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University of Alberta

Supporting Rural Alberta Beginning Teachers: Easing the Trial by Fire

by

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

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Dedicated to the individuals with whom I have had great conversations.

Abstract

This qualitative study illustrates successful rural Alberta beginning teacher induction. Individual profiles present the beginning teachers' backgrounds and motivations. Several conceptual themes emerge in the data derived from conversational interviews.

The findings reveal support factors found within the five rural school communities. An induction framework organizes the factors within roles and responsibilities of beginning teachers and two supportive groups of induction players. The framework begins in the literature review, continues through the discussion, and develops further in the recommendations. Four factors specific to rural inductions are highlighted.

The recommendations offer strategies such as: being pre-emptive with purposeful recruitment, being informed of successful practices, being intentional with supporting and building induction relationships, being interactive and collaborative, and being focused on growth. The reflections share the excitement of a researcher that found a story to tell and a picture to illustrate. Further research questions keep alive the quest for understanding successful inductions.

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Chapter 1

Overview of the Study

From the Latin "inducere," meaning to lead in, induction suggests that teachers will be led into, rather than thrown into, teaching.

Alberta Learning, 2001

While many beginning teachers are successful, some are not. Beginning to teach is not easy, and beginning to teach in rural Alberta has its own set of trials. Beginning teachers often move away from their families to teach in rural schools. They not only have to handle being a beginning teacher, but they must also contend with distance and isolation, living in a "fishbowl" environment, and often having less support, resources, and opportunities for professional development than are available to their urban colleagues.

When every problem seems like their mistake, when they feel alone and forgotten, when their assignments are overwhelming, when they perceive themselves to be unsuccessful, or when they sense they are without support, their self-esteem decreases and they become disheartened and anxious. The distressing experience crushes their perceptions of themselves as teachers and taints their reputations. With their teaching abilities compromised and their efficacy lessened, they begin to seriously doubt their choice of careers (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Some beginning teachers give up and choose to leave the profession; others do not receive a continuing teaching contract and have no choice but to leave. In short, their teaching careers end. Their defeat affects many people; it is distressing for them, and their distress negatively affects their students, colleagues, families, and friends.

Besides the personal costs of early career attrition, organizational costs are involved. School authorities spend time and money recruiting and inducting beginning teachers. By understanding and implementing successful teacher induction strategies, school authorities will use their limited resources more effectively and keep their well-qualified beginning teachers (Johnson, Birkeland, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Peske, 2001; O'Reilly, 2001; Perrone, 2003; Samier, 2000; Segal, 2000).

Beginning teachers need not succumb to unacceptable induction methods. Those involved in beginning teacher induction have opportunities to explore and implement successful induction strategies. School communities can lead beginning teachers more successfully into the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to build a body of knowledge regarding induction of beginning teachers in rural Alberta. The study briefly explored the beginning teachers' motivations for becoming teachers and their preparation for teaching to better understand their experiences as beginning teachers. The beginning teachers' stories, eventually organized into themes, provided insight into some of the formal, informal, and incidental supports found within their schools during their inductions.

Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study was: What factors support rural Alberta beginning teachers in the first few years of teaching? Answers to the following questions helped to address the main question:

1. What backgrounds do beginning teachers bring to the profession?
2. What motivates beginning teachers to want to teach?

3. What do beginning teachers experience during their first year?

Researcher's Background

Since I was in first grade, I desired to teach children in a school setting. My desire took flight, after working for ten years in several roles with Canada Post, when I enrolled in the Elementary Education program at the University of Alberta. I experienced two styles of inductions. My first interim contract, by the end, was three months in length. The second induction led me, over time, through a variety of classroom assignments (different subjects, grades, schools), including the principalships of two small, rural schools, and the coordination of divisional projects. My experiences, both negative and positive, drive my interest in studying induction supports for beginning teachers.

Researcher's Beliefs

I conducted this study with the awareness that the following beliefs might affect the findings:

1. Beginning teachers, after successfully completing their course work and pre-service teaching experiences of their undergraduate programs, should be well-prepared to realize success given supportive first-year teaching experiences.
2. Beginning teachers who receive adequate support within their school communities during their first years should be well-prepared to enjoy long and rewarding careers as teachers.
3. Factors within school authorities, public schools, and communities contribute to the successful beginning teacher inductions.

I revisit these beliefs in the method section addressing trustworthiness and limitations. Readers should keep these beliefs in mind when considering the discussion of

the findings and the subsequent reflections and recommendations.

Definitions

The following definitions help to ensure that readers understand the use of the respective terms as I intended:

1. Rural Alberta Public School. A rural Alberta public school exists at least fifteen kilometres outside of a town or city having a population of 10,000 or more people, and it belongs to a public school authority.
2. Rural Beginning Teacher. A beginning teacher possesses an Alberta Interim Professional Teaching Certificate and is completing the first full year of full-time teaching employment in a rural Alberta public school.
3. Success. A beginning teacher is successful upon receipt of a continuous contract within the same school authority or a positive referral that assists in receiving a contract with another school authority.
4. Induction. The experience of beginning to teach in a public school from the entrance to the profession in an employment situation to the end of the first full year of full-time teaching.

Promises of the Study

The study promises to inform various interest groups involved in teacher induction: pre-service teachers, beginning teachers, experienced teachers, principals, parents, central office administration, school board members, and local and provincial teacher organizations. The study will present pre-service teachers with a more clear understanding of beginning teacher induction in rural Alberta through the discussion of the experiences of selected beginning teachers. They will have an additional opportunity

to form their expectations realistically, and prepare themselves accordingly.

Beginning teachers will have access to stories of successful inductions that will inspire them to take initiative and responsibility for their individual inductions. Experienced teachers will respond to a professional obligation to their new colleagues, will have a greater understanding of their new colleagues' needs, and will be equipped to play a major role in their induction to the profession. The study will challenge principals to be active and responsible educational leaders in the induction of the beginning teachers they recruit and take into service. Parents will be aware of their indispensable role in supporting beginning teachers through the tough professional induction. Central office administration and school board members will better understand the need for clear and definite support through policies and other procedural guidelines. Provincial and local professional teacher organizations will have another set of data to support their induction efforts. Besides contributing to an understanding of teacher induction, the study will produce an increased level of awareness and an increased level of participation in the support of beginning teachers. Another outcome of the study is the opportunity for further research given a current perspective.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis continues in Chapter 2 with an exploration of current induction literature in Education and Business and the initial presentation of an induction framework highlighting the players and their respective roles and responsibilities. Chapter 3 describes the design of the study: sample, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, limitations, delimitations, and significance. Chapter 4 shares the beginning teachers' personal backgrounds, their professional preparations for teaching,

and their individual experiences as first-year rural teachers. Chapter 5 organized the findings of the interviews and subsequent conversations into emergent themes of passion, emotion, communication, constant learning, supervision and evaluation, professional development, informal support, balance between personal and professional life, and self-satisfaction. Chapter 6 discusses induction support factors from the viewpoint of the five beginning teachers in light of the literature review and continues to develop the framework. Chapter 7 concludes the study with my conclusions, recommendations (including an addition to the framework), and reflections.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

This chapter reviews induction concepts found in Business and Education literature. The chapter consists of three parts. The first part of the literature review sets the stage and explores the reason for concern that drove the study. It begins with an examination of the profession's treatment of its beginning teachers followed by a brief discussion of the extent and causes, perceived and otherwise, of early career teacher attrition. It ends with a brief discussion of the challenges, fears, and needs of beginning teachers.

The second part of the chapter describes the reviewed literature concerning factors of successful induction activities and programs. It includes induction factors that are relevant to new employees in general and beginning teachers specifically. The chapter reviews a variety of factors that authors assert enhance induction practices and help to overcome common induction problems.

Finally, the third part of the chapter presents a synthesis within a conceptual framework of roles and responsibilities of key induction players. The framework provides a basis for understanding the induction factors found in the stories of the five beginning teachers.

The Profession's Treatment of Beginning Teachers

The teaching profession is known for giving difficult challenges and great responsibilities to its least experienced people, beginning teachers who have very limited knowledge, strategies and skills (Zepeda & Mayers, 2001). The lack of induction support compromises teaching ability, lessens efficacy, and leads to doubt of career choice

(Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Danielson (1999) described the way the profession treats beginning teachers as an act of "professional hazing." Halford (1998) bluntly cited an expression used by other observers of educational practices; she referred to education as "the profession that eats its young."

Early Career Attrition

Well-documented reports of beginning teachers leaving the profession early in their careers including common reasons for the departure appear in several reports. From their study of teachers in the southern United States, Marlow and Inman (1997) reported a resignation rate of up to 40 percent during the first two years. Danielson (1999) noted some researchers reported the attrition rate in isolated rural areas might be as high as 50%. Nationally, the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF) reported a high drop-out rate among teachers within their first five years of teaching, suggesting that between one-quarter and one-third of beginning teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Worklife Report, 2001). In our province, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) stated that the departure rate for beginning teachers approaches one-third by the end of the first three years of teaching (ATA News, 2000). Le Maistre (2000) cited findings that showed a higher rate of attrition during the first year than any other year, and Moench (2002) added that the number of frustrated beginning teachers in Alberta is increasing. At the least, the percentage of teachers in Alberta that leave the profession within the first five years seems to exceed the national percentage, which is between 25 and 30 percent (ATA News, 2001).

Challenges Facing Beginning Teachers

The literature supports the idea that poor induction of beginning teachers hinders

retention and fuels high early career teacher attrition. The CTF stated several reasons for teacher attrition including burnout and a lack of support services (Worklife Report, 2001). Current practice forces beginning teachers to enter the profession "running at full speed" instead of being able to concentrate on meeting their survival needs. They often receive teaching assignments not wanted by other teachers, inherit students with serious behavioural and learning problems, and naively accept difficult extra-curricular assignments (Johnson, 2001). The unequal match between the limited experience of a beginning teacher and the reality of most classroom assignments creates problems for beginning teachers and their students (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Added to the pressure is the issue of accountability and testing (Wilson and Ireton, 1997). Recent educational developments, such as the use of technology, further complicate an already complex profession (Marlow & Inman, 1997).

Beginning teachers face many challenges: classroom management and individual student differences in needs, ability and achievement (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002), assessment of learning, student motivation, and relationships with parents (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002), and administrative demands (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999). Beginning teachers often lack engagement in meaningful discussions, answers to their questions, and models of teaching and learning (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Beginning teachers experience feelings of isolation, frustration, and confusion as they adapt to a wide range of needs and ability levels of their students in the areas of instruction and discipline (Johnson, 2001; Stansbury, 2001). Beginning teachers often feel the pressures of being the change agents in a building and in a school system while having to conform to philosophies and methods that are contrary to what they

developed in their pre-service education programs (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999).

Fears of Beginning Teachers

Besides facing many challenges, beginning teachers experience many fears. In their study of the fears of beginning teachers, Wilson and Ireton (1997) included fears of: (a) the assignment of a mentor, (b) course assignments, (c) meeting with parents, (d) time utilization, (e) racial differences, (f) not being accepted, (g) evaluation, (h) personal inadequacy, (i) classroom management and discipline, (j) violence, (k) retaliation, (l) student learning, (m) paperwork, (n) testing, (o) technology, (p) drug abuse, (q) child abuse, and (r) student assessment. Brock and Grady (1998) put forth a similar list. It seems many beginning teachers have a challenging and fearful induction.

Needs of Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers have many needs, as they face their challenges and overcome their fears. Beginning teachers first need to survive, and then they can begin to attend to their students' learning (Halford, 1998). They need to develop their identities as professionals and to learn the culture of the school (Halford, 1998). They need to learn expected behaviours and rules (Johnson, Geroy, & Griego, 1999) and become familiar with the norms and values (Kleinman, Siegel, & Eckstein, 2001). They need to adjust to the workplace and the profession, deal with change, master the situation, overcome conflict, manage stress, and learn to communicate (Johnson et al., 1999). They must learn the applicable tasks and understand the goals and politics of their organizations (Kleinman et al., 2001).

Beginning teachers need socialization as they enter the profession. They need their concerns taken seriously (Johnson & Kardos, 2002) by well-trained and motivated

mentors (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001) who are accepting and respectful of new employees (Riordan, Weatherly, Vandenberg, & Self, 2001). Marlow and Inman (1997) stated beginning teachers need to feel valued by the whole school community. Beginning teachers seek a sense that they will make a difference in the lives of students, and that they belong to and are part of a cause (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999).

Beginning teachers require assistance with curriculum, and they benefit from collaboration in lesson planning (Johnson, Birkeland, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Peske, 2001). Beginning teachers desire to have experienced teachers visit their classrooms and provide feedback, to have opportunities to watch experienced teachers, and to receive their guidance (Johnson et al., 2001). They need role models (Riordan et al., 2001), and they require professional development at their schools (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Stansbury (2001) suggested beginning teachers need protection from volunteer overload and Johnson (2001) further recommended a lessened load and a decreased responsibility.

Overcoming Early Career Attrition

Regardless of the exact rate of teacher attrition in Alberta, or its causes, there is no doubt early career attrition occurs. Many recommendations appeared in literature. The CTF recommended improved beginning teacher support as one way to avoid early career teacher attrition (Worklife Report, 2001). Research suggested supporting and training beginning teachers in schools is the key to retaining staff (Johnson & Kardos, 2002), overcoming teacher shortages (Johnson et al., 2001) and reducing attrition (Perrone, 2003; Segal, 2000; Samier, 2000). O'Reilly (2001) concurred by specifying mentoring as

a method to reduce attrition. Halford (1998) recommended class assignments be given careful consideration for beginning teachers, a recommendation that paralleled the finding of Moench's (2002) study of promising induction programs. He recommended careful assignment of beginning teachers considering course type and load, students, and parents along with ongoing support and sharing of information. Heck and Wolcott (1997) highlighted the importance of socialization in the success of beginning teachers. Successful socialization helps them avoid social blunders (O'Reilly, 2001), and it creates shared knowledge derived through shared experience (Swap et al., 2001). Other possible conditions for overcoming early career attrition and promoting beginning teacher success include supportive peers, a willingness of colleagues to help, and support from administrators (Johnson, 2001).

Another study (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997) on teacher induction further suggested involving beginning teachers in many facets of the school community, not in a teaching role but as observers, learners, and guests. This involvement provides opportunities for beginning teachers to feel they are a part of the community while learning the culture without the added pressure of obligation and burdensome responsibility.

In Alberta, Alberta Education and the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) attempted to support beginning teachers by specifying standards of knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) specific to beginning teachers and by providing Beginning Teacher Conferences respectively (Moench, 2002). Superintendents recognized that professional development opportunities, induction supports, and mentorship programs were very effective retention strategies (Alberta Learning, 2003).

Responsibility for Growth

While a variety of people are involved in beginning teacher induction, the primary responsibility for growth in teacher induction must remain with the beginning teacher. Growth must be self-initiated (Rymer, 2002). As protégés, beginning teachers must have a clear understanding regarding their needs and their expectations (Field, 2001). They must take responsibility to plan their careers and to learn the skills of learning new skills (Johnson et al., 1999). They need to be encouraged to take initiative to seek support and to form networks (Lee, Dougherty, & Turban, 2000). They must learn to seek information and coaching (Sadri & Tran, 2002). They must ask for help and learn how to show they have qualities for success (Shaffer, Tallarica, & Walsh, 2000). They must be committed to their own inductions and focused on their own achievement. They must be creative, motivated, and self-generative (Samier, 2000).

Successful Induction and Mentoring Relationships

Experienced teachers have professional responsibility for their beginning members. Moench (2002) reported that the promising induction programs he studied included mentoring relationships, a process of experienced teachers nurturing beginning teachers. Mentoring relationships range from being very formal to occurring incidentally. Somewhere between the two points, semi-formal mentoring programs provide, at least, matching, support for an initial meeting, and an outline of protocol (Field, 2001).

Mentoring relationships are multifaceted and embedded within a culture of everyday working relationships (Johnson et al., 2001). Because mentoring relationships are often impossible to differentiate from other relationships, the concept lacks a clear and consistent definition in literature (Samier, 2000). Formal mentoring relationships

might be defined in part as an authentic relationship where a person that is more experienced, more mature, or more advanced having reached high levels of achievement is purposefully intent on intervening, supporting, and influencing the career of and providing protection for someone less experienced and less advanced (Samier, 2000).

Mentoring relationships focus on achieving the goals of the person mentored (Verdejo, 2002). They are active endeavours (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; Field, 2001). They are dynamic, and change or evolve (Alleman & Clarke, 2000). Successful mentoring relationships are often long-term (Garvey, 2004; Godshalk & Sosik, 2000). They are causal; they stimulate change and are "superordinate" to, and an outcome of, leadership, management, apprenticeship (contractual method of learning a trade), and coaching (enabling one to develop oneself) (Johnson et al., 1999). The relationships are often voluntary, but seen as obligatory on the part of the mentors (Billett, 2003). Mentoring relationships are interpersonal, with reciprocal and open communication (Sadri & Tran, 2002) and often occur naturally, informally, unplanned, and unstructured (Garvey, 2004). Mentoring relationships include encouragement, counseling, friendship, and teaching (Gariepy, 1999; Garvey, 1999; Moench, 2002).

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2002) suggest mentoring relationships serve different aspects of support, each aspect serving its own purpose, for beginning teachers. Mentoring relationships are opportunities for socialization (Hill & Grant, 2000; Johnson et al., 1999). They are developmental and enabling relationships (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002) that provide connectiveness (Johnson et al., 1999; Nemanick, 2000; Rymer, 2002) and association (Johnson et al., 1999; Rymer, 2002). They are grounded in equality and emotional-engagement (Rymer, 2002). They involve supportive networks (Field, 2001)

that provide enculturation (Garvey, 2004) and emotional support (Nemanick, 2000); ensure personal wellness (Billett, 2003; Garvey, 2004); and increase satisfaction (Hill & Gant, 2000).

Mentoring relationships provide opportunities for professional growth. They involve building knowledge, skills and attributes, and inspiring professional growth (Garvey, 2004); encouraging reflection (Garvey, 2004; Bokeno & Gantt, 2002); and improving teaching performance (Garvey, 2004; Hill & Gant, 2000). The relationships afford authentic dialogue and collaboration (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002; Rymer, 2002); increase perception of success (Hill & Gant, 2000); and assist with career development (Johnson et al., 1999). They allow constructive criticism (O'Reilly, 2001); provide advice and guidance (Billett, 2003); and teach norms, values, and routines (Swap et al., 2001). They are professional learning pursuits (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002) experienced through relational practice (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002; Rymer, 2002). They are relationships of mutual trust (Rymer, 2002 & Samier, 2000) and transformation (Samier, 2000) that stimulate learning (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002).

Benefits of Mentoring

The level of mentoring in the relationship determines the level of success in teacher induction (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; Ragins et al., 2000). Effective mentoring increases satisfaction, knowledge, and commitment; reduces uncertainty, stress, burnout and early career attrition; and fosters growth (Kleinman et al., 2001). Well-mentored employees are more able to overcome obstacles, be more productive, and are more loyal (Segal, 2000). They perform well (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; Poe, 2002; Swap et al., 2001), report high satisfaction (Blake-Beard, 2001; Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Kleinman et

al., 2001; Lee et al., 2000; O'Neill & Sankowsky, 2001; O'Reilly, 2001; Ragins et al., 2000; Shaffer et al., 2000), and experience successful socialization (Blake-Beard, 2001; Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Kleinman et al., 2001; O'Reilly, 2001). They gain new skills and develop self-confidence (Blake-Beard, 2001; Butyn, 2003). They build supportive relationships, understand roles, resolve conflict appropriately (Sadri & Tran, 2002), and communicate effectively (Samier, 2000). Mentored employees experience better integration; they have a less-difficult entry (Sadri & Tran, 2002; Samier, 2000).

Supports for Mentoring

Studies show successful mentoring requires several specific supports including clear objectives and sufficient budgets (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; adequate time (Poe, 2002; Swap et al., 2001), and procedural and policy support (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Samier, 2000). Mentoring requires continuity (Swap et al., 2001), commitment (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; Lee et al., 2000), and trust (Poe, 2002). It is essential that participants have many opportunities to interact (Pittenger & Heimann, 2000). Training for both mentors and protégés is necessary (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; Pittenger & Heimann, 2000; Poe, 2002). Participants must have a clear understanding of the culture and possess the necessary interpersonal skills (Pittenger & Heimann, 2000). The mentorship requires appropriate matching (Johnson et al., 2001; Poe, 2002) including self-matching (Swap et al., 2001), and it is necessary to match mentor with need (Field, 2001). Alignment with all induction initiatives is critical (Samier, 2000). Early identification, realistic expectations, cooperation with teacher associations, administrative coordination of efforts, and release time provide additional supportive conditions for mentoring (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

There must be an allowance for increasing independence, reciprocal exchanges, voluntary involvement, individual choice, and role modeling, and the mentor must have freedom and permission to be responsive (Samier, 2000). Not only must organizations provide support for mentoring, but also they must protect the relationship from destructive organizational variables (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Samier, 2000).

Limitations of Formal Mentoring Programs

While formal mentoring is becoming more common, there are concerns. Formal mentoring is not without cost to a school division or to those involved. Challenges for such programs include selecting and developing mentors, scheduling and supporting release time, balancing support and evaluation, and providing adequate resources (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Formal mentoring is often specific to short-term goals and current situations (Ragins et al., 2000). A coordinator matches partners and creates a contract between the two people over a specified amount of time, usually short-term (Blake-Beard, 2001). Formal mentoring relationships have externally and initially set goals, pre-determined number of meetings, and seems to consist of only the first and third of the four stages of mentoring referred to by Johnson et al. (1999) and Samier (2000): initiation and separation (Blake-Beard, 2001). The second stage of cultivation and development and the final stage, a time of redefinition (Johnson et al., 1999; Samier, 2000), usually do not occur. The mentor's motivation focuses on organizational factors (Blake-Beard, 2001). The motivation may decrease quickly if dedication is not reciprocal (Lee et al., 2000). It seems that improper implementation of mentoring may be detrimental to beginning teachers and become just another burden for them to bear. Overall, formal mentoring may

be no more beneficial than other supportive roles (Samier, 2000).

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring seems to be more beneficial than formal programs (Lee et al., 2000; Nemanick, 2000; O'Neill & Sankowsky, 2001). Informal mentoring relationships are voluntary (Blake-Beard, 2001; Field, 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Nemanick, 2000). Informal mentoring relationships consist of strong relationships (Nemanick, 2000) based on mutuality (Nemanick, 2000; O'Reilly, 2001; Ragins et al., 2000) and similarities (Blake-Beard, 2001; Field, 2001; Lee et al., 2000), and focused on developmental needs (Ragins et al., 2000). Mentors in informal mentoring relationships are often more willing to devote energy and their protégés more willing to learn (Lee et al., 2000). Both mentors and protégés identify with each other (Blake-Beard, 2001; Nemanick, 2000). The mentor wants to support, and the protégé wants to imitate (Blake-Beard, 2001). The mentorship partners are comfortable with each other (Blake-Beard, 2001).

