring by linking the term to the process: "I think mentoring is being open to learning from experiences of others, setting some goals, developing your leadership skills and sharing these experiences. . . . [In my group] we definitely laid out what we wanted to get from this." Steve agreed with the connection to leadership and thought that a mentoring relationship involves "learning who you are as a leader. . . . I think that mentoring is looking at yourself as a person and a leader and as a team leader." Finally, Yvonne considered it as "sharing expertise and sharing your mistakes. That is learning as well. It is also listening to what others say. It is back and forth or a give and take process."

These excerpts from the interviews on the variety of perceptions of mentorship confirm what studies have indicated (Crow & Matthews, 1998; Daresh, 2001; Mullen, 2005). Individuals know that the reality of mentorship, because of its complexity in its process and function, extends beyond a "one-type-fits all" description (Mullen, 2005, p. 71). Mentoring is not a checklist of a prescribed formula or method, but rather a process as unique and diverse as the individuals involved. Yvonne commented on this belief:

> What I bring from my background may be a different way of looking at mentorship than what you might think of it as being. So I don't think that we [the mentorship group] had to necessarily have the same idea about what mentorship was, but I do think that we did have to come to some agreement on the kind of goals we wanted to attain.

Expressing views of the roles and responsibilities and identifying the primary purpose of the partnership is an important step in creating meaningful mentorship (Daresh, 2001). The steering committee and the participants in this study agreed that a discussion of mentorship is crucial to developing a clear plan and that planning is critical to creating a successful mentorship. Yvonne articulated it as follows:

> We [the participants] needed to express that to each other in the relationship to see how we saw each other's role. . . . We needed to state our needs, wants, and concerns. That's part of mentoring. A very important part if it is to be helpful to those involved.

To ensure good planning, each group had a form to assist them with the process that they ultimately accepted as part of the professional growth plan for each of the participating administrators. These plans became part of the documents that I analyzed. The goal sheets set the plans into action, outlined the direction for the group, and specified timelines and activities. They also provided the steering committee with the information necessary to further refine and "shape the process," as Yvonne referred to it,

of working with the mentorship program when the district evaluated it at the end of each year. The plans were intended to serve as a guide and were not to be used as a prescriptive form. As Kram suggests (1985) planning is one part of the second phase of mentoring and are important to guide the partnerships in meaningful activities.

Needs of the Participants

Daresh (2001) and Crow and Matthews (1998) outlined plans for implementing a formal mentorship program that emphasizes goal setting. As the participants in this study indicated, goal setting is necessary to meet the needs of the participants. Each mentorship partnership in the Plains district worked together to determine their goals based on their perceived needs, and it was important that they balance these needs. Most groups worked collaboratively to create a plan that would address these concerns, and after extensive conversations, they submitted a detailed plan to the coordinator at the district office of the school district. This process was easier for some groups, as Yvonne explained:

> We were committed. I think we understood what was involved. There has to be some initial thought: What do I think I need? What do I want to get from this? And those questions helped to develop the goals. You should have some common understanding and acceptance of what each other's needs are. It should be reciprocal, and it shouldn't be one person who is always doing the giving.

Lori agreed with this observation:

> I think we [the members of the group] are all open-minded in a sense where we all reach out to each other. We definitely laid out what we each wanted to get out of it, and we pretty much stuck with it. We all decided that if this is something that we are going to do, then we are going to get something out of it, and we won't continue if we weren't seeing benefits. We were in it because we needed something, and mentorship serves us well. It meets our needs, and we will make certain that it does. We are quite open to changing things to meet our needs.

When I examined her group's mentorship plan, it was clear that learning about leadership was of prime importance to all of the members. In her interviews Lori repeatedly expressed interest in examining both her strengths and weaknesses. She said that working with others in a "trusting and secure environment" would help her to discover her leadership style while she learned about different strategies to become a more effective administrator. Lori also noted that the mentorship plan shifted to accommodate different activities to explore leadership in different ways. This group was true to their goals and felt that the plan served them well by providing a focus and a direction to make the experience meaningful and worthwhile.

Not all groups were as successful as Lori's. Steve's group never explicitly discussed or examined their needs. Consequently, feelings of frustration and disappointment replaced the hope for a meaningful experience. Steve told me:

> Honestly, I don't think that this has made a huge difference. I don't think that I have blossomed in this relationship. I guess I was looking for more stimulation, and I didn't find it. Both years I did the plans for the group. I'd ask for input, but the others didn't really offer any. I felt that if it's a plan, it should involve all of us, but they would just say, "Yes, it looks great." Perhaps I should have insisted that we all work on this together, but then I don't know that the plan would have been finished.

Steve discussed the needs outlined in the plan. The first was to develop relational trust. Byrk and Schneider (2003) note that respect, competence, personal regard and integrity are components of relational trust. In reflecting on the outcomes of this goal, he felt that the group developed some trust but that it was only "superficial" because there had been little in-depth discussion about key issues or concerns. The second goal was to explore leadership as each member examined his or her needs. The group initiated a book study to support this exploration, but, again, Steve was disappointed in the commitment. The

other members did not do the readings or complete the suggested activities outlined in the assignments. Instead, the group "just sat there and did a lot of listening as people talked about something that had happened in their school."

Mullen (2005) does not specifically mention book studies, but she does refer to study groups, of which a book study is, as a specific form of mentoring in action. She refers to Lick who defines study groups as "a small group of school personnel joining together to increase their capacity [willingness and ability] through new learning opportunities for the benefit of student and the school (p. 92).

In referring to his group's book study, Steve described the group's dynamics:

> There wasn't a lot of reciprocation. I really wanted ideas on how to empower people, and I don't think that I got any of that from the other two. It didn't seem to work. I think as a team member I could do whatever, but unless the others have a vested interested in the program and in the relationship and really want to make a difference to his or her own administration, then it's not going to work. It has to come from within; it can't be forced.

This comment highlights the complexity of mentorship with the multiple needs of the participants and the many issues that they face. Readiness, opportunity, support, and willingness to share are key factors that enable a mentorship relationship to flourish (Bey & Holmes, 1992). To be truly effective, mentorship groups must mutually agree on goals and must centre on both responsibility and preparation. However, despite best intentions, not all mentoring efforts will produce the desired results. Connor (as cited in Mullen & Lick, 1995) noted that the prerequisites must include a willingness to share. Success requires empowerment and participative involvement; empowerment occurs when individuals believe that they have something of value to offer.

If a relationship is not productive, over time it can become less satisfying and perhaps even destructive. Recognizing that it is more beneficial to end the relationship

than to persist with futile efforts requires an awareness of others and self-confidence. Mediocrity is not productive. Individuals who are committed to working in a partnership want it to be meaningful and worthwhile so that they can benefit and grow both personally and professionally. The participants in this study chose activities that they felt would encourage both personal and professional growth, but these activities were more meaningful for some administrators than others.

The Functions of Mentoring

Daresh (2001) and Crow and Matthews (1998) identified three functions of mentoring: career development, professional development, and psychosocial development. The first function focuses on career satisfaction, awareness, and advancement. The mentoring partnerships addressed these through directives, shared information, and advice. For example, Steve pointed out that he was "pleased when I had the opportunity to demonstrate what I am able to do. I do want to grow, and I do have somewhere I want to go in the future. Mentoring definitely helps your career."

Lori also felt that mentoring had helped her to develop skills: "I think I've grown in leadership and in my administrative role. Mentorship helped prepare me for what is ahead as a leader, and that's someplace I would not have gone by myself." Yvonne, however, came to a different realization: "My goal now is to stay in my present role. I'm not wanting a principalship, but I now realize that instead I would want more of a team approach."

These comments suggest that, for the most part, these individuals were satisfied with the career development aspect of mentoring because they felt supported and encouraged to grow in their role or, for some, anticipated role as a principal. However,

they indicated that perhaps more effort could be directed toward helping school administrators gain a deeper understanding of mentoring. For example, Yvonne wondered about "mentoring for principals, because how much further can you really go in this career?"

Steve had a somewhat similar concern: "I find that—and this is only me—that principals can sometimes be the worst mentors because they have become so far removed from the classroom." Crow and Matthews (19998) did not share these ideas; they contended that mentoring is needed at all stages of a school administrator's career. They argue that lifelong learning is important to be effective as a principal and mentoring is an excellent means to that end.

The second function, professional development, received more positive responses. Professional development focuses on developing knowledge, skills, behaviours, and values for dynamic school leadership. Lori reported that professional development "gave me a better idea of how to approach things at times and a better idea of how to respond to others. This came from listening to others in our discussions."

Professional development can offer new ideas and support growth. Tracey explained this: "I now have a broader view of how the school, the district, and the education department work." It is crucial that school administrators have this view, not only for their own development, but also for the benefit of the students, the school, and the school district.

The third function, psychosocial, involves personal and emotional well-being and centres on role expectation, clarification, and conflict. In the mentoring partnerships these were delivered through counselling, verbal confirmation, active listening,

collaborative and critical thinking, planning, and feedback. Psychosocial assistance bolstered the participants' confidence and created a sense of self-efficiency. According to Tracey:

> I'm still a teacher, but more specifically as an administrator, I'm a counsellor, manager, accountant, writer, leader, negotiator, mentor, etc. The most challenging part for me is anything to do with where you have a relationship with people. It's the complexity of working with human beings and all their little idiosyncrasies.

The other participants also shared their ideas related to psychosocial development: "It's made me think more about what I'm doing and how" (Steve); "If I had had a mentor when I first became an administrator, I would not have felt quite as alone" (Lori); "It's sharing expertise—mistakes as well, because that is also learning" (Yvonne).

The participants made it clear that mentorship is a complex process that can be interpreted in different ways depending on the participant's understanding of and experience with the process. There is no one way and no one right way to mentor; each individual is unique and desires different experiences to satisfy his or her needs. These differing needs offer a basis for delivering content. However, content has long been debated "since not everyone agrees on what principals need to learn" (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 13). A to-do list is perceived as a passive approach to mentoring rather than the active approach that it should be. Understanding this and recognizing that school administrators are capable of devising their own course of action, the Plains district relegated this responsibility to the administration mentorship teams, with an offer of assistance if it was requested.

The participants in this study determined their content based on the needs that they had outlined in the yearly formal plans of each partnership. The activities in which

each administrator participated during the mentoring were similar in most cases. These activities included discussions of strategies such as discipline or community concerns and feedback when the suggested strategies were implemented. Conversations about questions or concerns related to policies and procedures, book studies on leadership, and involvement in projects such as presentations at conferences were also topics for the mentoring groups' sessions.

Tracey, a relatively novice principal, discussed the transition from protégé to equal partner:

> At first we had specific items related to management that we would discuss. Sometimes the job has some solid, everyday issues like caring for people, so that, as part of our job, became our focus. But as time progressed we shifted to work on ideas like lockdown procedures that we were both interested in establishing. It was then that we became more equals.

Lori and Yvonne began their mentoring with a book study on leadership styles that served as a springboard for discussions on the book's content, but also their personal styles with regard to sharing issues and practices. These discussions led to work on strategies to conduct more productive meetings and to communicate more effectively.

The discussions in Steve's group were concerned mainly with management issues such as budget, reporting, and supervision of staff. Despite Steve's repeated efforts to move the group forward to discuss broader issues of leadership through a book study, the others resisted the new direction and did not complete the assigned readings or reflections on them. Steve found this frustrating:

> At first we spent our time talking about conflict or the way each of us handles stressful situations. After some time we decided to study Fullan's book about change that I think has some really hard questions. I would answer them, but I was disappointed that the others didn't come prepared, so we seemed stuck on everyday issues.

Although Steve acknowledged that the discussions had resulted in learning, he would have preferred to work on the specifics related to development as a leader.

Overall, the activities were broad and unique to each group and generally served the needs of the participants while also addressing the functions of mentoring. All participants felt that they had developed as administrators, but to varying degrees of satisfaction. They also agreed that, before any work with content could begin in earnest, they had to establish a relationship. This was subsequently part of the formal plan, and was thought to be critical in determining the effectiveness of the mentoring.

Building Relationships

Relationship in Greek is *koinonia*, the same root of the English words *communion*, *communication*, *fellowship*, and *partnership* (Murchison, 2004). With regard to mentoring, Zachary (2000) and Sullivan (2004) identified these words as key characteristics of effective mentorship. Creating effective partnerships does not occur automatically, but requires a concerted effort to establish, build, and advance.

Galbraith and Cohen (as cited in Crocker & Harris, 2002) suggested that for mentoring relationships to be helpful, participation must be based on "mutual trust; accurate and reliable information; realistic exploration of goals, decisions and options; challenges to their ideas, beliefs and actions; holistic support of their efforts; and encouragements to pursue their dreams" (p. 10). The participants in this study also felt that, if mentoring is to be successful, these elements must be evident.

The participants agreed that the most critical elements required to improve relationships are trust and respect. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) emphasized that: "trust is an indispensable resource for improvement. Trust amounts to people being able to rely

on each other so relationships have coherence, continuity and purpose" (p. 212). Trust generates the energy and willingness to create relationships. With trust, the administrators believed that they would achieve their goal of identifying strengths and perceived needs with greater purpose and effort. These revelations suggest that, by trusting others, they hoped that the others would work together to achieve the goals for the mentorship team. As Steve said, "You have to feel that you can comfortably discuss issues and not feel like somebody's going to look down on you because they didn't like what you said and that's all part of that trust." People whom we trust offer the safety to experiment with new ideas and unfamiliar aspects of our roles.

