

Developing a Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Practice and Wellbeing

by

Lauren Romano Cecil

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
August 8, 2026

Keywords: mentoring, wellbeing, retention, action research, PERMA, intent, involvement

Copyright 2026 by Lauren Romano Cecil

Approved by

Ellen (Reames) Hahn, Chair, Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and
Technology

Amy Serafini, Associate Professor of Educational Foundations, Leadership and
Technology

Dr. Jason Bryant, Clinical Professor and Director, Truman Pierce Institute, Department
of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology

Fran Kochan, Professor Emeritus of Educational Foundations, Leadership and
Technology

Abstract

Teacher retention research indicates that educators are leaving the profession at increasing rates due to stress, burnout, and feelings of isolation. The purpose of this participatory action research study was to examine teacher mentoring as a strategy to reduce these challenges and support retention, particularly through teachers' roles as co-designers of a structured mentorship training program. The study investigated mentors' intent, level of involvement, and wellbeing, while also exploring how wellbeing is reflected in mentoring practices. Participants included five mentor architects who engaged in the development and implementation of the program and fifteen teacher mentors who participated in the training and subsequent mentoring. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys. Analysis of the data revealed five themes related to mentoring practices and teacher development. Findings indicated that participation in the mentorship training program enhanced teacher leadership capacity, increased accountability and intentionality in mentoring, promoted wellbeing-centered practices, supported transformational learning, and strengthened collective leadership within the school. These results suggest that structured mentor training programs may serve as an effective approach to improving teacher retention and fostering a supportive and collaborative school culture.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure Statement

In the preparation of this dissertation, the following Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used: ChatGPT. These tools were used primarily to edit writing and code broad themes from transcribed interviews. The author acknowledges full responsibility for the intellectual content of this work and has ensured that all AI-assisted sections have been reviewed and revised for accuracy and appropriate academic style. All AI-generated content was reviewed and validated for relevance, appropriateness, and accuracy before incorporation into the final document to maintain scholarly integrity of this research.

Digital Accessibility Disclosure Statement

In the preparation of this dissertation, the following digital accessibility tools were used to ensure this document complies with federal requirements: Microsoft Word Accessibility Checker and Adobe Acrobat Accessibility Checker. This dissertation was prepared to conform to WCAG 2.2 Level AA accessibility standards. The document is structured to support screen readers, and all tables, figures, graphs, and images include descriptive alternative text to ensure the content is perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust.

The author acknowledges full responsibility for the intellectual content of this work and has made a good faith effort to comply with digital accessibility requirements in publishing, wherein the nature of the content does not significantly change in order to do so. Furthermore, all content has been reviewed and revised to meet these requirements prior to final publication.

Acknowledgments

I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Ellen Hahn. From our first conversation in 2020, when I began considering a return to school for my administrative degree, you have guided me through every stage of this journey, from my master's in educational leadership to the completion of this doctoral degree. Pursuing a PhD was never something I initially envisioned, but your clarity, confidence in me, and intentional guidance expanded my academic path beyond what I thought possible. Thank you for your insight, patience, encouragement, and your unwavering support, even taking late evening calls so I could work with you after the kids were asleep. I am especially grateful for your trust in me as I undertook this action research dissertation. This accomplishment would not have been possible without you.

I would also like to thank my dissertation committee for your support and thoughtful feedback throughout this process. Each of you has played a meaningful role in shaping my academic journey and, in turn, my career in public education, my deepest professional passion. Your wisdom, experience, and dedication to students are deeply appreciated. Thank you for investing your time and expertise in my growth.

Thank you to my family, most importantly to my husband, Austin, for being my champion. You never doubted me, agreed to this financial commitment without question, and encouraged me every step of the way. You handled bath time and bedtime without me, long Saturday and Sunday classes after I worked all week, and took on far more than your share of the parenting load so I could have time to write. Meeting you at Auburn twelve years ago was the most influential moment of my life, and I am forever grateful to you. To my mom and dad, thank you for instilling a love of

Auburn, learning, and a work ethic that far surpasses what I thought my ability was. You worked incredibly hard to give me every opportunity in life, and I am so thankful be here today because of your sacrifices. To my baby boys, Sawyer and Shep, I love you. You are my greatest joy in life. I will always remember sitting through classes with you on my lap, writing papers while feeding, and reading research at nap time. Doing this with you all in my life made it even more special, thank you for being my “why” in everything that I do.

To my beloved cohort members, thank you for your unrelenting support and humor. Having people going through the same program was absolutely essential for my journey, and I am incredibly lucky to have such smart, experienced, and supportive colleagues who were always there to encourage and give a helping hand. I am so proud of you all and your unique academic journeys. You are changing the landscape of education in our state.

Finally, to Auburn University. I have loved Auburn my entire life, and to finish my academic journey here is my greatest honor and something I never imagined for myself. Auburn has given me more opportunities than I could ever imagine, and my life is exponentially better for being a student here. I will always believe in education, which gives me the knowledge to work wisely and trains my mind and my hands to work skillfully. Thank you, Auburn, for that education.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure Statement	3
Digital Accessibility Disclosure Statement	4
Acknowledgments	5
List of Tables	12
List of Figures	13
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	14
Background	15
Problem Statement	17
Purpose Statement	18
Research Questions	18
Advancing Scientific Knowledge	19
Significance of the Study	20
Rationale for Methodology.....	21
Nature of the Research Design	22
Assumptions and Limitations.....	23
Definition of Terms.....	24
Chapter Summary.....	24
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	26

Positive Psychology	27
Mentorship	33
Conceptual Framework.....	43
Leadership in Mentoring	46
Mentor Training.....	52
Teacher Resilience and Retention	63
Chapter 3: Methodology	71
Statement of the Problem.....	74
Research Questions	74
Research Methodology.....	75
Research Design	77
Population and Sample.....	78
Participants	80
Routine	83
Instrumentation	84
Validity and Reliability.....	84
Data Collection and Management.....	86
Data Analysis Procedures	88
Ethical Considerations.....	89
Limitations and Delimitations.....	91

Summary	92
Chapter 4: Findings	94
The Cycles	97
Cycle 1	97
Cycle 2	102
Results	107
Data Quantity	110
Theme 1: Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity, Capacity, and Advancement	110
Theme 2: Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design.....	112
Theme 3: Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing Centered Practice ..	114
Theme 4: Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring...	116
Theme 5: Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact.....	118
Research Question Findings	119
Research Question 1	119
Research Question 2	121
Synthesis.....	123
Triangulation.....	124
Relation to Retention.....	125
Summary	128

Chapter 5: Conclusion	131
Summary of the Study	132
Research Questions	133
Review of Methodology	134
Limitations	134
Major Findings Related to Literature and Interpretations	134
Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership	134
Improved Accountable Design of the Mentorship Program	137
Improved Wellbeing Centered Practice	139
Transformational Learning Through Mentorship	141
Improved Collective Leadership	143
Findings Related to the Research Problem	146
Findings Related to the Research Questions	147
Significance of the Study	148
Implications for Practice	150
Implications for Future Research	152
Final Thoughts and Conclusions	153
References.....	156
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval	174
Appendix B: Local Cite Approval Letter	194

Appendix C: Informed Consent Document	196
Appendix D: Survey Questions	201
Appendix E: CITI Program Certificates	202
Appendix F: Interview Protocol	208
Appendix G: Qualtrics Survey	211
Appendix H: Recruitment Letters	212

List of Tables

Table 1. Mentor Information	83
Table 2. Themes Relevant to the Development of the Structured Mentoring Training Program	101
Table 3. Overarching Themes Identified from Open-ended Survey Responses.....	107
Table 4. Teacher Retention after the Mentorship Training Program	114
Table 5. Alignment of Emergent Themes with Seligman's PERMA Model	123
Table 6. Alignment of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Themes Across Action Research Cycles.	129

List of Figures

Figure 1. Wheeler's Framework.....	46
Figure 2. Theoretical Model for Structured Mentoring Training.....	70

Chapter 1: Introduction

Mentoring plays a critical role in shaping teacher development, retention, and leadership capacity within schools. As education becomes increasingly complex and demanding, and teachers are leaving the profession at higher rates each year, the need for well-prepared mentors who can support and guide teachers who are new to a school has grown significantly (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Beyond offering emotional and instructional support, effective mentors also serve as catalysts for cultivating teacher leadership. Through structured training, mentors not only improve their own leadership skills but also help mentees envision and enact leadership roles within their schools by mentoring the entire person for career advancement (Ortogero et al., 2022). This dissertation explores the development and implementation of a structured mentor training program designed to promote teacher leadership, professional growth, and long-term success for both mentors and mentees in elementary school settings.

This participatory action research study explores two cycles of developing and enacting a mentor training program in a local elementary school. Five mentor teachers were chosen to help me (participant in the action research) develop this program. They will be referred to as the mentor architects. The mentor architects are current teachers in the school who demonstrated interest in school leadership and also wanted to improve mentorship after having negative experiences with it themselves. These mentor architects play a seminal role modeling and sustaining the mentoring system that elevates leadership preparation and wellbeing. Mentor architects met with me monthly for nine months to develop a mentorship training program based in Mertz's (2004) Mentoring Framework and Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework to combine a

supportive mentoring structure with wellbeing to promote school flourishing and teacher retention.

In this chapter, a background of the study is first provided to ensure proper context is given to this action research project. The problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions will also be introduced. Additionally, the advancement of scientific knowledge and significance of the study, as well as rationale for the methodology and nature of the research design will be provided. Finally, definitions for frequently used terms, assumptions and limitations will be presented to introduce the topic. This chapter will provide an overall summary for the research and its importance in the context of school mentorship.

Background

Previous empirical research showed that mentoring new teachers and supporting their wellbeing leads to better retention overall. The literature showed that positive psychology has a connection to mentorship as a long-term practice, and this demonstrates how positive psychology and mentoring intersect and the need for it in mentoring practices. Positive psychology through the PERMA Framework (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) proves the importance of teacher wellbeing with positive school relationships, school culture, and professional development (Lunsford, 2022; Seligman, 2011; Wheeler et al., 2024). Then, mentorship is reviewed in empirical research with the history and role of mentorship in schools and proves the importance of how mentoring as a form of induction can improve teacher wellbeing, retention, and effectiveness. Mentoring can take various forms to support mentees and increase best mentoring practices. The

politics and policies behind mentorship are important, as well as the difference between mentoring and coaching. Additionally, the benefits of mentoring for mentors and the role of demographics in mentorship play a large role in mentor recruiting and effectiveness (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014; Mertz, 2004; Viera, 2021). The role of leadership in mentoring emphasized the importance of mentor training in shaping effective mentoring programs. It creates shared leadership that improves school culture, gives mentors a greater leadership role in the school building, develops transformational leadership, and increases self-efficacy (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Thornton, 2014). Mentor training has proven to be one of the more effective ways to improve mentorship in schools. Some formal induction programs are in place, but there is not specific training on mentorship to improve leadership. This training combats negative mentoring practices which leads to a negative school culture. The research shows that mentoring, especially when guided by structured training, can promote long-term teacher leadership (Lunsford, 2022; Ortogero et al., 2022). Finally, teacher resilience significantly impacts both student achievement and school culture, and mentorship can strengthen teacher resilience, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes (Morettini et al., 2020; Washburn-Moses, 2010).