Time does not limit informal mentoring relationships, they may last several years (Blake-Beard, 2001; Field, 2001; Nemanick, 2000; Shaffer et al., 2000). They spontaneously develop (O'Reilly, 2001), and the goals, often long-term (Ragins et al., 2000), evolve as needed (Blake-Beard, 2001; Field, 2001). The informal mentorship progresses through all four stages mentioned earlier in this review: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Blake-Beard, 2001; Johnson et al., 1999).

The general trend seems to be that protégés perceive that the benefits of informal mentoring relationships are great (Blake-Beard, 2001). However, informal mentoring may not be adequate in and of itself. One drawback of informal mentoring is the extended period involved, and one weakness is the dependence on chance (O'Reilly, 2001).

Multiple Sources of Mentoring

Beginning teachers require more support than a lone principal or a formal mentor can offer, although Zepeda and Mayers (2001) reported that helpful supports involve the participation of principals. Other valuable mentors include the beginning teacher's colleagues. Instead of a single formal mentorship for beginning teachers, numerous relationships with a range of mentors of many backgrounds are beneficial (Blake-Beard, 2001; Rymer, 2002).

Principals. Principals foster professional collaboration (Edwards, Green, & Lyons, 2002; Johnson et al., 2001) and keep the focus on student learning (Edwards et al., 2002). Beginning teachers, studied by Brock and Grady (1998), suggested they need principals to explain their philosophies, expectations, and ideas as to what good teaching involves. Beginning teachers especially need clear and realistic improvement expectations (Marlow & Inman, 1997). They see communication with the principal as being important and want meeting times and classroom visits to be scheduled, and they desire affirmation and feedback (Brock & Grady, 1998). Beginning teachers feel principals are central to successful induction. Marlow and Inman (1997) found that supportive administrators provide a balance between granting autonomy to their beginning teachers in the use of new ideas as a basis for learning how to teach and encouraging assimilation within the school context.

Teacher Colleagues. In addition to the support of principals, Zepeda and Mayers (2001) reported that helpful supports involve the participation of other teacher colleagues. Marlow and Inman (1997) reported that beginning teachers have little basis for judging ideologies and solving problems and need the assistance of colleagues who are willing to

share ideas and help them solve their problems. Schools with successfully integrated cultures contain continuous interaction between teachers of differing levels of experience (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Promising induction programs included mentorship as a collective responsibility of staff (Moench, 2002).

Besides support at work, other sources within professional associations and in personal pursuits are necessary (Field, 2001) as are relationships with others of any age (Johnson et al., 1999). The pool of mentors is more important than the design of the program (Ragins et al., 2000). Greater diversity creates powerful networks (Rymer, 2002).

Beginning Teacher Induction

After reviewing several international practices that contribute to successful teacher induction, Moench (2002) recommended using the time and effort historically spent on the administration of beginning teacher assessment to adequately induct beginning teachers and, in turn, help the teacher to be successful. Of the successful induction programs reviewed in the study, one program earmarked twenty percent of new teachers' time and cost for induction activities, another program included time for orientation at the beginning of the year and again during the second month with continuous ongoing support at the school, and the third program included inter-class activities and the sharing of advice (Moench, 2002).

Successful induction depends on the provision of conditions that are optimal for the development of mentoring relationships. Since mentoring relationships develop from the interaction of two people, time is a necessary ingredient along with frequent (almost daily) opportunities for interaction and open communication (Johnson et al., 2001;

Samier, 2000). Beginning teachers must have many opportunities for interaction and collaboration with a variety of experienced teachers (Johnson et al., 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2002).

Therefore, the focus must be on the development of the adult, not the career, and the participants must have the freedom to choose goals and strategies (Samier, 2000). The learner needs to receive feedback focused on the task, not on the person, to learn well (Swap et al., 2001). Beginning teachers need to construct their own professional reality; they need to question, argue and explore (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002). Real hands-on experiences build expertise; memorable experiences create significant learning (Swap et al., 2001). Induction must be a shared activity (Johnson et al., 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Beginning teachers require shared experiences necessary to transform information into knowledge and they need assistance with metacognition (Swap et al., 2001).

Synthesis

To create a foundation to discuss beginning teacher induction based on the findings of this study, this synthesis provides an overview of the factors of successful induction followed by a framework incorporating the induction factors within the roles and responsibilities of the key induction players. The literature reviewed did not clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of particular players; thus, the citations in the following framework give reference to the factors as I have differentiated between the various players.

Successful induction relies on successful relationships. Successful induction relationships are diverse. They are purposeful (Samier, 2000), embedded (Johnson et al., 2001), ongoing (Moench, 2002), and voluntary (Samier, 2000; Billett, 2003). They are

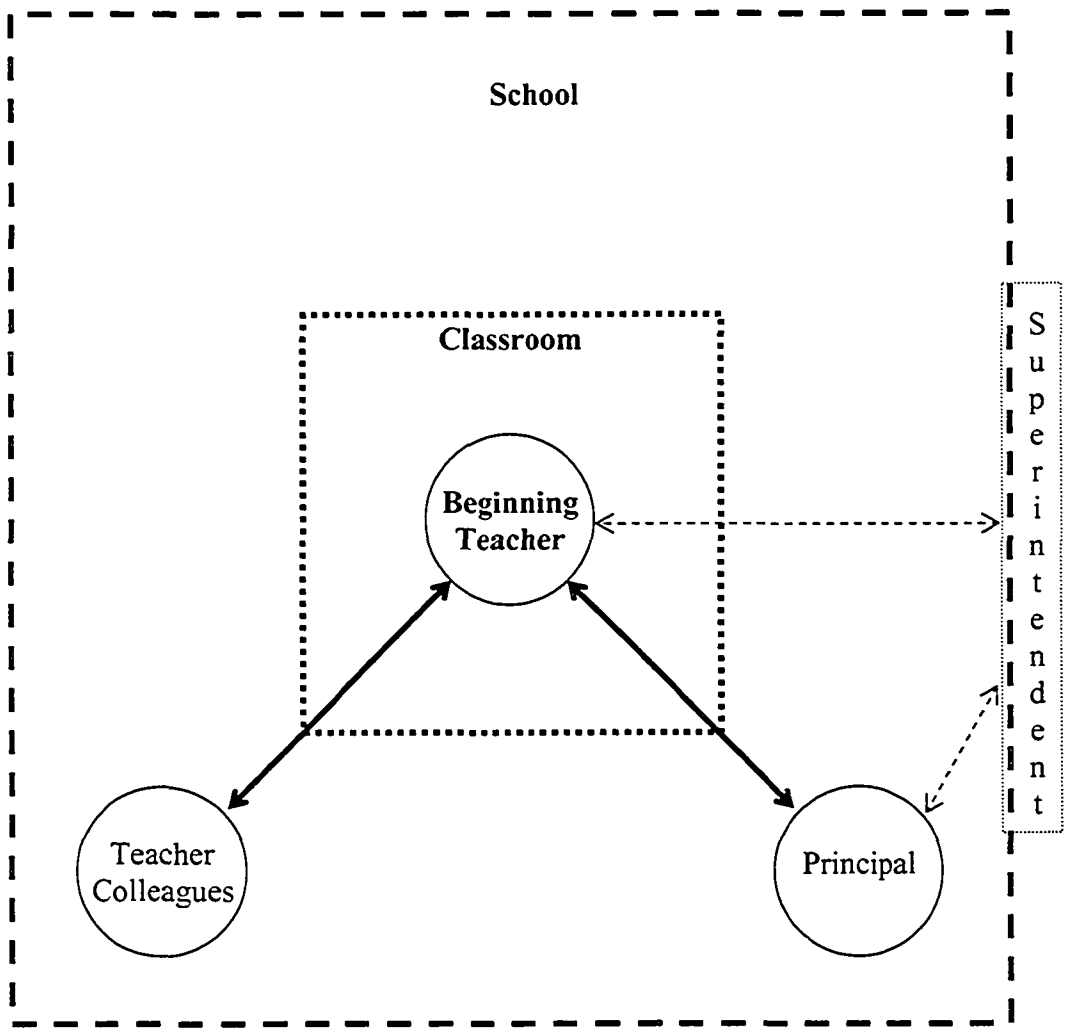
not merely limited to one formal mentorship assignment (Blake-Beard, 2001; Lee et al., 2000: Nemaniuk, 2000; O'Neill & Sankowsky, 2001; Rymer, 2002). They are dependent on continuous interactions between beginning teachers and members of the school community. They consist of strong, long-lasting, growth-oriented relationships providing intervention, training, support, encouragement, and protection. The focus of successful inductions is on the beginning teacher, not the career; and on the relationships, not the program.

Although the members of the whole school community involve themselves in the successful inductions of the teaching profession's newest members, three key players emerge, beginning teachers, principals, and teacher colleagues (see Figure 1). The superintendent also has a role, but it is much less active.

In successful inductions, beginning teachers center themselves in the induction process and take initiative for seeking support and building relationships (Johnson et al., 1999; Lee et al., 2000; Rymer, 2002; Samier, 2000). Their central locations enable them to form mentoring relationships with other players within the school community, especially with the principal and their teacher colleagues. Principals and teacher colleagues share the responsibility; they engage in induction relationships with beginning teachers and fulfill important roles.

Factors within the Role and Responsibilities of the Beginning Teacher. In successful inductions, beginning teachers are committed to their inductions. They take responsibility for their careers and their professional growth (Johnson et al., 1999; Rymer, 2002; Samier, 2000). They actively endeavour to assess their needs and define their expectations (Field, 2001). They learn how to build new knowledge, skills, and

Figure 1. Three Key Players in Beginning Teacher Induction



attributes (Garvey, 2004; Johnson et al. 1999), how to seek information (Sadri & Tran, 2002), and how to show their successful qualities (Schaffer et al., 2000). They ask for help (Shaffer et al.), and they actively seek supportive relationships and networks (Lee et al., 2000; Schaffer et al., 2000). They take care when accepting extra-curricular assignments (Johnson, 2001; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997). They are motivated to succeed (Samier, 2000).

Factors within the Role and Responsibilities of Experienced Teachers. In successful inductions, experienced teachers within the school feel an obligation to mentor the beginning teachers (Billett, 2003). They accept, respect, and support beginning teachers in their socialization processes (Blake-Beard, 2001; Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Heck & Wolcott, 1997; Hill & Grant, 2000; Johnson et al., 1999; Kleinman et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2000; O'Neill & Sankowsky, 2001; O'Reilly, 2001; Swap et al., 2001). They help beginning teachers develop their professional identities (Halford, 1998). They help them make a thorough adjustment to the school and the profession (Johnson et al., 1999). They explain the culture of their schools (Halford, 1998) including the norms and values, (Kleinman et al., 2001), rules (Johnson et al., 1999), and politics (Kleinman et al., 2001) along with the inherently acceptable behaviours (Johnson et al., 1999). They inform them of their organization's goals (Kleinman et al., 2001). They help them deal with change, conflict, and stress (Johnson et al., 1999).

Experienced teachers support beginning teachers with strategies designed to help them meet their students' learning, behavioural, and motivation needs and personal differences (Halford, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Moench, 2002). They provide assistance with curriculum and collaborate with lesson planning (Johnson et al., 2001). Experienced teachers visit the beginning teachers' classrooms and provide feedback, and they invite beginning teachers to visit their classrooms as observers (Johnson et al., 2001). They provide support for issues of accountability and testing (Wilson and Ireton, 1997), and assessment of learning (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002).

Experienced teachers ensure they address and help to alleviate feelings of isolation, frustration, confusion, and personal inadequacy (Johnson, 2001; Stansbury,

2001). They treat the beginning teachers' concerns seriously (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). They provide support to help beginning teachers as they learn how to relate to parents, and they protect them from harmful experiences with parents (Halford, 1998; Moench, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). They provide beginning teachers with assistance for dealing with issues of violence, drug or child abuse, and discrimination (Wilson and Ireton, 1997). They prevent beginning teacher overload resulting from administrative demands (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999) and burdensome extra-curricular assignments (Johnson, 2001; (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997).

Experienced teachers take responsibility for ensuring beginning teachers have frequent and ample opportunities to engage in meaningful professional development, especially at their schools (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). They include beginning teachers as partners in dialogue and ensure they have adequate and timely answers to their questions (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). They purposefully expose them to superior models of teaching and learning (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Riordan et al., 2001; Samier, 2000). They readily adapt their dated philosophies and methods as they encourage beginning teachers to rightfully be change agents within the school as they bring new practices based on current research (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999).

Factors within the Role and Responsibilities of the Principal. In successful inductions, beginning teachers perceive principals to be the vital link to the success of their induction. Principals have the authority and position to ensure initiation of mentoring relationships (Field, 2001), including mentor-protégé matching (Johnson et al., 2001; Poe, 2002), and to garner support for the beginning teacher at the school and within the community (Marlow & Inman, 1997). Principals provide policy and procedural

support for the induction of beginning teachers (Field, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Samier, 2000). They clarify induction objectives and ensure adequate resources including financial support (Alleman & Clarke, 2000) adequate time (Poe, 2002; Swap et al., 2001). Principals involved in successful inductions provide a balance between granting a level of autonomy to the beginning teachers and encouraging assimilation within the school community (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997). They create opportunities for beginning teachers to be involved in the school community as observers, learners and guests without burdening them with obligation and responsibility (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997).

Principals are in positions to provide opportunities, including release time (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002), for interaction; to ensure continuity (Swap et al., 2001) and commitment (Alleman & Clarke, 2000; Lee et al., 2000); to build trust (Poe, 2002) and to protect mentoring relationships from destructive organizational variables (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Samier, 2000). They ensure alignment with all induction activities (Samier, 2000). They create assignments that match the beginning teachers' limited experience based on the beginning teacher's abilities, knowledge, strategies, and skills; the course type; students' instructional and behavioural needs; and attributes of students' parents (Field, 2001; Halford, 1998; Moench, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). They assist with discipline and oversee instruction and learning (Johnson, 2001; Stansbury, 2001; Wilson and Ireton, 1997). They create flexibility in their schedules to enable visits to the beginning teachers' classrooms, and they affirm the beginning teachers' practices and provide feedback (Brock & Grady, 1998). They carefully delineate between induction assistance and evaluation. As instructional leaders, principals offer unique perspectives. They share their global philosophies (Brock & Grady, 1998),

overarching expectations (Marlow & Inman, 1997), and visions of what successful teaching and learning entails (Brock & Grady, 1998).

Adding to the Research Base

The research reviewed here provides numerous factors for successful beginning teacher inductions as arranged in the framework of appropriate roles and responsibilities. While there is much from this literature review applicable to the situation in rural Alberta schools, specific research addressing how rural Alberta school communities support beginning teachers during their induction seems to be limited.

This study attempts to continue the journey by examining the experiences of five beginning teachers in east-central, rural Alberta public schools. The main question asked in this study is: What factors support rural Alberta beginning teachers in the first few years of teaching? The findings within the emerging themes of the study and the factors within the framework of roles and responsibilities will add to the understanding of beginning teacher induction within rural Alberta schools.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Berg (2001) noted, "The purpose of research is to discover answers to questions through the application of systematic procedures" (p. 6). The purpose of this chapter is to describe the study and its procedures.

Type of Study

I chose a qualitative method for this study. I wanted to understand the experiences of five beginning teachers through their stories. I was seeking to appreciate the concept of beginning teacher induction from the perspective of lived experiences. I wanted to study their responses along with recent literature. I was looking for common themes to develop a framework that school authorities might utilize to help induct beginning teachers more successfully. I anticipated presenting a foundation for further research of the concept. Qualitative research methods seemed best suited for such study.

I chose and designed my study with Berg's definitions for quality and qualitative research in mind:

> Quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing – its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things (2001, p. 3).

Such qualitative research aligned with my intent of drawing on the responses of the five teachers participating in semi-structured interviews to study their induction to teaching in rural Alberta schools. The interview data informed qualitative descriptions of the inductions of the five beginning teachers. The resulting descriptions consisted of beginning teacher profiles and themes, which I related to beginning teacher induction in

rural Alberta schools.

The Study

The qualitative study originated out of my quest to understand how beginning teachers are supported in rural Alberta schools, to understand the needs of beginning teachers, to conceptualize successful beginning teacher induction, and to propose recommendations for those involved in induction in rural Alberta schools. I continued to tune my research problem and method during my graduate research courses. Eventually, I received approval to conduct the study.

The first step in the process was to create and pilot interview questions. Tricia's interview served as a pilot for the subsequent interviews. The pilot study enabled me to test the study's design for weaknesses and problems and to determine improvements to strengthen its credibility. It gave me an opportunity to strengthen my ability to interview and to practice my skills of analyzing the resulting data.

I had initially planned to strictly follow my interview schedule, asking a predetermined set of questions in a particular order, but the pilot interview was more like a purposeful conversation between two people. I learned to avoid writing notes as much as possible and to concentrate on the oral exchange instead. I revised the interview schedule by deleting many throwaway and extra questions. I allowed subsequent interviews to proceed similarly, in the same conversational style, to the pilot interview using the revised interview schedule (see Appendix A) as a guide only. As the conversation proceeded within each interview, I checked the schedule to ensure the beginning teachers provided answers to my questions. Otherwise, the conversation proceeded smoothly on its own without too many interruptions or sudden changes of

direction.

Sample

The target population of this study consisted of teachers who realized success as beginning teachers in rural Alberta public schools, located at least fifteen kilometres outside of a town or city having a population of 10,000 or more people, and who were finishing their first full year of full-time teaching. The accessible population of this study, for my convenience, included beginning teachers in four east-central Alberta rural school districts. The sample included three female teachers and two male teachers. Four teachers taught in K-12 schools, and one teacher taught in a K – 9 school. Collectively, the teachers had taught at all grade levels.

At my request, my superintendent sent letters of support for this study to several neighboring rural school superintendents. I made contact with the superintendents and asked them to nominate first-year teachers who were representative of successful beginning teachers in rural Alberta public schools. In these cases, the superintendents used their own criteria for determining success, using information from their informal and formal observations and principals' evaluations and reports. To mark the success of each nominee, the superintendents informed me that they had awarded each nominee a continuous contract within their respective divisions beginning in the forthcoming year. The superintendents provided me with names and contact information for each of their nominees. I extended an invitation to the nominees to participate, to which each nominee replied affirmatively. Each nominee was a graduate from an Education program at an Alberta university.

Data Collection

The data collected in this study centre on the personal perspectives of five successful beginning teachers as gathered through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided me with opportunities to engage in conversations with the beginning teachers using the interview schedule as a guide. The data reflected the teachers' experiences and perceptions of their induction to teaching.

Approaching the Participants

Before the interviews took place, I presented a letter of introduction (see Appendix B) to each participant. At each interview, I explained the process of the study. I shared my approved Ethics Review application and explained my compliance with the ethical standard of the University of Alberta (see Appendix C). I informed the beginning teachers of the conditions of their participation in the research and explained informed consent. The beginning teachers were satisfied with the process and expressed no concerns with their safety (see Appendix D). They offered their signed consents to take part in the study.

Developing the Interview Schedule

I developed the interview questions from my initial literature review, from my experiences, and from discussions with colleagues who were involved in beginning teacher induction. After the pilot interview, I revised the interview schedule to allow more time for incidental probing as each interview progressed. The interview schedule included several standardized questions, and it listed probing questions to explore items of interest or items that I had not anticipated asking.

The Interviews and Subsequent Communication

Because of the pilot interview, I intentionally paced the subsequent interviews to allow more time for sharing of stories. The stories shared by the interviewees provided more insight than did some of the answers to the questions in the schedule. The one hour, semi-structured taped interviews took place in person at the teachers' respective schools. Three beginning teachers informed me that their superintendents had forwarded the interview schedule before my visit. The interview strategy provided an opportunity to not only answer the questions, but to explore and clarify reasons for the responses and add other information that might be pertinent in understanding the complexity of the context. Subsequent and ongoing communication occurred by e-mail.

Data Analysis

I used a constant comparative method of data analysis in this study, repeatedly comparing and revising until satisfactory closure is achieved (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). I transcribed the interview within the pilot study and about half of the following interview, and then I hired a transcriber to complete the transcribing process. After the transcriptions were completed, I reviewed the taped interviews and edited the transcriptions for accuracy. I also examined the few notes I made during the interview and the thoughts I recorded afterward for additional insight.

I constructed a profile for each beginning teacher. The first part of the profile introduces the beginning teacher. The second part of the profile describes the beginning teacher's initial desire to teach. The second part of the profile explains the academic and personal preparation for entrance to an Education program. The third part of the profile focuses on their program courses and pre-service teaching. Finally, the fourth part

highlights their first year of teaching.

I organized the data describing the beginning teachers' first-year experiences in themes. Initially, I tried to use the themes developed in the pilot study for categorizing the data from the remaining transcripts. However, when I analyzed the transcripts from all five interviews, some pilot study themes vanished, and other themes appeared. The five transcripts collectively provided much more insight than did any one transcript in isolation. In the end the themes differed from those in the pilot study. The final themes seemed to reflect my experience, the literature review, and the interview data.

I determined my findings using mostly an inductive process. Berg (2001) suggests, "In order to present the perceptions of others (the producers of messages) in the most forthright manner, a greater reliance upon induction is necessary" (p. 246). Of course, deduction was involved too. I relied on my experiences and literature review to make sense of the data.

I categorized the data from the transcripts according to emergent themes. I also incorporated the remaining data in the transcript along with field notes and reflective journal notes with the data from the transcripts. Finally, I asked the beginning teachers to comment on, add to, or delete from my analyses of their stories.

The profiles are a collaborative accomplishment. I wrote each profile based on information provided in each respective beginning teacher's story. Then, I shared the profiles with the respective beginning teachers and included their feedback.

Trustworthiness

Several factors were included to help provide credibility within this study. The study included only reputationally successful beginning teachers. I requested accurate

responses and asked probing questions during the interview. Their answers seemed both forthright and genuine. They were able to adequately share their insights regarding their successes. I conducted a subjectivity audit (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996), keeping note of situations that aroused strong positive or negative feelings to understand how I influenced the inquiry and outcome. I remained cognizant of my own beliefs, questioning my findings with them in mind. Having the beginning teachers involved in member checking enhanced the accuracy and completeness of the information, the subsequent communications, and the interpretations of the data into themes.

As I reflected on the data, I considered whether the findings might be similar to what one might find from other beginning teachers within the accessible population or in other rural areas of Alberta. The beginning teachers reported that my interpretations supported their perceptions of what helped to make their first-year teaching experiences a success and what supports would have made their first-year experiences easier.

Limitations

A threat to validity might be my reliance on one source of data gathering, the interview. To overcome the threat, I included member checking (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996), having the beginning teachers review their respective profiles and my analyses for accuracy. The beginning teachers replied that my interpretation accurately pictured their respective experiences and reflected their respective thoughts. Chanelle replied, "Your written work sounds great. . . . Thank you for representing me so accurately." Arnold echoed her sentiments, "It represents me very accurately." Baxter wrote, "The great majority of your interpretations were either bang on or extremely close to what I was trying to get across." Tricia was excited to read an accurate reflection of her first-year

teaching experience, and Jamie concurred with her profile and the interpretations, "I checked over the draft, and it looks good."