Most participants thought that establishing trust was not immediate or automatic. Lori explained how her group had established trust: "You first start by taking a chance. We discussed things that were confidential. We saw that this helped us in our jobs and that we didn't share with others what we had discussed. Trust built from there." Trust, they noted, builds slowly and cannot be rushed.

Lori commented that her group members carefully unfolded themselves a little at a time to see what the listener would do with the information. It was a slow, deliberate, and careful disclosure to test the waters and protect their values and ideas: "As we got deeper into our conversations, we each slowly opened up. Because we were more comfortable, we revealed more and more about ourselves."

Opening up to the other members in the group can be risky, but when trust is established, the participants "feel safe to share more, to open up more" (Yvonne). Creating a safe space is essential to enable everyone to take risks on sharing information

about themselves and their work. Trust creates a safe place to experiment with ideas and practices, "but to trust, one must take risks" (Hayes as cited in Goodfellow, 2000, p. 38).

All of the administrators acknowledged that taking risks is necessary for growth. There was a sense of urgency in the participants' discussion of risks in their groups because it involved admitting to their strengths and weaknesses to help the others to understand and accept them. It was important that everyone know that they had someone on whom they could rely—someone who would be honest with them just as they had been honest about their own characters. Lambert (1998) wrote, "Learning must be embedded in a trusting environment in which relationships form a safety net of support and positive challenge" (p. 8). Disclosure requires confidence and an attitude that encourages the willingness to make changes, to experiment, to learn, to grow.

However, not everyone felt that the groups had established a sense of trust. Steve was certain that his group had never felt a deep trust:

> It seemed like the group was not willing and so never went beyond the surface issues. I never felt we got into deep discussions, perhaps because the others were reluctant to share a lot about who they are as people.

Trust also requires "an investment of oneself," and when the members of Steve's group did not open themselves up to the others, the relationship did not develop, but stalled.

Prior to becoming involved in this partnership, Steve believed that mentorship meant working together cooperatively to improve practices by being open and supportive. However, his satisfaction and hope were replaced with disappointment and discouragement about the group's lack of effort to work towards the constructive strategies on which they had initially agreed in the plan. To mediate between personal expectations and the understanding of the others, working alone on the goals seemed to

be more productive, which pushed Steve to question the concept of mentoring: "I don't know, but I'm not certain that what we did was mentoring." It is important that the members discuss their expectations and outline the goals as a group to foster commitment to the partnership. This is an important first step to ensure a common understanding and consensus.

Goodfellow (2000) stated that: "professional practice does not occur in a vacuum or within the hearts and minds of individual practitioners but in a relational climate within which practice occurs" (p. 40). Working in partnership is important, and creating opportunities to make our understanding transparent and meaningful will lead to more effective practices. Steve hoped that his group would create these opportunities, and when this did not happen, he became frustrated and disappointed.

Working as partners had positive consequences for most groups whose goals to examine leadership led to outcomes that resulted in a new understanding of the role of administrators and more effective ways to operate schools. It was a synergistic relationship for Lori, Yvonne and Tracey and her mentor. Mullen (2005) defined *synergy* as "producing through shared efforts, a total effect beyond any individual's particular contribution" (p. 97). Synergy is facilitated through trust. Understanding the needs of others guided the participants in their interactions with one another, and they were willing to be honest in their support and encouragement. They were able to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships. As Lori said:

> I think that when you have a mentorship that is strictly mentoring, you are able to discuss issues and concerns, but you can't get to what lies underneath all of that; you can't get to the feelings and the heart of the matter. . . . If we didn't have a deep relationship, if we weren't completely honest and trusting of each other, the others wouldn't know what I'm asking them or what I need.

It was important that the participants respect each other's experiences, values, and aspirations so that the group could deal with real issues. Relationships move forward only when there is, according to Lori, a "shared purpose and understanding." As the relationships deepened, this understanding extended beyond issues to understanding the others as well. In so doing, the participants not only learned more about their partners, but also learned about their identities in their roles. Tracey explained:

> I think that as a foundation it is important for both people to share what you believe in and the core values you each have. In the first year of mentorship it was about building relationships and looking at me and my identity in the role of a principal in the school and community.

Lambert (1998) agreed:

> Within such authentic relationships, our self-concepts and world views nestle and evolve. We can make public and discuss our fundamental beliefs when we know we can count on others to respect us for who we are, regardless of our differences. (p. 8)

This is not to suggest that it is an easy task, but if everyone in the relationship works together to create a safe space for sharing, there may be opportunities for open dialogue. Sharing perceptions of ourselves with others is risky, but it can lead to deeper understanding.

However, the participants faced challenges. At times differences led to disagreements, but despite some uncomfortable situations, most groups regarded these differences as a positive learning opportunity because they allowed the expression of opposing perspectives. The disagreements encouraged new ways of thinking and sometimes accepting. The group viewed disagreements as a natural process and as a "test of trust" (Lori), especially when the relationship stayed intact. Relying on the honesty of others created safe spaces for more open dialogue that then led to more meaningful

interactions. The participants did not view agreeing out of a sense of obligation as a way to engender trust or productivity.

Trust also implies a sense of openness to possibilities and opportunities to test assumptions and beliefs. This was possible only after the participants clearly examined and discussed their expectations and could conduct themselves in an open and honest manner. As Lori explained:

> The most rewarding part of mentoring for me was the openness that we developed in our relationship knowing that I have others I could rely on who will be honest with me. This didn't happen by chance, though. We worked at it taking small steps in the beginning with our first discussion about our expectations of the mentorship. (Lori, July 2005).

Lori also felt that openness promoted exploration and encouraged acceptance. Being open to new possibilities, however, does not suggest that mentoring should not have direction or purpose. Time is a precious commodity for school administrators. The participants understand this, and they were determined to gain the most from the mentoring by using their time wisely to work towards their purpose. They considered the goals that they had established in the year plans as a guide, but they did not rigidly impose them. At times the direction for most groups shifted to accommodate changes if it meant that the changes would achieve more purposeful and meaningful results. Yvonne said that all members of her group: "decided that this is something we are going to do, and we are going to get something out of it, and we won't continue if we don't." This was a common response in the study: Most of the administrators agreed that the relationship should end if there was no progress or purpose.

Steve, however, did not share this belief. Though his group had never moved beyond the surface issues and discussions, they were not considering withdrawing from

the program as an option. He was determined to stay the course, believing that more time might make a difference:

> Sometimes building a relationship does take longer for some, and perhaps ours will be that one. I think I would like to see my group continue, but I'm not sure. I'm not going to lose any sleep if I'm not with these two. It's just that I feel that I wanted more out of the relationship, and maybe it's too soon for my group.

Steve repeatedly mentioned time as a factor that contributes to the degree of effectiveness of the relationship. Time is critical for everything: to learn about others, to create spaces for others to comfortably share their beliefs and values, to be patient, to dig deeper into oneself and issues, to explore what we may already know; and to appreciate others. Steve described it as follows: "I love change, but I realized through my readings that change for some people is painful and excruciating, so I have learned to watch and be more careful and sometimes go more slowly."

The participants spoke of time in terms of not just duration, but also frequency. The number of sessions and the regularity affected the group's interactions. Scheduled biweekly meetings were necessary if they were to gain anything from their experience. They could then maintain continuity and expend less effort in re-establishing routines and connections within the relationship. Instead, they could commit energy and time to new discussions or their continuing work on projects.

The participants reported that finding time was a challenge, "but you can always be too busy unless you have a desire to make things happen" (Steve). It takes time and intense work to build a relationship, and commitment must be ongoing. Concerns about commitment emerged, which suggests that relationships, especially those that are thriving and vibrant, require commitment not only in words, but also in the actions of everyone in

the partnership. This theme of commitment was apparent in the recurring frustrations that most of the participants voiced. According to Steve:

> You have to have that internal motivation for the relationship, and if you don't, then you shouldn't be part of it because I don't think you have an interest to grow. I think it has to be something from within; it can't be forced.

Lori agreed: "If you don't come into the partnership with the right attitude, you're not going to get anything out of the mentorship."

Commitment requires consistency and effort. The participants assumed that agreeing to the partnership meant that they would share the responsibilities and that everyone would complete the group's assignments. This was a challenging but important task, as Lori explained:

> Keeping up with the assignments was difficult, although this was good for me because the reading we did was what I needed and continue to need. Knowing that we had a deadline for an assigned reading made me do it so I wouldn't let down my partners.

She later added that, "because I am responsible to two other people, I have to complete my readings before our next meeting."

Yvonne agreed that commitment is important but that expectations must first be discussed so that everyone in the group is aware of what he or she must do with and for the group:

> You have to give others an understanding for what is going to be involved—that there is a commitment to the process and to the others in the group. You commit, and this develops into a relationship. But first you set out some expectations like honesty. For example, if something's not working, both parties need to be honest about it in hopes of correcting the situation.

For Steve, commitment did not just happen by chance because he "worked at it and supported the others." Support, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is one of the functions of

mentoring. Support encourages other to grow. Lambert (1998) noted that "to be in an authentic relationship means that we provide long-term support for one another, challenging one another to improve, and to question our current perceptions, and to learn together" (p. 8).

This encouraging and supportive interaction was evident in the reciprocity of most of the administrators. They shared openly and eagerly and recognized not only that this sharing would be returned to them in kind, but also that it would strengthen the bonds within the relationship and result in enhanced leadership skills. However, despite this understanding and the hope that reciprocity would become part of the relationship, Steve felt that the participants did not always offer support: "A reciprocal responsibility is really important because if you are the only one giving—and that's how I felt most of the time—there isn't a lot of vested interest in the relationship of the program."

Voicing discomfort with the process, Steve struggled to be located in relation to support. Thus, paradoxically, in trying to distinguish the responsibilities of his role in the partnership as both a supporter and a recipient of support, he believed that reciprocity was not possible. He resorted to assuming the responsibility for the others in an attempt to ensure growth for himself and for the process of mentoring.

Wunsch (1994) suggested that for reciprocity to occur, individuals must first desire mutual benefits. While they assist others, individuals seek encouragement to pursue their own dreams in a supportive relationship, which allows both closeness and distance to occur simultaneously.

Steve did not disclose his concerns about non-reciprocity to the others in the mentoring group. Instead, to continue the partnership, he assumed the responsibility for

organizing and planning the sessions for the group. In the process, by trying to justify the group's purpose and recognizing the importance of being accountable to others and to the system, Steve's voice was silenced; he did not share his feelings. Voicing hopes, desires, and concerns through open and fluid dialogue is essential for healthy relationships. However, Steve felt that the opportunities to move beyond superficial conversation to more intense and meaningful dialogue were infrequent.

This was not the situation for the other mentoring groups. Tracey, for example, felt very comfortable talking to her mentoring partner, "and now, as we share more about the professional aspect of our work, I think that there is a depth to it." For Lori's group, "listening to each other and getting information from others about their practices or their beliefs and not feeling hesitant to voice our opinions took time, but it created a stronger relationship when we could communicate openly."

In these reciprocal relationships, the ability to share openly and freely created a bond as the members began to realize that they could "talk, argue, disagree, and debate" (Yvonne) in positive and meaningful interactions. Creating this bond took time, and it relied on trust and required commitment and work from all members of the group. However, as one participant suggested, another factor that contributed to creating a meaningful relationship was perhaps the group's like-mindedness. The relationships flourished when the individuals shared responsibilities, characteristics, and interests that accommodated both similarities and differences. The participants described how this affected their relationships. Tracey suggested that being like-minded helped "relationships grow" because it created common ground or a "level playing field" that encouraged sharing. Lori also considered it important "knowing that the others were

going through the same things that I was, and so I was able to understand their experiences, and they understood mine."

The common attributes of these individuals and their roles, combined with their similar beliefs and values, provided a foundation for relationships and created a bond among the members of most mentorship groups. The bond for Lori and Yvonne extended beyond the two-year formal mentorship program because they recognized the benefits of such a partnership. Tracey continued a casual relationship that might be described as informal mentoring. The mentoring partnership for Steve, however, did not continue, but it has developed into a casual friendship. Although each participant developed a relationship with the other members of the group, they varied in intensity and purpose, and despite the differences, they were glad that they had had the experience.

Conclusion

The journey into administration that participating in a mentorship program facilitated created opportunities for growth for these four individuals in their new roles, albeit in varying ways, to varying degrees, and with varying results for each individual.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSING THE FINDINGS

This chapter begins with an exploration of how the participants learned their roles through their experiences with mentorship and, in so doing, continued to shape their identities. Further discussion considers the importance of quality relationships. The chapter continues with an outline of the benefits of mentorship for the participants and concludes with additional findings that emerged throughout the study.

Major Findings

Learning to Become

Barth (1990) proposed that school administrators should embrace the concept of a community of learners wherein they regard staff, students, and parents as co-learners who work together collaboratively. Others such as Sparks (as cited in DuFour et al., 2005), Murphy (2002), DuFour (2001), and Crow and Matthews (1998) agreed with this view as a major goal of mentoring and extended it to include the principal as a learner who instils learning in others. They suggested that if developing dynamic school leaders is the primary goal of mentoring, this learning should not be left to chance, but should be planned, nurtured, and evaluated.