While existing literature highlights the benefits of mentoring in supporting novice teachers and improving instructional practice, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically focused on developing structured mentor training programs that intentionally foster teacher leadership and promote wellbeing, particularly for teachers new to a school district. Much of the current research centers on the general effectiveness of mentorship in aiding teacher retention or easing transitions into the profession, but few

studies explore how mentor training can be strategically designed to empower mentors as leaders while addressing the emotional and psychological wellbeing of both mentors and mentees. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how these programs function within the unique context of teachers acclimating to new district cultures, expectations, and communities, especially within an action research context. This gap underscores the need for research that integrates leadership development and positive psychology into mentor training models tailored for newly hired educators.

Problem Statement

There is a problem in education with the retention of teachers in the field. Despite administrator and district official's attempts to train and develop teachers, teachers are leaving the profession at high rates, with 46% of teachers leaving after five years in the United States, and 50% of teachers leaving in the state of Alabama (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Mackey, 2022). This problem has negatively impacted districts, schools, and most importantly the students within these organizations. The current teacher retention rate and the lack of consistent instruction negatively impacts student achievement and learning over time (Soulen & Wine, 2021). High rates of teacher turn over not only negatively affect student achievement, but an overall negative school culture and environment (Arthur & Bradley, 2023). Possible causes of this problem of teacher retention are excessive workloads, high-stakes testing, disruptive student behavior, poor leadership, as well as the view of teaching as a temporary profession (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Mentoring is one of the possible solutions to the teacher retention problem (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014), but a strong mentoring program must be in place for mentoring to be effective. To date, there is little formal evidence on the practice of

training mentors to increase teacher leadership and, thus, promote teacher retention for mentors and mentees in a local school building. This study will use participatory action research to examine the development of a teacher mentoring program and the effects on the developers and participants.

Purpose Statement

As an assistant principal at my elementary school, I co-designed a mentor training program to enhance mentorship in our building, and I invited five teachers (mentor architects) to help me develop the program and provide feedback. The purpose of this participatory action research study was to work with mentor architect teachers to develop a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through intent, involvement, and wellbeing leading to greater leadership and retention in our school. Since it is action research, two cycles were employed following the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting phases, with adjustments made based on data and feedback. The target population for this is relatively small, since they are the mentor architects of the program and the teachers (mentors) who participated in the mentorship training. There are five mentor architects and fifteen mentors. They are all located at the same K-5 elementary school. All mentors and mentor architects have at least three years of teaching experience within our district. All participants will be considered co-researchers, contributing to the design, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative participatory action research study:

1. In what ways do mentor architects describe how participating in two action research cycles to develop and implement a structured teacher mentoring program influence their intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices?
2. In what ways do teacher mentors describe their perceptions the first year of implementation after two action research cycles of a structured mentor training program, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly hired teachers and promoting aspects of wellbeing as described by Seligman's PERMA model with (a) positive emotions, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, (e) accomplishment?

These questions relate to the problem statement by measuring the effectiveness of the mentoring training program with its intent and involvement within the Mertz framework, as well as seeing the perception of effects of the PERMA framework within the mentor training.

Advancing Scientific Knowledge

The lack of existing literature on using mentorship training to promote leadership and increase wellbeing justifies the problem stated above and shows the need for a formal mentor training program. Although mentoring is recognized as a potential solution to the persistent issue of teacher attrition, there is a clear gap in the literature regarding how structured mentor training programs can be intentionally designed to cultivate teacher leadership and improve retention—particularly within local school contexts. Existing research often emphasizes the general benefits of mentoring but fails to explore how equipping mentors with leadership skills and strategies through targeted

training can enhance the mentoring relationship and promote long-term teacher commitment and retention. Furthermore, limited studies address how mentor training programs can be aligned with school improvement efforts to not only retain teachers but also improve school culture and student achievement. This study addresses that gap by examining the development of a mentor training program that fosters leadership and supports the retention of teachers new to a district through participatory action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

Wheeler's (2024) Framework is used to combine Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory and Mertz's (2004) Mentoring framework under the umbrella of positive psychology. This conceptual framework guides the study by focusing on positive psychology as the over-arching theme to guide the program, while individually embedding components of PERMA into the training to increase mentor wellbeing and potentially leading to mentee wellbeing, as well. Additionally, Mertz's intent and involvement is measured in the training to understand the effectiveness of the program and the development with shared leadership to solve a local school problem. This framework justifies a participatory action research approach by linking mentor development to teacher wellbeing and leadership growth. By embedding PERMA into mentor training and using Mertz's role taxonomy to guide development, the study fosters a system where both mentors can thrive professionally and emotionally.

Significance of the Study

This research will contribute to the existing body of literature by demonstrating how a structured mentor training program that was developed through a collaborative design process can improve mentorship and increase wellbeing. By exploring the

connection between intentional mentor development, leadership emergence, and wellbeing, the study fills a gap in current research on mentorship as a tool for professional empowerment. The study provides practical insights into how school districts can design and implement mentor training programs in collaboration with the teachers who will serve as mentors. This participatory approach not only ensures relevance and effectiveness but also empowers educators by positioning them as co-creators in their professional development, thereby strengthening leadership capacity across the school community. By addressing the challenges of teacher retention and leadership development, this research promotes positive social change within educational systems.

Rationale for Methodology

Participatory action research is the methodology used for this study. This study uses a qualitative action research design, which is both participatory and iterative. It focuses on solving a real-world problem, in this case, improving mentorship and increasing leadership and retention through a collaboratively developed mentor training program by engaging practitioners in the research process. Action research is grounded in cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, allowing for responsive changes based on participants' experiences and feedback. This approach is especially well-suited for educational settings where the goal is both understanding and improvement of practice. I chose participatory action research methodology because I wanted to solve a problem within my local school (mentoring teachers and promoting retention) while also increasing the leadership capacity of teachers in the school around me. Action research is a well-known qualitative form of research that has been used in

classroom settings but is progressively being used more often in larger school contexts for the benefits of school leadership (Mertler, 2016). Data on mentor teacher perceptions of the mentoring program was collected through interviews and a survey. Two stages of action research cycles were implemented in this process, the first during the development phase and the second during the implementation phase. The teachers were asked to describe their experience in the mentor training program and to specify how it affected their intent and involvement as a mentor as well as aspects of wellbeing through the theoretical frameworks. I hoped that this work would translate into a more effective approach for teacher mentoring in my district that focuses more on leadership and thus increases teacher retention. Also, being a participant in this action research study, I co-constructed the program with the mentor architects, and I examined what I already learned about mentor training and examined how the process of the study shaped the program.

Nature of the Research Design

Participatory action research cycles were conducted twice through a variety of data collection methods, including interviews and a survey. This context is within a local k-5 elementary school building, where a mentorship training program is being built by mentor architects and then improving the program while mentors participate in it and provide feedback to new teachers in the elementary school building. I am also a participant in the program and one of the mentor architects, which is common in an action research study. I used a convenience sampling technique, where I choose the participants directly based on who is participating in the program, which is relatively small. All data gathering with participants will take place on site at the local school

building. Several instruments will be used to collect data throughout the research cycles. Semi-structured individual interview protocols will serve as guides featuring open-ended questions aligned with the study's research questions. These interviews will be conducted throughout the research cycles to capture participant growth over time. A survey will be implemented based on the individual interviews to measure intent, involvement, and wellbeing while also triangulating the data for consistency. The first cycle took place during the development of the program last school year, and the second cycle will take place during the fall and spring of the current school year.

Assumptions and Limitations

With this study being participatory action research, it is assumed that knowledge is constructed through experience and interaction, meaning the lived experiences of participants and their interactions with each other and the environment. The truth is subjective and context dependent (Herr & Anderson, 2015). It also assumes that research is participatory and collaborative, that participants are not just subjects, but co-researchers. The study is conducted with people, not on them, and change is both a goal and a process with the purpose to bring meaningful change in practice (Mertler, 2016). Additionally, data collection and analysis are ongoing cycles to make continuous improvements. It is also assumed that improved practice is grounded in reflection which is essential for professional growth. Context is also very important, with all findings deeply influenced by specific settings, relationships, and cultural dynamics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, multiple perspectives are valid and valued, and first-hand experiences are necessary to understand the situation and appropriate solutions. The

researcher is an instrument and participant, the researcher's identities, values, and experiences shape the study. Reflexivity is also essential.

The limitations for the study include that school context limited to one location with a small sampling size. Additionally, action research is a time intensive process with a large dependence on participation. Finally, ethical complexities are at play with power dynamics in the school building between supervisor and employee.