Another threat to validity might be my own biases and beliefs. I am aware that my bias of personally experiencing a not-so-successful formal mentorship and having many worthwhile informal mentors might affect how I hear the beginning teachers in the study. I am also aware that my beliefs might affect the findings. As I discussed in the overview, I believe most beginning teachers, after successfully completing their course work and pre-service teaching experiences of their undergraduate programs, should be successful given a supportive first-year teaching experience. I believe that rural beginning teachers who receive adequate support at their schools and in their communities during their first two years should be well-prepared to enjoy long and rewarding careers as teachers. I believe there are certain support factors within rural school authorities, rural public schools, and rural communities that contribute to the success of beginning teachers. In addition to being aware of my beliefs, in my study I take care to not let my beliefs blind or deafen me to the beginning teachers' stories. Readers should keep my beliefs in mind when considering my discussion of the findings and my subsequent reflections and recommendations.

Delimitations

I delimited my study to the stories of successful beginning teachers in rural schools of east-central area of Alberta, a geographical area of personal interest. Although there are many cases of beginning teachers in rural Alberta and in the geographical setting of the study, I delimited my study to the experiences of five beginning teachers. I did not include teachers who were not successful in the first year even though they might

have provided support for the findings by showing the absence of many of the same factors that the teachers in the study attributed to their success.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is twofold. First, the study highlights five teachers' perceptions regarding their beginning teacher inductions. Their perceptions provide pieces of data that, when considered together, produce a collective insight into the phenomenon. Second, the study organized the findings into themes useful in conceptualizing an approach to successful beginning teacher induction. The study provides ideas to help rural Alberta public schools successfully induct beginning teachers preventing many teachers from personal and professional tragedy. It provides direction for several participants in teacher induction: superintendents, principals, parents, students, teacher colleagues, and beginning teachers.

Summary

Overall, the interactive process of the study was insightful. I individually interviewed five beginning teachers using a semi-structured and purposeful conversational format. The interviews took place at the interviewees' respective schools. The beginning teachers eagerly shared their experiences of their first year of teaching.

The interviewees entrusted me with much information and shared many personal feelings about their experiences. They seemed comfortable with the process and pleased with the resulting data when I shared my descriptions of their personal and professional backgrounds along with my organization of their thoughts into themes. Interviewing, with the opportunity to continue the dialogue throughout the project, seemed to be a successful way to gather data for research of this type. It was quick and efficient. It

provided the interviewees' perceptions, the viewpoint that I desired to investigate.

The next chapter describes the beginning teacher's backgrounds and explores their experiences during their first year of teaching. A sense of calling and preparedness emerges as each profile advances from learning about the sparks that ignited their desires to teach to sharing their experiences of being in the fire (at least figuratively). The subsequent chapter discusses common themes that emerge from the beginning teachers' responses.

Chapter 4

Backgrounds, Preparations, and the First Years

This chapter describes the backgrounds and preparations of five successful first-year teachers and provides a glimpse into their first year of teaching. Each profile contains five sections. Within each profile, the first section introduces the teacher. The second section summarizes the "sparks that ignited" the teacher's desire to teach. The third section outlines his or her preparations for entry into the Faculty of Education. The fourth section provides an illustration of the teacher's experiences throughout his or her professional terms. Finally, the fifth section describes experiences from the teacher's first full year of teaching.

Tricia

Tricia was the first teacher I interviewed. She was my pilot study participant. Tricia was the wife of a supportive husband and the mother of two young children during the pilot. She was in her first full year of teaching. In the spring after having finished her university program, she covered a short-term, part-time maternity leave in a rural school about 50 minutes from her hometown. During the following school year, she taught part-time at the school in her hometown. At the end of the year, she secured a continuing full-time contract.

I purposefully chose Tricia to pilot the interview questions. She was completing her first year of full-time teaching. I had been her principal during her coverage of a maternity leave immediately after she finished her final practicum, and I coordinated the Special Education program in her second school during her first part-time contract year. I worked on a part-time basis at her school during her subsequent full-time contract year,

the year I conducted the pilot study. I personally witnessed her success as a beginning teacher. I was confident her participation would assist me with the design of the study and revision of the interview schedule. I also felt she was able to accurately recall her experiences as a beginning teacher. Tricia projected much enthusiasm as she shared her personal and professional experiences. She was satisfied with her participation in the process.

Sparks that Ignited the Fire. Tricia lived and attended school in a rural community. At a young age, she began to work with children. At about age ten, Tricia began to tutor and babysit. By eighth grade, she began to think about teaching and by tenth grade she had made up her mind to become a teacher. She began working with first grade students reading with them and "doing" flash cards. Tricia remembered "that right away got me into it." In eleventh grade, she helped a teacher aide with clerical duties, and in her twelfth grade, she tutored students and babysat. She also worked with children in the summer library program. Looking back, she reflected that she "always had an interest in kids" and that they responded well to her. They made her feel like she had what it took to be a successful teacher. "The kids kind of responded well to me and that made me feel like well maybe I have something here that will help [me] be successful, so it was definitely grade ten I made my mind up." At an early age, her desire to see children learn and develop over a period of a school year became the spark that would eventually ignite the fire.

That Tricia would become a teacher was likely no surprise to those who knew her, her mother was a teacher and many of her mother's friends were teachers. She had inherited her mother's personal teaching efficacy; Tricia knew she could make a

difference in the lives of children. "I seemed to kind of be able to do it as well." She credited specific teachers, including her mother, with "fanning the glowing embers" of her eventual career choice. "Just seeing the teachers that I was around . . . [and] having my mom being a teacher I think that did impact me quite a bit." Tricia remembered their diversity of teaching styles, their fairness and understanding, and their ability to meet the individual learning needs of all students. These are many of the same teachers, including her mother, that Tricia relied upon during her first year of teaching. Remembering one of her favorite teachers, Tricia explained,

> The person was fair and understanding of students learning in different ways. [The] teacher would not just write it down on the board and say it, but would also bring in examples, show videos, use the overhead, have us do projects, just every single different style of teaching was used at some time [within] the week, like not every lesson but . . . you got it either through her saying it or through showing it or explaining it, and it also added variety for the students too. You never got bored; it was quite interesting.

Tricia's eager desire matched her academic ability. Although her subject-area strength was in English, Tricia's most enjoyable courses were Science, Art, and Social Studies with their respective experiments and hands-on activities. "I think I liked Science and Art better because it's more hands on . . . with the experiments and creating things; I like to learn that way better." As she set off for college, her goal was to return to a rural community to teach children in a school setting. She did not "plan to teach in the city, . . . [she] was hoping . . . [she] would be in a rural area when [she] graduated."

Gathering Fuel for the Fire. After high school, Tricia enrolled in a community college pre-education transfer program. For two years, she worked towards a Science major. In her first year, she had the opportunity to practice teaching children in a second-grade class. She experienced her first collegial relationships receiving much support and encouragement from her two veteran female cooperating teachers.

> It was actually two ladies that were team teachers and they were sisters. . . . They had been teaching for thirty years and they just had a wealth of information and experience that they shared with me. . . . I couldn't have had a better placement; they were wonderful.

During her second year at the college, Tricia concentrated on building her wealth of knowledge in her subject area before transferring to university. "I just did straight science and electives courses, I didn't have any kind of teaching experience."

Tricia spent three and one-half years at the university, first earning a degree in Arts with a major in Psychology. After completing her Arts degree, she entered the Bachelor of Education program from which she graduated with a double major in Science and Social Studies. Her courses sufficiently prepared her with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enter the classroom as a practicing teacher. "I actually lucked out having been in Science and, well, a Science and Social Studies major."

Adding Fuel to the Fire. In the fall of her first term in the Education program, Tricia taught in a suburban second grade class for six weeks. She remembered the experience with fondness commenting that the students were easy to teach because there was not much variance and "it was in some ways a very nice school to teach in; you had sort of a different type of student to teach, like they didn't come with some of the

problems they could have. And that went really smoothly." It was her first opportunity to teach a whole unit and to be involved in the organization of a Christmas Concert, an activity that sparked her interest in drama. "That's when I also realized I had an interest in drama, putting on things like that."

Her second practicum took place in a school in the inner city area of a large urban centre teaching Social Studies and Science to seventh-grade students. By the mid-point of the practicum, Tricia was teaching full-time. Although she felt she might have had a lighter teaching load than some student-teachers because she only taught two subjects (three times each per day), Tricia found the experience to be "enormously difficult" with lots of marking, a large number of students to get to know, and a diversity of student needs to address. "It opened my eyes up a lot that you're trying to teach a student that maybe has gone through a lot in their life and that . . . bring a lot of baggage to school." The difficulty did not deter her, she found the experience "quite interesting" and began to compare urban and rural teaching assignments knowing she would eventually be teaching in a rural community for reasons of preference and necessity as her husband's business was located in her home town. "I don't think I felt like giving up, but I . . . just kept wondering if this would be different if I was in a rural school." Tricia remembered the practicum as "a good experience, gave me a new understanding."

Tricia finished her course work during the summer and began her four-month teaching internship at the beginning of the school year that fall. The internship was at a rural school teaching sixth-grade students. She labeled the internship as her "best teaching experience ever" teaching entire units to a "really nice class" with strong skills. "I just really liked the rural setting, that nice rural kind of friendly community

atmosphere." The four-month experience provided an opportunity to plan and begin a new school year. The students saw her as their teacher, and Tricia saw them as her students. "I also think teaching for four months made a big difference because I wasn't just thrown in. I got to actually start with them in September, so I was their teacher from . . . day one. Starting day one, September 1st, it was me."

Planning and teaching entire units in several subjects for four months gave Tricia a real feeling of accomplishment. "I just felt like you really accomplished a lot instead of going in and trying to rush through one unit and get out. I really saw the kids progress and it was [a] very, very good teaching experience, learned a lot." She was able to witness student progress and experience much personal and professional growth as well.

Although her cooperating teacher provided daily feedback and assistance, she also credited much of her professional growth to her principal. Tricia shared her feelings regarding his scheduled weekly observations and their subsequent conferences compared with the very formal supervision process used by former supervisors:

> I would say that the third practicum, having the principal and I just sit down and just to talk about it was the most effective. Having a big, formal, filled out [form] actually intimidated me more than anything, because I felt like it was almost too structured, like I was getting picked apart, and it was just too overwhelming, but when I sat with the principal after school he had just made some brief notes on a page and he would just . . . discuss some of the things that really he thought worked well and maybe some different strategies to try for next time. And he would always say well, "It may not work for you, but why don't you give this a try." And then, I would try it. We would see if it made any difference and I liked

that a lot better, more relaxed, get rid of the forms, just have a discussion, better for me anyways.

Tricia left the internship with feelings of great accomplishment and much satisfaction. She was a teacher ready to teach.

In the Fire. While completing a short-term, temporary part-time contract for maternity leave, Tricia received a part-time contract to teach fifth-grade students for the following school year at the school in her hometown. She could hardly wait to finish what someone else had started and to experience teaching from the beginning of the year to the end.

Tricia found the first three months of her first year to be very rewarding, and she was able to maintain a balance between her personal and professional life. She had time to spend with her husband and her son, and eventually with her newborn daughter, and with her husband's ongoing support, she had adequate time to prepare, teach, and mark.

In December, Tricia had an adjustment to make when her principal offered her an additional two-tenths full-time equivalency. She accepted the increased assignment that consisted of teaching a seventh-grade option class for one period each day and tutoring a first-grade boy for another period each day. The workload increased, and the balance between home and work changed. While her husband supported her by being available to help with the parenting of their son, she had the support of her mother and her mother's teacher friends within the school and the community.

In the spring, Tricia, took a one-month maternity leave. She gave birth to her second child, a daughter. At the beginning of the next month, she returned to her teaching assignment and completed the year. At the end of June, Tricia was able to look back

again with feelings of great accomplishment and much satisfaction at a difficult job well done. "It was very rewarding for [me]. I finally got to see . . . something I've been wanting to see for a long time."

Tricia eagerly accepted a full-time continuing contract for the following school year. Her subsequent assignment was at the secondary level teaching a variety of subjects. Thus was Tricia's induction to teaching.

Baxter

The son of public school teachers, Baxter exhibited unbeatable and unwavering self-confidence and a deep self-awareness of his strong personal characteristics. He lived and went to school in a large rural town. During the study, he taught Science and elective courses at the junior and senior high school levels.

Sparks that Ignited the Fire. Baxter suggested fate might have destined him to be a teacher. "Both of my parents are teachers, so that kind of doomed me from the start." Besides his parents, Baxter credits most of his schoolteachers with having significant impact on him. "I would have an easier time picking out the teachers I didn't enjoy as much, but even then the list would be small, and I wouldn't have much bad to say anyways." He listed several teachers and their significance. His junior high school science teacher "was number one, . . . she let her human side shine through." He described her as having "the teacher voice." Baxter remembered that his high school Science teacher, although having "a very dry wit to him, . . . expected a lot and got it. He wouldn't give up an answer to save his life. He made you work through it with a little nudge here and there from him." The third teacher he discussed was his Grade Two teacher, who "put up with my worst year ever [and] tried different things to get through

to us." He fondly remembered "having a lot of fun in her class.

Some of his teenage experiences seemed to provide support for his future choice of profession as well. He babysat his brothers and "other people's kids as well." He went on to coach, referee, and tutor children.

During his high school years, when questioned about going into teaching, he would answer, "I think I have an idea [about what I am getting into]." When completing a job interest inventory in high school, his top interest, tied with being a paleontologist, was being a teacher.

Gathering Fuel for the Fire. Baxter enrolled in the paleontology program during his first year in university. To Baxter, the choice between being a paleontologist and being a teacher was not "choice one, choice two; it was more like one, one-a." He shared, "I just kind of took paleo because whatever."

His confidence in becoming a teacher was evident. "I knew I could [teach], I knew I could do well at it." His motive showed, "I knew I would enjoy [it]." It was a win-win situation. "It was something I did enjoy, something I really loved, so I thought . . ., I can't lose." By the beginning of the second year, he was in the education faculty focusing on General Sciences and working on a minor in Biology. "I knew I wanted to be a science teacher."

He chose his options accordingly, "I took a history class, but it was history of science." He did not forget his complementary choice. "I took a lot of paleo courses." He did not feel limited. "I figured I don't really need to go out of my subject area to get a wide, wide array of different courses and experiences."

His resolve strengthened as he compared his motivation and abilities with the

motivations and abilities of some after-degree students in his classes. "I think . . . they got their science degree and they honestly didn't know what to do with it." Remembering the situation, Baxter stated, "That always kind of puts up a red flag. . . . That was something . . . that worried me. . . . There [were] certainly a few people in there that . . . took it . . . not because they really want[ed] to be there." He considered himself as one who purposefully chose to teach.

His time spent working as a teacher's aide for a junior high school student and his stint at a summer early literacy camp were the fuel he would need as he progressed through his studies. His motive became more altruistic, "I figured . . . I could be a teacher and have some influence on what was going on in the school." With his resolve strengthened, Baxter plunged into his pre-service teaching experiences.

Adding Fuel to the Fire. Baxter shared that his four-week field experience seemed to be very short. "By the time I kind of got my wits about me, it was over." However, he did not feel that the experience should have been longer. He described the experience as a chance to "get 'climatized, play around a bit, get a little bit of work." His cooperating teacher provided some assistance. "Here's how you set up a lesson plan." He offered some feedback in the form of a checklist. "There was a lot more personal reflection, like what did I think."

Baxter received formal evaluation during his nine-week field experience. The cooperating teacher used checklists, but she offered reasons for her assessment and suggestions for improvement. She was considerate of his feelings and perceptions. "She got my input . . . on what I thought went well, what I thought I want[ed] to improve on."

Baxter's self-confidence and certainty of direction remained intact during his pre-

service years. "I loved doing lessons." He shared enthusiastically, "I liked preparing, doing the whole thing." He never thought, "I can't do this or I don't think I want to do this."

Looking back, Baxter expressed a lack of initial awareness about teaching in small rural schools. He had attended large town schools: a primary, an elementary, a junior high, and a composite high school. Baxter suggested that he could have benefited from a discussion on being "a first-year teacher in a rural setting." Some discussion of the challenges of teaching in small rural schools would have been helpful. "It's so different, there's so many different challenges." Otherwise, he felt confident in his ability to be successful. "I felt . . . as prepared as I could be."

In the Fire. Baxter "wanted a rural [assignment] coming out of university." Teaching in a small city or a large town would have been acceptable, but he was prepared to teach in smaller places. "I wasn't worried about too small. . . . I knew what I didn't want; . . . I didn't know what I really wanted." However, he began to wonder about his preference of location during the summer months while he waited for interview invitations with rural school boards. "I just hated looking for a job. I didn't like having to check the paper every week . . . hoping there was something [that] would kind of fit me." He eventually sent for application information to some urban boards, but continued to procrastinate." I was dragging my feet on it 'cause I didn't want to work in a city." He also was not very hopeful about receiving an interview or a job offer in a large centre. "I knew that was pretty much of a pipe dream . . . it's pretty hard to get on there . . . I didn't know anyone."

Before summer ended, Baxter accepted an interim teacher contract by a rural

school board to teach in a K-12 school. "Well, here I am in a town of . . . less than 200 people." Perhaps fate intervened again. He shared, "While I was getting my act together, . . . I got called back for this one." His assignment included Science in grades seven to ten, Biology 20, Chemistry 20, and "a whole whack of CTS courses: computers, foods, wildlife, . . . [including being] the teacher in charge of sewing." One class was split-grade, and the other classes were small, single-grade classes.

The small classes presented an advantage for Baxter. "You got more time with kids, you get to know the kids pretty well . . . you can . . . sit down and really get to know them." Baxter did not worry when administrators and other teachers told him, "You're getting spoiled in [these] little classes." From his field experiences in the large city high school, he knew "how to do crowd control."

Baxter's year ended with the signing of a full-time continuous contract with his school board. His teaching assignment would expand to include more instruction using technology.

Arnold

Like Tricia and Baxter, Arnold's parents were teachers. Arnold grew up in a small town. He was very active in athletics throughout his public school years. At first meeting, Arnold's strong personal appearance gives one the impression they are in the presence of an authority figure. The interview showed nothing less. His personal attributes and his physical training proved to affect his success as a secondary teacher. During the study, Arnold taught a variety of courses at several grade levels: Grade 7 Social Studies, Language Arts, and Math; Grade 8 Science and Health; and Grade 11 and 12 Social Studies.

Sparks that Ignited the Fire. In Grade 12, Arnold decided teaching was one of his three career possibilities. "I was either going to be a cop, or a fireman, or a . . . teacher." Although both of Arnold's parents were teachers, they did not want him to follow in their footsteps. "Both my parents didn't want me to become a teacher."

Meanwhile, Arnold's school experiences seemed to be preparing him for that direction. "I was always into sports and coaching, and I was captain of my basketball and my volleyball team[s]. . . . That was my life." It was in the area of sports that Arnold recognized the beginnings of his desire to teach. "I liked . . . teaching . . . [and] being a leader." He remembered helping one of his teammates learn to play basketball. "He'd never played basketball and we both played post, and I basically taught him how to play post." The experience "was enjoyable" for Arnold.

The impressions of his high school teachers were also having their affects. "My high school basketball [coach was] kind of the reason I got into teaching." He also credited some of his motivation to his Biology and Physical Education teachers. "My high school Biology teacher . . . was great for the way I learn and the way I teach in high school." Arnold described the coach and these teachers as "friendly guys, sports guys, . . . [with] a similar personality to [himself]." Their way of managing a class, as well as that of his father's, was a model for Arnold. "I never heard [them] . . . yell at a class once in those six years." He suggested, "I think it was a look, . . . there was always a possibility of more." He also reminisced that his English teacher was an "old frail little woman, but nobody ever crossed her." Arnold shared, "I don't want to have to bring it all out, let [the students] think about . . . the possibilit[ies]."

Gathering Fuel for the Fire. Arnold went directly from high school to college. "When I was eighteen, I graduated, then I went to [college]." Arnold's intentions were definite. He had decided to pursue an education degree. His father conceded that Arnold "could always be a cop or firefighter after [Arnold] got [his] university degree."

During his college years, Arnold participated in two observation activities in Physical Education classes, both at the same large urban high school. While he involved himself in the classes, he did not engage in teaching. "I just played the games and helped out."

Arnold shared that he chose to teach at the secondary level because he "wanted to coach high school sports and deal with high school kids." His choice was clear. "I like to deal with more advanced levels, . . . and I like the high school classes."

Adding Fuel to the Fire. After two years of college, Arnold transferred to a university. Arnold remembered his four-week practicum, in Physical Education and Junior High Social Studies at a K to Grade 9 school, "It was good all around, no complaints." His cooperating teacher was a very positive person, but talked more than Arnold thought appropriate. "You'd ask him a question, and he'd [take] an hour to answer." Arnold thought the teacher was not well liked or respected by his students. The teacher appeared inconsistent and would "blow off the handle." Arnold shared, "it was a tough situation going in."

Arnold's final practicum was successful and rewarding. It took place in the same school where he observed classes during his college years. His cooperating teacher was "a young guy, about three years into his teaching." He had won the title, "Alberta High School Teacher of the Year." In Arnold's judgment, his cooperating teacher was "a

phenomenal teacher, just really outgoing." Arnold related that the teacher had "personality . . .; [he was] the guy that everybody like[d]." Arnold finished his assessment, "So, I learned a lot from him . . ., how to get along with people. . . . What I got out of his class is how I'll teach."

Both cooperating teachers left Arnold on his own after they had observed Arnold teaching for a few classes. "They had confidence in me to take the class, and they'd come in every once in awhile." Arnold felt constrained when they were present; he enjoyed his independence in their absence. "If they're not there, then it's your ball." Arnold felt much ownership. "It was my class . . ., and it was good for me."

Arnold's former cooperating teacher gave generalized support. Arnold quoted him saying, "Ah, everybody has their own style, you did good." Arnold recalled, "You know, I didn't learn anything out of that."

The cooperating teacher of Arnold's final practicum provided thorough supervision. "The thing that was different was that [the cooperating teacher] told me what I was doing wrong, what I could do . . ., he was straight to the point . . ., if I had a question, he told me what I was doing wrong . . . and what [I] did [well]." After observing a class, he would "write up a page." Arnold appreciated the cooperating teacher's ability to "run a class properly, and then see what you're doing wrong, and teach you how to do it better."

One challenging practicum class included "behaviour disorder kids and . . . a couple of kids that had been in jail." Arnold commented, "That was probably my most successful class, 'cause I just get along with those types of kids." He shared that if he left them alone, "They'd be beating each other over the head with something. . . . They

[were] very aggressive individuals, but they were outgoing, easy to get along [with], easy to talk to." Through the experience, Arnold learned that he could be stern, and perhaps even intimidating. The experience provided him with an opportunity to develop his ability to "read kids." He admitted, "I found that I got into a few of their faces and they just blew up, . . . their emotions [were] right on their sleeves." He tried to "think of ways to get them to participate in class." He shared his personal experiences and accepted their challenges to play rugby, contact sports, and badminton. He reported corresponding benefits in the classroom: maintaining interest and preventing behaviour problems. "That kept them interested in the class anyway."

He also continued to develop his philosophy of teaching. He learned how he felt about segregating such students from other students. "I didn't agree with doing that, 'cause . . . they just didn't get anything out of it . . . I [saw] the amount of stuff that got done, the amount of violence . . . it brings them down." He offered, "I think [educators] should make an attempt . . . to try to get the most out of those kids, 'cause they were capable . . ., they just needed the right environment. Most of them grew up in bad homes and that's why they [were] like that, so that's what I felt, [I] thought they should be in a regular classroom."