Recognizing that many of the administrators involved in the mentorship program embraced this concept of continuous learning to improve practices and develop learning communities, Plains School District has encouraged the mentoring program participants to build on these existing strengths. It has advised them to enrol in graduate studies, attend workshops and conferences, and participate in district professional development opportunities while continuing to work in their mentoring groups to learn more about

curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership. "Learning," according to Zachary (2000), "is the fundamental process and the primary purpose of mentoring" (p. 17). This view supports the current studies in mentoring that focus on the importance of education and learning and promote individual inquiry (DuFour, 2001; Mullen & Lick, 1999; Murphy, 2002; Sergiovanni, 2000). The concept of leaders as learners as it pertains to administrators in schools implies that they are committed to actively charting the course and direction of their own learning.

Examining the experiences in which the school administrators in this study were engaged confirmed that they value learning, and regard it as both necessary and important. The four administrators considered themselves lifelong learners who had seized available opportunities to learn prior to the mentoring program, but when mentorship was proposed to them, they realized the added potential to acquire knowledge and develop skills in a collaborative setting instead of in isolation. The mentorship centred on acquiring the knowledge necessary for their jobs as administrators, developing the skills to implement this knowledge, and investigating the attitudes that influence their work. That is, these areas became the benefits, as identified by four administrators, of participating in mentoring relationships.

Learning to Acquire Knowledge

> Mentorship can be a powerful tool, an intensive teaching-learning relationship that is well suited for transmitting complex knowledge and 'artistic' skills that are required for today's principals to be successful in demanding educational environments (Zellner, Skirla, & Erlandson, 2001, p. 5).

The demands on novice administrators are constant and at times overwhelming because they are expected to be 'all-knowing,' and 'all-seeing' (Tracey). The

participants in this study felt that staff and parents expected that administrators should have all the answers immediately and that when this is not the case, others are often surprised. It is imperative that the new administrator quickly learn the role and responsibilities of the position to make others feel confident in them and allow the staff and students to work effectively.

As the participants suggested, the first goal of the novice administrator is therefore to acquire management knowledge. Learning to operate and maintain a school and follow government and school district procedures and policies is a vital first step. The transition from teacher to assistant principal or from assistant principal to principal requires new knowledge, and the participants in this study reported that this knowledge is seldom offered in manuals but must be learned on the job under the scrutinizing eyes of the entire school community. Tracey commented, "Others expect you to know right away as if you have an all-knowing cap." Often this learning is left to the administrators, and they have no assistance.

However, the participants agreed that working with a mentor, whether in the traditional sense or in a co-mentoring relationship, offers a safe setting in which to learn about their new responsibilities in a more detailed and thorough manner and to address the issues and questions that arise from events or interests. In these relationships, the more experienced partner knew the rhythms and pacing of the school year and was also able to provide information to assist with future concerns throughout the school year.

This was the situation for three of the four participants in the study. Although Tracey was the only novice administrator who required more intense support in the managerial and technical areas, they all agreed that they learned new information through

working closely with others. Learning to manage was at the top of the list of needs for all the participants, and only when they felt more confident in this area were they able to broaden their learning and discover how to serve others as instructional leaders.

In these mentoring partnerships, learning about management was a topic of discussion in all groups. However, Steve did not believe that the information he received in his group was adequate to meet his needs, and he moved beyond the mentoring group to seek assistance from other sources, including other administrators or, at times, the school secretary: "She was my sounding board. When I couldn't find the help I needed, she would be there for me to help or sometimes just to listen." He believed that these people were more willing and able to share information in a timely and effective way. He also did not think that this conflicted with the work of his mentoring group. This indicates Steve's participation in both an informal and formal partnership simultaneously. As Mullen and Lick state (1999) often there are many different ways of mentoring that occur at the same time depending on the needs of those in the relationships.

The participants valued sharing ideas and learning new ways. Lori especially appreciated the mentoring because it pushed her to study new ideas. She realized that mentorship significantly affected her learning: "If I hadn't been involved in a mentoring relationship, I would still be in the same place I was three years ago, thinking that I needed to learn more about leadership, but still not making time to do it."

The participants noted that they had had no prior formal preparation for their role of administrator. Some had a master's degree in education, but these individuals suggested that the courses that they had completed had little relationship to the practical realities of life in schools. Lori found working with others meaningful:

> It wasn't until we started our mentorship group that I understood what other aspects were part of the position, because now I had two other people in the same role as me, and we were able to talk about our jobs and learn together.

Administrators are required to learn to operate a school and serve as instructional leaders. Mentorship meetings, workshops, and conferences offer occasions for sharing and learning in this area. Because curriculum is constantly changing and new demands are being placed on the teaching profession each year, school administrators are required to keep abreast of the changes to assist teaching staff and to facilitate students' learning. For example, Steve pointed out:

> You have to find out about curriculum and how to teach it. Take the new social studies curriculum for example. Unless you go to the workshops and know that the program is about inquiry learning and unless you learn what the inquiry method is, you're really not going to understand it to be able to work with teachers.

Yvonne believed that being "an expert in all areas is impossible" and appreciated the opportunity to share knowledge of curriculum, pedagogy, and procedures in the mentorship sessions and considered it an efficient way to learn new information. Participants who are more knowledgeable in areas such as professional learning communities, assessment for learning, or differentiation, for example, would become responsible for guiding the other members on that topic. As the topic varies, this role shifts to the person who has the best understanding of the new subject.

Knowing how to manage and lead instruction is not sufficient for today's administrators, however. They are constantly challenged with responsibilities beyond management and instruction. It is expected that administrators will be visionaries as well as master leaders. In addressing this complexity, Daresh (2005) contended that it is important to view administrators as professionals who have wisdom and experience

rather than simply as managers of schools. He suggested that mentoring provides a place to exercise these skills while also offering support to make the job of the administrator less lonely.

Klitz et al. (2004) asserted that learning should be the administrators' focus and advocated for professional development opportunities for school administrators to "orient the principalship from management to leadership and to focus the principalship from administration and policy towards teaching and learning" (p. 136).

The goal of all of the participants was to learn about leadership. They were eager to discover their style of leadership and their strengths, as well as to examine the areas that required additional investment of time and effort. This learning occurred when the participants engaged in book studies. The group members often responded to readings through survey questions or reflections that led to discussions, and the readings also helped them to shape their professional growth plans as they discovered more about themselves as leaders. Lori explained:

> I find that I've gained a lot more wisdom, I've learned to see the bigger picture, and I have a better understanding of the workings of administration; and now I better understand how I would make decisions on certain matters.

She later added:

> The biggest benefit of mentoring for me was firming my ideas about leadership and learning about my partners' experiences. Putting these ideas together with mine, I formed my beliefs about what an ideal principal and assistant principal leader should be and discovered that this is how I want to be as a leader.

Steve, however, was not satisfied with his learning because he had expected to gain more from the mentoring group. He expressed his disappointment:

> I would have liked to have examined leadership and looked at trends and issues so that I would be able to analyze where I place myself in relation to these, but our group didn't spend much time on these issues.

The participants agreed that it was important for others to see them learning. If they were to be considered "a learning leader" (Steve) in their school community, they too must demonstrate this learning by either sharing or modeling it. For example, Lori pointed out that

> when we began a new initiative related to bullying, a book study on the topic was suggested. I purchased books for everyone, and together we read through the sections and decided on a plan of action. It was important for the teachers to see me learning alongside them instead of just expecting them to learn.

The participants suggested that some formal preparation would have been welcome prior to their assuming new positions. Whether a university or the district offered this preparation did not seem to be a concern, but what was important was that it be current, timely, and practical. With regard to participation, they also affirmed that it is important to work collaboratively with others to share ideas. They suggested shadowing others in similar positions, but the logistics of organizing and offering release time to shadow could be a challenge. Despite the need for some training, the participants reported that their best training came from being on the job and having a mentor to provide guidance and support. However, they also pointed out that there must be frequent opportunities to share experiences, concerns, and ideas with those in similar roles if the mentoring is to be effective. This is not to suggest that other forms of mentoring should not be considered.

Crow and Matthews (1998) also encouraged principals' mentoring of assistant principals in the same school as a means of transferring the knowledge, skills,

behaviours, and values necessary for schools to operate efficiently and effectively and facilitating further advancement for the assistant principals. This is especially important considering the looming retirement of many of our current administrators, as discussed in Chapter One.

If principals and assistant principals are viewed as a team working together to guide a learning community, it is assumed that the principal will act as a mentor and share his or her expertise with the assistant principal. Weller and Weller (2002) suggested that, hypothetically, the principal acts as "the guide and model, mold[ing] their charges into future leaders" (p. 16). The administrators in this study agreed that this applied to them, but the degree and intensity of such mentoring varied.

Tracey appreciated having been in a successful partnership with a former principal: "I have always felt part of a team," because her principal ensured that she was always included in all aspects of administration. Her understanding of shared leadership began with these experiences and transferred to her mentoring relationship.

Yvonne understood the role and duties of the position clearly because her principal shared openly: "Our principal was very transparent to me in terms of the job, so I knew more about what to expect". This openness allowed Yvonne to understand the role of an administrator before she assumed the position and helped her to make the transition from teacher to administrator.

Steve's situation was somewhat different. He acknowledged that "my mentoring partners were so surprised I knew so much about certain issues, but that's because [the principal] is so good at sharing everything with me." However, this was not always the case. In his previous assignment, "at times [the principal] was just seeing if I could

survive. It made me realize I was expected to learn, and [the principal] knows I learned more that way than by having somebody hold my hand."

Lori also shared a past experience in another partnership in which she felt that little had been done to support or promote her and that

> there was no camaraderie. We didn't discuss things. Basically [the principal] was in charge, and I didn't have very much support. If I had had mentors, I would have seen that there can be different relationships depending on the principal.

One explanation for this range of experiences is, in Alberta, there are no definite, prescribed duties for an assistant principal; the principal generally determines these duties as necessary. Coupled with the recognition that there has been little research on the assistant principal, this makes the role ambiguous (Harvey, 1995; Weller & Weller, 2002).

As the participants worked together in their partnerships, they gained new knowledge that supported their roles. Mentorship sessions were ideal places to share ideas. At times the participants attended conferences together and then met to share their questions and knowledge. Book studies offered another venue for the exploration of issues that are important to school administrators. Regardless of the kind of mentoring partnership or the activities in which each were engaged, the participants unanimously agreed that they had gained new knowledge, albeit to varying degrees of satisfaction.

Learning to Acquire Skills

To be an effective leader, a school administrator requires both knowledge and skills to facilitate teaching and learning for all. They need to be able to perform the skills as outlined in the provincial acts, professional codes of conduct, and board policy. The

Administrator Professional Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy Model from the ATA:

> confer[s] responsibility for certain types of decisions on the principal, however, an important part of this role is to identify areas of shared decision making and the ability to facilitate various decision-making processes. This involves the skills of facilitating, problem-solving, team building, modeling and empowering and encouraging the development of leadership skills in others (2004, p. 2).

In their previous work as classroom teachers, the four participants developed the required skills to a degree. Yvonne observed:

> This job requires many of the skills I had learned as a teacher. It's people skills, and these are transferable, right? I think though that you have to be a quick study, because there are so many more things to know. (June 2005)

Despite previously having learned some skills, in the participant's new role of administrator the responsibility is magnified because their decisions reach beyond the classrooms into the schools and beyond into the community. Although these four administrators spoke of sharing the decision making with their school staff, they recognized that, ultimately, they were responsible for the final decision. They also acknowledged that there are times and circumstances when others are not able to be involved for reasons such as time or privacy. Lori noted:

> It's important to include staff in decisions as they should be encouraged to be involved, and they should be aware of what is happening in the school. But there are times when we [the administrators] have to take sole charge because we are the ones who shoulder the responsibility for the final decision. The buck stops here.

The documents did not discuss improving skills or learning strategies related to the skills as an explicit goal, but they suggested, for example, the need to communicate

effectively, respond to problems in a timely and efficient manner, effect decisions, build relationships, and empower others.

Recognizing that there are possible multiple responses to most situations, how to acquire the desired skills challenged the mentorship groups. Their book studies presented ideas for consideration and proved helpful when they encountered novel situations. Steve made this evident: "One thing that I really wanted to get from our mentoring group was how to empower others, and I don't think that I learned anything from the group. But when I studied Fullan's book, I got some ideas."

However, because of the systematic unpredictability of human activity (Feldman, 1992), rules and procedures can apply crudely at best. For this reason Lori and Yvonne's group chose a more practical approach to acquiring and honing communication skills. Initially, they had embarked on a book study with *Fierce Conversations* (Scott, 2004) and began by identifying strategies that they believed could be easily implemented and were transferable. To test the applicability of these strategies, they used a role-playing technique. For example, one member of the group would identify a concern, and, after studying the procedure in the book, that member would then enact the suggestions. "The other group members then offered feedback" (Lori). Shortly after this rehearsal, Lori had cause to employ the strategies in an actual situation. At the next mentoring meeting, she shared the event after reflecting on the process and the outcome. This activity aligns with the procedures suggested for coaching.