Definition of Terms

- Mentorship - a developmental relationship where an experienced educator guides a less experienced educator to help them grow professionally and personally (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021).
- Teacher Leadership - teachers who influence their school and community to improve teaching and learning practices, as well as increase school culture through a shared vision and continuous improvement (Cosenza, 2015).
- Teacher Retention - the practice of keeping qualified teachers in the profession and reducing the rate at which they leave their positions (Nguyen et al., 2024).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduces the topic of participatory action research to solve a mentoring problem through the training of mentors to increase school leadership and promote wellbeing. Additionally, with the problem of teacher retention, it shows the need for the development of programs in schools to train teachers effectively to increase mentorship capacity in mentors and then study the effects on those mentors. This study shows the importance of this training by providing the background of the need within the school context, as well as clearly defining the problem of teacher retention and a lack of

quality mentorship, as well as the purpose statement of working with the mentor architects to develop and refine the program to increase the success of mentorship and teacher retention. Through the research questions, significance, and discussion of methodology the plan for participatory action research is clearly laid out to fill the gap of improving mentorship practices through action research. In the following chapters, I will provide a comprehensive review of the literature, describe the methodology, review the results of the study, and the provided discussion.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter begins with an overview of positive psychology and its connection to mentorship as a long-term practice. The purpose of this overview is to demonstrate how positive psychology and mentoring intersect, providing a foundation for understanding how mentorship can enhance teacher resilience and improve retention. As a theoretical lens, positive psychology offers valuable insight into the emotional and professional well-being of educators, making it a critical framework for exploring mentorship. Martin Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, introduced the PERMA model—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—which has since been applied in educational settings and influenced approaches to mentoring (Seligman, 2011; Wheeler, 2024). Following this foundation, the chapter explores the history and role of mentorship in schools, with particular attention to teacher retention and the various forms mentoring can take. It then addresses the role of leadership in mentoring and emphasizes the importance of mentor training in shaping effective mentoring programs. The literature on teacher resilience is also reviewed, highlighting its impact on student achievement and school culture, and exploring how mentorship can strengthen resilience. Finally, the chapter examines research on teacher retention, arguing that mentoring, especially when guided by structured training, can promote long-term teacher leadership. The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework guiding this study, which integrates the key themes of positive psychology, mentorship, resilience, leadership, and retention.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology was first introduced by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) as a shift away from the traditional deficit and dysfunctional focuses of psychology towards well-being and the positive aspects of human experience. Theories and research examined positive psychology intervention and how to define, quantify, and create wellbeing (Rusk & Waters, 2015). This holistic work introduced the key concepts of positive psychology focusing on well-being and a strengths-based approach to fixing problems, with the ultimate goal of humans functioning at optimal levels in individual, group, and social settings (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This concept and the focus on optimism can be applied to schools to foster student learning environments and create work places where teachers thrive instead of just survive. The need for positive psychology in education was evident. Many schools and systems have a “sink or swim” mentality when teachers begin working that leads to burn-out, unqualified teachers, and lessened student achievement (Wexler, 2019). In his introductory work, Seligman found that how individuals respond to failure determines how they proceed in life, and those who have help and an optimistic outlook are more successful when they are able to amplify positive emotions and overcome negative ones (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Negative emotions, especially when blown out of proportion in comparison to the reality they are facing, lead to burn-out and career changes (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Clearly, this sink or swim method is not working in our schools and teacher attrition rates proved that the adoption of a positive psychology model could greatly benefit teachers and students.

Seligman first used the term wellbeing in the positive psychology context to describe the characteristics of a self-actualized person, a description of which is outlined in his PERMA model. The PERMA model was established as a building block of wellbeing in Seligman's book, *Flourishing*. As stated above, the PERMA model focuses on positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments (Seligman, 2011). By understanding the role each of the five components play in wellbeing independently of each other, PERMA can be seen as a model that predicts flourishing, increases job satisfaction, and decreases psychological distress (Foregard et al., 2011). Positive emotion includes hope, interest, love, joy, compassion, pride, amusement, and gratitude, and is a prime indicator of flourishing that can be learned to improve well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). When positive emotions are built into daily life and recognized as such, it improves quality of life and can undo the effects of negative emotions and promote resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Engagement in work is an important part of PERMA where a combination of strength and skill is found to challenge individuals while also helping them to feel successful. This experience of engagement is more likely to happen when people know and work within their strengths to complete tasks (Seligman et al., 2005). Relationships, the next component, prove that humans are innately social creatures, and these social connections are paramount to human wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). Relationships, both personal and work related, are proven to play a large role in an individual's health and overall wellbeing (Siedlecki et al., 2014). Meaning is defined as the need to have value and worth (Seligman, 2011). Having meaning and purpose in one's life helps individuals become resilient and face challenges. Meaning can have many different definitions, but

finding meaning in a career, something that thankfully comes easily to educators, can improve overall life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011). Accomplishment, which can also be known as achievements, is the last component of Seligman's PERMA model. Having a sense of accomplishment when working toward and reaching a goal contributes to wellbeing, because it creates a sense of pride and shows perseverance to strive towards goals with intrinsic motivation (Seligman, 2011).

These components of PERMA demonstrate how they can be used as a model for overall wellbeing, and how this can be adopted to increase wellbeing through mentorship in an educational setting. Seligman acknowledges that PERMA is not all encompassing of wellbeing, but instead a building block to use to guide individuals to improve their own lives and thus improve happiness and flourish in their careers (Seligman, 2018). When teachers feel that they are flourishing in the workplace, they are more resilient and are more likely to stay in their current role, as well as in education in general. Positive psychology is more likely to be successful when built slowly over time using a model like PERMA, and it is not something that can simply be adopted and work to improve individuals' lives immediately. Steps must be given to see the path to happiness and wellbeing. When it is forced without providing a tangible pathway that shows the causal connections among components, wellbeing will not be adopted by the individual (Seligman, 2018).

Positive psychology builds on the strengths of an individual, which is shown to be a best practice for mentors to improve mentee wellbeing (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). This is even more impactful when it is being encouraged by the leaders of the school and they are also aware of these strengths. Finding and building on signature strengths

while also identifying areas of gratitude increases happiness and decreases depression, however the work of these interventions has to be put in place and adopted by the individual, and made into a continuing practice (Seligman, 2005). Wellbeing and mindfulness with components of positive psychology are important for mentors to adopt to help mentees recognize the good in their jobs, and the mentor relationship is essential for wellbeing to help individuals and schools flourish and improve their culture and climate (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). Mentoring supports well-being, identity, leadership, and change beyond simply a skill transfer, and it is a powerful motor behind promoting cultural change and promoting positive psychology in a school building. Mentoring across domains such as career development, self-efficacy, and pedagogy supports that mentoring can be tailored to different needs, stages, and roles (Reames & Searby, 2021). These relationships can often be mutually beneficial, and providing these networks for collaboration is essential to positive psychology in the school building and to create career advancement and retention for teachers. When these relationships are formed and common interests are identified, this increases the wellbeing of both the mentor and mentee and strengthens the relationship (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014).

Wellbeing and fulfillment through positive psychology are not just elements of a positive school culture but are essential to meeting academic goals (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). These authors mention Seligman's PERMA Framework in their book, *Well-Being in Schools*, to demonstrate how learned helplessness explains why people are often passive where they could be advocating for well-being once they are aware of the elements of positive psychology. By following the steps of the PERMA framework,

teachers were more positive and active when having the emotional intelligence to identify ways to improve their wellbeing in the workplace (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). Conversations that help mentees reframe their experiences through positive psychology have been found to build resiliency and optimism through the practice of “thought catching” or the ABCDE model (Seligman, 2016). The ABCDE model allows mentors to engage in complex conversations by using role-playing exercises to engage in reframing dialogue. Mentors address the adverse event, describe the belief as a result of the event, describe the consequences of holding the belief, dispute the belief by identifying other explanations, and discuss the energy one has (Seligman, 2016). This element of positive psychology demonstrates the need for mentors and the element that PERMA can play with a mentoring framework to increase a teachers’ experience at a school and their retention. The PERMA model is a way of life that validates human worth and the creation of a better life where humans are able to flourish (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022).

Finally, positive psychology plays a role in many elements throughout the school building, such as professional development for teachers, relationships between mentors and mentees, self-efficacy for teachers, the school environment, and overall teacher emotion. Professional development for teachers, which can lead to greater teacher accomplishments, is composed of an element of PERMA that helps teachers feel successful and promotes their wellbeing (Iannucci et al., 2021). Relationships that develop in the school building are essential to wellbeing, especially mentor/mentee relationships that establish trust (Basaran & Cakir, 2023). Collaboration due to these relationships also increases trust and wellbeing, contributing to meaningful relationships

that are essential in positive psychology (Lee et al., 2023; Sezer & Can, 2019). Underpinning all of these relationships and setting the tone and culture for trust in the building is transformative leadership, that must take place in order for organizational happiness and overall wellbeing to occur (Kilic et al., 2023). Self-efficacy is also important within the context of positive psychology as it relates to PERMA where teachers can engage with their work fully and feel confident in their abilities, and through this success they can also celebrate accomplishment (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). The school environment affects well-being, and the overall culture of the school can be impacted by PERMA to increase happiness and school culture (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). Teacher emotion also plays a large role in the PERMA model with positive emotions built in, and the use of mindfulness in the classroom increases teacher wellbeing over time (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). The passion of teaching and engagement that teachers have in their job is another way that positive psychology contributes to the field of education and can be improved through mentorship over time (Santoro et al., 2012).

Mentorship connects to positive psychology by improving wellbeing through mentorship. This is still an emerging topic in the literature, and simply introducing wellbeing through mentorship is in the beginning stages. Once wellbeing is introduced and mentees begin to consider their own wellbeing and learn about different strategies that they can employ, they are much more likely to participate in wellbeing related activities that improve their mental health and make their job more sustainable (Wheeler et al., 2024). Mentoring through a strengths-based approach highlights the importance of improving relationships to provide greater meaning and identity, which shows the

need for wellbeing in mentorship and how it can expand in the future (Brewer, 2016). Additionally, participants in a study reported that mentors are critical to increasing knowledge of wellbeing and connecting it to their personal and professional lives. (Wheeler et al., 2024). As research continues to explore the intersection of mentorship and positive psychology, it becomes increasingly clear that fostering wellbeing through mentoring relationships has the potential to transform both individual experiences and the broader educational environment.

Mentorship

Mentorship in education has evolved into a complex, intentional practice that plays a critical role in professional development and organizational growth. Mentorship is a practice that has been in place around the world for a number of years, it was first introduced to education in the 1970s focusing on improving faculty members' experiences (Irby & Boswell, 2016). The majority of literature that currently exists on mentorship focuses on pre-service teachers, or teachers who are brand new to the profession. Mentoring is difficult to define as it is different depending on the career field and even individual who is participating in it (Kram, 1988). Mertz (2004) defines mentoring as a hierarchical, but supportive work relationship based on intent and level of involvement. Mertz's (2004) framework shows that the increase in the level of intent from the mentor is necessary to earn the distinguished title of mentor, as more than just a role model, coach, advisor, sponsor, or patron. Mentorship is a science that requires rigorous evidence through science and relational/creative skill though art (Allen & Eby, 2021). Organizations have an implicit obligation to develop their employees, and this is true in educational settings as well. Mentorship is a combination of professional

development and career advancement in order to grow the individuals in the organization (Kram, 1988). Mentorship in schools should be mutually beneficial for both the mentor and mentee, which is why it is such an important part of the overall organizational structure. Because mentors are placed in such a high regard, they are held to more requirements than just a coach or advisor, such as connecting their mentees, developing their network, supporting their advancement, and sharing their power of influence (Mertz et al., 1988). Mentees should also take an active role in the relationship, by taking initiative, having a growth mindset orientation, having an active role in goal setting, and having a reflective orientation (Searby, 2014). As such, effective mentorship is not a passive role, but a deliberate and influential practice essential to fostering both individual growth and institutional success, which is why it is so important in the field of education.