Arnold expressed his satisfaction with his practicum experience. "If anybody asked me about what was the most valuable experience, it's definitely my practicum experience by far." It "prepared [him] more than anything [for] becoming a teacher."

Other than the practicum experiences, he credits his content courses with helping to prepare him. "Any courses that taught me games and stuff . . . so I know my material." He remembered a phenomenal history professor in college who taught by telling stories.

"I remember his stories that he told us, and I tell the same stories."

The mandatory course that focused on classroom management also helped to prepare Arnold for his first year of teaching. "We had to teach a class . . ., and we knew there was going to be a mismanagement problem . . ., and we had to deal with it." He remembered being nervous, but considered it a worthwhile experience. He attributed the success of the course to the instructor. "The class was made by who was teaching it . . ., he was good."

In the Fire. Arnold shared his frustration with his job search. "I was hired . . . four days before I started school. . . . I finished school in April . . . and, I applied for a ton of jobs. I had four interviews, all high school Phys. Ed., and I didn't get any of those." He felt the activity "was useless. I just didn't know what I was doing wrong." Arnold had resigned himself to waiting tables and subbing in the city when he received a job offer with a rural school division at which he had not applied. Arnold had planned on teaching in the city. "I didn't really want to live here, I kind of wanted to be in [the city]." He began to reconsider his two other career options: a police officer or a firefighter.

Arnold was surprised when a superintendent called and offered him employment; he accepted immediately. The position "included no Phys. Ed., but high school Social." He shared, "I'm like, 'all right!'" Arnold speculated that the assistant superintendent, who had been his father's principal and who had seen Arnold during his last practicum, had recommended him to the superintendent.

His assignment was far from what he had expected, "Grade 7 Social Studies, Grade 7 Language Arts, Grade 7 Math, Grade 8 Science, Grade 8 Health, Grade 11 Social Studies, Grade 12 Social Studies, and I went in to be a Phys. Ed. major, Social

minor." He had had no practicum experience in most of his assigned subjects. "I had never taught Science . . . never even had any background: Science, or Math, or Language Arts." His assignment to Social 30 caught Arnold by surprise; he had not anticipated a first-year teacher having to teach a diploma course. "No first-year teacher ever teaches Grade 12 Social." His transition to teaching was quick and brutal, "So, four days, came up here. I had nothing prepared." He explained his preparation "was a lot of work, it was an insane amount of work, especially the first four days." There were times during his first semester when Arnold wondered, "What the heck am I doing here?"

Arnold planned to pattern his teaching after that of his last cooperating teacher. "He never had to yell or anything like that. He'd get stern, but when he'd get mad, it made the kids feel bad, because they [had] disappointed him. . . . They liked him so much that they didn't want to disappoint him." Arnold had learned that, "if you get involved in the kids' [lives] and if they like you, then you don't have to deal with . . . discipline problems. That makes a big difference." He also had high expectations for his students. "I try and encourage them as much as possible, but I would expect that they do good work." Students that give up "bother [him] more than anything."

Arnold provided evidence of his attachment to his students. "I got a pretty close working relationship with my Grade 7s, and I'd love to . . . teach them [in] high school, [and] see them graduate." He fondly remembered their Edmonton field trip. "That was definitely a [highlight]."

Arnold accepted a full-time continuous contract with his school board. His teaching assignment focused more on senior high Physical Education and Social Studies.

Jamie

Jamie attended an elementary school with "basically all the farm kids" and then proceeded to a junior high school. She graduated from a comprehensive high school in a city near her parents' farm. She wanted to return to a rural setting because as she shared, "The big city life wasn't really my thing." Jamie also has personal connections to teachers. She has an aunt and a sister who are teachers; her sister graduated a few years before Jaime finished her program. Jamie is an elementary generalist with a minor in Early Childhood. During the study, Jamie taught a Grade 4 class for three-quarters of the day. The remainder of her assignment involved teaching an assortment of complementary courses at the junior high level. "I . . . taught them Computers to 7, 8, and 9 . . . and Agriculture to Grade 7." In the second semester, Jamie taught drama and creative writing.

Sparks that Ignited the Fire. Jamie looked back to her elementary years when she considered her first thoughts of becoming a teacher. "I always looked up to my teachers, and my favorite teacher . . . was my Grade 4 teacher, and I always wanted to be like her." Jamie repeated her long-held desire as she referred to teachers in her family. "I've always wanted to be a teacher. My auntie was a teacher, and my older sister is an English teacher at my old high school. [We] both used to always play school when we were younger." Jamie repeated her goal, "It has always been [my] dream to be a teacher"

Gathering Fuel for the Fire. Jamie worked hard throughout her high school years. Jamie was keenly aware of her parents' belief that "school was the most important thing." She remembered, "All through school it was . . . pressure for school, to do well."

Jamie shared that throughout school she was "always helping out the [younger] kids." She babysat and taught Sunday School. One of her summer jobs involved the

"Summer Fun program for the kids." She was also involved in 4H and sports.

Adding Fuel to the Fire. Jamie went directly from high school to university. She shared "My first semester was a little rough, didn't quite commit myself as much as I should." She enrolled in Arts and took some difficult courses. She was certain of her goal. She remembered, "I was kind of worried that I wouldn't be able to become the teacher that I always wanted . . . That kind of hit home the first semester there and that made me realize I needed to pull up my socks." "I just wanted to be . . . in Education." While Jamie never felt she did not want to teach, she was "worried that [she] wasn't going to be a teacher . . . wasn't going to be able to get [her] dream." Her parents and sister encouraged her. "My family all said, 'You know teaching is your thing, keep going, don't let this speed bump get you.'" In her second semester, her "average . . . improved significantly . . .; [she] realized that [she] had to work hard." She adjusted to university, "got involved in the intramurals program," and worked hard.

Jamie observed in elementary classes at two city schools, and then she shared a placement with another student for her first practicum. She reported that the practicum involved more than she expected. "We were doing lesson plans for every period of the day. We had to do two unit plans, and we didn't even know how to do them." She remembered the practicum as very stressful . . . almost a breaking point." She reported, "I didn't have a life."

She felt a rekindling of her dream to teach during her last practicum. "That showed me that I did still want to [teach]." Her cooperating teacher was "super, and she taught [her] so much." Remembering the experience, she commented, "I learned more through my practicum, than . . . some of those courses." When asked how her university

program might have helped her through her first year, she suggested, "Talking about the demands of a first-year teacher, and how to deal with them."

In the Fire. By the middle of July, Jamie was experiencing distress because she did not have a job for the fall. "I was really stressed 'cause it was already the middle of July, and I hadn't had a job." She had applied for a few jobs and "had a couple of interviews." Each time she did not receive a contract she thought, "There must be something wrong with me." Eventually, she successfully interviewed and received a job. She was ecstatic even though she did not know her assignment until the end of August. "When this job came up, I was really happy."

Jamie purposely choose to teach at a rural school "because [she] knew [her] first year of teaching would be stressful." Her stress began when she received her assignment. "I was stressed. As soon as I found out I was teaching junior high, I was stressed, very stressed." She felt a lack of confidence knowing her assignment did not match her area of training and her ability. "Elementary trained, and I'm not a real stern person. . . . I was shocked!"

Jamie benefited from close relationships with her students, some of the parents, and her colleagues. She received support from her teacher sister and her colleagues, especially other first-year teachers and the other younger teachers. Her colleagues provided adequate and timely intervention and support in the first few weeks. She also relied on her young colleagues for social activity and she kept busy outside of the school. "I'm enjoying it here, and . . . I'm getting involved in the community . . . a breeze." The interaction of many people within the school community, along with her personal fortitude, helped her to survive a very trying first year of teaching. Although she received

a full-time continuous contract with her school board, she was deeply disappointed that she had to transfer to another rural school. Looking back on her experience, Jamie suggested, "Your first day of teaching is something you've got to mark down."

Chanelle

Chanelle, like Jamie, was an elementary generalist with a minor in Early Childhood. Chanelle took all of her public schooling in a rural community K – 12 school. She shared, "I played all the school sports there; . . . [I] really enjoyed my education in the rural setting." She is the oldest of three siblings. Her assignment during the study included teaching Grade 3 students in a single-graded classroom.

Sparks that Ignited the Fire. Chanelle initially decided she wanted to be a teacher at about eight years of age. She had played 'school' with her younger siblings, having designed their upstairs playroom as a classroom. She shared that she always enjoyed helping and looking after children." I just realized I had knack for working with kids . . . I really enjoyed it and decided that that's what I wanted to do for a career." She had a good idea of what it took to be a teacher and what a career in teaching would involve. "I have some aunts and uncles that are teachers and they explained . . . all that stuff."

Knowing her career choice, Chanelle honed her skills and abilities in and out of school. At school she "played all sports . . . [and] took an active role . . . in Students' Union." Outside of school, she was involved in leadership and counseling in the 4-H program. She "enjoyed giving presentations [and] demonstrations, and enjoyed public speaking." By the time she graduated from high school, Chanelle was well-prepared to begin her career.

Gathering Fuel for the Fire. After graduating from high school, Chanelle decided she would first seek a diploma rather than enter an Education program. She enrolled in a community college to obtain a diploma in Marketing. She soon decided marketing was not her choice of professions. "It didn't involve enough." She especially shied away from a desk job. She wanted "to help kids . . . and . . . make a difference [in their lives]."

She finished her first year in the Marketing diploma program and then transferred to the Education program for her second year. She was able to transfer most of her college courses as non-education options; she would only have to make up two courses.

During her second year at college, she completed her observation classes. The first observation was in a Grade 1 and the second observation was in a Grade 2 class. Chanelle began to note differences in teaching styles. She described the first classroom as a dictatorship, while she viewed the second classroom as being "more hands on . . . [with] the kids finding our their own knowledge." Chanelle preferred the latter. Her observation experiences were "wonderful, because I didn't really just observe. I got to teach lots too, and I started tutoring." She continued tutoring until she finished college.

Adding Fuel to the Fire. Chanelle's four-week practicum "was a real eye-opener for [her], because [she was] from a small rural town." The class size was large. About half the students were below grade level or were learning English as a second language. Besides being a revelation, the experience had other unanticipated aspects. Chanelle was forced to make a quick adjustment to her expectations of her first practicum when she realized that the cooperating teacher had mistakenly assumed Chanelle "was coming in to take over [the] class." Chanelle also worked through her cooperating teacher's

disillusionment with the profession. The cooperating teacher "wasn't very happy with the teaching profession . . . [and] I found that very hard." Chanelle remembered that during the first week the cooperating teacher "just cut down everything [Chanelle] did." The University facilitator was of little help. "He would come in . . . and basically write a few notes down and walk out." However, by the end of the experience, Chanelle had won her cooperating teacher's heart. She shared, "All of a sudden, after week two, she loosened up . . . and started to accept what I was doing. I ended up with an awesome evaluation from her."

Even though Chanelle was exhausted after her third university year, she took the two courses during summer session to complete her third year. Chanelle's resolve to teach was evident. She could not wait to finish; she "just wanted to get teaching."

During her fourth and final year, Chanelle completed her nine-week practicum. She reported that her cooperating teacher taught her much about classroom management. "I really enjoyed every moment." In the beginning, the cooperating teacher observed often. She would first explain the focus of her observation and then provide feedback and support. "She observed lots at the beginning, . . . and then later on she would just leave the room . . . she usually was never there . . . that was fine . . . It was a very good experience."

Chanelle continued to keep in touch with the cooperating teacher. "We still keep in touch, I talk to her at least once a month, we go for dinner or we talk on the phone." Chanelle also reported that she kept in touch with other members of the school's staff. "They gave me their numbers, and I've called them."

During the two practical experiences, Chanelle developed on her teaching style.

She reflected, "I think it really helps to . . . realize who you are as a teacher, . . . [to] realize that certain things may not work for you, for you mannerism and teaching style." She realized her style of teaching was very interactive. Her cooperating teacher gave her the freedom to experiment. "She didn't even ask before what I was doing. I would just do it."

In the Fire. Early in January of her fourth year, Chanelle declined an unsolicited offer from a large urban school board because she wanted to teach in a rural setting. She then traveled to the rural school board office near her hometown and shared her portfolio with the superintendent. In May, she noticed an advertisement for a Grade 3 teacher in a small rural school with the same school board. She arranged an interview with the person in charge of hiring. "I just took him my portfolio . . ., and then two days later I was called for an interview." She shared, "I was very aggressive in looking for a job." The wait "was hard, but it was worth it. This was the first job I applied for and I got it, so I was pretty happy."

Chanelle spent the spring and summer months preparing to teach. "I read through all the curriculums, figured out what I needed to teach, started collecting things, went and met with other teachers, seen what they were doing, borrowed some stuff." She spent time at the school cleaning and organizing her classroom. For most of August, "[she] did a lot of preparation"

Chanelle considered herself "lucky to have only fourteen kids" in her single-graded classroom. Even though she had five students on special programs, she described that her assignment had been her "dream first-year job."

Chanelle received a full-time continuous contract with her school board to teach

at the school in her hometown. Her teaching assignment changed to a third-grade homeroom.

Synthesis

The beginning teachers began to consider teaching as a professional career choice at differing ages ranging from about eight to about eighteen. Jamie and Chanelle, as young children, began to dream about teaching and to act out their future professions as they played school with their siblings and friends. Tricia's spark showed itself in Grade 8 as she began to babysit and tutor younger children. Arnold set his sights on teaching in his twelfth grade; and, although Baxter considered teaching as one of his career choices, it was not until his first year of university that he made teaching his primary career choice. Chanelle spent a year in a Marketing program in a small college, and Baxter spent a year in a Science program at university before beginning their Education programs.

The beginning teachers shared their experiences with children. During her high school years, Tricia read with first grade students and helped them with their flash card activities, tutored older students, babysat, and worked with children in the summer library program. Baxter babysat, coached, refereed, and tutored children. Arnold was involved with children in sports and coaching. Jamie babysat, taught Sunday School, organized summer programs, and participated in 4H and sports. Chanelle was active in sports, her Students' Union, the 4-H program. She stated what seemed to be the goal of the beginning teachers, they wanted "to help kids . . . and . . . make a difference [in their lives]."

The beginning teachers each had rural roots. As children and adolescents, the beginning teachers lived in rural areas or small rural towns. Baxter lived in the largest

setting, a rural town of approximately 10,000 people. Most of the beginning teachers attended schools within their communities. Jamie attended a comprehensive high school in a neighboring city. They each considered themselves to have had a rural childhood and adolescent experience.

Another common factor in each case was having a teacher as a close family member. Tricia's mother, Baxter's parents, Arnold's parents, Jamie's sister and aunt, and some of Chanelle's aunts and uncles were teachers. The beginning teachers related to how these close relationships to teachers gave them considerable insight into teaching and helped to give them a realistic picture of the teaching profession.

Some of the beginning teachers referred to their public school teachers during their interviews with me. They shared their perceptions about what they thought were qualities of successful teachers: diversity of teaching strategies, fairness and understanding, ability to meet individual learning needs, and caring and firm approaches to classroom management. Some beginning teachers recalled wanting to be similar to specific teachers the beginning teachers had experienced throughout their school years.

The beginning teachers shared their extracurricular activities. Participation in sports was a common factor for all five beginning teachers. One beginning teacher reported extensive coaching experience. Some beginning teachers were involved in 4-H and Students' Unions. One beginning teacher worked with children at a public library during the summer.

Most beginning teachers identified how individual courses prepared them for teaching. They especially credited some of their success to the opportunities to role-play teaching strategies within the course on managing the learning environment. Some of

them suggested that discussions on the demands of first-year teaching, especially the demands on beginning teachers in rural areas, would have benefited them greatly.

Besides course work and observing school classes in the early part of their university programs, the beginning teachers took part in a least two practical experiences. Most of the beginning teachers sensed a discrepancy between their practical experiences in urban settings with their first-year experiences in rural school, but they suggested their practical experiences were the most beneficial part of their preparation for first-year teaching. Tricia's program included three practical experiences in addition to her observation activities; she took part in a four-month internship.

The beginning teachers rated their practical experiences from phenomenal and enjoyable to extremely stressful and stifling. They experienced a range of expectations, personalities, teaching styles and evaluation approaches. Some beginning teachers reported their cooperating teachers had inappropriate expectations, other cooperating teachers provided the beginning teachers with a freedom to experiment. Some beginning teachers perceived their cooperating teachers to be disillusioned or not receptive to student teachers. Some cooperating teachers provided only generalized support, while others provided formal observations with specific and constructive feedback. Even though negative aspects were evident across the cases, the beginning teachers expressed great achievement during their final practical experiences.

After their practical experiences, the beginning teachers began their searches for teaching jobs. Tricia sought a job in her rural hometown where her husband was located. Baxter desired a rural teaching job, any location would be acceptable and no location would be too small. Arnold applied and interviewed mostly for urban Physical Education

jobs. After resigning himself to waiting tables and subbing in the city, he received and accepted an unsolicited job offer with a rural school division. Jamie purposely chose to teach at a rural school. Chanelle declined an unsolicited offer from a large urban school board, and aggressively sought and received a contract in a rural setting within her home district. The search was frustrating and stressful for some of them as they applied for jobs and attended interviews without any success. Some beginning teachers received job offers in the spring, while others secured interim contracts a few days before the school year began. Two of the teachers received assignments within their areas of expertise. The other teachers received assignments in a variety of areas and grade levels.

Tricia began her career progressing through a series of part-time temporary contracts, which increased in full-time equivalency throughout the year. After suspending her teaching experience for a brief one-month maternity leave, she successfully completed the year.

All beginning teachers received and accepted full-time continuous contracts with their school boards for the subsequent year. Tricia, Baxter, and Arnold remained at their respective schools. Jamie and Chanelle moved to different schools. With the exception of Tricia, the beginning teachers received assignments similar to that of their first year of teaching. Arnold and Jamie's assignments became more focused on their areas of qualifications, Chanelle's primary assignment increased by one grade level, and Baxter took on more instruction in information processing. Tricia moved from her elementary experience to take on the role of a secondary teacher.

The beginning teachers expressed their desire to teach, completed extensive preparation for teaching, endured rigorous induction, and acquired tenure with a school

board. Each teacher reported a great sense of personal and professional satisfaction and accomplishment.

The next chapter explores the beginning teachers' induction to teaching in greater depth. It explores their stories. Through the exploration, themes emerge that represent their personal and professional experiences as beginning teachers. Themes of passion and emotion were keenly evident. Their stories of communication, constant learning, supervision and evaluation, and professional development formed other themes. Through it all, two additional themes seem to connect the pieces: informal support and keeping a balance between personal and professional lives. A final theme, self-satisfaction, is the result of their passionate activity.

Chapter 5

Trial By Fire: Themes from the First Year

The conversational interviews provided many insights into beginning teacher induction. This collection of data revealed patterns from which themes emerged that describe the experience of the beginning teachers' first full year of teaching and highlight their respective personal tenacity to succeed. The themes include passion, emotion, communication, new learning and change, supervision and evaluation, professional development, informal support, and balance between personal and professional life. I shared the themes and my analysis with the beginning teachers, and invited their feedback. The themes resonated with their perceptions. Each beginning teacher agreed with the representations that follow.

Passion

Passion for teaching children appeared to permeate the beginning teachers' stories of their first year of teaching. Pride, enjoyment, desire to share part of one's self and the need to be a part of a child's life seem to consume the beginning teachers in their quest to successfully complete their first year of teaching.

Feelings of pride were evident in Tricia's comments. She stated that it was very rewarding to "see [the students] leave with all those skills and knowledge that you accomplished." Tricia showed pride of ownership. "There was a student in there that . . . [came] from a bad background and he doesn't have a mom and I think we really clicked, and we still do. I think he just saw me as kind of the motherly figure." The following story provided further evidence of Tricia's connectedness with her students.

There was one student, who . . . struggles with math, finds it very, very difficult

and we just started our measurement unit and he did really, really well all through the unit. When I gave him back his test he had an 80% and I don't think he's ever had 80% on a math test in his life and he jumped up and he got kind of teary-eyed. He yelled, "Can I phone my mom right now?" And he ran out of the room and phoned his mom. Yeah, it was pretty touching, so I had to go out of the room and [regain control of my emotion].

Tricia summed up her feelings of pride saying, "Like that was my first class, . . . and those are my babies, and they still are, I teach them in grade six and they're still my babies."

Baxter's passion for teaching was evident. "I love being around people, I love being around kids. I really love teaching someone something . . . explaining it and having them finally get it. It's just so much fun." He continued, "I just like the give and take, and I like that everyday is going to be different." He summed his passion as "Helping kids, being with people, variety." Some of his reasons bordered on personal enjoyment. "I just have fun doing it too. It's just flat out really fun for me." He added, "I really like being in school too."

Baxter was emphatic about the importance of being passionate about teaching. Without such passion, Baxter suggested even though one might know one's content and teaching strategies "when you get in school and you're bottom rung and you're teaching Science 24, good luck." He discussed the difficulties associated with teaching. He suggested, "If you really didn't want to be here, I don't know why . . . you would come even close to this."

Throughout the interview, Arnold's passion to share his love of sports with the

students was evident. His passion produced a team that went to finals from what began as a team with very little skill. "Our [high school] boys' volleyball team [was] horrible . . ., and I had to teach them how to pass and how to bump." Arnold remembered the last game, "Our setter went down and we ended up losing the last, the final game in . . . extra sets." Another product of sharing his passion for sports was achieving the best track and field results his school had "ever done, in track, as a team, both in zones and districts." Arnold valued the activities as "definitely . . . enjoyable experience[s]."

Jamie shared that she had "one goal and she wanted to reach that!" Her goal was to teach. "I love to teach!" At first, Jamie thought she only wanted to teach young children, but after teaching students in Grade 4 and 7, she reported, "I really enjoy the older kids!" Jamie described her passion,

> I truly enjoy working with children as well as young adults. I love that my day is never the same no matter how well planned you are. Sometime in the day, something will pop up to change the plans. I find it amazing to watch the affect I have on some children and how my actions may change a child's view of school. I aim to make school a positive and encouraging experience for every child. . . . I have realized why I had always dreamed of being a teacher, . . . I now understand why teachers are called molders of dreams.

Chanelle described her motivation to teach as "see[ing] my students succeed." She did not limit her motivation to academic alone. "[It's] . . . not necessarily what you've taught them, but how you've helped them." Her teaching is not limited to "just content, it's . . . their daily lives [that] you're helping them with; they really . . . need someone to be there for them."

The beginning teachers expressed personal passion for their work. Tricia expressed her passion in her feelings of pride and connectedness with her students. Baxter's passion was evident in his love for people, and the variety the relationships offered. He recognized a paramount need for passion in teaching. Arnold's passion stemmed from his need to share his love of sports with others. Jamie's passion was accomplishing her goal to affect the lives of her students. Chanelle's passion centered on helping others.

The beginning teachers revealed a sense of pride and presumed ownership of their situations. They felt they were influential in the lives of their students and that their individual efforts were directly instrumental in motivating their students to succeed. They found personal satisfaction in the effects of their involvement; they exhibited a high level of professional efficacy.