Coaching as, for example, Bloom, Castagna, and Warren (2003) and Daresh (2001) discussed it is synonymous with mentoring because some of the procedures are similar, as Yvonne previously suggested. Although coaching as mentoring can be

debated, the idea of coaching as a mentoring strategy does have merit. However, Conyers (2004) differentiated between coaching and mentoring:

> Mentoring defines a long-term relationship between protégé and mentor that includes ongoing, continuous feedback. Coaching, we feel, entails short-term, issue-specific advice or guidance. The mentor approach is for the long haul, and the problems addressed are broader and not as hands-on. (p. 21)

Coaching offers ways to address skills that need to be taught or refined, and even though it is always suggested as a strategy for mentoring, it does not always relate to mentoring. It is one way to improve ability and is particularly effective when it focuses on behaviours (Sullivan, 2004). However, as previously discussed, coaching is not mentoring.

Acquiring skills requires practice, and, despite the opportunities to discuss and share ideas or to rehearse strategies, the participants agreed that in real situations they must draw on their own judgment and develop their own ability to respond to the demands of individual circumstances. Making the right choices is not always a teachable skill because issues differ and each solution may require different considerations. The four participants agreed that the most effective way to acquire skills is through experience in an environment in which they will use them. Learning can stem from book studies, role-playing, or discussions, but the approach is shaped by our life experiences and our reflections on these experiences. The participants realized that they can not separate who they are and what they believe and value from their actions. Steve shared his thoughts on this idea:

> I think that who you were as a teacher and who you are as a person will to a great degree be who you are as an administrator. And what you value as a person and what you see as important will influence the way you act. You can't separate the person from the administrator.

Similarly, Lori pointed out that: "it's good to get other people's perspectives and to consider these when faced with a decision. But in the end I have to be true to myself and what I believe."

If learning is a desirable goal of mentoring, then the learning must be an active process that engages the participants. The participants recognized this and worked to develop their own capacities to the extent that they felt they were able within their mentoring group.

Shaping Identity

As one learns to become an administrator, the journey may be unfamiliar, and therefore feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about self may emerge. The four participants experienced these feelings to some degree before they became involved in mentoring. In speaking of their initiation into administration, they described images of being "frazzled," "being bombarded," "falling," "steep cliffs," and "huge gaps." They felt that there was neither anyone to turn to nor anyone to guide them as they embarked on this new path. Lori illustrated this feeling of isolation:

> When you become an administrator, you're on your own. You know people out there who know the way, but you don't feel attached. You don't necessarily know who to go to for help or what would be the right questions to ask. Others don't necessarily come to you to help you. They assume you know what to do and that you'll be okay.

Insecurity also prompted Tracey to question her identity:

> When you are not able to give people an immediate answer, some people are surprised. They expect you to know everything, and when you don't, you question yourself. Sometimes you feel like a fake. When you first begin as a new administrator, you feel like kind of a fraud.

These responses represent the feelings of the participants as they began their new assignments. At times they were not certain that they were prepared for the new job because it was a "huge leap from the classroom" (Tracey). Transitioning from classroom teacher to assistant principal or from assistant principal to principal involved new learning and expectations that were attached to the identity of the new role that they assumed.

Kram (1985) acknowledged the importance of identity formation and suggested that mentoring can be a means through which this process occurs. Mentorship involves participation in the practice that leads to new learning and understanding. Talk is a critical element of mentorship and important for learning. In mentorship, ideas and concerns are discussed, debated, and argued, and information on how to proceed in certain situations is passed along.

Maynard (2000) explained that talking also provides meaning, norms, and ways of knowing that are specific to a particular community of practice. This learning shapes identity: "Learning will involve becoming a different person or a different kind of person. It involves a construction of identities" (p. 18). However, this does not suggest that in the transition from one role to another the former identity is discarded or ignored. When Tracey stated "I'm still a teacher," she was reminding us that we cannot separate our former self from the emerging self. As Zembylas (2003) said, "To become is not to progress or regress along a series [...]" (p. 221). Instead, becoming something new is a process that embraces who we were with all of our values, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences and blends these with who we are in our present self, erasing the boundaries to further create or shape our identities. Steve agreed: "Who I was as a teacher will affect

what I do and who I am as a leader. It will determine what choices and decisions I make and why."

Mentoring encouraged the participants to reflect on their role and their interpretations of themselves as leaders. This was a rewarding process for some because of the revelations that emerged that were sometimes surprising and sometimes emotional. Yvonne felt that with the help of the other group members, she was able to discover more about herself:

> I found that I looked at myself in greater depth. The discussions we had were very intelligent, and they created a chance for me to look at myself and my skills. I realize I am similar to others because I have the same frustrations as them, and I now know that this is normal.

Yvonne was surprised to find that

> at times I still think of myself as twenty-five years old or inexperienced, thinking that I don't have the wisdom to help others, but then I discover that I have helped someone. I realize that I do have some expertise.

Lori also related her discovery:

> After our meeting I gave a great deal of thought to the conversations we had and the great ideas we explored, and I realized that I want to stay where I am. At one time I thought I might want a principalship, but I'm not so sure now. I have many more questions than perhaps answers now. But for now I think I will be happier staying where I am.

Reflecting on her experiences raised some questions for Lori. Connecting her reflections to her experiences had created some uncertainty for her, and some emotional concerns and questions emerged. Emotions are the "glue of identity" (Zembylas, 2003, p. 222) that gives meaning to our experiences. Emotion is important in our construction of self because "the search for identity requires the connection of emotions with self knowledge" (p. 222).

Conversing with others or reflecting on our experiences can encourage us to question who we are and what our hopes are. Self-reflection can be healthy and can lead to personal growth, as Lambert et al. (1995) suggested: "A sense of personal identity allows for courage and risk; our ego needs a sense of possibilities" (p. 28). Knowledge of self promotes understanding and aligns us with the current situation and those connected to us.

Mentorship provided spaces for these administrators to explore the possibilities through a different lens to view who they are and who they could become. This was made possible in the relationships that evolved, but, as this study reveals, the kinds of relationships varied, as did the learning and growth that stemmed from the relationships.

The Importance of Relationship

> We all need to remember that success begins with building relationships. It doesn't end there, and relationships aren't the only things that matter. Unless the relationship piece is in place, however, successfully completing the task will be much more difficult whatever the task may be. (Hoerr, 2005, p. 32)

The task for the four administrators, although embedded within different activities, was to learn to be more effective in their roles. They discussed the intended goal and agreed that learning is their focus. As learning was a goal for the administrators, the second question was answered. Evans (1997) suggested that people come to what they know through relationships and that relational knowing "is similar to the notion of personal, practical knowledge, embodied in persons, embracing moral, emotional and aesthetic senses, and enacted in situations" (p. 281). Zachary (2000) also identified the importance of connecting learning within the relationship: "When mentoring experience is consciously and unconsciously grounded in learning, the likelihood that the mentoring

relationship will become a satisfactory learning relationship for [the] mentoring partners dramatically improves" (p. xvi). However, none of the groups discussed the process of establishing the relationship. Putting the relationship piece together proved to be easier for some participants and resulted in a rewarding process because they perceived it as a necessary component in the natural order of events. However, for Steve "the relational aspect" was a struggle that resulted in a disappointing experience. In uncovering how relationships are developed, the participants noted that the process of building them yields different results that range from deep satisfaction to disappointment.

Many factors distinguish successes from failures. According to Zachary (2000), preparation that includes creating a plan is an essential first step in building a relationship. This process employs many skills, including communicating needs, detailing a vision, and negotiating possibilities that will determine the direction of the mentoring and the relationship.

Preparing for a mentoring relationship is an important step, and establishing the groundwork through goal setting is a means of connecting that requires little time but serious effort. The content, or tasks, and format are important considerations (Sullivan, 2004) that must be negotiated to ensure that all members become part of the process and have a voice in the decisions as they create a vision of what they desire or what can be for everyone involved. Once a plan is established, however, it cannot be assumed that all participants will be in agreement.

For example, Steve spoke of creating the plan for his group, and the members simply agreed to the content. He reported that there was no ensuing discussion to ensure that everyone understood the desired goals or agreed with the suggested means of

achieving them. Steve "could not say for certain that everyone had the same intention or vision for the mentoring work of the group," but he soon discovered that understanding is essential in developing a vision.

Checking for consensus and satisfaction is a necessary step before implementing a plan, but Steve's group neglected this. One of the stated or assumed goals of mentoring is growth, and change is an expected outcome. As the relationship develops, regular examinations provide opportunities to adjust and redefine goals, to check for understanding, and to confirm that all members are in agreement. Not all mentoring groups incorporated this step in their plans, however, and, for most, as they met one goal, another would take its place.

Tracey's group checked to determine how they were doing before continuing their work, as did Lori and Yvonne's group. When they completed one goal, Lori noted, "there usually were negotiations" and discussions to decide on the next step. At times they would change their plan to reflect the direction of the group and the individual needs. Change was especially true for Tracey as she became more confident and adept in her new role of principal and the group then considered her a peer or equal in the partnership, rather than the novice.

The participants conducted checks regularly during conversations. Conversation was an important piece of the relationship as a means of exchanging information, ideas, reflections, thoughts, and feelings about their personal and professional lives. Scott (2004) suggested that authentic relations are based on honest and open communication that involves discussing needs, negotiating terms in an honest manner, and talking about real problems while working towards a vision.

Dialogue is crucial to building relationships. "Dialogue is reflective learning in which group members seek to understand other's viewpoints and assumptions by talking together to deepen their collective understanding" (Kaser et al., 2002, p. 225). Dialogue, as referred to in the literature (Kaser et al., 2002) is synonymous to conversation (Scott, 2004). Dialogue that suspends judgement will lead to greater understanding: "Dialogue creates an emotional and cognitive safety zone in which ideas flow for examination without judgement. . . . Much of the work in dialogue is done internally by each partner as he or she reflects and suspends" (p. 228). When individuals engage in this manner, understanding is possible and may lead to the development of a common vision.

Creating a common vision is complex work that demands tolerance of views. One must be willing to work towards consensus that at times "requires one to hold tensions of apparent opposites" (Sullivan, 2004, p. 73). Scott (2004) cautioned that we will never get below the surface if we avoid talking about problems because we want to maintain a very polite relationship. Instead, she encouraged "conversation that interrogates reality by mining for increased clarity, improved understanding and impetus for change" (p. 39).

Steve's group did not venture into such conversations. There was discussion, but as Steve acknowledged, "We never did get into any deep discussions." He would have welcomed disagreements or debates, but they did not occur. He had hoped to learn new ideas and to challenge his existing perceptions, which he saw as a powerful way to learn.

One member of Steve's group was in the final year of her career during the second year of the mentoring partnership. Steve hoped to glean knowledge from her

years of experience, but instead of offering insights and being enthusiastic about the work, she was losing energy and was disillusioned. She no longer found joy in her work.

Neither did the third administrator in Steve's group provide much hope for Steve's learning. He always presented a happy and casual appearance, but Steve was cautious of this carefree attitude. Conversations in the meetings were predictable, polite, and focused on daily routines. Steve had hoped for more meaningful discussions, but they never occurred. If he had taken the time to seriously reflect on the events, he might have been more encouraged to mention his concerns to the group. Stepping back to view the situation from the outside allows a participant to evaluate the situation and then articulate his or her concerns to promote refinement, adjustment, or change (Zachary, 2000). If Steve had done this, his mentoring experience might have been different.

During Yvonne and Lori's frequent meetings, they regularly employed reflection and conversation as a means to gauge how their mentorship was working. This procedure was not immediate, but after several months of working together and becoming more at ease with one another, according to Yvonne, they were "able to openly discuss other possibilities." Reflecting on the previous meetings and the outcomes, this group was not hesitant to change their plan because they recognized the need for a meaningful process. Having established parameters for communication, they believed that they could openly approach the other individuals in the group with honesty to move the group towards better and more meaningful and relevant possibilities.

Scott (2004) encouraged this attention to open communication, because the opposite, she noted, will stall or stagnate a relationship or perhaps even deteriorate it: "Conversation is the relationship" (p. 60), and to be meaningful, it must be authentic,

frequent dialogue about shared work and responsibilities that will create a genuine and thriving relationship.

Conversation is one forum for reflection, but writing is another: "Reflection is an introspective dialogue carried on in written form that stimulated the raising of questions, provoked the assessment of learning and enabled the integration of new learning" (Zachary, 2000, p. 53). Although the participants were encouraged to maintain a reflective journal to record their mentoring interactions, they did not regularly attend to it, and time was the constant deterrent. Lori admitted that when she was able to find the time or energy to gather and record her thoughts, she could "dig deeper, and then I start to come up with questions to share at our next meeting. Writing makes me slow down, so then the ideas begin to flow."

Zachary (2000) agreed that reflection "enables us to slow down, rest and observe our journey and the process of self-knowledge that is so important along the way" (p. 53). Reflection is valued as a means of connecting with others and attending to the learning process. When Lori reflected on her relationships, she discovered that her actions affected not only herself, but also the others in the group: Reflection motivated her to be more open with herself and the others in the group. At times when Lori did not agree with the others, she felt empowered to voice her opinions. She recognized that "if I didn't agree, we would either work through it or agree to disagree. We wouldn't take it personally though." Lori's statement is similar to Zachary's comment (2000) that "regular reflection throughout the duration of the mentoring relationship empowers the mentor's learning, which in turn informs and potentially strengthens the facilitating process" (p. 49).