In order for mentorships to be successful in school environments, effective policies must be in place. A lot of policies are put into place but are simply symbolic in action, and in order to make a difference policy needs to be actionable and intentional (Rosen, 2009). Political factors can also contribute to policy effectiveness and get in the way of true organizational change, especially within mentoring and how it is approached (Malen, 2011). Political factors can also negatively impact wellbeing in the organization, and thus disrupt or deter the mentoring process (Miller & Gkonou, 2023). Many of these political factors come from institutionalized educational practices and areas of funding that can be difficult to change over time (Meyer, 1977). Lack of clear policy creates role ambiguity in mentorship and can result in confusion instead of the benefits that mentorship hopes to bring about (Peiser et al., 2018). Research shows that backwards

mapping for policy implementation is the best way to begin a new policy, and knowing the end goals of a policy (such as mentoring) is the best way to navigate that application (Elmore, 1979). When policy is successfully put in place and obligations and/or responsibilities within the policy are clearly stated, mentorship programs are more successful and more likely to make connections between theoretical and practical knowledge. What the mentorship relationship is meant to achieve should be clearly stated, as well as the training of mentors with appropriate support and structures for programs to be successful (Searby & Brondyk, 2016). Additionally, those who are creating the policy must have a full understanding of the pedagogy of mentoring to be effective (Peiser et al., 2018). Many policies are put in place as a way to address longstanding issues with teacher turnover, teacher quality, and lack of preparation in specific teaching contexts (Smith, 2007). The hope with these policies is to solve these problems, but when they are not monitored effectively these common problems persist. Some policies can even exacerbate negative mentoring and further ineffective teaching practices (Peiser et al., 2018). Conflicting national policies can contribute to role confusion, especially when there is no career progression and a lack of common understanding is missing (Hobson & Maldrez, 2013). Studies have found that mentor policies can improve schools' desired outcomes, but only to the extent that those policies lead to positive and effective mentoring interactions (Polikoff et al., 2015). Policy that increases in specificity is more likely to be impactful, especially when related to grade level or subject area, instead of having a "one size fits all" mentoring policy for the district (Luft et al., 2003). While policy for mentorship is of the utmost importance, what is actually enacted in the school building, not necessarily what is written on paper,

is what most affects how mentorship is performed. The most successful policies tend to have a contact hour requirement, physical proximity, and specific feedback (Polikoff et al., 2015). A policy to practice gap often exists in mentoring policies, and implementation often falls on the district of school administrators in order for it to happen. Organizations must have the capacity to assure compliance of the state and district mentoring policy initiatives (Washburn-Moses, 2010). In order for the policies to be implemented as designed, key stakeholders should have shared power in developing policies which will ensure clearer implementation (Fransson & McMahan, 2013). Ultimately, the success of mentorship in schools depends not only on the existence of well-crafted policies, but on their thoughtful implementation, shared ownership, and alignment with the real-world needs of educators and school communities

When examining mentorships in school, it is important to differentiate the role of a mentor than that of a coach. Coaching is defined as, “An ongoing professional relationship that helps people produce extraordinary results in their lives, careers, businesses, or organizations” (Whitworth, 2007). Coaching is often focused on improving specific job-related responsibilities, while the role of mentorship is much broader and includes improving all skills and overall human performance (Van Tiem et al., 2002). Mentoring interventions and coaching interventions differ in various ways. Coaching focuses more on overcoming barriers, work related suggestions, informal meetings, and based on the assumption that the worker wants to improve, where different people can serve as a coach. Mentoring, however, goes beyond a single job or role, is a shared experience an emotional transformation, and overcomes barriers in a

one-on-one relationship (Viera, 2021). There is also a significant difference between simply advising someone and mentoring them. An advisor helps someone through a program or job and provides information, while a mentor facilitates an individual's career functions and psychosocial functions (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). Conversations that mentors are expected to have with mentees are also very different from those of coaching, including those that are critical and constructive that provide value for goal attainment and lifestyle choice alignment (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). Mentorship is a central work of teaching and is necessary in school buildings in addition to academic and pedagogical coaching. The persistence in that of a mentor is also very different from a coach, where a mentor helps the mentee overcome hardships, encouraging perseverance in a mutually beneficial relationship (Gearity & Mertz, 2015). Mentorship is also not considered "tutoring" but instead a real change agent for a school. Embedded in mentorship can be reform, culture change, accountability, and leadership renewal (Mullen, 2005). Recognizing these key distinctions underscores the unique and essential role of mentorship in fostering holistic educator development, beyond the scope of skill-based coaching or advising.

Educative mentoring, or collaborative mentoring, is a form of mentoring that helps mentees develop skills to learn from practice and push for continuous professional growth (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). Educative mentoring is important to understand in the context of mentorship because it demonstrates the importance of effective mentoring and how it can truly transform a school and culture, and promote resilience and teacher retention. Educative mentoring is more than just cheerleading for the mentee and providing advice when convenient, it is an emotional investment in

transforming the mentee pedagogically to improve their teaching abilities (Roegman et al., 2016). Part of this is moving beyond superficial conversations, which goes against many norms in school culture where we are lacking the language and interactions that are both critical and constructive, especially for feedback (Stanulis, 2006). Having difficult conversations through educative mentoring was mentioned many times throughout the literature, especially when it comes to the depth that can come from these conversations and the pedagogical results that happen when tensions are overcome and trust is fully in place (Wexler, 2019). Mentors and mentees learn from each other and have a mutually beneficial relationship, instead of just one experienced teacher transferring knowledge to another (Langdon & Ward, 2014). When educative mentoring is done correctly, it can result in co-planning, observation with targeted feedback, and deeper analyzation of student work that all promotes increased student learning (Stanulis et al., 2019). In the context of educative mentoring, both the mentor and mentee grow without trying to create another version (or cloning) of the mentor teacher, which can have negative effects and further the status quo (Kasten et al., 2024). Educative mentoring is also a way to advance professional development in schools and make a greater impact than traditional mentoring. Mentors who participate in educative mentoring have greater learning opportunities and a community of practice where they can then reflect and enact change in the classroom. This increases resiliency and thus creates a shift in mindset (Trevethan & Sandretto, 2017). Educative mentoring also encourages high-leverage practices that lead to greater job satisfaction and confidence (Wexler, 2020). Research has found that when mentors take an educative approach, they are able to clearly define their role and distinguish themselves

as a guide, role model, and supporter, with the ultimate goal of supporting the teachers in their unique abilities and establishing their own teaching philosophies (Kasten et al., 2024). Educative and co-mentoring were also found to be beneficial outside of the educational world, showing benefits in healthcare where a transformative collaborative mentorship took place not just to benefit the mentee but to change practices within the field for the better (Ramos-Diaz & Kochan, 2020). Alternative mentoring is another form of educative mentoring that pushes past traditional forms and focuses on different types of mentoring that occur and the benefits that can come from them (Mullen, 2016). Learning flows both ways, and attention to power, equity, and privilege are important to consider while employing systems thinking and creativity to break the mentoring mold (Mullen, 2016). Ultimately, educative mentoring fosters a dynamic, growth-oriented culture where both mentors and mentees evolve as reflective practitioners, leading to stronger instructional practice, increased teacher resilience, and meaningful school transformation.

The benefits of mentoring when done correctly are well known, but there are also many benefits for the mentor (Adair & Reames, 2025). Veteran teachers who participate in mentoring found that it created confidence and helped them view themselves as educational leaders within the school building (Thornton, 2013). Additionally, when the mentor realizes the benefits of mentorship and is committed to the overall goal, they are able to transcend the self in serving others and create a lasting change within the educational community through their work. For this to occur, mutual respect must be accessible by both parties (Mertz, 2004). This requires a level of intimacy in the relationship that is governed depending on the mentoring program and structure that is

currently in place (Dwyer, 2000). Mentorship builds communities by joining perspectives, including a historical shift in mentoring towards mutuality, mentor development, and wellbeing (Kochan & Pascarelli, 2004). Mentorship has been found to be mutually beneficial when the following structures are put in place: fundamental reciprocity, fluid expertise, increasing vulnerability, extended range of intended outcomes and professional identities, and taken with a holistic approach (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). To break Johnson's mentoring relationship continuum (MRC) model down, it shows that mutuality takes several forms where assistance is given back and forth between the mentor and mentee, and the trainer and trainee are able to authentically switch between learner and expert in a fluid relationship (McManus & Russell, 2007). Vulnerability and recognizing shortcomings in a supportive way as well as stimulating a strong sense of professional identity while taking a holistic approach all encompass the mentoring relationship continuum in a way that is beneficial for all parties (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). Viewing mentoring as ongoing professional development is also beneficial for both parties, where the veteran mentor teachers are able to learn new pedagogical practices from novice teachers who were recently trained in the latest techniques, and novice teachers learning practices and systems through the mentors creates a mutually beneficial relationship that benefits the school building as a whole (Wexler, 2020). The cultural factors of mentoring must be taken into consideration, so that mentees feel heard and understood by their mentors and mentoring can be approached in a positive and safe way (Kochan, 2013). When mentoring is approached as a reciprocal, evolving partnership, it not only empowers

novice teachers but also reinvigorates veteran educators, fostering a collaborative culture of continuous learning and shared leadership within the school community.

Teacher demographics and diversity are an important part of mentorship to consider when reviewing the literature. Studies found that a mentorship pairing dichotomy can exist between teachers of different sexes, races, and years of experience (Darwich, 2021). Teachers of color often feel most supported when they have a mentor or close co-worker of the same race who understands them culturally and who were able to collaborate effectively with them. This increased self-efficacy and confidence, and improved mentoring relationships (Darwich, 2021). Additionally, female mentees tend to feel higher stress in their workloads but also tend to have a higher workload due to work and family responsibilities, thus they benefit from someone who understands this and can help with emotional regulation in the teaching profession (Colomeischi & Ursu, 2024). Differences were also noted in sexes of teachers as concerned to self-compassion and willingness to take care of wellbeing with men prioritizing this more than women (Uyanick & Cevik, 2022). Content areas and years of experience are also important to consider within mentorship. Special education teachers need to be paired with others in their area due to the specific nature of their job, and pairing teachers by content area is also beneficial to promote a strong mentoring relationship (Uyanick & Cevik, 2022). It was found that teacher happiness decreased with years of experience through some studies, so choosing mentors based on years of experience alone is often an ineffective strategy (Bayraktar & Girgin, 2020). When considering mentorship in the context of the school, these are all important factors that must be considered.