Emotion

The simultaneous pressures of personal need and professional responsibility produced a range of positive and negative emotions within the beginning teachers as they interacted with others in their school communities. They shared some emotional highs, and they discussed how they coped with their negative emotions as they negotiated their way through their first year.

Tricia discussed the causes of some of her negative emotions. She cited not knowing what to expect as one cause. While discussing report cards and preparing for parent-teacher interviews she shared, "It was still intimidating just because . . . you're not sure what to expect." Feelings of disappointment overwhelmed her when a student was withdrawn from her class without explanation. She "felt let down and really

disappointed." Remembering an experience with an ungrateful veteran teacher, Tricia offered, "Not that we didn't get along, but there [were] a few times I would consider unpleasant."

She shared her disappointed with the comments and actions of a veteran teacher. Tricia shared that it "seemed like [the veteran teacher] questioned competence of a new teacher . . ., she seemed to get frustrated that I didn't know everything right here and now . . ., she was almost disappointed that [she had] to get used to a new person and just almost seemed inconvenienced." Tricia felt veteran teachers needed to be aware that their comments and actions seriously affected beginning teachers.

Baxter was surprised by how different behaviors affected him compared to the behaviors he thought would cause him grief.

> I worried more about kids . . . acting up and being bad . . ., but I find that less troubling than kids who just don't care or just can't understand . . . I'm surprised how much that hits me . . . it's so frustrating for me, and it's so frustrating for them, and I just feel like . . . I'm not doing my job . . . like I'm failing as a teacher.

He reported taking it personally, "a lot more personal."

Rumors in his small community were stressors for Baxter. He experienced disappointment when parents and students blamed him for the lack of success of his team. He reported feeling "a little bit of a kick in the teeth" when he "wasn't given a chance to succeed" before the rumor mill put forth the indictment. He felt parents and students did not understand or appreciate his ability and dedication. "I wasn't given a chance to succeed . . . that upsets me . . . when people are talking . . . 'cause I know my stuff and I'm as dedicated as they come. . . . I know there's talk out there, . . . but . . . I

don't take much stock in it."

Baxter was careful to not take the responsibility for the feelings and perceptions of others. "I guess it's confidence or cock[iness] . . . if [someone] has a problem with me, . . . that's their thing . . . I'm not going to buy into that." On the other hand, he was careful to make amends. "If I've done something wrong, I will go and apologize and say, 'Look, I've screwed up here. What can I do to make it better?'"

He was careful to not hold a grudge. He tried to "find that common ground." He remains realistic during disagreements, "I just kind of chalk it up, 'Fair enough, you're over here, I'm over there,' and even if we did have problems with each other, it would still be civil . . . professional and civil."

Arnold shared that "some days are phenomenal, some days you go through a class and they learned so much [or] did so [well] on an exam . . .," but not every day was an emotional high. Arnold remembered one particular time when he was voicing his distress. One of Arnold's first-year colleagues commented, "Geez, I would think that you'd been teaching here thirty years, the way you talk sometimes." Arnold remembers thinking, "Oh, yeah, I guess, geez." Arnold reported perceiving similar negative attitudes in the experienced teachers. "Some of the older ones are kind of stressed out, they just think kids are horrible, . . . and . . . that doesn't help you." Another source of distress was Arnold's worry about the Social Studies diploma exam during the first semester. "I wasn't confident that [the students] would learn the material [for the diploma exam]. Arnold expressed relief when his Social 30 class achieved "two percent higher than provincial average."

Jamie was "excited, enthusiastic, and eager to finally start teaching!" She enjoyed

teaching the young children, and she found that she often appreciated the independence of the Grade 4 children and some of the junior high school students. "I really enjoy the older kids!" Jamie was very pleased with her Grade 9 class. They "are doing a play for the Grade 3, 4, 5. They've worked really hard. . . . They showed me they could do it!"

Although Jamie enjoyed some emotional highs with her students, she also experienced frustration. She was "stressed with a few junior high students who thought it was fun to be disruptive . . . in gym class." Talking about her drama students, Jamie reported, "They're not taking it as seriously . . . I have them last period in the day, which doesn't help 'cause they're hyper as it is, and then having drama . . . We struggled through the year. . . . There were ups and downs . . . and some kids ruined it for others." She was "frustrated . . . as it seemed no matter what [she] did they continued to disobey the rules." Eventually, she "finally got through to the junior high class."

Jamie had some negative interaction with a few parents, but "once I explained and showed them . . ., it was all fine." Jamie also reported her workload created distress. She was "stressed with [her] workload as it seemed [she] didn't have enough hours in a day to do everything."

The year ended with another source of frustration. Jamie was "frustrated with [her forced] job change when there was only a few days of school left in the year and [after she] had been told she was staying there." She summed up her relief that the first year was finally over, "We made it through."

Chanelle reported one of her most positive experiences during her first year was when "she realized [her] kids were above and beyond the Grade 3 level of writing. . . . Their vocabulary was way above grade level, and their spelling and convention [results

were too]." She was "really happy, because [they had] worked really hard on that." She attributed the results to her efforts and viewed them as confirmation. "I realized I was doing what I was supposed to be doing and that . . . I taught them a lot."

Chanelle experienced some stress with an unhappy parent until she realized the parent was "not supportive of the school and [did not] want her kids to be in school at all." Chanelle was stressed at first because she thought she "was not doing [her] job [because she] was not keeping [the parent] happy."

Chanelle also found the teachers' strike in the spring of 2002 to be very stressful. "I found the strike stressful because I needed the money and I knew I'd have a lot of catching up to do with my kids" to get them ready for the provincial achievement tests.

Each beginning teacher experienced some positive and negative emotions. Sometimes the source of their emotions was merely their respective perceptions, other times the sources were external. The beginning teachers fluctuated between enduring distress, feeling incompetent, being unsure of what to expect, suffering intimidation and encountering disappointment to receiving welcomed relief, feeling deeply satisfied, and experiencing short bursts of elation. They seemed to cope with the ambiguity by relying on their personal resolve, their feelings of efficacy, and any data that showed student success. They believed their students' successes were their successes. They succeeded, despite their negative emotions, by balancing their negative experiences with some very positive emotions.

Communication

Open and timely communication partly accounted for the successful inductions of the beginning teachers. Communication seemed to aid their enculturation. Lack of

communication caused distress, while honest exchanges were helpful.

Tricia talked about the large number of rules that are not written anywhere for a beginning teacher to learn and the lack of meetings to share common information and expectations. She suggested that sharing of standardized rules and procedures with a beginning teacher prevented other teachers from being frustrated. "It would be nice if someone could tell you . . . have a meeting."

Tricia experienced little communication with her administrators regarding formal supervision and evaluation. Her confirmation of her success came in the form of increased full-time equivalency to be responsible for additional teaching assignments. Tricia also reported not receiving reasons for events that involved her, especially a decision regarding one of her student's withdrawal from school. She felt a great deal of anxiety, for herself and for her student.

> [I] really felt let down and really disappointed that he wasn't going to come back. . . . We never really found out why . . . we're still left to wonder and it just kind of left us with uneasy feelings why. Not sure why . . . that was a hard time because we weren't sure of the reasons. . . . If we were just . . . told that it's just something that can't be talked about that's fine, but we weren't told anything. We asked, but never got any answers, nothing.

Tricia could only guess the reasons for her student's withdrawal from the classroom and wonder about her lack of formal evaluation.

Baxter reported successful communication with his students' parents. He shared one of his conversations with a worried mother, who was concerned about her daughter's performance on a previous exam. He explained that he, "talk[ed] her through it." He

shared her concern and encouraged her to be optimistic and to focus on strategies for improvement, "I don't really care what went on before, . . . I'm making sure she's going to do well on [the next exam]." He reassured her, "It's all right, it's [going to] be fine, we'll get her." Baxter reported that the approach produced improvement, "[We] have brought her mark up a fair bit."

Baxter's ability to communicate helped him with students as well. He shared how, on one occasion, he communicated very clearly with his basketball team. When the team members blamed him for the collapse of the team, Baxter reviewed how he had tried to make it work and clearly explained to the team members how their lack of commitment and participation caused the team to fold. "I just finally took them in one day . . . [after which] they just couldn't say, 'It's all your fault.'" He realized the importance of candid communication.

Jamie, too, learned that part of the responsibility for success during the first year of teaching lies with the first-year teacher. She shared how one teacher told her to "speak up, tell us what you're thinking." She found the advice helpful. She discussed how someone changed the supervision schedule in response to the first-year teachers honestly communicating their feelings. "They did make a few adjustments for us. . . . Nothing would have got done if we just would have . . . sat there and let whatever happen. You need to stand up for yourself."

Chanelle credited much of her success with parents to the amount of communication she initiated with them. She had "lot's of communication with parents." She reported she would "phone quite regularly reporting what's happening." Chanelle opened another channel of communication for parents that also provided her with

confirmation. "A lot of times in the kids' planners, there'd be notes" of appreciation and thanks.

The beginning teachers seemed to attribute their successes to their respective initiative and skills. They credited their success with parents to the amount of communication they initiated. Their ongoing communication with parents enabled them to address the parents' concerns. The beginning teachers initiated discussions regarding the underlying reasons and solutions for problems. They attempted to maintain optimism as they focused on strategies for improvement. They sought and valued openness and honesty in their communications with others, clearly articulated rules and procedures, and explicitly conveyed expectations. Communication was vital to their success.

Constant Learning

Embedded learning occurred throughout their first-year experiences. As they maneuvered through their induction, they encountered numerous opportunities for learning. The year was one of constant professional self-edification.

Tricia reported that, as a beginning teacher, she was in a constant state of learning. She was constantly "learning the rules, . . . learning about students, . . . learning . . . about school routines, [and] . . . learning about content to teach." She shared that she learned more in her first year of teaching than she did during her entire life.

Report card preparation and parent-teacher interviews were a time of concern for Tricia. She found the time to be "hectic and stressful" and admitted she "was probably pretty nervous." She was intimidated: "not sure what to expect" and "hoping [parents] would take [her] seriously."

Tricia felt pressure when taking on a new assignment with very little notice in

December. The size of the class intimidated her and the lack of time to prepare caused anxiety. She "felt some serious stress for about a month [until she] got that course rolling."

Baxter shared, "There [were] . . . little things that I never even fathomed I'd have to worry about here." When he asked his students about the timing of 'tryouts' for the school teams, they met him met with an uncomprehending response. Tryouts were not necessary at his new school; school teams existed only if there were enough players. Baxter had never considered not having enough students interested in sports to make a team. "It was just something that kind of blew my mind."

Baxter related having a struggle with procrastination when marking student work. After talking with his principal about helping students to be successful, Baxter learned that he needed to be "more on top of them with re-marks." He admitted, "One thing I have to get better at is keeping up on my marking."

Baxter shared how he worked through the transition from being a student to being a teacher. Arriving early at a community dance, he found himself looking at "a table of parents and a table of kids." He sat between them at a table by himself. "I [had] a lot more in common . . . with the Grade Twelve's." He related more to being a student because he "had been a student . . . eighteen years . . . and a teacher thirteen weeks." He reports that, "It's gotten better, . . . I'm feeling more towards the teacher side." He credits the older students for respecting him as a teacher. "The older kids . . . understand the line better than the younger kids. . . . I think it will be a lot easier for me as I go along. . . . You need that period of adjustment."

Arnold shared that he developed confidence in himself and received respect from

the students as he worked through the first semester. He found that it was better to not rely on others to solve his problems. He decided that "if [he] had to rely on [supervisors], . . . he was not going to learn anything, . . . [and that he] might lean on them to help him out." Putting himself in his student's place, he thought, "If I [were] in a class . . . being bad and the teacher just disciplined me, but the principal had to step in, I think I would lose respect for that teacher"

Arnold desired to observe an experienced science teacher in his school. "It'd be nice to watch [the science teacher]. . . . He's a . . . respected teacher . . . and, I'd like to go watch him, . . . just [to see] how other teachers run their classes." Besides not having the time to observe, Arnold worried about what the students might think. "The students are going to think, 'What are you doing here?'"

Arnold learned that he was a professional who could manage the curriculum to help his students learn. "I tend to change my curriculum, I tend to change things to hit on, change things the way I want to do them to hit on . . . the themes." Within the Grade 7 Culture topic, Arnold created his own unit on South Africa.

> 'Cause I've been there and I have friends there . . ., I know lots about it, . . . I kind of created my own thing and from my experience. . . . I found myself a hundred times better teacher if I'm teaching from my own experience than from reading some book. . . . I think the kids, I know they . . . will remember a lot more from the South Africa [unit] than . . . [they] did on [the unit] on Japan.

Jamie's first year of teaching was a continuous process of learning and change. Her university experience had prepared her to teach at the lower elementary level. "As soon as I found out I was teaching junior high, I was stressed, very stressed." She

attributed her stress to several factors. The first factor was her perception of the attitudes of the kids. Other factors included, "being a first-year [teacher], being female . . ., and then elementary trained." She also felt her nature was not conducive to teaching junior high, "I'm not a real stern person as it is, so to step into junior high, people telling you to . . ., I was kind of shocked." Jamie recognized her responsibility to "[learn] how to deal with . . . the different age groups." She stated, "It took me some time . . . to adjust."

Jamie quickly learned to adapt curriculum to meet her students' interests. "I found teaching options was a lot of work. . . . I made my options on my own . . . from university classes I took, some from storytelling classes and creative writing classes, and even . . . from my sister." When Jamie was struggling with her ninth-grade option class, she took the advice of a colleague, "Why don't you do a novel study with them, they're sitting down, they can take turns reading."

Chanelle became keenly aware of how "much work you have to put in to be original, creative, [and] enthusiastic . . . It's a lot of extra work and I didn't actually think it'd take this much prep work."

She attributed much of the prep work to her status as a first-year teacher and to the purposes of supervision for evaluation. "Writing up your plans just to be evaluated" created work that she did not feel was extremely valuable. "I don't need to have everything written up . . ., but [the evaluators] wanted them all written out."

Chanelle found test making to be a time consuming activity. She reported her assessment course at university had taught her some things about test making, but "it all depends on . . . the grade level . . ., and what you've taught." She knew she could have borrow tests from others, but she learned that, because she taught differently than others,

she needed to make her own tests. "You better teach them what you're going to test."

The beginning teachers reported significant experiential learning. They quickly became familiar with curriculum. They learned to effectively manage their classrooms. They learned how to engage the norms of their schools, how to deal with time management, and how to motivate themselves. They become efficient at preparation tasks such as developing assignments and tests. They learned how to complete report cards and conduct parent-teacher interviews. They adapted to changing circumstances including new assignments during the year and the corresponding curriculum material. They discovered how to meet divergent student needs. They quickly learned how to work with other adults including teachers and parents. In short, they made a very abrupt albeit trying transition from student to teacher.

Supervision and Evaluation

The quantity and quality of supervision and evaluation varied among the beginning teachers. The process ranged from non-existent to ongoing, low-key, and informal, to somewhat formal. For most of the beginning teachers, their evaluation occurred in the latter part of the year.

Tricia reported support from her vice-principal, but she received no formal supervision or evaluation. She shared resulting feelings of anxiety and disappointment. "There wasn't any [formal evaluation] and there wasn't any after I requested one." At the time, she felt unsupported. She was anxious because she did not have a clear understanding of how the principal viewed her teaching performance. She was disappointed because she felt he had no time for her. Even though she thought the lack of supervision was because he likely felt she was competent, she still expressed doubt when

she said, "I think I guess it must have been that I was doing fine, that he didn't see a need for it, that's what I'm assuming, but . . . hopefully, it's not the other." Obviously, the offer of a continuous contract for the next school year, which she had received before the interview, was not enough to eliminate her feelings of anxiety regarding the lack of supervision during her induction.

Baxter's supervision was mostly casual and ongoing. At first, "It was nerve wracking." Because of the small class sizes, Baxter habitually taught to small groups or worked individually with students. However, for evaluation purposes, his evaluators expected him to engage in direct teaching to the whole class. "I'd usually direct teach until he left the room, then we'd go back." His evaluators recognized his efforts to individualize his instruction. Baxter shared their thoughts, "'That's awesome you're doing this and we'll make note, but we do want to see you actually doing the teaching.'" Baxter noted their narrow definition of teaching.

His superintendent gave Baxter the division's teaching evaluation outline. He coached Baxter on "what they [were] going to look for . . . and [advised him] to address some of [the] different areas." The superintendent used the outline as a checklist and rated Baxter's performance on each item as either "exceeds, meets, unsatisfactory." After the observation, the superintendent met with Baxter "for about ten, fifteen minutes, and . . . he'd just go through . . . this was good, . . . worry about this." Baxter stated that his evaluation was "a good thing, [but] it's very fake . . . it's one class . . . it's pretty artificial."

Arnold received his first formal evaluation from his principal in the second semester. The evaluation consisted of three classroom observations within a two-week

period. The principal provided Arnold with a written report and met with him to discuss the contents. "Just the three [observations], and then he wrote them up and we talked about them." Arnold did not report feeling any additional stress because of the observations, nor was he sorry he had not received an evaluation earlier in the school year. "I know I'm a good teacher, so if they want to come in and . . . give . . . me a couple of things that I did wrong, . . . that's good, 'cause then I can change that."

Jamie explained that her principal was her sole evaluator. The principal was in her classroom several times in the first semester. "He didn't actually sit down and do an observation, but he popped in and out a lot. . . . He . . . came in and . . . walked around for a bit." When asked late in the first semester by the principal if she wanted him to come in, she had answered, "No, because they'll be bad just because you're in there." Jamie felt she had "a handle on it" by then and worried that any formal observation of her ninth-grade class might disrupt her management of the learning environment. In the end, the principal's evaluation consisted of three observations and a written appraisal. He conducted his first formal observation of Jamie's class in the second semester. "I think it was March, . . . 'cause he was so busy in the first semester." It did not matter to Jamie that she received no formal observations earlier in the year. She said, "It kind of worked out okay." When the principal made his observations, "everything was going . . . smoothly." Jamie shared her overall feeling, "I'm glad he waited."

Chanelle reported that the principal conducted three formal evaluations beginning in October and then again in January and April. "She's been in three times and . . . [recorded] written observations." After the twenty-minute observations, the principal would conference with Chanelle in the office. "We'd just discuss what happened and

what went on, and she'd look through my plan books."

Chanelle also benefited from the positive support provided by her central office evaluator. "He was very positive about everything . . ., he didn't really have any . . . suggestions . . . just talked through things and made sure that I knew that if I had any problems to let him know." Their good relationship was confirmed when he arrived unexpectedly. Chanelle was not flustered, "That was fine."

The beginning teachers experienced slightly different forms of supervision and evaluation, but there were commonalities. Tricia's supervision seemed to be very informal with assistance from her vice-principal. Her eventual confirmation was in the form of a continuous contract, she received no formal supervision or evaluation. Baxter's summative evaluation did not match his teaching situation nor did it consider his teaching style. His supervisor coached him as to what to do, and then Baxter merely staged what the supervisor wanted to see. Arnold received his summative evaluation in the second semester. His principal observed him three times in two weeks during the spring and provided a written evaluation. Although Jamie's evaluation began informally, it eventually consisted of three observations in the spring followed by a written appraisal. Chanelle's evaluation by her principal consisted of three short observations and follow-up conferences throughout the year. She portrayed her ongoing discussions with a central office supervisor to be helpful.

Overall, the beginning teachers experienced some form of supervision and evaluation within their first year. Informal supervision occurred throughout the year. Formal evaluations usually occurred in the spring. Tricia encountered informal supervision, but she received no formal supervision and no formal evaluation. Baxter had

close ongoing and useful supervision by his principal, but he endured a simulated formal evaluation experience. Arnold and Jaime also received supportive supervision. Chanelle experienced a combination of ongoing, formative supervision and ongoing summative evaluation. Overall, the formative supervision processes was informal and usually helpful. The formal summative evaluations came at the end of the induction process.

Professional Development

The beginning teachers shared only limited evidence of engagement in professional development. While their employees sponsored some of their professional development, they participated in other activities on their own initiative.

Tricia "attended a couple different conventions" and "a one-day workshop on teaching Grade Five Science" on her own initiative. All activities were outside of the division. The school budget supported the substitute teacher, but Tricia had to pay her own registration and travel expenses.

Baxter's employer supported his attendance at the Beginning Teachers Conference in the fall, but there was "not too much follow-up." He reported, "Most of the seminars were condensed versions of classes I had taken . . . and . . . were almost exclusively geared toward city teachers with large classrooms." On the other hand, he found "some of the course-specific seminars had good ideas to use in my class."

Both Arnold and Jamie attended at least one session as part of their mentorship program. The session focused on helping new teachers manage their classrooms. When asked about other professional development, Arnold replied, "Regretfully, I didn't do any." Jamie reported taking the Lions Quest training, "but I took it late so it really didn't help me as I was teaching it already." Part of the reason for not participating in other

professional development activities, was she "didn't know [she] had PD money to use, so [she] didn't use it for anything [her] first year."

Chanelle did not mention any engagement in professional development. She recalled initiating and organizing a meeting with other third grade teachers to mark Provincial Achievement exams. "I knew these teachers from my practicum, and I just phoned [them]."

Although four beginning teachers engaged in professional development activities, professional development did not seem to be a key consideration during their first year of teaching. Perhaps Arnold's statement of regret and the fact that four beginning teachers experienced some form of professional development showed they understood the importance of lifelong learning. Surprisingly, none of the beginning teachers specifically included a Teachers' Convention in their discussions of professional development.

Informal Support

The beginning teachers derived support from numerous informal sources. The support ranged from social to professional, from congenial to collegial. Similar to other aspects of their induction, some of the informal support occurred because of the active initiative of the beginning teachers; other support was forthcoming.

Tricia valued her familiarity "with the school and the staff and principal" from having attended the school as a student. She relied heavily on those relationships during her first year as a teacher at the school. She sought support from several staff members including her mother, the vice-principal, and the library-aide; her husband and his family; and a teacher-friend from another school for support.

[My mother] helped a lot, because not only could she tell me some of the

information at the school, but I could always phone her or talk to her when we got together. . . . I knew my mom . . . would always be there for me.

Tricia went to specific teachers for "supplies, share ideas, and just bounce ideas off of them, and ask lots and lots and lots of questions." She also expressed her gratitude for the library-aide's assistance with "anything from getting used to the computers at this school to finding resources . . . or lesson plans on the computer." Tricia stated most teachers tried to make her aware of things they thought she might not know, to correct her privately and professionally, to spend some time to know her better, and to check on her. The teachers reassured her, in the absence of any supervision, that she was doing well. "Some of the teachers on staff said, 'you have nothing to worry about, you will be doing fine.'" Their reassurance helped Tricia "not to feel uneasy or that [she] was incompetent." Tricia received some positive feedback from parents too. "I had some good feedback from parents too." Tricia shared that she "would have left last year wondering still" had she not received the feedback from other teachers and some parents. "Thank goodness for the teachers' and parents' feedback."

Tricia credits other people outside of her school for their support. "My husband was a big support system and his family, too." Besides her husband and his family, Tricia's professional support outside of the school centered on a friend who was a teacher in another school. They "would talk a lot about teaching and share ideas and strategies." Tricia especially valued having another teacher as a friend.