Communication among the members of Lori's group became more open, honest, and authentic. Realizing that they would be offered support encouraged them to express their views. With the support came answers, but often so did questions. The unconditional support facilitated the learning process both personally and professionally. Zachary (2000) emphasized that support is an important prerequisite for successful mentoring relationships. Support is a condition of mentorship, and logic would dictate that agreement to participate in a relationship would also include support. Lambert (1995) stated that "to be in an authentic relationship means that we provide long-term support for one another, challenging one another to improve and to question our current perceptions and learn together" (p. 8). Steve believed that this is true, but although he was eager and willing to give of himself, "nobody asked what they could do for me."

How is support offered freely? Zachary (2000) suggested that motivation is a key factor that impacts commitment and sustainability. Individuals must be internally motivated to participate in a meaningful manner. Perhaps the key to motivation lies in establishing the foundation for the relationship. If all parties are not engaged in a collaborative process while contributing ideas and suggestions freely and openly to ensure that their needs are considered, the purpose is not shared. This was evident in Steve's group when not everyone shared responsibility. Participating in a partnership requires agreeing on the goals for the group with minimal investment in the process.

The motivation for Lori and Yvonne was their shared interest in discovering more about a common goal. Learning was evident and "almost contagious" (Lori) as the group became more engaged with the process, perhaps because it was meaningful to each of them and was connected to each person's needs and experiences. As the group learned

more, the motivation intensified, sustaining the group and encouraging further exploration.

Lori and Yvonne also cited rapport as contributing to their successful experiences. Their regularly scheduled meetings provided opportunities to become more comfortable with each other. Each meeting would begin with informal chatter as they shared personal and professional stories before proceeding to the selected topic. They established trust over time, at first by exercising patience and persistence, and later by getting to know each other not only as professionals, but also as people. They both "genuinely cared for each other as well as the relationship" (Yvonne) as it developed over time. According to Yvonne, "We had become friends, not just colleagues." They realized that they did not exist alone in the relationship and that it would not continue or thrive if they did not offer care. As Yvonne said, "We are part of the others, and they us."

Through support for each other's work and vision, the two spoke of the possibilities of seeing beyond the obvious or the present as they discovered more about what could be. They also discovered more about themselves through their interactions, and Lori noted that they "became mirrors to see ourselves as others saw us, and these mirrors in turn became windows where we could look beyond to see other possibilities."

Lori's statement relates to Sullivan's (2004) idea that "vision is the ability to see what could be as opposed to seeing only what is there" (p. 72). Sullivan suggested that it is important "to look inward with new eyes" (p. 73) just as Lori did when she reflected on her experiences within the group. "When I think about what I want for myself, I think of what I need to be a good administrator and who I am as a person" (p. 73). Lori was concerned with learning new skills and gaining new knowledge about administration in

schools, but she went beyond the technical elements by looking within herself to examine her beliefs and aligning them with her vision for her leadership.

According to Sullivan (2004), looking outward and forward also shapes vision. Both Lori and Yvonne were aware of the importance of developing goals for their group to outline what they hoped to achieve. These goals were used as a guide, but they did not dictate a rigid path that the administrators to which the administrators believed they must adhere. Frequent conversations provided opportunities for regular checks to allow them to make adjustments. Their plans were a guide that they were able to revise as they grew in their skills and knowledge and as their needs changed.

At times it is necessary to look inward as Lori did when she reflected on her experiences in the group and at other times to look outward as Lori and Yvonne did when the group explored other ideas or when they shared their experiences.

Being clear about expectations and unravelling assumptions promotes greater understanding. Assumptions can be a springboard for discussion, but they can also be a source of discomfort, as Steve discovered. His group did not ensure clarity of their goals and norms of operation and procedures when they began their mentoring, and the group therefore proceeded on a course that was stagnating despite the occasional glimmer of hope for progress.

Steve was committed to personal mastery and frequently assisted the others in the group: "After our discussions I would e-mail some information to the others, but they never let me know if they received it or if they even used it." He was eager for the group to succeed and hoped that he could learn more about leadership from the more experienced members in his group. His hope was not fulfilled, and a paradox was easily

recognizable when Steve told me, "I'm not going to lose sleep over those two"; but then in a second breath he contradicted himself: "I'm not going to give up on the relationship."

As Steve tried to establish the unique boundaries for his role in the relationship, he struggled with his recurring concern about uncertainty in relation to the others. He was eager to fulfill the requirements for mentoring, but he permitted the others to manage the partnership by attending to their concerns while ignoring his. In the process he tried to be accountable to the other voices, but, in so doing, he sacrificed his own voice. Despite his best intentions for the group and himself, Steve's efforts did not lead to the kind of success that he had anticipated.

As noted at the beginning of this section, the purpose of the mentoring was to learn to be effective administrators. However, Zachary (2000) cautioned, "Good intention is not enough to facilitate effective learning in a mentoring relationship" (p. 86). Building relationships requires instituting a number of conditions. There is no guaranteed formula to ensure success because there is no assurance of how relationships will develop. Everyone has thoughts and ideas on what they hope to achieve, and there is no definite or correct way to mentor. However, if individuals are willing to invest themselves and their time with a fierceness, the mentoring partners can successfully accomplish their goals.

The Fierceness of Mentoring

Prior to beginning this study, my attention was captured by Linda Lambert's statement at the conference in 2004 that mentorship is not fierce enough to make a difference. When she was questioned about the meaning of this, she declined to comment, which left me puzzling over the statement. Fierceness had always held a

negative connotation for me because I associated the term with conflict, dissatisfaction, and violence. How, I wondered, could mentorship be any of these? However, other sources gave me new insight into the meaning of fierceness. Scott (2004) noted that *Roget's Thesaurus* lists the following synonyms for fierceness: robust, intense, strong, powerful, passionate, eager, unbridled, uncurbed, and untamed (p. 9). She referred to fierceness as an attitude, a way of life, a way of leading. Framing mentorship in these terms, I was able to view my participants' experiences through a new lens. In examining the conversations again, I concluded that fierceness depends on one major component: commitment.

Commitment requires that individuals make the current relationship more intentional by communicating and sharing openly and honestly and by making those involved accountable. Effective communication, including active listening and constructive feedback, is necessary. This is more challenging in the initial stages of the relationship when the participants are only beginning to establish trust and because it is easier in the beginning to discuss the issues that are more visible. Lori recognized this: "When you have a mentorship relationship that is strictly about the work, you can discuss ideas, issues, and concerns; but you won't get to what's underneath all of that to the heart of the matter."

Commitment also requires sharing openly as the issues become less obscure and the participants feel safe and gain confidence in themselves and the process. The conversations shift to a deeper level. The relationship evolves, encouraging the participants to challenge ideas, which sometimes require confrontation. Dialogue is open

and honest. Personal growth and improvement supersede the need to ignore sensitive situations that might challenge values and beliefs. As Lori put it:

> If you don't have an attitude that you are willing to make some changes, to experiment, to question, to learn, but instead you want to play it safe or you want to save face, then I wonder how many people will get anything out of mentoring.

Senge (1990) stressed the necessity of open and honest dialogue, which they defined as the "free and creative exploration of complex and subtle issues, a deep 'listening' to one another and suspending of one's own views" (p. 237). Interacting in an open and honest way requires trust and respect for others. Unconditional acceptance is critical if the mentoring is to extend beyond the current situation to new possibilities. Lambert (1998) argued that "all of the learning must be embedded in a trusting environment in which relationship forms a safety net of support and positive challenge" (p. 8).

Agreeing to devote time is an example of commitment. "Time is a challenge" (Lori) for busy school administrators, but if the participants are serious about their mentoring, they will make time for it. Taking time for meetings, for reflections, or for assignments was difficult for the participants, but they all recognized the importance of time for progress. The mentoring partners who met regularly and followed through on assignments reported that their relationships were effective, whereas those who met by chance or sporadically reported marginal effectiveness. For these latter individuals, the group simply existed and endured. Commenting on the importance of committing time, Tracey pointed out, "you have to be willing to give of your time and yourself. If you don't make it a priority, it won't happen, and you won't receive any benefit from mentoring. You can't just do mentoring by the seat of your pants."

Reflection also requires time. It helps to discover more about self and clarifies role expectations. During the fractured day of an administrator, when he or she is constantly being bombarded by problems and queries, there is little opportunity to engage in thoughtful reflection. Time is necessary to learn the profession, but because it is also important to learn about oneself in that profession, it must be intentionally scheduled for meaningful reflection to occur.

Demonstrating commitment creates possibilities for more fierce relationships. However, once established, relationships must be nurtured through hard work, as Tracey suggested: She "found mentoring very useful as it helped me grow as a principal in my new job, but it didn't just happen; it required a lot of time and effort. We took it seriously, and because of that, we were successful."

From the words of the study participants I was able to find examples of what I perceived to be fierceness. I agree with Lambert's statement at the 2004 conference that fierceness must be present if mentoring is to be meaningful, but I think that her statement does not account for the different kinds of relationships. Each relationship is as unique as the individuals in it. My observations revealed that fierceness was evident in the work of some groups, but certainly not all. My wish would be for Lambert to meet Lori, Yvonne, and Tracey to realize that commitment, as I perceive it, is present in some relationships.

Conclusion

Mentoring is the process of learning new knowledge and skills while discovering oneself and how mentoring shapes identity. It has evolved from a system that simply dispensed knowledge to become a more learner-centred approach. Learning is the result of mentoring and an integral component that facilitates and nurtures relationships. The

learning is not only an individual effort, but also a group effort that encourages active participation and shared responsibility. Relationships are important in mentoring, but it is the quality of the relationship that determines the effectiveness of the mentoring. The ideal, fierce mentoring, transcends the boundaries of the traditional form of mentoring and extends to the professional and personal level to reflect honesty, respect, and vigour. The administrators reported that if the relationship is fierce, success is imminent. In conclusion, the four administrators reported that their mentoring relationship did meet some of their important needs although these needs differed and were of different intensities.

CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Recommendations

From the analysis of the data from my conversations with the four administrators who participated in my study on mentoring school administrators, four recommendations emerged; they result from the data collected and analyzed from the experiences of these individuals in a mentoring or co-mentoring relationship.

Recommendation #1

Ensure that there is fierce support, as defined in Chapter Seven, for mentorship if it is to be valued and encouraged; that is, administrators in both the schools and central office must support these relationships to ensure that they are effective and successful.

Ideally, a program would aim to be both effective and successful. *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1996) defines these terms as follows:

> **Effective** – (adjective) 1) having an effect; 2) producing a definite or desired result; efficient; 3) actual, not merely or theoretical. (p. 445)
>
> **Successful** – (adjective) 1) coming about, taking place or turning out to be as was hoped for; 2) having achieved success (a favourable result) (p.1422)

The research and the four school administrators in this study all supported the need for and value of mentoring. It has value when there is rigorous support for it. This study illustrates that mentorship experiences vary in degree and form because each relationship is unique, as is each individual in the relationship. These factors, in turn, affect the degree of success of each mentoring relationship.

Mentoring is becoming an encouraged practice in organizations and more prevalent for school administrators. Enthusiasm for mentoring and clarity about the significance of the process have not been documented, although they are related. With the increasing popularity of mentoring, more support of resources, time and encouragement must be offered to facilitate the process for it to be effective. Zachary (2000) noted, "Good intention is not enough to facilitate effective learning" (p. xv). This is not to suggest that mentoring programs should be designed to follow a textbook approach; instead, research must be built on there must be accommodation and time for planning, preparation, and training. Mentoring should not be left to chance, and it should not be assumed that all involved understand what is needed for it to be beneficial and effective. As Darwin (2000) observed, "mentoring cannot afford to be seen as an add-on feature. Rather organizations must value the power of relationships and value the time for these connections" (p. 273).

As noted in Chapter Two, administrators would want education in matters connected to leadership behaviour; management skills; instructional leadership; theories of instruction and planning; and goal setting (Cale, 1993). Using these as a guide, mentors should receive instruction in theory and strategies.

Success depends on establishing an appropriate and necessary foundation, which helps a learner-centred practice to flourish (Zachary, 2000). Support must be extended to all involved in mentoring, beginning with approval from central office that should be continued, with offers of time release to mentor and a provision for resources, training, and, ideally, funding. When jurisdictions demonstrate their belief in a mission statement for the district, they attribute value and importance to the mission. Including specific

references to the need for and value of mentoring for all school administrators emphasizes the value of learning for all administrators. As educational leaders of schools, administrators must be continuously engaged in learning, both independently and with others in a learning community. Klitz et al. (2004) reflected this belief:

> Part of learning entails developing a learning community, one in which greater attention is given to promote an atmosphere of personal inquiry with a focus on collaboration and shared decision-making. In this role, leaders need to develop the capacity for refection and promote self-inquiry (p. 136).