Pivotal requirements of effective mentorship include time and proximity to mentee, creating a developmental network for the mentee, having the appropriate level of intent and involvement, and working through the stages of a mentoring relationship while following the role of a mentor. Time and proximity were found to be the most impactful factors to mentorship and making a difference in the life of the mentee (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Specifically, being in the school building and having common planning times made a large difference in the mentor/mentee relationship. Creating a developmental network for the mentee increases career advancement through exposure, visibility, and psychological support (Higgins & Kram, 2001). These networks create the most mutually beneficial experiences and highlight diversity and strengths within the organization. For this to be successful, the mentee must seek help and be vulnerable, as well as open to feedback (Higgins & Kram, 2001). As stated earlier, the intent and involvement of the mentor also determines the level of success in the mentor relationship. Intent, being the why behind the relationship and involvement being what is required of each party to the relationship, and the level of investment involved in the relationship (Mertz, 2004). The stages of mentorship, including initiation, cultivation, separation, and eventually redefinition, show the ebbs and flows of the mentoring relationship and how complex it can be (Kram, 1983). In order to have a strong mentoring program, the formal characteristics a mentor must have include accountability, alignment, communication, demand, training, and multiple opportunities to learn to be a mentor (Lunsford, 2022). A safety net for dysfunctional mentoring and value/visibility are also necessary to have a functional mentoring program. Together, these elements form the foundation of an effective mentorship program that not only

supports mentee development but also fosters sustainable, growth-oriented relationships within the school community and are mutually beneficial for all parties.

Conceptual Framework

I chose to use a conceptual framework for this qualitative action research study to organize the overarching ideas to guide the action research study. This roadmap helps to clarify key elements within the study and explain the structure for analysis and interpretation. This conceptual framework (Wheeler, 2024) combines two different frameworks under the umbrella of positive psychology. This study is guided by two interrelated conceptual frameworks: Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, which emphasizes the elements of wellbeing, and Mertz's (2004) mentorship model, which delineates the types and functions of mentoring relationships. Together, these frameworks provide a holistic foundation for examining how structured mentor training supports both mentors and mentees in professional and emotional domains. Positive psychology is the over-arching theme of the framework, focusing on human strengths, well-being, and optimal functioning that produces a flourishing life (Seligman, 2011).

Underneath the umbrella of positive psychology more specifically is Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework, as explained above in the positive psychology section, that focuses on positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments as ways to promote a meaningful life through positive psychology. These elements all highlight mentorship innately by building positive relationships and promoting supportive mentoring. Additionally, mentors who are trained in wellbeing strategies can help manage stress and help others find meaning in their work. Using Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework in mentorship is a step-by-step guide to increase

the well-being of the mentors who are participating in the training and pass it down to their mentees, promoting a greater sense of wellbeing throughout the school. Research shows positive associations when the PERMA framework is applied in workplaces and commitment within organizations (Kern et al., 2014).

Additionally, Mertz's mentoring framework of intent and involvement is combined in this conceptual framework to go through the stages of mentorship. The stages of intent include psychosocial development, professional development, and career advancement. Within these stages of intent, the stages of involvement are role modeling, coaching, counseling, sponsoring, protector, and eventually at the highest level, mentorship (Mertz, 2004). Mertz's mentoring framework shows the important steps that must take place for successful mentorship and to reach the full role of a mentor. Mertz's model highlights the importance of clarifying roles and expectations within mentoring relationships, which aligns with the structured mentor training approach used in this study. Within her model, different forms of mentoring take place, such as formal and informal mentoring- where the levels of intent and involvement can differ. Formal being more structured and informal being more flexible (Mertz, 2004). Additionally, mentoring can be peer to peer based or hierarchical depending on who the mentor is and the level of power involved, which can also affect the intent and involvement. Finally, the functions within mentoring are categorized into four areas: feedback, opportunity creation, connections and counsel, and role modeling (Mertz, 2004). These functions are all necessary for a successful mentorship to occur and for the peak of Mertz' framework to be met. Wheeler (2024) found that soft skills in mentoring were essential for successful mentoring relationships, and that the

combination of PERMA and Mertz was an efficient way to employ this in mentoring relationships, especially concerning K-12 education (Wheeler, 2024).

When combined with PERMA, teachers can be mentored to increase wellbeing and hopefully increase leadership and improve the overall culture of the school building. The combination of these two frameworks was originally developed by Rhonda Wheeler in 2024 and is used in this literature review with her permission. By positioning structured mentorship as a relationship-based mechanism for promoting PERMA-aligned wellbeing strategies, this study integrates the interpersonal and intrapersonal elements critical to teacher development and retention. This connects directly to my qualitative action research questions by using the PERMA model and Mertz's framework to measure mentor intent and involvement to promote leadership and success, as well as mentor perception of well-being strategies used in the training program that was developed through action research. In this study, mentor training sessions were designed to both clarify mentoring roles (informed by Mertz) and introduce wellbeing practices aligned with the PERMA model, allowing researchers to explore how these intersecting influences shaped the mentor experience.

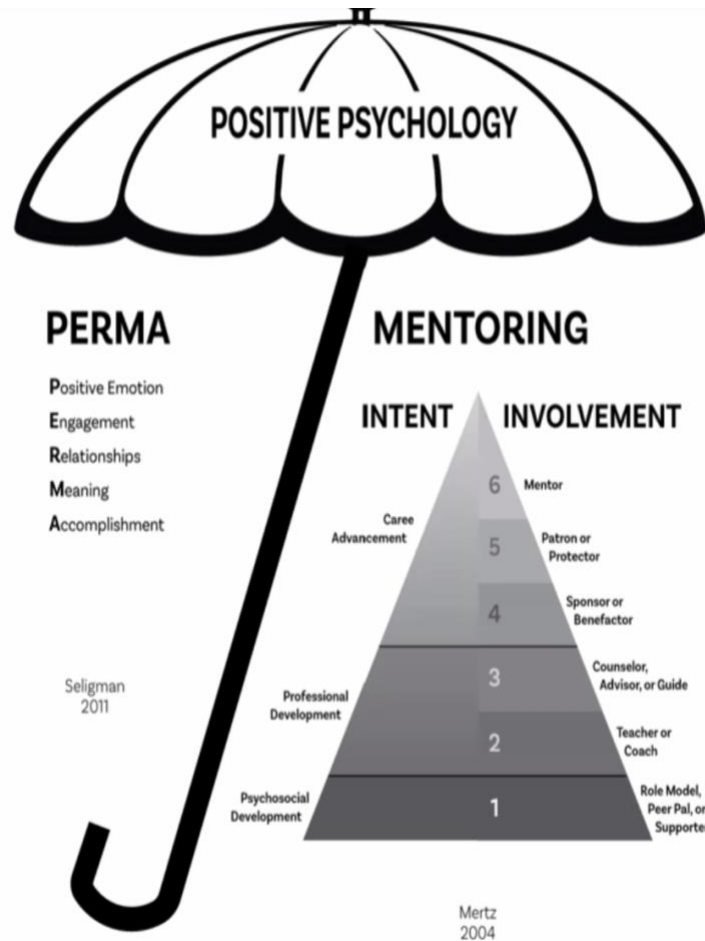


Figure 1. Wheeler's Framework. Model of conceptual framework combining Seligman's PERMA model with Mertz's mentoring framework, all under the umbrella of positive psychology.

Leadership in Mentoring

Leadership is a foundational element of effective schools and plays a central role in developing self-efficacy, positive school culture, and successful mentoring programs. Leadership greatly affects the overall school building, and it can determine the developmental order of the organization (Ghosh et al., 2013). Developmental networks in schools can either promote shared leadership or discourage it, and when teachers are given leadership opportunities, they are able to reach the inter-independent stage,

maintaining autonomy while relying on collaboration (Ghosh et al., 2013). This is important so that teachers feel self-sufficient in their role in the classroom and in mentoring but also knowing that the developmental network in the school can be beneficial to them. Contextual factors such as wellbeing, job satisfaction, and burnout are also tied to the quality of mentoring facilitated by school leadership (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaugnessy, 2020). When these contextual factors are considered by leadership, higher quality mentoring is likely to occur. Leaders can also have a large impact on mentorship in the school building when they build developmental relationships and model positive approaches to sustain the work of teaching and learning (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). More positive relationships that are built around the school improve culture. Through positive psychology principles, leaders can multiply the benefits of mentoring, foster wellbeing, and build a mentoring culture centered on trust and growth (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). A focus on instructional leadership and teacher learning can take place with strong mentoring programs, where the mentees engage with instructional improvement, analyze data, and reflect on practice. This becomes a part of a broader system of professional development (Searby & Brondyk, 2016). Continuous evaluation and improvement of mentorship programs is necessary to create a successful mentoring program (Searby et al., 2017). Shared leadership can only happen, however, when trust is given to teacher leaders by the administration, and this includes trust to mentor effectively. Teachers do not feel like they can contribute in settings where they are not trusted members of the organization, and school leadership has a direct impact on the shared trust in the building (Basaran & Cakir, 2023; Cobanoglu & Bozbayindir, 2019). Ultimately, school

leadership that fosters trust, shared responsibility, and psychological wellbeing lays the essential groundwork for mentoring programs that empower teachers and sustain a thriving school culture.

Support from school leadership plays a large role in the success of mentorship programs. Teachers who find meaningfulness in their work through mentorship are more likely to be effective, and administrators contribute directly to this (Kilic et al., 2023). Transformational leadership has been found to be the most effective form of administrative leadership, which makes a difference by increasing collaboration in teams, strong communication skills, and creating an open environment for pedagogical freedom and conversation (Burns, 1978; Kilic et al., 2023). Educational leaders must be willing to work in innovative and transformative ways that enhance learning opportunities, engage in critical reflection, and have enthusiasm and energy (Robinson et al., 2009). Transformational mentors increase leadership by inspiring and transforming their trainees through sincere and well-timed guidance, encouragement, modeling, and visioning (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). Transformational school leadership increases mentorship through compliance to mentorship policy. These leaders actively support mentorship through reduced teaching assignments, appropriate compensation, and commitment to positive mentoring experiences (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Conversely, weak mentoring systems, when unchecked by leadership, lead to missed opportunities and stagnant growth (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). District and state-level leadership also influence mentoring success, particularly through funding and program design (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). Organizational backing of mentorship programs is essential for success to provide time, resources, and alignment

with professional goals (Searby et al., 2017). When school, district, and state leaders prioritize and invest in strong mentorship systems, they create the structural and cultural conditions necessary for both teachers and students to thrive.