Tricia believed that rural school staffs are supportive because they know each other well. She offered her insight on the support inherent in teaching in rural schools. She stated,

> I think it's the school family atmosphere. At least at our school, I think we see ourselves as more like a family, like a unit. We just don't go to work and go home. We go to see our friends, and we go to see our colleagues as much as we come to do our job.

Tricia also presented her students as a source of support, specifically their respect for teachers. Again, she believed the support occurred because of the familiarity between student and teacher. "They get to know you better . . ., because you live in the area. They know who you are [and] where you're coming from as well."

Baxter reported some of his support came from his parents and from some teacher-friends. "My parents are teachers, . . . whenever I'm home and they have company, chances are that I'm seeing a former teacher of mine or someone else who is now my colleague. I have a few friends who are teaching as well." Baxter recognized that although he "knew [his] stuff, . . . [he] didn't know the [high school] curriculum." He reported the mentorship of his principal was very helpful explaining the curriculum for the high school courses and providing resources. "He gave me all this help." He would say, "If you need any help, come with it." He would follow through with additional invitations, "Come in anytime you need help." Although Baxter felt intimidated, he sought the principal for help. The principal would "always make sure to help me out."

His principal supported him in the classroom too. "He'll . . . come in and . . . answer some questions or work with [students] . . . making sure that they're getting it and that I'm getting it." Baxter shared, "He's been tutoring me a fair bit and he says, 'You're starting to get it.'" Baxter evaluates the success of his principal's approach when he adds, "next year, I will have no problem with any of these courses." His gratitude and self-

awareness was evident, "I'm so glad he's here 'cause I would have . . . been struggling."

Baxter expressed his appreciation for a supportive staff. "We're really lucky here 'cause our staff is just awesome." Besides support from his principal, Baxter received informal support from other teachers. He reported that the Grade 1 teacher and the Physical Education teacher provided support at crucial times. Simple words often sufficed. The Grade 1 teacher would say, "It's tough, . . . I'm not surprised, they were like that in Grade 1." Baxter took comfort in the honesty of his peers.

The supportive encounter with one student's parent deeply impressed Baxter. At a community dance, "I had one of the parents come over. . . . [She] sat down and chatted with me. . . . It meant a lot that someone sat down and said hello." Baxter included "community and parental support" as key factors in teacher retention in rural areas. His advice to beginning teachers is, "Have parents in, don't drive them away."

Although Arnold had a formal mentor, albeit in a school about an hour away from his school, most of Arnold's support came from his parents and other first-year colleagues. He and his parents "talked about teaching all the time." He reported that he "gained support from other first-year teachers at [his] school." He sought out the other first-year teachers "when [he] had a problem, . . . a bad day." They listened to each other providing moral support and advice. "We're all supportive of each other, as far as kids, discipline." He summed the importance of their support, "That was invaluable, having [his peers] there." His awareness of his needs and his active pursuit of assistance were keenly evident.

Arnold reported that he was not able to find the curriculum support he needed. He shared, "The problem I had was curriculum support, . . . 'cause nobody in [the] entire

school had taught Social 30." Although curricular support was the reason for having a mentor, the arrangement was not effective. "[My mentor] doesn't teach the same way as me and there [were] lots of days he couldn't make it . . ., it was a bit of a help, but it wasn't as much help as I could have used." When he sought his former high school social teacher, he found another discrepancy in teaching styles. "He's more of a . . . project [teacher]. I like lecture and I need to know my information . . . I just wish there would have been another Social person in this school."

Arnold explained that the mentor program included several meetings with his mentor, and suggested the mentorship might have been more helpful "if you were matched up with somebody who's similar to you . . . [and if the mentor were] somebody who's really willing to put an effort out to help you out." Besides teaching styles, time was a constraining factor. "You spent so much time preparing, you didn't really have that much time." Proximity was important to Arnold as well. "If it was in the same school, . . . that would be spectacular."

There were other sources of support. One of Arnold's memorable sources of support came from a parent. Arnold shared one parent's support, "I had one parent come in . . . and tell me thank you for making her son's year so wonderful." Another memorable incident of support involved a student who passed her diploma exam. "She came up and hugged me when I was doing supervision on the playground." He remembered, "I didn't think she did that well, I thought she could do better . . ., but she was happy she passed." Arnold rallied with such support.

Jamie was involved in her division's mentorship program. She had a formal mentor in her school to assist her with curriculum matters. The school division organized

supper meetings to provide new teachers ongoing support. The supper meetings provided time for interaction with mentors and other first-year teachers.

Besides the formal mentorship program, Jamie recognized the value of seeking relationships with teachers outside of her school. She consulted "past teachers when working to create [her] option class." She also consulted her sister and a friend, who were also teachers.

Jamie especially appreciated "having some . . . young teachers" on staff. "We . . . were experiencing the same things. We were all around the same age, so it was easy to . . . relate. We could . . . go out and discuss our issues." In addition, she recognized the support of all teachers. "I ended up teaching junior high . . . I struggled for awhile, and the teachers . . . were very good support because they knew I was elementary." They told her that if, "they're being bad, just come and get me." She relied on their support. "As soon as they walk[ed] in, [the students would] stop." With the teachers' support, Jamie reported, "I walked in there more confidently . . ., and [the students] could see I was more confident." She reflected, "If I wouldn't have had support from other teachers, I don't think I would have made it through the year . . . 'cause [the students] were . . . so bad I could have left the room bawling half the time."

Jamie credited her principal with providing quick and effective support. "At the start of the year with my junior high I had a lot of problems and [went] to him." He advised her to send uncooperative students to him. She shared an example that proved the effectiveness of his support. She related, "Like my first week or two, I was told to f . . . off, so I was kind of shocked. I didn't know where to go from there . . . [The principal] and I had a discussion with [the student], and things were done, and [the student] was

better . . . [The student] didn't get away with it."

Jamie attributed her success to the adequate and timely intervention and support provided by her colleagues in the first few weeks of the school year. Jamie suggested that support taught the students it was the students' responsibility to treat her with respect "knowing that they [couldn't] treat her like that." The staff shared alternative strategies with Jamie. She admitted that she might not have discovered the solution to the restless of her ninth-grade option class on her own. "I probably would have kept going, but then the teachers said, 'Try this, try something else. They're sick of what you're doing with them . . ., so do something structured with them.'"

Jamie appreciated numerous incidents of support from parents and students. She remembered one parent telling her, "I'm really glad you came here." Jamie considers such comments to be "bonus" and proof that "you do get to some kids."

Chanelle was fortunate to have the support of many people throughout the year. She lists her support including, "parent support, principal support, other teachers supporting me, [and] the community."

Chanelle reported successful support from her students' parents. She shared that parents were pleased to have their children in a single-grade classroom, and she invited parents to her class. "They were . . . excited [their children] were going to have their own teacher, . . . excited that their kids were going to get all this attention, and they thought all my ideas were very original and neat." Chanelle engaged in "lots of communication with the parents." Often the parents would write supportive notes in the students' planners. "I got quite a few notes . . ., so that's been nice." Chanelle credited her students' good behavior to the support of the parents. ""My kids in my class are so good, because the

parents aren't saying negative things at home."

Chanelle suggested, "Principal support is number one." She explained that her principal supported her. She said, "She really loves first-year teachers." When asked how she knew this, she replied, "She told me." Chanelle knew that her principal supported her in all ways. She reminisced, "Anything that I wanted to do, she encouraged it, just supported everything, any activity I did in class she was behind me."

Chanelle reported several examples of support from other teachers. During the summer, when Chanelle was preparing for her first class, she had the benefit of a seeking advice from the Grade 1-2 teacher. Chanelle remembered, "she was here . . . every once in a while, she'd pop in and see how I was doing . . . She's been awesome . . . given me guidance . . . and she made sure I had her number in case I needed help." Chanelle shared, "Anytime I have a question, the teachers here are a . . . listening ear."

The beginning teachers sought support from multiple sources. The beginning teachers identified a close family member as their prime support. Tricia had her mother, and her husband and his family. Baxter, Chanelle and Arnold credited their parents for their ongoing support, and Jamie recognized her sister as the one who encouraged her. Besides family, the beginning teachers credited their peers with providing essential support. Tricia, Baxter, and Jamie each had a specific teacher-friend for support while Tricia listed other colleagues such as her vice-principal and library-aide. Jamie and Chanelle also mention other colleagues.

Four of the beginning teachers credited their principals. Chanelle shared that her principal explicitly valued her, and encouraged and supported her in everything. Most of the beginning teachers reported receiving support from the parents of their students, and

Arnold and Jamie credited the students themselves. Only two beginning teachers had formal mentors. Arnold's mentor was in school about an hour away; he did not view it as an adequate arrangement. Jamie's mentor, in same school, was helpful for curriculum matters. Arnold and Jamie relied on the support they received from the young teachers in their school. Jamie also relied on one of her former teachers.

The beginning teachers relied on their sources of informal support for interaction and personal and professional support. The support created credibility and legitimacy for them before their students. Their support also enabled the sharing of alternative strategies, and provided them with welcome assistance in solving student behavioural problems. Each source of support was beneficial.

Balance between Personal and Professional Life

The beginning teachers struggled with maintaining a balance between their personal and professional lives. They attempted to focus on their teaching responsibilities while caring for their personal interests. Each beginning teacher presented unique circumstances and distinctive solutions.

Tricia considered her family when she decided to accept a part-time job close to home; she had the option of taking a full-time job farther from her place of residence. Part-time employment was attractive to her "because [she] had a small child at home." She found teaching part-time less stressful than being a full-time student. She was getting more sleep and had more time for her child. She organized her time so she could do her school preparations while her child was in bed. "Being busy with a family . . . puts a lot of pressure on." Tricia took care not to become too involved in extracurricular activities so that she could be prepared for the classroom and have time for her family. She

reported maintaining a "good balance between family and school."

Baxter shared his philosophy of life when discussing team sports. "When I played on a team, [I was] there to play hard." When his basketball team folded, he was realistic. "I could coach another team . . . soccer . . ., and I like to snowboard. . . . I have a lot of other things to do with my time. . . . I took the ski trip this year, and that was pretty . . . good."

Being in a rural area, Baxter often lacked motivation to find something to do. He found that "if you're not motivated to really go out and do anything, it's tough to get anything done." To keep active and be involved, Baxter made an effort "to make it to some [community] events . . . to be out there and be seen." He shared, "I always try and make sure that I'm . . . one of the last few to . . . go home."

Arnold related that his "first semester was unbearable . . . by Christmas time I . . . [was] as close to stressed out . . . as I had ever been." Teaching consumed him. "I had no life really for the first four months." His daily routine was hectic.

> I was living at home . . ., so it was a 45 minute drive . . ., I [got] here about 7 o'clock in the morning and I [got] sort of prepared and then [taught] . . . I was here 'til about 7 'clock usually, 7, 8 o'clock at night, then I'd stop in [a neighboring town], work out, and be home by 10, 11. That was my first, at least two, three months.

His workload did not change much in the second semester. He picked up Social 20 and Health 8, but "at least [he] didn't have a [diploma exam] to prepare for." His experience with the Social 20 curriculum during his practicum helped to ease some of the preparation, and he had fewer students and less marking than he did in Social 30."I

marked essays, it'd take me another . . . five, six hours . . . with the 30s than the 20s."

Jamie shared that besides the fact that first-year teaching "no matter what, is going to be chaos," it was important that new teachers in small rural communities remain busy. Jamie felt "being busier was good, because [she] didn't have time to sit and think" about her situation. She coached the junior girl's volleyball team, and she kept busy outside of the school. "I'm enjoying it here, and . . . I'm getting involved in the community. . . . I'm coaching soccer." Jamie reported her involvement with extra-curricular activities helped to alleviate some of the distress of first-year teaching.

Chanelle found involvement in the community to be "a bit awkward" at first, but she realized that a person "really has to learn to make the best of it and get involved in the community." She "realized [she] had to have a life too, or [she was] not as effective in the classroom." Chanelle reported, "It's getting easier, and . . . the parents have just been great."

The beginning teachers balanced their personal and professional lives in individually significant ways. Tricia initially took part-time employment in consideration of her young family. She purposely organized her time with them in mind and was careful not to become too involved in extracurricular activities. Conversely, Baxter overcame his lack of personal motivation by keeping active and becoming involved in community events. Arnold maintained a workout routine to overcome the consuming nature of his teaching assignment. Jamie found it was important for her to remain busy after school hours to alleviate some of her distress. Chanelle found involvement in the community provided her with a sense of balance that allowed her to remain effective in her classroom. In their individual ways, the beginning teachers endeavored to balance

their intensely demanding professional lives with their personal lives.

Self-Satisfaction

The beginning teachers took personal satisfaction in claiming professional successes. They shared their reasons for satisfaction as they discussed their successes. Tricia's statement, "I feel successful; I have worked hard," clarified her perception of her experience as a beginning teacher. She concluded her interview with some revealing remarks:

> I love teaching even though it can be stressful, lot of pressure especially with middle school and high school students and the number of students, but I know them on an individual basis. I feel successful; I have worked hard.

Tricia took personal credit for, and ownership of, her success.

Much of Baxter's success may be the result of his personal tenacity to succeed. His passion to work with kids overcomes the negative aspects of the job. "If you're not really into it, it would be an awful job, an absolutely terrible job, if you . . . don't really love it, don't really like what you're doing." He attributed his strong ability to relate to kids and their parents as a definite asset within his success. "You're dealing with kids . . . [and] you're dealing with kids' parents which makes it a really tough job . . . 'cause the parents automatically jump to the defense of the kids." His definite answer to one of my questions seems to sum up the reason for his ability to succeed, "I never panic."

Arnold was pleased with his choice of professions. He shared, "I think it's one of the best jobs in the world. Great choice!" He knew he had worked hard and deserved the credit for a job well done.

Jamie expressed satisfaction with her choice of professions as she summed her

first-year teaching experience, "It's super, I couldn't ask for anything better." She hinted at her personal fortitude when she spoke about some aspects of teaching, "Once you've done it once, it's a breeze.

Chanelle summed her first-year teaching experience at her rural school as she passionately offered her thoughts in realistic terms:

> Teaching's a great profession to be in and I wouldn't, there's no other position, . . . no other job I'd rather have than teaching, . . . try to make the best of it. There are tiring, exhaustive days and days where you don't feel like you're doing your job, but the next day is usually better and the kids, just take the time to listen to their stories, because . . . they'll make your day lots of times. Lots of times you feel you're too busy to listen, but if you actually sit and listen to them, they make your day and they make your job so much more enjoyable, 'cause it's easy to just kind of, "Yeah, in a minute, I'm busy." you know, but sit and listen to them.

Chanelle knew her success rested on her personal ability.

The beginning teachers exhibited great satisfaction as they unabashedly lathered themselves with personal credit for achieving the professional status of succeeding as a first-year teacher. Their efficacy at the end of their first-year teaching experiences seemed to correspond to their respective individual abilities, strenuous efforts, ongoing diligence, and incessant initiative.

Synthesis

While the beginning teachers were proud of their successes and took personal ownership in them, they recalled examples of needless negative emotion and lack of communication. They described a state of constant learning and change. Their

professional development was mostly at their own initiative. They gave credit for informal support to a few staff members, some teacher mentors, their families, some close friends, and other school community members including the parents of their students. Through it all, they attempted to maintain a balance between their personal and professional lives. In the end, they expressed a deep sense of satisfaction in their respective strenuous efforts for a job well done.

Tricia felt she was the person mostly responsible for making her first year successful. She gave credit where credit was due, but she was not oblivious to the induction that could have been. She had worked hard to overcome the shortcomings of the responsibilities of others in her induction to teaching. It was that hard work and determination that helped her alleviate some of the stresses of being a beginning teacher. She took great pride in connecting with her students and making a difference in their lives.

Tricia wished that everyone around her had contributed to her induction. She felt she could have overcome her negative emotions easier by knowing what to expect, receiving reasons for decision that affected her, ensuring veteran teachers were coached how to relate to beginning teachers, and being made aware of standardized rules and procedures. The lack of communication with her administrator and her perception of his lack of overt induction support and supervision caused her great anxiety and disappointment. She felt unsupported, vulnerable, and dispensable. She perceived him as not caring about her. Because of her lack of experience, she also felt very anxious about reporting to and conferencing with parents. Other stressors included the size of some of her classes, the limited amount of time, and abrupt changes to her assignment.

Tricia was constantly learning, but her professional development was mostly on her own. She had diverse informal support, instruction, and care from colleagues, family, and friends. They shared ideas, strategies, and resources. She perceived they cared for her. She purposely took care to maintain a balance between her professional responsibilities and her personal life in an effort to avoid overburdening herself with extra responsibilities. Overall, she felt she was individually responsible for her success and took great pride in that ownership.

Baxter expressed a similar stance. If fate were the spark that ignited the fire, Baxter's passion and personal strengths were what fueled his fire in his most daunting experiences throughout the first year. The support shown him by his principal, his teacher-colleagues, and some parents fanned the flames and kept the fire burning. Baxter shared many thoughtful insights from his experience as a first-year teacher. Baxter was an example of a beginning teacher who successfully inducted into the teaching profession. Whether he succeeded on his own, with the support of others, or both, is worthy of further investigation.

He was passionate about helping students and being around people. He thoroughly enjoyed the interaction. Baxter had a clear understanding about teaching. He knew from the outset that the enjoyment he would reap in teaching would far outweigh the frustrations.

Ironically, what motivated him also caused him his greatest concern. He found student apathy for learning troublesome, because he took it personally. He tempted to examine himself for the cause, but he consciously took care not to take full responsibility. He tried to maintain his personal confidence in his ability to learn to teach and in his

interpersonal skills. In all conflicts, he took great care to make amends as necessary. Although he had feelings of disappointment when blamed for the lack of success of those in his care, he took great care not to nurse a grudge and to remain realistic. His incessant goal was to communicate successfully with parents and students. He was determined to make a successful transition from student to teacher role in his relations with both parents and students.

Support of the school community, including his students' parents, was a key factor in Baxter's continuance. His colleagues, his parents, and his teacher-friends also supported him. He was very appreciative for his colleagues' honesty. He was also grateful that, although his teaching style did not match the expectation of his central office supervisor's, his supervisor supported him wholeheartedly. Baxter reported he received beneficial curricular and classroom support from his principal, who invited Baxter to continually seek his assistance.

Baxter engaged in very little professional development with no follow-up. He credited himself with hard work. He admitted he often struggled with motivation in his personal life, and in an effort to overcome his lethargy, he determined to keep active and to get involved with his community. Overall, Baxter's personal tenacity, his passion, and his personal ability to relate to kids and their parents were instrumental in his successful induction.

Although Arnold was not as sure of his intentions, he tended to wonder about his career choice, he too took personal credit for achieving success. His successful teaching, modeled after that of his award-winning cooperating teacher, earned him a nomination for the Edwin Parr Award, which recognizes exceptional first-year teachers. His story left

no doubt about his achievement, and he proved to be a successful first-year teacher.

Arnold reported some emotional highs. By sharing his love of sports, he transformed a group of students with very little skill into a successfully competitive team. He also coached another group of students that eventually achieved record track and field results.

Arnold related several stressors as well. He found that negative attitudes of experienced teachers affected him negatively. He felt stressed awaiting the results from his first diploma examinations, he was concerned with time and what students might think if he asked for help, he experienced a heavy marking load, and he worked through a lack of curriculum support.

Arnold attempted to find his own solutions to problems. He came to realize he was instrumental in helping his students learn. He incorporated his personal experiences in his teaching. He experienced relief when his class achieved well. He purposely developed confidence in himself. He sought to increase his energy through daily physical activity. Over time, he received respect from the students and gained energy accordingly.

Arnold's evaluation was formal and of short duration. He was not concerned with the lack of formative evaluation because he was confident that he could do it on his own. He was keenly aware of his needs and actively pursued assistance from those he chose. He garnered support from his formal mentor, his parents, and other first-year colleagues, who offered moral support and advice. His hard work paid off with the receipt of a continuous contract. Arnold had no doubts that his success was his in which to revel.

Jamie's love of working with children and adults was the source of her passion. She aspired to be a "molders of dreams." She experienced both emotional highs and

extreme frustration. Her stressful workload was mostly due to a mismatch between her assignment and her training and interest.

Jamie realized the degree of her success was her responsibility. She came to teaching with the accurate preconception that first-year teaching would be hectic, that new teachers in small rural communities need to remain busy, that activity would help to counteract distress. Her experience was one of continuous learning, adjustment, and change. She was constantly aware of the need to focus on her students' interests. She desired to engage her students.

Jamie appreciated receiving early and effective intervention and support in the form of ongoing informal observation by her principal. She was grateful that her principal delayed her formal evaluation until she had overcome some of her initial struggles. She had a formal mentor and other teachers for support within her school. She participated both socially and professionally with her colleagues. Her colleagues provided adequate and timely intervention and support in the first few weeks. She also sought satisfying relationships with teachers outside of her school. Although Jaime attributes part of her success to her admission that she did not have all the solutions, she credits her retention to the many compliments she received from her students and their parents. The interaction of many people within the school community, along with her personal fortitude, helped her to survive a very trying first year of teaching.

Chanelle's motivation to teach was her initial anticipation of being an instrumental part in her students' success in academics and in their personal lives. She attributed her students' results to her efforts. Student success and parent comments confirmed her efforts.

Chanelle learned experientially of the amount of preparation and degree of teacher input – originality, creativity, and enthusiasm – needed. One area of greatest learning was around assessment. In her efforts to improve, she initiated and organized collaborative marking of Provincial Achievement exams with other third grade teachers in her school division.

Chanelle, too, actively sought support from others. She perceived total support from her principal. She considered her conferences with her principal, the ongoing support provided by her central office evaluator, confirmation from her students' parents (likely in response to her extensive communication with them), and the care shown to her by her colleagues to be key factors in her success. Another factor was her involvement in the community. It allowed her to maintain a healthy perspective.

Through it all, she persevered with patience knowing the good days would more than compensate for the bad days. From her conversation, there was much evidence to show that, beside support from others, she too felt her success was primarily a result of her personal ability and hard work.

From the interviews, themes emerged: themes of passion, emotion, communication, constant change, supervision and evaluation, professional development, informal support, balance between personal and professional life, and self-satisfaction. As in their individual stories, their personal tenacity to succeed dominated the themes. Their personal and professional efficacy seemed to be the foundation for their success.

Their passion to be influential in the lives of their students resulted in great degree of personal satisfaction. It helped them to endure distress and balance their negative experiences and negative emotions: feelings of incompetence, ambiguity and uncertainty,

intimidation, tension between parents and school, and disappointment with an active and positive outlook. They did not dwell on conflict or negativity; in fact, they often attempted to initiate resolution. They valued openness and honesty. They placed blame where blame was due, and they maintained a high professional standard for themselves as they engaged in their beginning year of teaching.

Their supervision and evaluation was inclusive of a wide range of models and strategies. Informal supervision was ongoing and helpful; formal summative evaluations occurred in the spring. One beginning teacher received no formal supervision or evaluation; another received coaching during his evaluation process. Others experienced formal observations with subsequent conferences and ongoing discussions followed by a written appraisal.