The need for learning can be translated into support for administrators by providing opportunities for paid sabbaticals to encourage administrators to enrol in graduate studies at the university. Education on the current pedagogy in curriculum, instruction, leadership, and administration will lend more depth to the practice of mentoring. As Klitz et al. (2004) stated:

> If learning is to be a core focus of a new generation of educational leaders, then these leaders will need to be more broadly educated in general about the human condition, and with deeper and richer understandings about learning, instructional practice, curriculum development and the multiple context in which these occur. (p. 136)

The findings of this study reveal the need for everyone involved in a mentoring relationship to receive experiential education. The participants in this study received no training, prior to mentoring, but they would have welcomed the opportunity to learn more about mentoring methods while they prepared for their partnership. Preparation, according to Williams et al. (2004), is essential to reduce or eliminate the obstacles to success. It should involve a study of mentorship and an understanding of the purpose of mentoring, focus on the goals of learning, and include strategies for mentoring such as coaching, conversation, and reflection.

It cannot be assumed that, by simply agreeing to be in a mentoring relationship, individuals will know how to practice the conceptually orientated learning that requires specific skills. Acquiring knowledge and demonstrating an understanding of it is an active process that is best facilitated through experience. Brown et al. (as cited in Williams et al., 2004) agreed: "Learners get a more complete account when they participate in authentic activity . . . using the tools of their discipline to solve real problems within the context where knowledge is located" (p. 56).

Successful mentoring is possible when effective communication includes active listening, constructive feedback, meaningful dialogue, and opportunities for reflection. Talk allows individuals to reflect on their decisions and approaches to situations. Williams et al. (2004) stressed the importance of dialogue and of individuals' "gain[ing] insight into ways that mentors think about decisions or approaches to solving problems. Through dialogue mentors communicate mental models as conceptual tools, beliefs and values they hold that extend through the community of practice" (p. 58).

Asking stimulating and supporting questions directs individuals in thoughtful and meaningful reflection. Williams et al. (2004) emphasized the need for talk as a means of reflection: "By reflecting on what worked and what did not and anticipating how they should inform future action, interns learn from successes and mistakes, make sense of experiences and construct knowledge about the practice" (p. 58). Articulation promotes reflective thinking, which, in turn, encourages a shift in thinking to redefine or adjust behaviour and actions. These are learned skills that require time for practice and development.

Time is integral to the success of mentoring relationships and should be offered unconditionally to promote growth. Allocating time was a common concern for the administrators in this study. They recognized the importance of scheduling time, but found it challenging. Designing schedules that actively encourage time for mentoring teams to meet, for dialogue, and for reflection can be a challenging task, but not impossible. Zachary (2000) cautioned that: "it takes time to sustain a learning relationship. Time becomes an issue when the partners cannot find enough of it, acknowledge a need to call a time out or do not use the time they do have wisely" (p. 61).

If mentoring is to be a serious endeavour, individuals and groups must find time and use it consciously. Embedding time for the suggested practices into daily routines could eventually make it part of the culture of the schools and an expectation for administrators. Opportunities for regular and frequent interaction and reflection should be created, and this makes mentoring valuable.

The participants in this study also suggested that providing time to meet with other mentoring groups would foster learning and sharing. They recognized that learning opportunities are possible by working with others in similar roles or similar educational settings. Moving beyond the mentoring partnership to create other mentoring connections would lead to greater understanding and further expand the possibilities for learning.

Mentoring is a complex process that is shaped by the unique attributes of the individuals involved, and therefore the perceived success of the mentoring will vary, and the mentoring will fall along a continuum of effectiveness. Providing support through the

various noted means attributes value to the process while improving the opportunities for success within the relationships and for the learning process involved in the mentoring.

Recommendation #2

Conduct checks to review the goals, progress, and satisfaction of the members of the group before, during, and after the mentoring on a regular basis.

The mentoring partners and central office, when the mentoring is a district-sponsored activity, should conduct regular checks to lend clarity to the process and reduce or eliminate assumptions. These checks will clarify understanding and permit opportunities for refinement or change.

Checks also address accountability. Although checking can be challenging and sensitive, it is necessary if mentoring is to be effective and worthwhile. Providing time and spaces for frequent dialogue at different stages of the relationship will encourage accountability and a greater likelihood that the process and relationships will develop in a healthy and responsible manner. Sharing openly and honestly to assess the development of the mentoring and the relationships will encourage each member to be accountable. When the partners negotiate the terms of the partnership, they must investigate and clearly record the accountability mechanisms and protocols for dealing with concerns.

As previously noted, mentoring is not a simple process, and not all mentoring relationships are created equally. For those relationships that are not fierce according to the previously stated meanings of fierce, the process may be stalled or, worse, may deteriorate. Mentoring relationships are not constant but continually shift and change. Some relationships are contractually linked and terminated at a predetermined time.

Some relationships are highly satisfying; however, there must be a process to end the partnership. Checks create more awareness and can serve as a signal that the relationship must end. It is better to end a relationship that is unsatisfying or even destructive than to continue for the purpose of mentoring in name only.

Recommendation #3

Clearly define the role of the assistant principal and include mentoring of assistant principals.

Currently, the Province of Alberta School Act does not recognize the role of the assistant principal, which might, in part, explain the confusion over the loosely defined responsibilities of their roles. The three assistant principals in this study are aware that their expectations and the responsibilities assigned to them are different and unique and vary as their principals deem necessary. Understanding that each school site is unique and requires its own considerations does not presume that the responsibilities will be restricting and rigid; they should be flexible enough to address differences while establishing definite guidelines for the assistant principal.

Though some would assume that a principal as a professional would support and guide the assistant principal in learning the position, this occurs more by chance than by design. Effective principals naturally assume the responsibility of guiding the assistant principal to reach his or her potential. A partnership in which the principal shares his or her knowledge and skills, offers support, and models behaviour is often viewed as mentoring or apprenticeship. There are, however, no guidelines for either the principal or the assistant principal for this process. Calabrese and Tucker-Ladd (1991) suggested that role definition can clarify responsibilities that can then create a solid foundation for

learning. When individuals understand what is expected, they often work in a synergistic relationship to develop procedures and skills that will allow them to achieve the goals. Not knowing creates inefficiency. Clarity on role definition can create greater possibilities for effective learning and stronger relationships.

This learning must be meaningful and nurture the development and growth of the assistant principal. Before assuming the role, the assistant principals in this study believed that there would be more responsibility associated with leadership, but, as with many assistant principals, their work involves mainly organizational matters as dictated by their principals. Zachary (2000) suggested that "the learner needs to be engaged in the learning and the learning needs to be connected to his or her experiences" (p. 86). Scaffolding knowledge to learning opportunities develops skills and facilitating the process to advance learning to become a full practitioner should involve a consideration of previous knowledge to be meaningful (Williams et al., 2004).

Working collaboratively with the principal as part of a leadership team to develop a shared vision would further encourage assistant principals to learn their current role while discovering the possibilities for increased leadership. The vision should be embedded in the current context of the schools where they practice. One strategy to create a plan might be to work backward from the desired outcomes to identify methods that could be used to achieve them. Employing this strategy could help to outline the responsibilities of the assistant principal more effectively. This backward design, according to Sullivan (2002), demonstrates good leadership:

> Vision is the ability to see what could be as opposed to only seeing what is there. It may depend on looking outward and forward. . . . True leaders live their lives backwards; they look ahead to see where they wish to end up and adjust accordingly. (p. 72)

I recommend that principals actively mentor assistant principals. If assistant principals are to be considered for promotion, if succession planning is a consideration, and if they are to be effective in their positions, they must be nurtured to allow them to explore and understand the role of principal. Williams et al. (2004) agreed: "Mentorship is deemed essential to preparing aspiring school leaders to move into complex positions vested with significant authority" (p. 55). Principals' transparency in performing their duties and openly sharing as much as possible will better prepare assistant principals for advancement and alleviate the "shock" of adapting to a new position. They will be more likely to demonstrate efficacy within the position, and further growth will be possible for the assistant principal.

Recommendation #4

Because there is no one right way or only one way to mentor, accommodate a variety of methods of mentoring.

Our perceptions and understanding of mentoring have evolved beyond Homer's version in *The Odyssey* to embrace a variety of approaches. Mentoring is a complex process that may assume different forms depending on the context (Jipson & Paley, 2000). As more studies of mentoring are conducted, more support for different models of mentoring emerge (Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Mullen, 2005; Mullen & Lick, 1999). The form of mentoring that one chooses depends on one's understanding of mentoring, the needs of those in the relationship, and the manner in which one frames the process. Because different frameworks of mentoring serve different purposes, different kinds of mentoring should be considered and encouraged. Mullen (2005) suggested six frameworks for mentoring, including co-mentoring and lifelong mentoring (p. 73).

Mullen outlined some possible activities for co-mentoring and the realized benefits, which indicates that this process is worthwhile and meaningful with rigorous attention and support. Lifelong mentoring (p. 75), as Mullen noted, recognizes that mentoring is centred on learning throughout one's life. Lifelong mentoring offers opportunities to seek experiences that will promote growth during an individual's different stages and ages of life. If different configurations of mentoring are possible and considered a means of advancing relationships and learning, it should be encouraged.

One could potentially be involved in several mentoring relationships simultaneously. Mullen (2005, p. 5) referred to lifelong mentoring and suggested that during our lives we will have many different mentors, including parents, spouses, friends, coaches, and colleagues. Each relationship will be characterized by the time of life and the perceived learning needs in these relationships. They may overlap and at times shift to increase or decrease in intensity according to the needs. This concept can be likened to a kaleidoscope. Although the glass pieces shift and reconfigure as the scope is manipulated, each piece remains connected in some manner to the others, which reminds us that although relationships may evolve and change, we as individuals are always connected to others according to some design or purpose.

This study of mentoring is important and worthwhile for school administrators. Administrative work is complex and difficult, and everyone, not just the novice, would benefit from support. If school administrators are the instructional leaders of our schools, they must be offered support to undertake a variety of methods of professional and personal development to become dynamic and effective instructional leaders.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of this study, I suggest the following possibilities for future research.

1. Little research has focused on mentoring and leadership. Mullen (2005) and Fullan (1999) briefly referred to the connections between the two processes, but little detailed information is available. More studies focused on the connections between these two areas would enhance the value of mentoring while providing another venue for studying leadership.

2. It is important to conduct studies of protégés who become mentors to further explore the experience of mentoring and the activities and knowledge that might be considered meaningful and important for those in the relationship. Studying the evolution of mentoring could focus on the participants' reflections on the initial mentoring process that involves protégés as principal learners and the adjustment that they make as they become mentors.

For example, Tracey could be studied first as a protégé who is beginning her principalship and then as a mentor for a novice principal. She could explain how she mentored her protégé based on her personal guided experiences. Would she replicate the manner in which she was mentored, or would she choose a different way? What are her reasons for choosing either way?

3. More qualitative studies focusing on the role of the assistant principal would add depth to the available but limited information on this topic. Documenting and analyzing various experiences could create opportunities for other assistant principals to

identify with the role, the problems, the successes, and the strategies of others in the same role. The study could serve as a support as well as a guide.

4. More qualitative studies on the ways that individuals have been mentored throughout their lives would support the concept of lifelong mentoring and the different ways to mentor and document the learning from these experiences. They could include both professional and personal relationships and need not be limited to a specific time period because mentoring can be evident throughout a person's life.

CHAPTER 9: MY LEARNINGS ABOUT MENTORING AND ABOUT MYSELF

This research began as a study of the mentoring of school administrators, but it has also become a study of my own beliefs and understanding as I have reflected on my personal and professional experiences and those of the participants. Untangling the ideas of the participants has allowed me not only to better understand the process of mentoring, but also to learn about the human connection within mentoring. I have also discovered a great deal more about myself in this journey.

My personal reflections during this study have led me to search more deeply to discover why mentoring continues to be such a dynamic force in my life and why I continue to be so passionate about it. I have always believed in the power of 'more than one,' and I was eager to discover whether this was also important to others; specifically, those in school administration.

During my research relationship with the participants, I was struck by their honest and eager willingness to share their experiences. I believe that their responses reflect, in part, their sincere belief in mentoring as a valuable process to discover more about themselves as they grow in their profession. I recall some of their comments after our sessions in which they expressed surprise and pleasure about having learned more about mentoring. Their participation in the study encouraged them to actively think about what mentoring means to them and its impact on their lives and challenged them to examine their beliefs. Despite the variation in experiences, they all felt that mentoring has been rewarding. They have all achieved their goals, to varying degrees of success, and this was important to them. However, more important, they believe that they have discovered more about themselves as their values and beliefs were held up to scrutiny and, at times,

challenged. They also discovered that good mentoring requires hard work, commitment, and a willingness to invest themselves in the process. This includes sharing talents and energy and investing time. True mentoring should create situations that scaffold understandings to guide in further discoveries. The challenge should be to examine not only what is, but also what could be. They also discovered the importance of creating positive relationships to allow for these possibilities.

Examining the transcripts of the participants' interviews, I also reflected on how mentoring revealed itself in my life, and I recognized that it has always been present in the society that I know, whether with parents, coaches, or teachers. I now realize that mentoring as I have come to understand it has always been at work with and for me. However, I did not always recognize it for what it is because, before my work with mentoring, I had not yet defined this concept for myself, nor had I connected it to the context.