Teacher leadership can increase from mentorship roles, especially in regard to teacher self-efficacy. Teacher leadership is defined as, “a set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere” (Danielson, 2006). Core principals of teacher leadership include advocating for students, leading collaboratively, and reflecting on leadership and teaching practices. These practices can make a large difference in school effectiveness (Portner, 2005). Fostering shared leadership is one of the essential elements to increase self-efficacy in the school building (Tore & Duman-Saka, 2023). Teachers and school administrators with higher self-efficacy are more likely to exhibit more advanced leadership behaviors than others (Harris & Jones, 2019). Advanced teacher leadership behaviors such as this are beneficial when mentoring new teachers. Mentorship increases confidence, in both mentors and mentees, and confidence has been found to increase leadership (Zuckerman, 2001). As mentorship strengthens teacher confidence and self-efficacy, it lays the foundation for sustained teacher leadership that positively influences school culture and instructional practice. Collaboration often leads to greater confidence and resources, and when teachers gain these skills, they are more likely to become leaders in the school building (Soulen & Wine, 2021). Additionally, strong teachers can model leadership and best practice for the school community and make a difference in their buildings (Soulen & Wine, 2021). Self-efficacy, defined as one’s belief in their ability to

achieve goals (Bandura, 1982), is central to effective mentorship and positive psychology. When teachers gain confidence, optimism, and recognize their strengths, they are more likely to assume leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to school culture (Cobanoglu & Bozbayindir, 2019; Seligman, 2011). Shared leadership predicts teacher self-efficacy, so when this is put in place, teachers have more confidence, are more extroverted in sharing their ideas, and overall school culture increases (Cobanoglu & Bozbayindir, 2019). Highlighting strengths also increases leadership abilities (Seligman, 2011). When strengths are noticed and capitalized upon, it can give teachers the confidence to share in those areas where they might not have otherwise. Mentoring based on strengths can have similar affects, where vulnerability and trust are increased so that leadership can flourish (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). By cultivating self-efficacy, emphasizing strengths, and fostering collaborative mentorship, schools can empower teachers to lead with confidence and contribute meaningfully to a thriving educational culture.

Teacher leadership transforms cultures in schools. Mentors who view themselves as educational leaders are able to identify ways that the school culture can shift to enable or disable the development of their leadership (Thornton, 2014). Things that promote leadership in mentoring relationships include the selection of mentors, mentorship preparation programs, and ongoing professional support of school and district leaders. The main barrier was negative school cultures or inadequate systems that squash shared leadership (Thornton, 2014). For a positive school culture, educational leaders must have a deep understanding of the learning process, foster connections between the school and community, a vision for the future, and understand

the context of their school (Stoll et al., 2003). As stated earlier, negative cultures can be a barrier to effective mentorship and teacher leadership, and this is influenced most by program leaders and school administrators. Administration who are collaborative and have a strong school culture through building positive relationships and support the development of teachers are more likely to have advanced teacher leaders within their school building (Thornton, 2014). An administrator who is not interested in collaboration can undo the work of positive mentoring in the building and can be the gatekeeper of the culture (Sergiovanni, 1987). It is important that administrators at both the school and district levels understand and acknowledge that the role that mentors can play in strengthening the culture of mentor leadership is supported in the literature (Thornton, 2014).

When mentors view themselves as teacher leaders, they are more likely to recognize their influence and embrace the opportunity to support and shape the growth of new educators. Ongoing professional support and the rigorous selection of mentors who have leadership potential are the most likely to make the largest impact (Moir, 2009). When district and school leaders treat mentors as leaders, they become more comfortable being described in that way, and it increased teacher confidence. It also gives mentors greater opportunities to demonstrate their leadership capacities. Teacher leaders were able to see how they were an agent of change and also encouraged reflection while increasing leadership capacity (Thornton, 2014). Empowering mentors to lead not only enhances their professional growth but also strengthens the overall leadership capacity and reflective culture within the school.

The perspective of veteran teachers is important to consider in conjunction with leadership. Development of leadership opportunities is an excellent way to retain and reward veteran teachers (Hobson et al., 2009). Veteran teachers who view mentorship as a form of leadership are important to have in the school building, and building their capacity via leadership and mentor training affects the experience of their leadership (Ponte & Twomey, 2014). Teaching is an inherently emotional practice, and the passion of teaching can often have positive or negative effects on mentor teachers, which makes it critical to understand the role mentoring plays on leadership in the school building (Santoro et al., 2012). Teachers who serve as mentors often develop a stronger sense of leadership and begin to explore additional roles or certifications to advance their careers. Mentoring shifts their self-perception, increases fulfillment, and reinforces the emotional resilience needed to sustain their work (Ponte & Twomey, 2014). Positive feedback from mentees further affirms their impact, strengthening their identity as leaders within the school. As mentors grow in confidence and purpose, they become catalysts for leadership and professional renewal in their schools.

Mentor Training

Training mentors is an essential practice to have strong mentoring programs that promote resilience and teacher retention. The development of a mentor program should advance the professionalization of the practice of mentoring by assembling evidence-based resources, and make it easily accessible to practitioners (Lunsford, 2022). Pairing mentors with mentees that have similar attitudes, value, and beliefs are likely to form better mentoring relationships and create a stronger mentoring program (Eby et al., 2013). The simple development of a program and pairing mentors does not train

mentors sufficiently, it has to be supported by the organization. To start, building a mentoring infrastructure within an organization with solid boundaries and a strong developmental network and mutually beneficial relationships sets a mentoring program up for success (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Promoting high quality mentoring with training in vulnerability, positive relationships, ethics, and ways to avoid dysfunction is the responsibility of the program leader. Additionally, recruiting the right participants, orienting participants to the program goals, supporting participants, and assessing progress are all necessary to ensure a high-quality mentoring training (Lunsford, 2022). A strong mentoring culture fosters organizational learning where innovation and productivity are enhanced through accountability, alignment, communication, demand, training, multiple mentoring opportunities, and value (Carmeli et al., 2009). It is important that mentors have a solid understanding of why they are participating in the program and providing them support throughout it. By having clear goals and avoiding ambiguity, quality mentor. Training can be ensured. Attitudinal, behavioral, career, and health measures are all examples of quality outcomes from mentor programs that will lead to program and cultural change (Lunsford, 2022). Ultimately, intentional mentor training and organizational support are critical to cultivating a sustainable mentoring culture that drives both individual growth and systemic transformation in education.

Andragogy, the art and science of teaching adults, is a complex practice that requires knowledge and time. Mentors cannot enact educative or collaborative mentoring on their own, and to leverage high level mentoring practices, the training program must recognize the complexity of a mentoring role and move beyond advice to meet the expectations of collaborative mentoring (Langdon & Ward, 2014). When

mentors are left to their own devices, they will not develop their mentoring practices to the level of the expertise required for effective mentoring (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Complex mentoring needs time and training, and it is a matter of adult learning that many teachers are unfamiliar with. Induction programs usually focus only on information, guidance, and psychological support, rather than professional learning and promoting effective teaching practices. This limited approach to mentoring does not advance new teachers but merely emulates models of teaching experience (Langdon & Ward, 2014). Providing models, handbooks, and professional development for mentors creates stability in schools and clear roles for mentors. To cultivate truly effective mentors, schools must prioritize comprehensive andragogical training that equips mentors with the skills, knowledge, and support necessary to move beyond surface-level guidance and foster meaningful professional growth.

Mentoring is a different role from many other positions in the building and should be separated from teaching children or coaching. Mentoring and training other teachers to be mentors requires building capacity in adults by combining expertise, motivation, and opportunities (Viera, 2021). Mentors who provide emotional support alone, while helpful, are not effective and require training to encompass specific teaching practices and routines in their mentorship. Developing effective structures for mentorship through professional development designed to shift mentoring practices can improve mentoring and change the perceptions of mentor teachers (Kasten et al., 2024). Creating mentoring structures that support this work and well-developed frames facilitates the substance of mentoring that enables mentor learning to take place (Karathanos-Aguilar & Ervin-Kassab, 2022). Mentors who are provided with models of training were more

successful than those left to their own devices (Kasten et al., 2024). When developing these structures, input from other educators is important. Educator input in the training, what needs to happen in the program, and how it is facilitated will impact the overall effectiveness of the program (Fransson & McMahan, 2013). Finally, general mentorship knowledge must be embedded within the structures. Mentors who were trained in the areas of teaching specific classroom practices and prepared for difficult conversations were able to connect better with their mentees, and their mentees had a greater awareness of student attention and behavior (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). By intentionally designing mentorship structures grounded in educator input, pedagogical modeling, and targeted mentor training, schools can cultivate mentoring practices that lead to meaningful teacher development and improved classroom outcomes.

Currently, there is little professional learning available for mentors or specific training when teachers are asked to mentor preservice, novice, or even veteran teachers new to a school district. Many teachers do not see the need for mentorship training, especially if they have a lot of experience in the classroom. If they are not able to acknowledge their own learning needs, they are also not likely to access opportunities for professional development in mentoring on their own (Threvethan & Sandretto, 2017). The literature states that even though many teachers feel this way, experience in the classroom does not equate to being an effective mentor. It is a complex practice that must be learned. (Gareis & Grant, 2014). Mentor preparation programs should be rooted in the experiences of actual mentors, focusing on aspects of co-planning, observing and debriefing, and analyzing student work (Stanulis et al., 2019). There is, however, a lack of specific mentor training research and further

investigation is needed to identify how specific models of professional development can prepare teachers to enact mentoring practices in effective ways (Wexler, 2019). To bridge the gap between classroom experience and effective mentorship, intentional, research-informed professional learning opportunities must be developed to equip mentors with the specific skills and practices necessary for impactful teacher support.

Mentorship preparation programs can also vary drastically based on the grade level or instructional focus. Creating a one-size-fits all instructional mentoring program is difficult and often not the best practice. Tailoring the program to the context of the school and teachers working within it proves more effective. The benefits of mentoring are well known, but the most common finding in mentor preparation is that the mentors need non-contract time to prepare for and undertake the mentoring role (Hobson et al., 2009). This has to be accepted and promoted by organizational leadership. Mentor preparation programs should include strategies to assist individuals developing their identities as mentors and create groups to help overcome mentor isolation and help develop mentors' skill development through conversation (Carroll, 2005). In addition, specific content area mentor training, training to understand the value of pedagogical conversations with mentees, and mentor preparation activities based on inter-personal skills and development of reflection activities are also elements of effective mentor preparation programs (Crasborn et al., 2008). Lack of a full preparation program leads to uneven mentor policies and negative mentorship experiences that do more harm than good.