Their professional growth was mostly classroom-centered as they adapted to often changing assignments. They attempted to meet the divergent needs of their students by focusing on curriculum, classroom and time management, planning, assessment, reporting, and learning the norms, expectations, rules, and procedures of their school communities. Each beginning teacher seemed to understand the need for lifelong learning.

The beginning teachers received their support from a multiplicity of sources. Two beginning teachers experienced formal mentorship, albeit one mentor was located in a neighboring school. The beginning teachers actively sought most support. Informal sources of support materialized in the form of friends, family, and community members. The support from school staff ranged from congenial and social to professional and collegial. Collegial support seemed to increase the beginning teachers' credibility and

legitimacy with their students and their students' parents, allowed for the sharing of alternative strategies, and assisted with influencing student behaviour.

The beginning teachers intrinsically understood the importance of balance between their personal and professional lives. They each responded to their uniquely different circumstances with correspondingly distinctive solutions. Their strategies ranged from preserving energy to increasing motivation. One beginning teacher purposely engaged in part-time employment and was careful not to burden herself with extracurricular activities. Other beginning teachers purposely became involved in extra-curricular activities and community events. Another beginning teacher assumed a workout regime in his efforts to take care of himself.

The beginning teachers experienced similar situations in similar ways in their quest to successfully complete their first-year teaching. They experienced a range of emotions. They learned the value of communication. They received little formal support; most of their support was informal. Most were subjects of at least minimal supervision and evaluation. They managed their own continuous learning and change, sought professional development, and attempted to balance their personal and professional lives.

Overall, the beginning teachers attributed their own initiative, abilities, and skills to their success. They remained self-motivated. They personally resolved to be successful. They looked for success in their students as the primary indicator of their successes. They realized deep feelings of satisfaction, they relied on short bursts of elation, and they maintained a spirit of optimism. Their efficacy at the end of their first-year teaching experiences seemed to correspond to their strenuous efforts, their ongoing diligence, and their incessant initiative. Because of their personal tenacity, along with the

support of those around them, they persevered and subsequently succeeded at their first year of teaching in rural Alberta schools.

The next chapter will discuss induction support factors relevant to rural Alberta beginning teachers including many factors relevant to all beginning teacher inductions. The factors will be extracted from the profiles and themes derived from the responses of the five beginning teachers in light of the literature review. The chapter discusses factors that promise to deliver successful support for beginning teachers in rural Alberta schools.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The rural Alberta beginning teachers' inductions in this study, like the relationships they produced, occurred embedded (Johnson et al., 2001) in their respective roles and situations. Some of the relationships in the study were purposeful and a limited number were assigned and formal but many of the induction relationships were voluntary similar to reports by Samier (2000) and Billett (2003). Most relationships occurred incidentally and continued informally.

Besides growth from the formal and intentional interventions, the beginning teachers also realized personal and professional growth because of the relationships that occurred incidentally. Such relationships often commenced out of necessity and continued because of proximity. Most induction relationships within the study occurred informally in the respective school communities with interaction throughout the year.

The districts and schools provided additional financial assistance (Alleman & Clarke, 2000) to provide release time for beginning teachers to attend the Beginning Teachers' Conference and other professional development activities (Poe, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002; Swap et al., 2001).

Another induction support was the appropriate matching of beginning teacher and assignment (Field, 2001; Halford, 1998; Moench, 2002; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2002). Two teachers received assignments within their areas of expertise. The other teachers received assignments in a variety of areas and grade levels. There seemed to be limited matching of the responsibilities within the beginning teachers' assignments with their limited experiences and abilities.

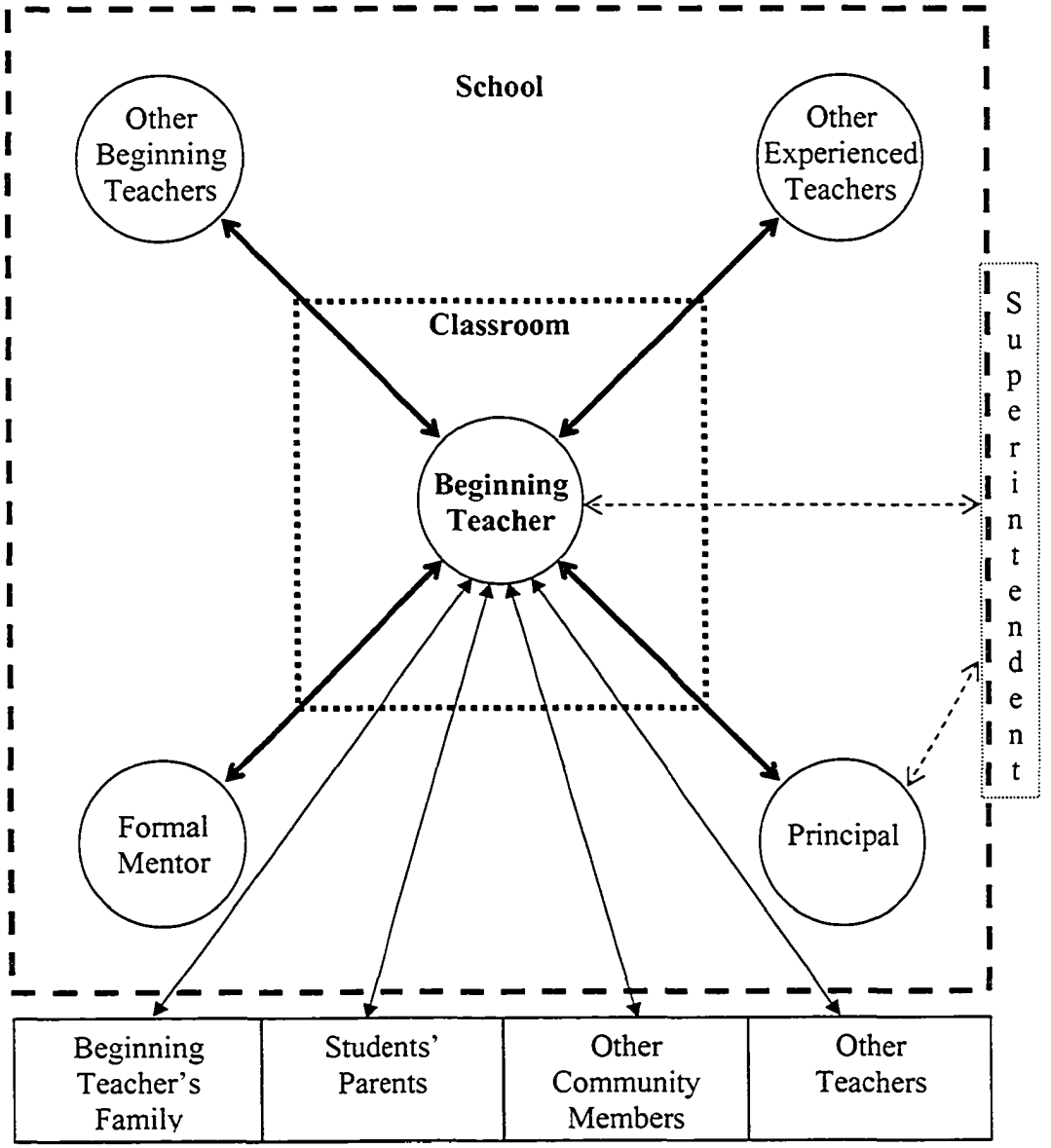
Induction Players in the Rural Alberta Schools

The central player in the beginning teachers' induction in rural Alberta schools was the beginning teacher (see Figure 2). Support for beginning teachers occurred in two ways. It came to the beginning teachers by invitation of the beginning teachers, and it was provided spontaneously, without invitation, by members of two general support groups. The primary group consisted of two key players: principals and the teacher colleagues in the schools. For the most part teacher colleagues mentored informally. The secondary support groups consisted of the teacher's family, teacher associates from other schools and districts, the parents of the beginning teacher's students, and other school community members. Besides the two groups of supports, superintendents or designates were involved in the induction process as evaluators in two cases and as facilitator of the formal mentorship program in two other cases. Chanelle had the support of a central office supervisor throughout the year, and Baxter's superintendent took an active role in his summative evaluation. Arnold and Jamie participated in their district's formal mentorship program.

The beginning teachers shared some examples of interaction between the induction players and groups of players. Some interaction likely occurred between the central office evaluators and the principals. Similarly, the central office personnel that facilitated the mentorship programs for two of the beginning teachers must have interacted with the beginning teachers, their mentors, and their principal. The mentorship supper meetings also provided additional opportunities for beginning teachers to interact with other colleagues. Besides the efforts of central office personnel and principals, the responsibility for creating relationships and interaction remained first

with the beginning teacher and second with the principal and individual teacher colleagues.

Figure 2. Key Players in Beginning Teacher Induction in Rural Alberta



The Beginning Teachers

The successful beginning teachers seemed to be well-matched for teaching in rural Alberta. Each of the beginning teachers had lived, and most of them had received all

of their schooling, within rural communities. Three of the beginning teachers wanted to teach specifically in rural areas, and another included rural areas in his job search. Of the four beginning teachers that wanted to teach in rural schools, one wanted to be near family and friends, one wanted to work in a familiar area, another perceived the rural setting to be less stressful, and the fourth was open to more than one option. The fifth beginning teacher was grateful for his rural teaching employment even though teaching in a rural area was not his first choice.

Each of the beginning teachers paraded examples of successful pre-service work with children. They had babysat, tutored, coached, refereed, led 4-H and summer programs, or taught Sunday School. Each had a genuine desire to be involved with children, and more specifically they desired to teach children.

The beginning teachers had dispositions that predicted success. They had personal confidence in their ability to learn to teach. They determined to make successful transitions from student to teacher roles. They maintained a high professional standard for themselves. Their personal and professional efficacy was the foundation for their success; their personal tenacity to succeed was a dominant factor. They realized their degree of success was their own responsibility and knew that success came with hard work and determination. They had personal tenacity. They were committed to their inductions; they took responsibility for a successful start to their careers and to their professional growth within the classroom (Johnson et al., 1999; Rymer, 2002; Samier, 2000). They felt individually responsible for their own inductions and took pride in that ownership.

The beginning teachers were motivated to succeed (Samier, 2000). Each teacher

sought personal and professional satisfaction. They were passionate about working with children. They desired to make a difference in the lives of their students. They took pride in connecting with their students. They were confident of their interpersonal skills. They thoroughly enjoyed the personal interactions teaching afforded them. They understood the required amount of preparation and the necessary degree of teacher input needed. They had an accurate preconception that first-year teaching would be hectic, but they anticipated the enjoyment of teaching would far outweigh the frustrations. They persevered with patience knowing the good days would more than compensate for the bad days.

Their central locations enabled and obliged them to form induction relationships with other players within the school community, primarily with their principals and their teacher colleagues. Although the beginning teachers were physically situated at the center of their inductions, over the year they intentionally and purposefully centered themselves psychologically in their induction processes as well. Over time, they attempted to assess their needs and understand their expectations (Field, 2001). They realized they were primarily responsible for their growth, recognized their need for supportive relationships, and understood that they must actively and purposefully build appropriate relationships to secure their support (Johnson et al., 1999; Rymer, 2002; Samier, 2000). They sought assistance (Shaffer et al., 2000) and purposefully engaged in supportive relationships (Lee et al., 2000; Schaffer et al., 2000). The support they sought from school staff ranged from congenial and social to professional and collegial. They actively pursued assistance from others as well, including their own parents and families and their teacher-friends outside of the school.

Through the induction process, the beginning teachers strove to keep positive attitudes. Although they experienced feelings of incompetence, ambiguity and uncertainty, intimidation, and disappointment, they did not dwell on negative emotions. They attempted to initiate resolution of problems, sometimes overtly and assertively and other times more personally and reflectively. They valued openness and honesty, accepted blame when it was due, and deflected unmerited blame. They relied on short bursts of elation to maintain their sense of optimism. Through it all, they endeavoured to maintain high professional standards for themselves.

The beginning teachers had an intrinsic understanding of the importance of balance in their personal and professional lives. They realized they required a healthy degree of energy to teach. They sensed that having energy increased their motivation and decreased their levels of distress. Conversely, they also realized that being motivated and experiencing less distress increased their energy level. They attempted to protect their energy levels in a number of ways. One beginning teacher assumed a workout regime in efforts to remain healthy. The beginning teachers assessed their energy levels and abilities before participating in optional activities and accepting extra-curricular assignments (Johnson, 2001; Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997). With the exception of the beginning teacher with a family, the beginning teachers purposely became involved in extra-curricular activities and community events. Alternatively, the former beginning teacher attempted to preserve her energy by not accepting too many extracurricular duties.

The beginning teachers took personal credit for achieving their successes. They rightly felt they were the ones who were mostly responsible for making their first years

successful. They attributed the achievement of their successes to their own initiative, abilities, and skills. Their students' successes and the comments from their students' parents confirmed their attributions.

The Primary Support Group

The Principal. The following description of the principals' role in the successful inductions of the five beginning teachers derived from the responses of the beginning teachers, and as such were their perceptions; no principals were interviewed during the study. The beginning teachers shared examples of administrative efforts provided to ensure their successful induction support within the school community (Marlow & Inman, 1997). For the most part, the principals also assumed the more formal parts of the induction process especially supervision and evaluation. Most administrators actively involved themselves in formative supervision and summative evaluation.

Although Tricia reported her administration did not provide any formal supervision or evaluation during her first year at the school, she shared from a previous experience where her principal would caution her as he provided strategies, that not every strategy worked for every teacher. After she tried the strategy, they would talk again to discuss how well the strategy worked for her. She felt the process was relaxed. The focus was on how well the strategy worked for her and not on how well she was able to implement the strategy. Tricia related that the experience was more effective than providing a formal checklist as did evaluators from other settings. She found such formal evaluations intimidating. "It was almost too structured, like I was getting picked apart, and it was just too overwhelming."

Baxter recognized for himself that he struggled with certain aspects of teaching

and specifically with a certain program. He sought his principal, who provided the necessary curriculum support and resources. His principal continuously invited him to seek his help, "Come in anytime you need help." Even with the invitation, Baxter felt intimidated, but the principal was always reassuring. His principal also spent time in the classroom to make sure Baxter and his students were learning. Baxter was grateful for his principal's approach. He recognized that his principal was key to his success.

Unlike Baxter, Arnold worried about the students' perception of his ability if his principal came to the classroom. Much to Arnold's relief, his principal waited until the second semester to conduct any formal supervision, a summative evaluation including three observations. The principal presented a written report and discussed it with Arnold. The evaluation did not cause Arnold great stress, he took the feedback as an opportunity for further growth.

Jamie appreciated her principal's early and informal observations. Jamie's principal informally observed her classroom several times during the first semester. He invited her to seek his support, and he allowed her to reject his offer of an early start to the evaluation process. They were both comfortable with the ongoing and informal supervision. Jamie was concerned that an early start to a formal evaluation would disrupt her growth as a teacher. She had control of her classes and was experiencing enough success to enable continuance of her progress. By the time of her formal evaluation, three observations and a written appraisal, she was well-prepared to show her success.

Studies of successful inductions found principals explicitly assured support for beginning teacher induction in their schools (Field, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Samier, 2000). Chanelle's principal explicitly told her from the start that she loved

beginning teachers. The principal's subsequent actions supported her words. Chanelle related, "Anything that I wanted to do, [the principal] encouraged it, just supported everything. Any activity I did in class, she was behind me." She perceived her principal's total support. Chanelle's principal conducted three formal evaluations (observation, written notes, and a conference) evenly spaced throughout the year. The ongoing conferences became the forums for professional dialogues between two colleagues.

From the literature and the perspectives of the beginning teachers, principals supported successful inductions of beginning teachers. The principals guided the beginning teachers as they developed their classroom management, and they supervised their teaching and their students' learning (Johnson, 2001; Stansbury, 2001; Wilson and Ireton, 1997). They intentionally scheduled observations within the beginning teachers' classrooms, provided feedback, and provided affirmation for the beginning teacher (Brock & Grady, 1998). As instructional leaders, the principals offered their unique perspectives. They assisted in the beginning teachers' development of professional visions and philosophies of teaching and learning (Brock & Grady, 1998). For the most part, the principals were available to support the beginning teachers, especially as they required support. The principals were sensitive to the needs of the beginning teachers, and they were careful not to force the induction process to move ahead prematurely. The principals gave the beginning teachers a degree of responsibility and autonomy as they assimilated themselves within the school culture (Ponticell & Zepeda, 1997).

The Formal Mentor. Arnold and Jamie's district assigned them to formal mentors. The district supported their formal mentorship program financially (Alleman & Clarke, 2000) by providing several supper meetings for the two beginning teachers and

their formal mentor partners. The district attempted to appropriately match the formal mentoring partners (Johnson et al., 2001; Poe, 2002). Jamie's mentorship within the same school appeared beneficial, Arnold's mentorship from a neighboring school in another community was less effective. Arnold suggested the match would have been more beneficial if it had involved a mentor that was committed to the relationship, had a similar teaching style, and was located within the same school. In both cases, the relationship focused on curriculum matters.

Experienced Teachers. Other experienced teachers participated in induction support as informal mentors fulfilling their professional responsibility of professional colleagues in the room next door or down the hall. They attempted to provide professional and personal assistance. In any case, they answered their professional obligation to lead the beginning teachers into the profession (Billett, 2003).

Tricia considered herself fortunate to return to the school of her youth. She had the opportunity to continue her relationships with the staff, this time as colleagues. She relied on the experienced teachers, including her mother, to listen to her and to guide her with their feedback. Some of the experienced teachers intentionally and purposefully attempted to mentor her. They spent time with her to get to know her better. They tried to anticipate what she might need to know. Most instructed her privately and professionally, and they attempted to assured her that she was being successful. "'You have nothing to worry about, you [are] doing fine.'" Tricia valued her colleagues and suggested they were part of the reason she loved to go to school. "We go to see our friends, and we go to see our colleagues as much as we come to do our job." She felt their care and concern for her as a beginning professional and as a person.

Baxter also expressed his appreciation for a supportive staff. He reported that the experienced teachers provided support at crucial times. He specifically valued stories of their struggles. He appreciated their honesty.

Arnold and Jamie received moral support and advice from their colleagues. Both Arnold and Jamie benefited from close relationships with colleagues that provided adequate and timely intervention and support in the first few weeks. Their colleagues provided an assortment of helpful advice. One experienced teacher helped Jamie take initiative and to fulfil her responsibilities as a professional colleague. Jamie valued their support with classroom management. "I walked in [the classroom] more confidently . . ., and [the students] could see I was more confident." Both Arnold and Jamie also relied on their younger colleagues for socialization.

Chanelle attributed the care shown to her by her colleagues to be a key factor in her success. As she was preparing to teach, "[she] went and met with other teachers, seen what they were doing, borrowed some stuff." Chanelle reported several examples of support from other teachers during the year, "Anytime I have a question, the teachers here are a . . . listening ear."

Experienced teachers helped the beginning teachers adjust to the profession, the classroom, the school, and the community. (Johnson et al., 1999). For the most part, they attempted to reduce the beginning teachers' distress (Johnson et al., 1999). They seriously considered the concerns of beginning teachers (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). They attempted to help the beginning teachers deal with feelings of frustration (Johnson, 2001; Stansbury, 2001). They invited beginning teachers to ask questions (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). They provided socialization support (Blake-Beard, 2001; Godshalk & Sosik,

2000; Heck & Wolcott, 1997; Hill & Grant, 2000; Johnson et al., 1999; Kleinman et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2000; O'Neill & Sankowsky, 2001; O'Reilly, 2001; Swap et al., 2001).

Other Beginning Teachers. Most of the beginning teachers did not have the fortune of having other beginning teachers in their schools as did Arnold and Jamie. In their cases, the beginning teachers in their school provided support for each other. Arnold reported that he "gained support from other first-year teachers at [his] school." They listened to each other and provided moral support and advice. Jamie especially appreciated discussing with peers that "were experiencing the same things."

The Secondary Support Group

Besides the primary support group, the beginning teachers' families, other community members, their students' parents, and teacher-friends from other schools supported the beginning teachers. The beginning teachers had natural and continuous connections with their families. They made intentional contacts with their teacher-friends to receive their support. They built connections and created situations to receive support from their students' parents. Support from other community members was incidental.

Beginning Teacher's Family. The beginning teachers credited members of their families for personal and professional support. The beginning teachers each had at least one teacher within their families. Relationships with these family members provided an initial and foundational understanding of the teaching profession. They were also available during the beginning teachers' first year for ongoing consultation and encouragement. Tricia received professional and personal support from her mother. She relied on her husband and his family for personal support as well. Baxter and Arnold credited their parents for ongoing support. Jamie recognized her sister as the one who

encouraged her, and she also received support from her aunt. Chanelle professional advice from some of her aunts and uncles.

Other Community Members. Tricia expressed her gratitude for the library-aide's assistance with "anything from getting used to the computers . . . to finding resources . . . or lesson plans on the computer." Baxter and Chanelle listed the community as part of their support. Jamie was grateful for her interaction with many people from the school community.

Students' Parents. Tricia received positive feedback from parents. "I had some good feedback from parents too." She was very grateful. "Thank goodness for the . . . parents' feedback." Baxter included parental support as another key source of support. He shared a supportive encounter with a student's parent at a community function that provided him with a sense of support. Jamie appreciated numerous incidents of support from parents and students including a parent that told her, "I'm really glad you came here." Chanelle experienced much success with the parents of her students to the amount of communication she shared with them. She shared that parents were pleased to have their children in her classroom, and that she often received supportive notes from them. She attributed her students' success to the support she received from the parents. "My [students] are so good, because the parents aren't saying negative things at home."

Teacher-Friends from Other Schools. Tricia's professional support outside of the school centered on a friend who was a teacher in another school. They "would talk a lot about teaching and share ideas and strategies." Tricia especially valued having other teachers as friends. Baxter reported some of his support came from his and his parents' teacher-friends. Jamie consulted former teachers and a teacher-friend. Chanelle organized

other teachers in her district to collaboratively mark Provincial Achievement exams.

Factors Specific to Successful Induction in Rural Alberta Schools

Many factors within the discussion were characteristic of any beginning teacher induction. Thus, the factors also related to successful beginning teacher inductions in rural Alberta. The study to this point provided answers to the main question that drove the study: What factors support rural Alberta beginning teachers in the first few years of teaching? However, four factors became evident that were specifically descriptive of rural inductions.

First, four of the successful beginning teachers desired to live in rural Alberta. They wanted to return to their families or to settings similar to those they experienced as children. Second, they aspired to teach in rural schools. Third, in support of their search, each beginning teacher had pre-service experience with activities in which rural children might be involved, such as sports and 4-H. Fourth, the beginning teachers depended on their families, friends, students' parents and other local community members for support. The parents and other community members provided professional recognition to the beginning teachers and confirmed their choice of settings.

Summary

Many factors, most similar to the induction of any teacher regardless of location and some more specific to rural areas, were observed in the successful rural Alberta beginning teachers' inductions. The successful beginning teachers had fitting backgrounds including appropriate qualities and experiences that predisposed them to success. They were motivated to teach rural children. In addition, a range of induction

players in the school communities provided adequate support for their professional growth.