With closer examination, I now have a clearer concept of mentoring, and I am able to identify my parents as my first mentors. Throughout the various stages and ages of my life, they directed me to learn certain things that they believed necessary to assist me in my development. I have easily identified these lessons on, for example, how to dress or how to save my money because they are connected with parenting. I now understand that there were other times when the teaching was not as transparent. At times a word, a single gesture, or an expression would guide me in my learning. Mentoring from my parents was two-pronged: sometimes obvious and direct, sometimes quiet and unassuming. I internalized some of the lessons that they chose to share, but rejected other knowledge that they attempted to pass along.

My lessons beyond home began early in life when I identified with individuals I admired or respected. Throughout my life I sought out individuals who I believed had valuable ideas from which I could learn. Coaches, teachers, professors, pastors, family, friends, colleagues, and employers often guided me in my discovery of myself and my capacity. The lessons from these experiences helped to shape my own understanding and growth. I accepted what I believed was important for myself and aligned with my values, and I would dismiss the rest. Perhaps that is the power that I know mentoring can offer. Learning about new possibilities assisted me in learning about myself as an individual and as a professional. Knowing more about myself allowed me to assist others.

Relationships have always been important to me. I thrive when I am challenged to create and when I am connected to individuals who make a difference to me. This guides me in my choices of relationships and encourages me to reciprocate, knowing that, by giving, I may often receive in return. This, for me, is essential in my mentoring relationships. I believe that I have been affected and influenced by many different individuals at the same time throughout my life, and I know that I will continue to seek out mentors for myself. It is only now that I can truly identify the people I value as mentors because I understand what mentoring involves.

I now recognize that tormentors also guided me. Individuals posing as mentors attempted to mould me to their expectations or in their likeness. Mrs. Fitzpatrick, my mentor teacher during my first teaching practicum, is one whom I can clearly recall. She expected me to administer the daily lessons as she had planned them in the same prescribed manner that she had outlined. There was never any discussion or dialogue, nor was there any accommodation for questions or negotiations. I was not encouraged to

develop my own identity, and I complied only because I felt threatened because my future lay in her hands. I remember the feelings of being alone and not truly understanding what it was that I needed or wanted. Unfortunately, I did not learn much in this experience except what I would not do or be in future relationships.

I also learned that support is vital in guiding others as they discover their potential. Mentoring can offer this support. This is not to suggest that mentoring alone will provide a means of, nor will it be the only path for, growing as a professional and a person. It is only one way, but it is one that I would encourage others to embrace because of the many opportunities and advantages to be gained from the experience. I have mentioned these gains in previous chapters where I described the experiences of the participants. These gains, whether small or large, affirm that mentoring is valuable. I recognized this in the stories of the participants, but I also realized it for myself when, after finishing this study, I returned to my journal to reread some of my entries. The following excerpt from my experiences as a co-mentor reflects this value:

> I have just returned from the conference in Banff on Building Leadership Capacity. The theme focused on building relationships through open communication and trust. One key concept outlined how leadership should encourage others to hone their skills and use their talents. In so doing, more learning opportunities for all will be possible, especially if student learning is at the centre.
>
> This, I believe, is what my mentorship team does. Each member of the triad has unique talents and strengths and when we meet to share and talk, we are sincere in our efforts to encourage each other to become better administrators and also better people. This has not always been easy because we each have our own ideas and ways of doing things but we have intentionally worked at building our relationship that I believe is solid. It has required work and a constant effort as well as a give and take, but because we can openly and freely express ourselves, we have lively, engaging conversations that force us to think outside of the box. At times this challenges our own beliefs and assumptions and forces us to reflect on our values. All of this is done respectfully. We've built something that we value and we are careful to guard it so that it will continue. Mentorship for us is definitely benefiting each of us as well as the team.

> Perhaps that is why I was so puzzled when at this conference when Linda Lambert proclaimed that mentoring is not fierce enough to make a difference. I wonder what she meant by this statement. Maybe she believes that there is not enough time being devoted to mentoring. If that is her reasoning then I could agree with her because there is never enough time as an administrator. Our days are so disjointed and fractured it is a wonder that we ever accomplish or finish anything let alone participate in a mentoring program. However, because my team understands the benefits of mentorship, we are eager to participate and so we find time to make it work. However, if Lambert believes that mentoring is not practiced with passion and an honest commitment, she obviously has not encountered teams like mine.
>
> I am fortunate to be in this triad sharing ideas and receiving support and encouragement while I learn from the others. Perhaps there are other teams who do not take mentorship as seriously as we do. I don't know. What I do know though is that if teams do not work at the mentorship, it will not be fulfilling or perhaps not even useful. Good things do not always come easily. I believe that there is a lesson in this for all who are in a mentoring relationship. Mentorship can be challenging, but if the participants and the team truly want to have an enriching learning experience, they will recognize that it will require work. They will find the ways to make it happen. With work and commitment, mentorship can be a meaningful and valuable opportunity to learn. It is for this reason that my team and I work at the process because we want all that mentoring can offer. (April 21, 2004)

Prior to this study I believed that mentorship was important, and it has confirmed my belief. Mentorship is valuable, but it is important to be open to the possibilities and focus mentoring experiences on supported learning. I also believe that mentoring, in the authentic sense, is not a passing phase but will connect to learning to promote and enhance the growth of individuals and organizations. This, I believe, will be true if mentoring is encouraged in the truest sense, as the participants in this study demonstrated in sharing their experiences as to how mentoring relationships met their needs.

REFERENCES

Alberta Teachers' Association. (1999). *Mentorship program: A model project.* Research Monograph No. 39. Edmonton, AB.

Alberta Teachers' Association (2004). Leadership Quality Standard. Alberta Teachers' Association, Edmonton, Alberta.

Alberta Teachers' Association. (2006a). *Principal quality practice standard: Successful school leadership in Alberta* [Draft]. Retrieved January 2007 from http://www.teachers.ab.ca.

Alberta Teachers' Association. (2006b).*Administrator mentorship handbook.* Edmonton, AB.

Alvy, H. B., & Robbins, P. (1998). *If only I knew . . . Success strategies for navigating the principalship.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Anderson, M. (1991). Principals: How to train, recruit, select, induct, and evaluate leaders for America's schools. Oregon: University of Oregon.

Barry, C. K.. & Kaneko, J. (2002). Mentoring matters. *Leadership, 31*(3), 26-29.

Barth, R. S. (2003). *Lessons learned.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Barth, R. S. (2004). *Learning by heart.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bateson, M. C. (1994). *Peripheral visions: Learning along the way.* New York: Harper Collins.

Bateson, M. C. (2000). *Full circles, overlapping lives.* New York: Random House.

Bloom, G. (1999). Sink or swim no more. *Thrust for Educational Leadership, 29*(1), 14-17.

Bloom, G., & Krovetz, M. (2001). A step into the principalship. *Leadership, 30*(3), 12-13.

Bloom, G., Castagna, C., & Warren, B. (2003). More than mentors. *Leadership, 32*(5), 20-23.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Boostrom, R. (1994). Learning to pay attention. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 7*(1), 51-64.

Brunner, J. (1996). *The culture of education.* Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press.

Bryk,A. & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 40-44.

Buckner, C., & Jones, B. (1990). In search of strong administrators: A worthy investment. *NASSP Bulletin*, *74*(79), 20-22.

Burns, M. (2000). *Introduction to research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bush, T., & Chew, J. (1999). Developing human capital: Training and mentoring for principals. *A Journal of Comparative Education*, *29*(1), 41-53.

Calabrese, R. L., & Tucker-Ladd, P. (1991). The principal and assistant principal: A mentoring relationship. *Coach and Model, 75*(533), 67-74

Cale, J. (1993). Principal induction: Orienting newly hired principals. *NASSP Bulletin, 77*, 113-116.

Carter, K. (1993). The place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, *22*(1), 5-12.

Chao, G. T., Waltz, P. M., & Gardner, P. D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with non-mentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, *45*, 619-636.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *19*(5), 2-14.

Conyers, J. G. (2004). Thinking outside to support newcomers. *The School Administrator, 6*(61), 18-21.

Crabtree, B.F., & Miller, W.L. (Eds). (1992) *Doing qualitative research: Research methods for primary care.* (Vol. 3) Newbury Park, CA: Sage, p. 24.

Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Crocker, C., & Harris, S. (2002). Facilitating the growth of administrative practitioners as mentors. *Journal of Research for Educational Leadership*, 1(2), 5-20.

Crow, G. & Matthews, L. J. (1998). *Finding one's way: How mentoring can lead to dynamic leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. (1986). Support for beginning principals: First hurdles are highest. *Theory Into Practice, 25*(3), 168-173.

Daresh, J. (2001). *Leaders helping leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. (2002). *What it means to be a principal: Your guide to leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Daresh, J. C., & Playko, M. A. (1991). What does a mentor do? *Principal, 71*(2), 38-39.

Daresh, J. C., & Plako, M. A. (1989). Teacher mentors and administrator mentors: Same track, different trains. *Planning and Changing*, 20(2), 88-96.

Darwin, A. (2000). Critical reflections on mentoring in work settings. *Adult Education Quarterly, 50*(3), 197-211.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, *Handbook of qualitative research* (p.1-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DuFour, R. (2004). Schools as learning communities. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11.

Ellis, J. (1998a). Interpretive inquiry as a formal research process. In J. Ellis (Ed.), *Teaching from understanding. p. 14-32.* New York: Garland Press.

Ellis, J. (1998b). Introduction: The teacher as interpretive inquirer. In J. Ellis (Ed.), *Teaching from understanding.* p 5 – 13. New York: Garland.

Evans, M. (1997). Shifting the leadership focus from control to empowerment: A case study. *School Leadership & Management, 17*(2), 273-283.

Feldman A. (1992, April). *Practical theories, practical paradigms, and teacher education.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Fessenden, E. A. (2002). *Kaleidoscope.* In World Book Encyclopedia (Vol. 11, p. 174), Chicago, IL: World Book Inc.

Fleming, K. A. (1991). Mentoring: Is it the key to opening doors for women in educational administration? *Education Canada. 31*(3), 27-33.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gardiner, M., Enomoto, E., & Grogan, M. (2000). *Coloring outside the lines*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Garvey, D. (1998). Mentorship project a hit in Red Deer. *ATA News*, 32(19).

Grumet, M. R. (1988). *Bitter milk: Women and teaching*. Amherst: IBT Global.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, 105 – 117, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gubrium, J. G., & Holstein, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Handbook of interview research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hansen, J., & Matthews. L. (1994). Peer mentoring for principals: Building professional networks. *People & Education*, *2*(2), 216-225.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2000). Mentoring in the new millennium. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(1), 50-56.

Harvey, M. (1995, April). Metamorphosis: The changing role of the vice principal. *OPSTF News*, 24-27.

Hibert, K. M. (2000). Mentoring, *Leadership, 82*(1), 16-18.

Hoerr, T. (2005). *The art of school leadership*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Holloway, J. (2004). Mentoring new leaders. *Educational Leadership*, *61*(7), 87-88.

Howarth, I. (2002). Mentoring for new administrators. *CAP Journal*, *10*(3), 10-11.

Huang, C., & Lynch, J. (1995). *Mentoring*. New York: Harper Collins.

Jipson, J., & Paley, N. (2000). Because no one gets there alone: Collaboration as mentoring. *Theory Into Practice*, *39*(11), 36-42.

Kaser, J., Mundry, S., Stiles, K. E., & Loucks-Horsley, S. (2002). *Leading every day: 124 actions for effective leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kealy, W., & Mullen, C.A. (1999, April). *Rethinking mentoring relationships*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Klitz, G., Danzig, A., & Szecsy, E. (2004). Learner-centered leadership : A mentoring model for the professional development of school administrators. *Mentoring and Tutoring, 12*(2), 136-151.

Kochan, F., & Trimble, S. (2000). From mentoring to co-mentoring: Establishing collaborative relationships. *Theory Into Practice*, *39*(1), 20-28.

Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Krueger, J., Blackwell, B., & Knight, W. (1992). Mentor programs: An opportunity for mutual enhancement and growth. *NASSP Bulletin,* 55-62.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lambert, L. (1995). *The constructivist leader*. London: Teachers College Press.

Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart*. New York: Routledge Chapman and Hall.

Leedy, P., & Ormrod, J. (2001). *Practical research: Planning and design.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lick, D. (2000). Whole faculty study groups: Facilitating mentoring for school-wide change. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(1), 43-50.

Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Books for Young Readers.

Malone, R. (2002). Principal mentoring: An update. *NAESP*, *18*(2), 1-4.

Maxwell, J. C. (2001). *Developing the leader within you*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

Maynard, T. (2000). Learning to teach or learning to manage mentors? Experiences of school-based teacher training. *Mentoring & Tutoring*, *8*(1), 17-30.

McColl, C. (1999). Scarcity of school-based administrators in Alberta and Canada. *CAP Journal*, *8*(3), 6-11.

McGuire, G. M., & Reger, J. (2003). Feminist co-mentoring: A model for academic professional development. *NWSA Journal*, *15*(1), 54-72.

McIntyre, D., Hagger, H., & Wilkin, M. (1993). *Mentoring perspectives on school based teacher education*. London: Kogan Page.

McKinnon , B., Ireland, C., Hossack, L., & Thompson, H. (1999). Why would I want to become a principal ? *The CAP Journa*l, *8*(3), 2-5.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Monsour, F. (1998). Twenty recommendations for an administrative mentoring program. *Bulletin, 82*(594), 96-100.