Negative mentoring experiences are common and come from a result of lack of mentor training. While mentoring has been heavily studied, there is too little focus on

what constitutes as effective mentoring or on the interpersonal processes involved (Hamlin & Sage, 2011). Mentoring can even become “toxic” at times, where the relationship becomes harmful to one or both parties. Toxic mentoring can come about when there is a poor match in the relationship, distancing behavior, manipulation a lack of expertise, and general dysfunctionality (Eby et al., 2000). Mentor training and development programs directly combat toxic mentoring by promoting empathy, matching mentors by values, focusing on specific power dynamics, and using Kram’s developmental framework to define the stages of mentoring and provide support (Washington & Cox, 2016). Matching mentor and mentee pairs based on readiness and initiative for relational engagement is also an important factor to consider, because if the mentee is uninterested and does not participate, the relationship will fail (Searby, 2014). Kochan (2013) found that the success or failure of a mentoring program often relies on how well cultural dynamics are handled (like values), and that mentoring program managers must consider cultural awareness to have a successful program. A difference in values often leads more problems in the mentoring relationship, and when proteges perceive their mentors to have self-enhancement values they experience more negative mentoring than those who are perceived to have self-transcendence values (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2020). Mentors lacking emotional intelligence was found to be one of the greatest contributors to negative mentoring, so when they are trained in this area, mentors and mentees are likely to have better relationships and combat previous harm done by toxic mentorships in the past (Washington & Cox, 2016). Negative mentoring comes with a myriad of problems for school buildings and cultures. Teachers who experience negative mentoring have less organizational commitment, job satisfaction,

and perceived career success (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2020). By prioritizing intentional mentor training that emphasizes emotional intelligence, value alignment, and developmental frameworks, schools can prevent toxic mentoring relationships and foster a culture of trust, growth, and professional satisfaction.

Failure to create appropriate mentoring conditions also contributes to negative mentoring experiences, and school-based mentoring often fails to realize its full potential. Judgementoring is a term that was coined by Hobson and Maldrez (2013) where a relationship between a mentor too readily reveals his or her own judgements or evaluations of the mentee's teaching skills and compromises the mentoring relationship and future benefits that could come from it. "Judgementoring" usually occurs when mentor training has not been put in place and when there have been weak methods of mentor selection, leading to the designation of mentors that lack appropriate knowledge and skills (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Besides general negative effects of mentoring, it can also result in the reproduction of conventional norms and practices, where mentees are unable to develop their knowledge and maintain the status quo (Hobson & Maldrez, 2013). Developing a robust mentor training program where everyone involved feels safe, trusted, and valued is, therefore, necessary to combat the effects of negative wellbeing from mentoring. Poorly trained mentors also contribute to teacher attrition by creating stress and isolation when a mentoring relationship goes bad (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Not only do negative mentoring experiences contribute to those feelings, but prior negative mentoring also determines the approach of mentors when not properly trained. These prior experiences can enhance or detract from the possibility that they will view mentoring as a form of professional learning (Trevethan & Sandretto,

2017). To prevent the damaging cycle of judgementoring and promote mentoring as meaningful professional learning, schools must invest in thoughtful mentor selection and comprehensive training that fosters trust, reflection, and growth for both mentors and mentees.

Even though negative mentoring can provide many setbacks, when mentors are trained effectively, they can improve over time and through professional development. When mentors are provided with professional development on relative topics as well as mentoring and coaching of their own, they are more likely to stay in the profession (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Additionally, teaching is an evolving profession, so providing mentoring training on the most up to date skills and strategies is beneficial to both the mentor and mentee (Childre & Van Rie, 2015). When provided with training, researchers found that mentor participants increased their overall knowledge by improving in areas of coaching, releasing responsibility, and specifically designed instruction (Ortogero et al., 2022). The most common themes that were found to improve mentoring in training were on effective mentor language and approaches, research-supported strategies, applicable course materials, improving teaching practices that improve student outcomes, and collaborative learning and networking. Mentees also perceive their mentorship experience as more positive when their mentors have been trained, and they could see a direct impact on student achievement as a result (Orgtogerio et al., 2022). Districts and schools that provide mentor training have higher positive outcomes which leads to more effective teaching practices (Washburn-Moses, 2010). When schools invest in ongoing, research-based mentor training, they

not only enhance the effectiveness of mentoring relationships but also contribute to improved teacher retention, instructional quality, and student achievement.

The perception and self-awareness of a mentor can also change after they receive training. Mentors who are aware of their roles and purpose through training are more likely to grow alongside with their mentee, enhancing the effects of mentorship in the school building (Garza et al., 2019). When it is assumed that teaching experience alone is enough preparation for effective mentoring, novice teachers often have mentors with no preparation for their mentoring role (Roegman et al., 2016). Mentors often want to grow professionally to better understand their role as a mentor and how they can be more effective, but they are unaware of how to do this on their own. When they perceive their roles of great importance for their own professional development and to promote their identity in their profession, they are more likely to be successful (Leshem, 2014). Greater levels of self-awareness from the mentor allow for the process of co-learning to occur in a meaningful and purposeful way. Having this knowledge and understanding why the training is important helps mentors improve their practice, and role clarity that improves the professional development of all involved (Garza, 2019). Effective feedback is another way in which mentors can improve their practice through training. When mentors are provided with feedback on their own practices, they are able to see how they can improve in mentorship and perceive themselves as stronger mentors after reflection (Gearity & Mertz, 2015). Teachers are found to improve over time as they grow in their mentoring experience and training, which creates a larger impact from their mentoring (Roegman et al., 2015). Impact was highly dependent on reflection

opportunities for both the mentor and mentee and was specific to high-leverage mentorship practices being enacted, not just positive compliments.

Implementation of mentoring programs is important when considering training for mentor teachers. Local implementation is difficult, and it often depends on how participants understand their practice and potentially can change their beliefs and attitudes about the topic in the process (Spillane et al., 2002). Policy and programs are rarely successful without planned implementation from leadership and clear directives that measure the desired outcome (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989). Policy typically does not fail due to a lack of effort but, instead, due to people who do not have the base knowledge to carry out the plan effectively, and this can often apply to mentorship (Spillane et al., 2002). Program managers play an important role in implementing new programs. These managers must be informed of the intended policy and practice in order to effectively implement the program, and they are often the driving force behind the change the mentoring program is hoping to create (Lunsford, 2022). Shared leadership in creating the program goes a long way with successful implementation as well. When stakeholders were included in the development of a program and implementation, the policies were much more effective (Fransson & McMahan, 2013). Mentor preparation programs should be important to policymakers who want to support and develop teachers, and by listening to the voices of all educators, they can make changes that encourage teachers to stay in the teaching profession (Bullough, 2012). Training strong mentors is a way for administrators to ensure success in their local mentoring programs. When programs lack support from administration, they are destined to fail. Teacher mentoring programs have become a form of teacher induction,

where common pre-service induction programs fail (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Induction often has positive effects, but when combined with implementing a mentoring policy it increases even more. The training of mentors to ensure collaboration and support, as well as administrative assistance are influential factors for new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Providing mentors who are unskilled causes implementation to fail, so providing mentors with the knowledge of how to support these new teachers is crucial (Evertson & Smithey, 2000).

Specific mentoring programs have been reviewed in the literature to provide some examples of induction programs that can lead to positive mentor training experiences. Induction programs have positive effects when paired with mentoring, especially when paired in the same subject field and when mentors are properly trained (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Training mentors with appropriate resources to enable personal development, mitigate psychological costs, and ease stress from the job are all ways that mentor training through induction can be beneficial (Dutton et al., 2024). A mentorship program focusing on shared mentorship and self-efficacy called SMILE is an example of a program where mentors are trained on critical feedback and their development of instructional skills was thus improved (Chizhik et al., 2018). This program also provided feedback from the mentees to the mentors to gauge their effectiveness and make reflective adjustments throughout the mentoring process. Training teachers in the collaborative nature of mentoring while providing reflective feedback made the mentoring experience more beneficial for all involved and shows the benefits of including positive mentoring induction programs with embedded training to sustain mentorship and promote resilience and retention in the school building.

Teacher Resilience and Retention

Increasing teacher resilience through mentorship is an important topic to consider when developing a mentoring program. Teacher turnover rates are increasing, and many times this is due to new teachers leaving the profession who have not built resilience or who have not been encouraged to build it through induction programs like mentorship (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Teacher resilience is defined as the ability to withstand stressors and setbacks of the job while maintaining commitment and agency towards the teaching profession (Mansfield et al., 2016). This combines personal resources, such as one's own self-efficacy, motivation, and competence, with contextual resources like relationships, school culture, and mentoring support networks. When these two resources are combined with strategies that teachers can be taught, it promotes resilience outcomes (Mansfield et al., 2016). When teachers are able to harness this framework of resilience, they can persevere and continue working in the face of chronic challenges, which we know is current in the state of education today (Morettini et al., 2020). Teacher resilience then increases retention in the school building, which benefits students and the school culture.

Relationships are one of the major factors that increase teacher resilience in the school building. Teachers who build and are accepted by the community become more accustomed to the culture of the school. Those who are not accepted by the school community are often unprepared and less resilient, resulting in a lack of management, issues with documentation and processes, and struggles with student behavior. Because some teachers are not accepted by the school community, they also don't have the resources, such as quality mentoring, to build the resilience that is key to

making it in the profession (Morettini et al., 2020). Managing student behaviors was shown to be a large factor when it comes to resilience, and one that mentors can directly impact. Different classroom management styles are unique to each teacher, but strategies that are added after mentor observation can have a direct impact on improved management and increase teacher resilience when they feel more capable to independently manage their own classroom (Ihtiyaroglu, 2018). Additionally, protégés of mentors who participated in mentorship training were proven to have more effective classroom management than those without a mentor or an untrained mentor (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). When teachers are accepted by the school community, they are also more likely to be trained and have their potential recognized by leadership and other veteran members of the staff. This is necessary to increase teacher resilience when the new teachers are seen as competent in their position and can build upon strengths they already possess (Tore & Duman-Saka, 2023). Another way that teachers are embraced through the community to increase resiliency and promote mentorship is through relationships with special area teachers throughout the building. Collaboration with and gaining knowledge from these teachers, such as librarians, fine arts teachers, and physical education teachers, fosters resilience, increases competency, and builds mentoring networks (Soulen & Wine, 2021). Additionally, knowledge sharing and collaboration through mentoring relationships also increases teacher happiness, wellbeing, and resilience (Lee et al., 2023). Collaboration through mentorship often comes in more than just instructional means, especially regarding classroom management. When teachers are trained and mentored in strong classroom management skills, their overall resilience is increased, and they are more likely to stay

in the profession (Sezer & Can, 2019). Ultimately, when educators are supported through meaningful relationships and collaborative mentorship, they gain the confidence, skills, and sense of belonging necessary to thrive and remain resilient in the profession (Adair & Reames, 2025).