Having lived and attended public schools in rural Alberta, the beginning teachers were well-matched for teaching in their rural schools. They had successful pre-service experience working with rural children and understood the children's customary activities. The beginning teachers' backgrounds enabled them to connect with their rural students.

During their inductions, the beginning teachers took immediate and continuous responsibility for their successes. Their motivation to teach rural children centered on making a difference in the lives of their students. They willed to grow professionally. They consciously reached for high professional standards. Their active pursuit of success left little wonder that, in the end, they attributed their successful induction achievements largely to their own initiative and attention.

The beginning teachers, as the central induction players, energetically proceeded through their inductions actively seeking the interactive support of their principals, colleagues, families, teacher-friends, and community members. While the beginning teachers with formal mentors received some curriculum assistance, most of the beginning teachers received formative supervision from their principals and all of them experienced mentoring relationships with the experienced teachers near them. The principals assumed the more formal parts of the induction process actively involving themselves in formative supervision and summative evaluation. They encouraged the beginning teachers to seek their support, but they allowed them the opportunity to help decide when and how to proceed. The principals carefully watched and sensitively guided the progress of the

beginning teachers as they experienced their inductions and grew professionally. The experienced teachers provided a range of supports, both personally and professionally.

In the end, the beginning teachers were successful. They made the transition from being students to taking on the role and responsibilities of professional teachers. They achieved a professional standard of performance during their first year of teaching, and they received professional recognition for their performance from the members of their school communities.

Chapter 7

Fanning the Flames: Conclusions, Recommendations, and Reflections

This study explored the induction support factors of the five rural Alberta beginning teachers by focusing on the findings, as found in their profiles and themes, and the factors that emerged within the reviewed literature. Although many factors discussed were applicable to any beginning teacher, the total package of factors showed promise for successful beginning teacher support in rural Alberta schools. The study concludes with a picture of successful beginning teacher induction in rural Alberta including many factors similar to most successful teacher inductions, recommendations for induction providers to consider, and reflections of the study in general.

A Picture of Successful Rural Alberta Beginning Teacher Induction

Beginning teachers undergo a transition from being a student to taking on the role and responsibilities of a professional teacher. In making the transition to the profession and achieving a professional standard of performance during their first year of teaching, beginning teachers seek and receive supportive inductions at their schools. They realize they are responsible for the success of their induction and thus for their professional growth. They recognize their responsibility to engage in learning relationships with their professional colleagues. They attempt to build personal and professional support networks. They seek supportive and growth-oriented relationships with their principals, their colleagues (experienced and beginning), their families and friends, and other community members. They reciprocate by sharing their expertise. They seek and benefit from formative supervision. Beginning teacher take responsibility for their careers and their professional growth. They actively endeavour to understand their needs and to know

their expectations, and then they learn how to succeed.

They learn how to ask for help, how to pursue supportive relationships, and how to form or join networks. They participate in professional development opportunities within their schools and throughout the province. They learn to focus on their achievements, to show their professionalism by publicizing their knowledge, skills, and attributes, and to celebrate their achievement, creativity, and motivation. They learn to invite community and parental support through effective communication. They learn to realize and garner the excellent support of grateful parents and students. They learn to maintain balance between personal and professional aspects of their lives. They learn to care for their personal interests while focusing on their teaching responsibilities. They learn to involve themselves carefully in extra-curricular activities within the school community and avoid being consumed by their work.

Through all their learning, the beginning teachers find personal satisfaction by claiming professional successes. They take personal credit for, and ownership of, their successes. They remain focused on their passion to work with children. They revel in their individual abilities, their strenuous efforts, their ongoing diligence, and their incessant initiative.

In successful beginning teacher inductions, balance between coordinated and spontaneous support is evident. Directed efforts by district and school administrators alone do not produce enough support to ensure successful inductions. Alternatively, relying only on spontaneous and informal mentoring relationships leaves too much to chance and may prolong learning past the point of need, significance, and value. Both formal mentoring relationships and informal learning relationships occur in successful

inductions.

The focus remains on the pool of mentors rather than the design of the program, on the growth of the beginning teachers rather than their careers. Successful inductions involve collective responsibility and require a team approach. They necessitate numerous relationships with a range of mentors of many backgrounds and continuous interaction with teachers of differing levels of experience. Diversity creates powerful networks. Supportive relationships with others of any age, at work, within professional associations, and in personal pursuits, fuel successful support. The support of others provides credibility and legitimacy in the beginning teachers' classrooms before their students and their students' parents and throughout the larger school community.

All induction players attempt to show beginning teachers they are accepted and valued by the whole school community. There is a concerted effort to assist the beginning teachers with their professional identity development, helping them to realize a sense of belonging to and being part of a cause, a sense of making a difference in their students lives.

Continuous and committed action comes from those situated in positions of authority, and those near the beginning teacher. There is no doubt that district leaders support the inductions, but the key position in the support of beginning teacher induction is the principal, a leader in the school community and the primary authority in the school building.

Principals ensure they have a working understanding of current research in beginning teacher induction. They learn how to plan and support the inductions. They understand the importance of allowing beginning teachers individual choice and

increasing independence. They understand the beginning teachers' need to construct their own professional reality. Supportive administrators provide a balance between granting autonomy to their beginning teachers in the use of new ideas as a basis for learning how to teach and encouraging assimilation within the school.

Principals ensure procedural and policy support including clear objectives supported with sufficient budgets to support induction resources and time. They carefully create beginning teachers' assignments to match their limited teaching experience, abilities, knowledge, and skills considering course type and load, students instructional and behavioural needs, and attributes of students' parents. They host an orientation at the beginning of the year with opportunities for sharing expectations, learning expected behaviours and rules, learning the culture of the school, becoming familiar with norms and values, and understanding the goals and politics of the school. They unabashedly share their philosophies, expectations, and ideas as to what good teaching involves. They invite beginning teachers to question, argue and explore; and to seek assistance.

Principals foster professional collaboration and secure the cooperation of colleagues to support beginning teachers. They ensure mentoring relationships, focused on developmental needs and improving teaching performance, are initiated and supported at the school and within the community. They understand the need for voluntary involvement of all induction players. They realize relationships of mutual trust stimulate learning. They encourage strong relationships based on mutuality and similarities. They ensure participants possess the necessary interpersonal skills. They provide opportunities, including release time, for interaction and collaboration, dialogue and reflection.

Principals assist the beginning teachers with managing their classrooms; they

oversee instruction and learning and support the management of student behaviour. They teach the students it is the students' responsibility to treat new teachers with respect. They help beginning teachers to avoid social blunders, to create successful relationships with other teachers, parents, and community members. They protect beginning teachers from volunteer overload. They provide for opportunities for involvement in many facets of the school community, not in a teaching role but as observers, learners, and guests to learning the culture of the community without the added pressure of obligation and burdensome responsibility.

Principals provide formative supervision throughout the year and conduct summative evaluations. They carefully delineate between induction assistance and evaluation. They encourage professional growth and provide professional development opportunities both within and away from the school.

Experienced teachers actively assist the principal with many aspects of induction support listed above. They continuously accept, support, and respect beginning teachers throughout their inductions. As proof of their professionalism, they readily adapt their dated philosophies and methods as they encourage the beginning teachers to rightfully be change agents within the school as they bring new practices based on current research.

All induction players within the school have a clear understanding of their school culture and possess high levels of interpersonal skills. Explicit induction training occurs for both the beginning teachers and other induction players. All players learn to communicate; to dialogue; and to listen, respond, and respect one another.

Meaningful learning opportunities exist. Frequent, perhaps daily, occurrences of interaction and collaboration with a variety of experienced teachers exist. Shared

experiences transform information into shared knowledge. Reciprocal visits take place between beginning and experienced teachers classrooms for beginning teachers to observe experienced teachers and for experienced teachers to observe beginning teachers in their respective classrooms. Dialogue, reflection, and guidance and feedback are commonplace. The feedback focuses on the task, not on the person. Collaboration encompasses lesson planning, curriculum administration, classroom management, time utilization, and student behaviour.

Other sources of support exist in the school community. Families (often including teachers), parents of the beginning teachers' students, and other community members provide continuous assistance, encouragement, and recognition. Beginning teachers also consult their teacher-friends from other schools.

Recommendations

Several recommendations are suggested to promote successful inductions in rural Alberta schools.

Be Pre-emptive. Recruit beginning teachers that predictably will achieve success in rural schools. Recruit beginning teachers exhibiting a desire to live in a rural setting and to teach children in rural schools, presenting experience working with rural children, and demonstrating an understanding of their personal and professional needs. Recruit teachers that have appetites for successful rural teaching careers.

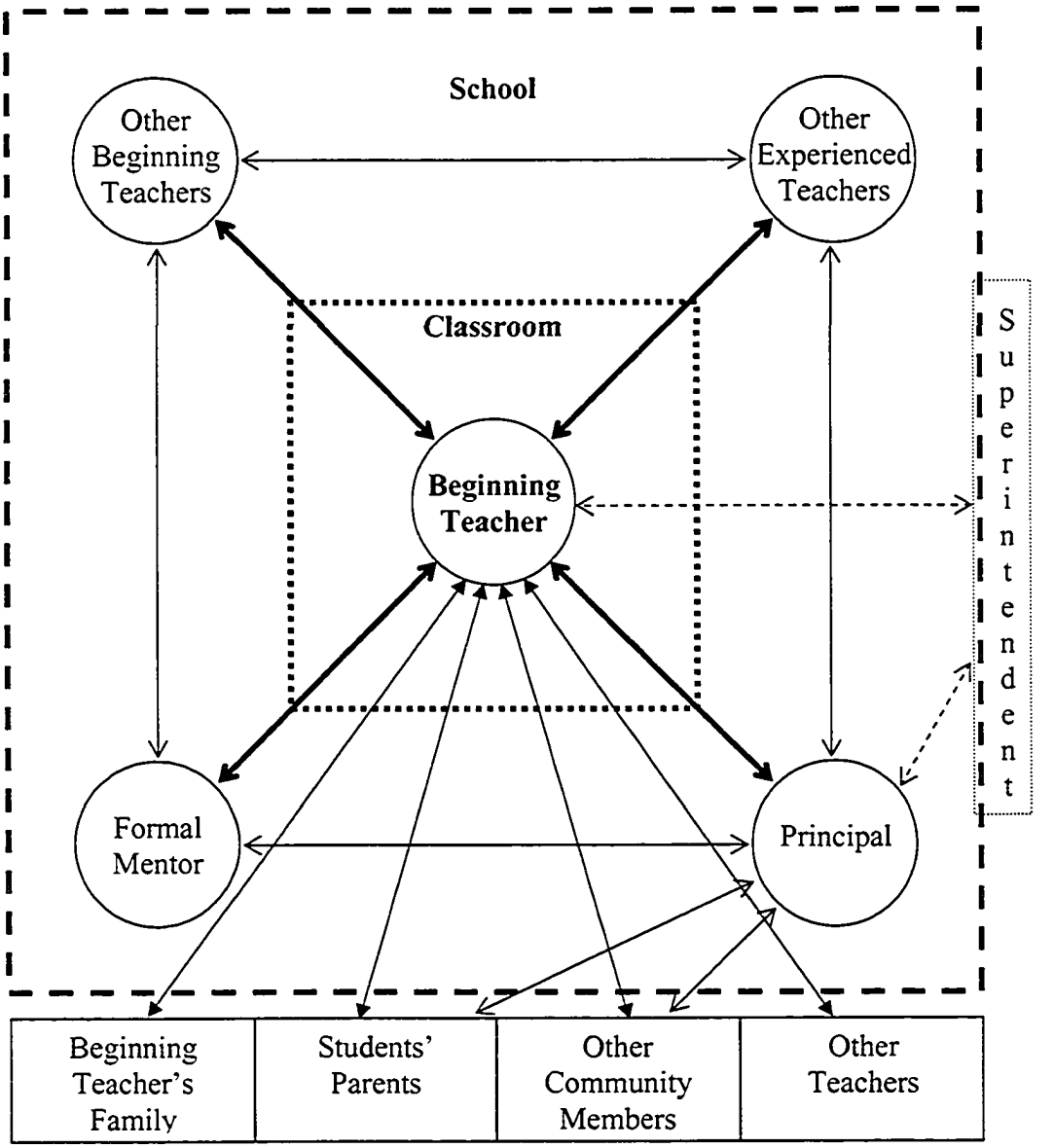
Be Informed. Grasp the insensitivity within the profession's historical treatment of beginning teachers and the tragic evidence of early career attrition statistics. Understand the beginning teachers' numerous needs as they face their fears and overcome the challenges of first-year teaching. Appreciate that effective mentoring

increases satisfaction, knowledge, and commitment; reduces uncertainty, stress, burnout and early career attrition; and fosters growth (Kleinman et al., 2001).

Be Intentional. Prepare for successful beginning teacher inductions. Create policy and procedural support for induction (Field, 2001; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Samier, 2000). Specify roles and responsibilities for members of the primary support group, principals and teachers. Ensure clear induction objectives and adequate resources of financial support (Alleman & Clarke, 2000) and release time (Poe, 2002; Swap et al., 2001). Promote supportive growth-oriented voluntary relationships, taking care not to create burdensome programs (Samier, 2000), nor to leave the building of relationships to chance (O'Reilly, 2001). Build opportunities for frequent communication and exchanges.

Be Interactive and Collaborative. Approach the induction of beginning teachers as a team. Build interaction and collaborative support (Edwards, G. L., Green, K. E., & Lyons, C. A., 2002; Johnson et al., 2001) into the relationships within the induction model (see Figure 3). Encourage and ensure interaction between the beginning teacher and all players within the model. Within the school, ensure interaction and collaboration for induction between the principal and experienced teachers. Provide and encourage opportunities for one-to-one interaction and collaboration for induction between beginning teachers and other teachers, i.e., beginning and experienced teachers including formal mentors. Provide and encourage opportunities for group interaction and collaboration for induction between groups of teachers, i.e., groups of beginning teachers, experienced teachers, and formal mentors. Ensure interaction and collaboration between the school and the secondary support groups too, specifically between the principal the beginning teachers' parents and between the principal and the other community members.

Figure 3. Collaborative Support for Beginning Teacher Induction in Rural Alberta



Be Growth Focused. Garner support from the total school community for the beginning teachers' professional recognition. Interact within the school for professional collaboration. Collaborate within the classroom to generate professional growth. Maintain focus on professional growth (Bokeno & Gantt, 2002). Enable formative supervision and prepare the beginning teachers for successful summative evaluations

through continuous interaction between the principal and the beginning teachers. Fulfil professional obligation to support the professional growth of beginning teachers through interaction between the principal and the experienced teachers. Facilitate the beginning teachers' realizations of their passion for teaching children in rural Alberta. Empower the beginning teachers to direct their energies towards their teaching, their professional growth, and their students' learning (Edwards et al., 2002).

Reflections

This study gave me the opportunity to design and conduct a research project. As I reflected on the study I began to evaluate negatively, but I stopped, changed direction, and thought of the positive aspects including ideas for improvement. The core of my study was reasonable. I had a question, searched the literature for background information, revised my question, and designed a study. The design included many interview questions. I conducted a pilot study and subsequently shortened the schedule drastically. In my excitement, I plunged head on into four interviews with beginning teachers. I got more excited with each interview. I was actually conducting research!

With my excitement boosting my energy, I began to transcribe the interviews anticipating the next step of watching as themes emerged from the data. My excitement and my energy, however, were no match for the task of transcribing. I soon contracted the task to a friend that had the necessary skills and ambition. In the end, the contract only cost me a few weeks of using my construction skills to help build her mother's garage. It was a small price to pay for a seemingly insurmountable task.

With the transcribing done, I set out to find those emergent themes that I had heard so much about in my research courses. At first, the themes were elusive. I read and

re-read the transcripts. I listened to the taped interviews, more than once. The data seemed too numerous and too varied to tackle. Finally, I printed another set of transcripts and started again as per the instructions of my research supervisor. Using highlighters of many colors, it was not very long until commonalities began to emerge. Themes! Themes at last! No, it was not as quick and easy as it sounds, but over a period of several weeks the themes did emerge and arrange themselves. Alas, they were not themes that I had anticipated. I had wanted to find problems to solve, problems for which I could design preventative or compensatory programs to recommend to superintendents and principals. There I was with several unanticipated themes.

The themes left my literature with more than a few holes, big gaps one might say. It was back to my laptop and on to the online library search system. At the recommendation of my supervisor, I scoured the Business sections of the electronic stacks. A flood of research on mentoring presented itself. Armed with many email messages containing attachments, I began another reading session. The reading exercise brought forth more information than I had acquired during the initial review. After trying to assimilate too much information, I eventually focused on induction activities and created a more manageable literature review.

The next step in my process led me to introduce the study's beginning teachers through a chapter of profiles. The activity was "worth its weight in gold." I felt I knew the participants much better by the time I finished their profiles. Knowing them better, I was more prepared to write about the themes that emerged from their accounts of their first-year experiences.

I continued to struggle with my writing even though I had accomplished the

organization of several themes. I often wondered how the themes came to be. They seemed to be too simple. Had I contrived the themes? They seemed without direction. Had I missed something? Was I chasing after something that I had not anticipated? Was I not finding something I had anticipated? Yes, I realized that was it. I had not found major problems to rectify. Instead, I had found stories of successful inductions to tell.

As I continued to write about the findings, my excitement returned. I had stories to tell and a picture to share, stories and a picture of successful inductions! After all, the stories and picture presented answers to my main research question, "What factors support rural Alberta beginning teachers in the first few year of teaching?" I had also found answers to my secondary questions about their backgrounds, their motivations for teaching, and their experiences during their first year of teaching. My study had gone full circle!

Overall, the interactive process was successful. The beginning teachers entrusted me with much information and shared many personal feelings about their experiences. They were comfortable with the process, and I am pleased with the resulting data. Interviewing, with the opportunity to continue the dialogue throughout the project, seemed to be a successful way to gather data for research of this type. It provided stories from the viewpoint that I had desired to investigate, the viewpoint of the beginning teachers' perceptions.

Further Research

The study ends much the same as it began, with questions. Questions arise concerning other perspectives and other factors of beginning teacher induction in rural and urban Alberta. Would the same results occur with other beginning teachers? With

other researchers? What helpful data would the stories of unsuccessful inductions reveal? How would successful induction stories read from the perspectives of principals, formal mentors, or other experienced teachers? What factors would correspond with stories from the beginning teachers perspective? What social activities promote successful inductions? What professional development opportunities promote growth-oriented inductions? What curriculum supports are found in successful inductions? How does family support affect beginning teachers' inductions? Are induction needs different in different parts of rural Alberta? What would a similar study of urban beginning teachers reveal? A study including data from these questions would add to the understanding of teacher induction in rural Alberta schools.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

1. Outline your pre-university educational and work experience.

2. What were some of your motivations for wanting to teach children? When did you first think about being a teacher?

3. Describe your educational background.

4. Tell me about your field (student teaching) experiences. Describe how you were evaluated. How did your experience prepare you for teaching?

5. Outline your job search. What factors led \you to choose a teaching position in a rural Alberta school?

6. Describe the setting for your first year of teaching.

7. What was your assignment for your first year of teaching?

8. What formal support factors in your school contributed to your success as a beginning teacher?

9. Share a few stories from your first year of teaching. Share some of your most enjoyable experiences. Give a few examples of when you felt most appreciated. What made you feel appreciated? Who made you feel appreciated? Did you have any stressful experiences during your first year? What support did you receive during these experiences? Who provided the support?

10. What factors might help attract and retain teachers in rural Alberta public schools?

11. Do you have anything to add to the interview?

Appendix B: Letter to Participant

Dear Participant,

I am a student at the University of Alberta working on my master's degree in Educational Administration and Leadership. As your superintendent has discussed with you, I am inviting you to participate in my research project. The purpose of my project is to identify the factors that beginning teachers attribute to their successful induction to teaching within rural Alberta public schools. My intent is to highlight factors that may promote success for beginning teachers within rural Alberta public schools during the first year of teaching thus building a body of contextual knowledge from the perspective of the participants. I will conduct the research as stated and I will use your responses solely for the purpose of the research. I assure you that the research project is not deceptive in any way.

Should you decide to participate in my study, your involvement would include the following steps:

1. I will meet with you to explain the purpose and nature of the research project and address questions you may have. I will explain free and informed consent. If you choose to participate, you will sign a consent form.
2. I will interview you to discuss your motivations for becoming a teacher, your teacher preparation, your reasons for teaching in a rural school, your experiences and needs during the first year of teaching, the support you received, and your reasons for continuing into a second year. The interview will take from 30 minutes to one hour of your time. I will audio-record the interview and prepare a written transcript of the interview.

Appendix C: Procedures for Observing Ethical Guidelines

1. Explaining the purpose and nature of your research to participants

Initially, I will explain the purpose and nature of the research project to participants in an introductory letter with an invitation to contact me for additional information. I will then meet with the participants individually to address any questions. I will encourage the participants to contact me at any time during the study for additional information or with questions or concerns.

2. Obtaining the INFORMED consent of the participants

I will provide information regarding free and informed consent in my introductory letter, then discuss it in person with each participant before the individual participant signs the research consent form as attached. I will ensure they understand free and informed consent and have adequate opportunity to discuss and consider their participation. I do not foresee any potential harm given that the positive nature of the study. However, I will discuss the possibility of harm such as the breach of confidentiality or anonymity with each participant.

3. Providing opportunities for your participants to exercise the right to opt out

The right to opt out will be included in the introductory letter and on the consent form. I will also explain the right to opt out during my first meeting with each participant. I will provide my address, phone number and email address, and those of my supervisor, to the participants and ask them to notify me, or my supervisor, as soon as possible should they decide to withdraw from the study.

4. Addressing anonymity and confidentiality

I will maintain anonymity and confidentiality of each participant throughout the

study. I will not discuss the participants with anyone but my supervisor. I will assign fictitious names for each participant and the respective community, school, and school district. I will ensure that tapes, phone calls, and postal and email messages are secure.

5. Avoiding threat or harm to the participants or to others

I will avoid threat or harm to the participants by interviewing them at their place of work or within a facility controlled by their school district of their choosing. I will provide each participant with the opportunity to have an observer present as he or she desires. I will not share any information provided by a participant with anyone other than my supervisor. I will assure anonymity and confidentiality for each participant.

6. Providing for security of the data

I will maintain security of all data. I will secure all data including paper, tape, or electronic media for the duration of the project. I will use my person laptop with appropriate password security for electronic messaging and filing. I will keep data recorded on paper and tape in a locked filing cabinet in my home office.

7. Permission for secondary use of the data

I may wish to use the results of the study in presentations and written articles for other educators. To this end, I will discuss it in the introductory letter and include it on the consent form. I will inform each participant and receive specific and prior permission to use the research report for any other use.

8. Ensuring assistants or transcribers in your research that they observe the ethical guidelines

I do not plan to use assistants or transcribers in my research. In the event that I do, I will have them sign two copies of a letter outlining these ethical expectations. I will

keep one copy on file and give the other copy to the assistant or transcriber for their reference. I will remind them of their responsibility before each task. I will also inform the respective participants.

9. Describing other procedures relevant to observing the ethical guidelines

I will destroy all data used to prepare my final paper or thesis five years after the completion of the paper or thesis. I will erase electronic files, shred paper files and destroy the audiotapes.