Mullen C. A., & Lick, D. W. (Eds.) (1999). *New directions in mentoring: Creating a culture of synergy.* New York: Falmer.

Mullen, C. (2000). Constructing co-mentoring partnerships: Walkways we must travel. *Theory into Practice, 39*(1), 4-11.

Mullen, C. (2005). *Mentorship.* New York: Peter Lang.

Mullen, C. (Ed.). (1997). *Breaking the circle of one: Redefining mentorship in the lives and writings of educators.* New York: Peter Lang.

Mullen, C. A., & Cairns, S. (2001). The principal's apprentice: Mentoring aspiring school administrators through relevant preparation. *Mentoring & Tutoring, 9*(2), 125-152.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Norrel, J. E., & Ingolsby, B. (1991). Surviving academic isolation: Strategies for success. *Family Relations, 43*, 345-347.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Peshkin, A. (1993). The goodness of qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 22*(2), 24-30.

Playko, M. (1991). Mentors for administrators: Support for the instructional leader. *Theory into Practice, 30*(2), 124-127.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5-23). Washington, DC: Falmer.

Portner, H. (2001). *Training mentors is not enough: Everything else schools and districts need to do.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Ragins, B., & Cotton, J. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes. *Journal of Organization Behavior, 20*, 493-509.

Ragins, B., Cotton, J., & Miller, J. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of types of mentor, quality of relationship and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal, 43*(6), 1177-1194.

Scott, S. (2004). *Fierce conversations: Achieving success at work and in life, one conversation at a time.* New York: Berkley Books.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization.* New York: Doubleday.

Sherman, R. & Webb, R. (Eds.). (1990). *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods.* London: Falmer.

Smith, D. (1991). Hermeneutic inquiry. The hermeneutic imagination and the pedagogic text. In Short, E. (Ed.) *Forms of curriculum inquiry* ,187-209. New York: State University of New York Press.

Smith, J. (1993). Hermeneutics and qualitative inquiry. In D. Flinders & G. Mills (Eds.), *Theory and concepts in qualitative research,* 183 – 200. New York: Teachers College Pres.

Spence, H. (2001). Fostering leadership: Mentoring to prepare future leaders. *CAP Journal, 9*(3), 26-28.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.

Stake, R. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln, (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stanfield, R. B. (2000). *The courage to lead.* Gabriola Island, BC: New Society.

Sullivan, C. G. (2004*). How to mentor in the midst of change.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Walker, A., & Stott, K. (1994). Mentoring programs for aspiring principals: Getting a solid start. *NASSP Bulletin, 78*(55), 72-77.

Weller, L. D., & Weller, S. J. (2002*). The assistant principal: Essentials for effective school leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Williams, E. J., Matthews, J., & Baugh, S. (2004). Developing a mentoring internship model for school leadership: Using legitimate peripheral participation. *Mentoring and Tutoring, 12*(1), 53-70.

Willis, H., & Dodgson, J. (1986). Mentoring of Canadian women in administration. *The Canadian Administrator, 25*(7), 1-6.

Wilmore, E. (1995). It's not easy being green: Mentoring for the first year principal. *NASSP Bulletin, 79*(57), 91-96.

Wilmore, E. L. (2002). *Principal leadership.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Yerkes, D., & Guaglianone, C. (1998). Where have all the high school administrators gone? *Thrust for Educational Leadership, 28*(2), 10-14.

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zachary, L. J. (2000). *The mentor's guide.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Zellner. L., Skirla, L., & Erlandson, D. (2001). The art of mentoring principals. *Connections, 3*, 2-5.

Zembylas, M. (2003). Emotions and teacher identity: A poststructural perspective. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 9*(3), 213-238.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION LETTER

Date

Dear_____:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta. I understand that you are and have been a member of an administrator mentoring team in the Plains School District for approximately eighteen months. Because of my interest in administrative mentoring, I am inviting you to participate in my research concerning this topic.
The purpose of my research is to examine the experiences of protégés within a mentoring relationship; therefore, I would appreciate the time to discuss this relationship with you. I would request three interviews that would be semi-structures with particular questions that I will propose but I will also be open to exploring other directions presented by you and your stories. The questions will serve to guide our discussions.

Each interview will be approximately 60 minutes and it will be scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for you. It will be audio-recorded and transcribed from which I will then write your experiences. The written description will be available for you to review and to decide if it accurately represents your experiences in the mentoring relationship. You may change, delete or add any information you deem necessary to present your true story. A transcriber will be employed but this individual will commit to a confidentiality agreement. At this stage no other individual except for you and I will have access to this information. All names and places will be changed so as to ensure anonymity. You are free to not respond to any question and also to withdraw from the study at any time.

This study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the information will only be used for educational purposes such as thesis preparation, educational papers and presentations.

If you have any questions regarding the process or the purpose of the research and your potential involvement, please call me at (780) 459-3114 or at home (780) 458-8121 or e-mail me at keaniem@spschools.org. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Maryanne Doherty at (780) 492-4952 or e-mail her at mdoherty@ualberta.ca. I look forward to working with you if you decide to participate. Thank you for your consideration of this research request.

Sincerely,

Marlene Keanie
Doctoral Student
University of Alberta

APPENDIX B: VOLUNTARY INVOLVEMENT/CONSENT FORM

University of Alberta
Department of Secondary Education
Experiencing Mentoring as a Protégé

I, _____, hereby consent to be included in the research study and consent to be interviewed and tape-recorded by Marlene Keanie. I also consent to observations during mentoring sessions with my mentor. I will also provide documentation to the researcher in the form of a journal, mentoring plan and evaluation forms of the mentoring plan.

I understand that:

- I may choose not to respond to any question.
- I may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
- My involvement in the study is voluntary. I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research.
- All information collected will be treated confidentially and will be seen by only the transcriber and my supervisory committee during the stages of collecting the data.
- The consent forms will be stored separately from the transcripts.
- All other information will be securely stored for a period of five years at which time it will be destroyed.
- All taped interviews will be erased immediately after they have been transcribed.
- This study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- The results of the research will be used for the research dissertation, and in presentations and written articles to other educators.

_____ _____
Print Name Signature

_____
Date Signed

For information concerning the completion of this form, please contact Marlene Keanie at (780) 459-3114 or at home (780) 458-8121 or through e-mail at keaniem@spschools.org
You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Maryanne Doherty at (780) 492-4952 or through e-mail at mdoherty@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX C: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT LETTER

Project title: **Experiences of Mentoring by School Administrators**

I, _____, the transcriber have been hired to transcribe the audio tapes from the interview sessions between the researcher, Marlene Keanie and the participants in this study.

I agree to:

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (disks, tapes, and transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher, Marlene Keanie.

2. keep all research information in any form (disks, tapes and transcripts) secure while they are in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (disks, tapes and transcripts) to the researcher, Marlene Keanie, when I have completed transcribing the tapes.

4. after consulting with the researcher, Marlene Keanie, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the researcher, Marlene Keanie. This includes any information stored on computer hard drive.

Transcriber:

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Researcher:

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT LETTER

September _____

Dear _____

Thank you again for your help with my study. Please find enclosed a copy of the transcript of our conversation. It is important that your thoughts and ideas are accurately represented in this study. When you have time, please read this transcript to ensure that it captures the tone, nature, and key ideas presented during the interview. If you fell that changes are necessary, please make these on the document. Upon completion, please contact me and I will arrange to pick up the edited version.

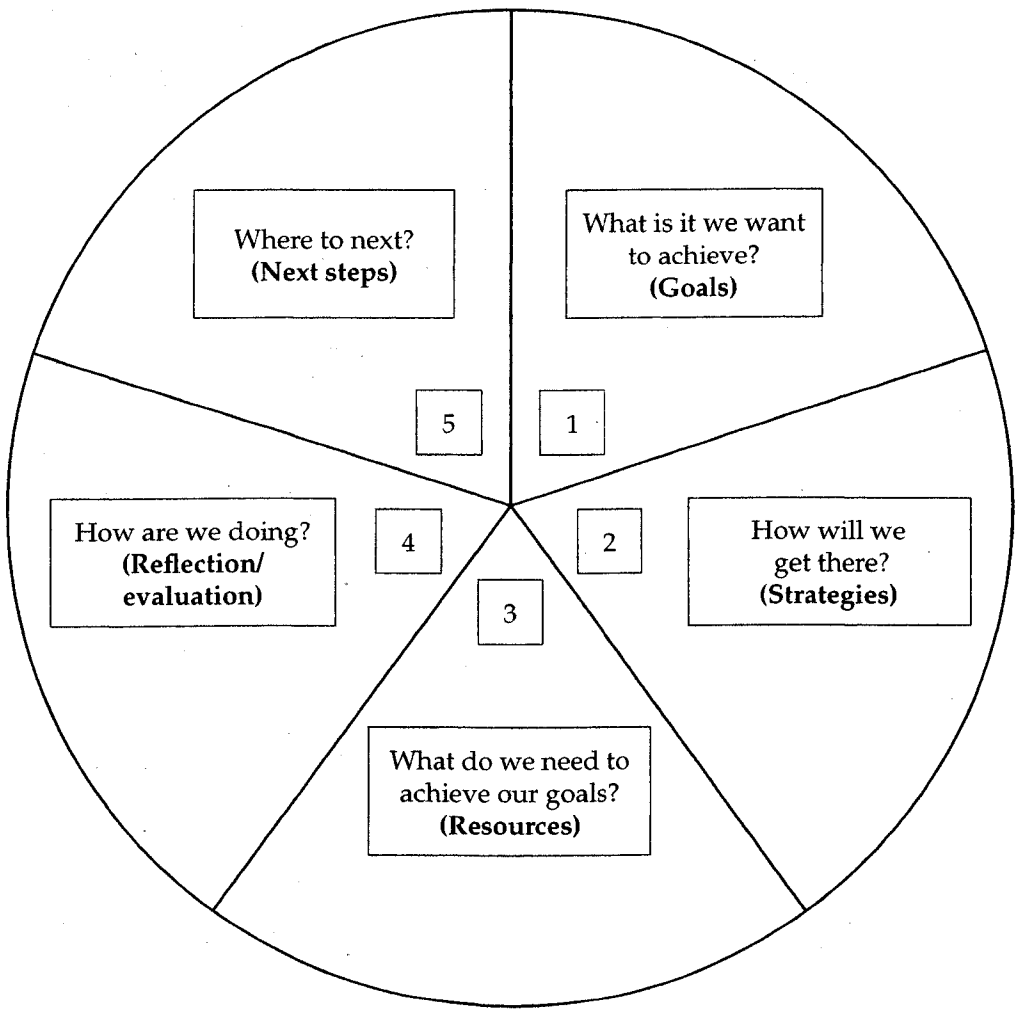
Once again, I truly appreciate your participation and thank you for your time and effort in assisting with this study.

Yours truly,

Marlene Keanie

APPENDIX E: PLANNING GUIDE A

Planning Guide



ATA Mentorship Handbook, p.26

APPENDIX F: PLANNING GUIDE B

Planning Guide

Goals

1. What do we want to achieve?

Strategies

2. How will we achieve our goals?

Resources

3. What do we need to achieve our goals?

Evaluation

4. How are we doing?

Next steps

5. Where to next?

ATA Mentorship Handbook, p.27

APPENDIX G: REFLECTION SHEET SAMPLE

Reflection Sheet Sample

In preparing goals for this school year, consider work undertaken in the previous year and the areas(s) in which you'd like to expand your knowledge, skills and expertise.

1. What did I/we accomplish last year as a result of our mentoring relationship?

2. What were the successes we shared/I experienced?

3. What were the challenges I/we confronted?

ATA Mentorship Handbook, p.32

APPENDIX H: REFLECTION SHEET SAMPLE (CONTINUED)

4. How can I/we build on the successes?

5. How can I/we deal with the challenges?

6. Where do I/we want to go next?

ATA Mentorship Handbook, p.33

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE CONVERSATION

Pre-Conversation Activity

Use colours to make a drawing that metaphorically represents how you experience mentoring.

OR

Draw two pictures that represent how you perceived your professional role as a teacher/administrator before you became involved in a mentoring relationship and now as you are in this mentoring relationship.

Questions

How long have you been an administrator?

Why did you choose to become a school administrator?

Tell me about your journey of becoming a school administrator.

What were your perceptions or understandings of the role of an administrator before you became one?

Have these perceptions changed now that you are an administrator? If yes, how?

How were you prepared for the responsibilities of your role?

What surprised you about being an administrator?

What was or is the most satisfying part of being an administrator?

Tell me about the work you do as an administrator?

How were you prepared to take on this role?

How did you become involved in mentoring?

How were you matched with your mentor?

Tell me about your mentoring relationship.

How has mentoring affected your experiences as an administrator?

In your mentoring relationship, what has been of most benefit to you?

What is the most rewarding part of being in a mentoring relationship?

What is the most difficult part of being in a mentoring relationship?

What are some of the things you have benefited from in this relationship?

If you could pick one thing you have not experienced but would like to experience in your mentoring relationship, what would it be?

If you could share your ideas of mentoring with others who are not in a mentorship program, what would you tell them?