Student achievement is also critical to teacher resilience. When teachers feel confident in their instructional abilities and that they are making a difference in the classroom, they become more resilient and are able to sustain the day-to-day challenges of teaching at a more effective rate (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). Studies have found that resilient educators have higher student achievement scores, and that collaboration and organizational trust are essential to these high achieving student outcomes (Basaran & Cakir, 2023; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Soulen & Wine, 2021). Therefore, resilience isn't just necessary for teachers to stay in their positions but shows the impact it can have on the overall school organization and the students who are a part of that organization. Mentoring is an essential way to foster collaboration and increase organizational trust to improve student outcomes. However, studies also show that students with low resilience have low student achievement and, thus, are more likely to have higher turn-over in their positions (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). By prioritizing mentorship that builds both teacher and student resilience, schools can create a sustainable, achievement-driven culture that benefits the entire educational community.

Teacher emotion also plays a large role in overall resilience in the classroom. Teaching is an inherently emotional profession, where educators bring their own views, passions, and feelings daily. Many teachers view the profession as their identity, and

therefore it can have a great influence on their resilience and what they are able to handle in the classroom (Santoro et al., 2011). Gaining personal fulfilment through teaching and the sacrifice that comes with it increases resilience also (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). Research shows that teachers who promote their wellbeing, or are encouraged to do so by mentors, are able to better regulate their emotions and have stronger resilience (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020). Additionally, those teachers who prioritize wellbeing through mentorship are able to recognize happiness in the school building and have a positive outlook that promotes resilience (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). It was even predicted that when teachers are shown to have stronger emotional regulation on an intake survey, those same teachers were proven to be more resilient (Sagar, 2021). When those teachers who already have strong emotional regulation are paired with mentors to help them capitalize on that and promote their wellbeing, they are able to enjoy a long career in the classroom and in education in general. Teachers who perceive stress more easily than others are more likely to burn out quicker and be less resilient (Colomeischi & Ursu, 2023). This can be due to many things, such as their upbringings, personal lives, or even inexperience in unique situations that the teaching profession puts them into (Benner et al., 2023). Mentoring can increase personal identity, and this builds resilience, fosters leadership capacity, and helps mentees adapt to systematic pressures (Mullen, 2005). When teachers have strong support systems at school and at home, they are more likely to have a higher resilience level (Darwich, 2021; Papatraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). Matching mentors and mentees by values and what they are emotionally tied to can also increase resilience because they can support each other in unique ways and increase each other's'

identities and efficacy (Carrillo & Flores, 2018). Mentorship increases feelings of confidence and pride in teaching roles that are necessary for resilience in the classroom (Leshem, 2014; Thornton, 2014). In conclusion, fostering emotional awareness and wellbeing through intentional mentorship not only strengthens individual teacher resilience but also contributes to a more stable, passionate, and enduring teaching workforce.

Teacher resilience leads to and is critical for teacher retention. When we are able to increase the leadership skills of teachers in the school building, they are more likely to stay in their positions or advance to other leadership positions within the school or district (Kangas-Dick & O'Shaughnessy, 2020; Washburn-Moses, 2010). Mentorship also increases job satisfaction for both the mentors and mentees. Teachers who are chosen to mentor feel as if they are put in a leadership role and are more bought into the organizational goals when properly trained (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2020). Additionally, mentorship can be seen as a form of recruitment for new teachers and mentees. They are seeking this in a position and are looking for it in order to be a part of the induction process to a new job, and schools or districts without a developed mentorship program are at a disadvantage and have higher teacher turnover (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). Induction programs have increasingly positive effects on the retention of new teachers, and mentorship is one of the most effective induction programs available. Teachers who participate in those programs are more likely to stay in the profession for a longer time (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). By fostering leadership and connection through structured mentorship and induction, schools can significantly

strengthen teacher retention and build a more stable and committed educational workforce.

School culture plays a large role in teacher resilience and retention. A negative school culture can lead to teacher attrition, and mentorship is a proven way to increase the culture of the school to increase retention (Arthur & Bradley, 2023). High attrition rates are often the result of inexperienced teachers, high economic costs from turnover, and a lack of continuity in the school that make long term planning and cultural development difficult. Many things in school culture can lead to this attrition, such as excessive workloads, testing, poor student behavior, and lacking administrative leadership. Mentoring and induction programs combat these losses and improve upon low pre-service training standards for new teachers and the vast change in standards and processes when teachers move districts. Teachers who have chosen the profession as a second career are also important to consider when retaining them. Specific strategies can be employed to help older individuals who are first year teachers to increase their resilience and retain them (Dutton et al., 2024). Resources and mentor/mentee participation play a large role in this, but when mentors are trained, they are far more likely to retain early career teachers, no matter what stage they are in their lives. Retaining a teacher is more productive and cost saving than hiring a new teacher year to year, and mentorship helps retention and builds resilience (Brill & McCartney, 2008). It is stated clearly in the research, “Teacher retention is directly tied to the collective experience of teachers in the school and the quality of instruction that those students receive” (Brill & McCartney, 2008, p. 754). Another factor to consider is that teaching is often seen as a temporary position. Many females plan to teach until they

start a family of their own, or programs like Teach for America only place teachers in the classroom for a few years before they move onto their “real” profession. This results in a higher turn-over rate than other professions, less resilience, and lower outcomes for students and teachers (Brill & McCartney, 2008). It is also important to consider that mentorship does not have lasting effects when invested in people that do not plan to stay in the profession as their career or for an extended period of time. Untrained, overbearing mentors also contribute to teacher retention issues, which goes back to negative mentoring experiences listed in the mentorship training section. Specifically in the state of Alabama, retention numbers are dramatically decreasing. Teachers are leaving the profession at high rates, with 46% of teachers leaving after five years in the United States, and 50% of teachers leaving in the state of Alabama (Mackey, 2022). When teachers are mentored to be passionate about the teaching position, their resilience and retention improve, and they are likely to then go into leadership positions to increase the school culture. Therefore, investing in intentional, high-quality mentorship programs not only strengthens teacher resilience and retention, but also fosters a positive school culture that supports long-term growth, leadership, and student success. Figure 2 (below) depicts a theoretical model for a structured mentor training program based on existing mentorship literature and how mentorship training leads to effective leadership, better mentorship, resilience, and teacher retention.

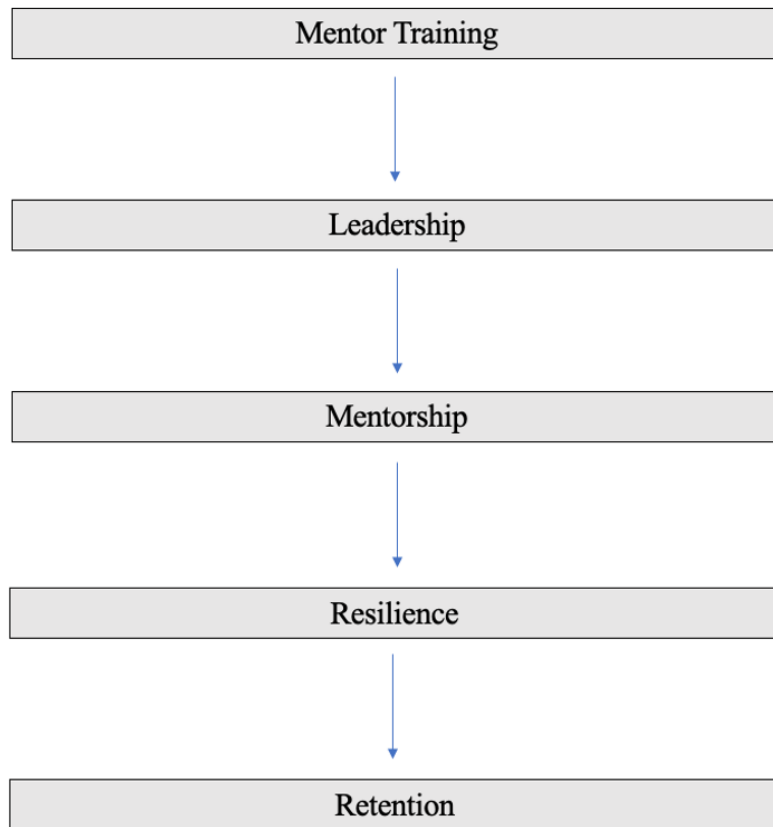


Figure 2. Theoretical Model for Structured Mentoring Training. This figure shows the progression of the structured mentor training program and its connection to the literature review that helped develop the program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

When reviewing the literature in the previous chapter, the themes of positive psychology, mentorship, leadership through mentoring, mentor training, and resilience were reviewed. Additionally, how all of those components are tied together to increase teacher retention through mentorship were highlighted to show the importance of mentorship to improve the teacher retention problem. Overall, it was found in the existing research that positive psychology plays an important role in mentorship, mentorship is essential for induction to new organizations and career development, creating mentors develops shared leadership in schools, mentor training increases the effectiveness of mentoring, and resilience and retention are results of high-quality mentoring (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Lundsford, 2022; Mertz, 2004; Morettini et al., 2020; Seligman, 2011; Thornton, 2013; Washburn-Moses, 2010).

In this chapter focused on methodology, I will go into depth explaining the research questions, research methodology, and design. Within these sections, I will highlight the qualitative aspects of the research questions, elaborate on participatory action research methodology, and provide rationale for why these choices were made. Additionally, I will expound upon the research design, explain how this will answer my research questions, and explain the data resources and analysis that will be used. Then, I will describe the population and sample and the confidentiality measures that took place. Instrumentation and the structure will be discussed, along with validity and reliability, as well as my data collection and management procedures. Data analysis will focus on how data was collected and thus analyzed with ethical considerations in mind.

Finally, limitations and delimitations will be included to round out the full picture of methodology used in this participatory action research study.

To conduct the literature review for this dissertation, a comprehensive search of relevant empirical studies was carried out using multiple academic databases and search tools. Auburn University Libraries served as a central access point for scholarly resources, offering a wide range of peer-reviewed journals and educational research databases. Google Scholar was utilized to expand the search and locate open-access articles, citation trails, and recent publications across disciplines. In addition, ProQuest provided access to full-text dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles, and educational reports. The search focused on key topics aligned with the study's purpose, including mentoring, positive psychology, mentor leadership, mentor training, teacher resilience, and teacher retention. Keywords, authors, and citations were strategically combined to refine results and ensure the inclusion of current and high-quality empirical research. This methodical approach ensured a well-rounded and evidence-based foundation for the conceptual framework and research design.

The background of the problem for this study is the current issue of teacher retention. This includes teachers new to the profession as well as those who have been teaching for a long period of time but are new to a school or district. Teachers are leaving the profession at higher rates which hurts school culture and student achievement (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Therefore, actions need to be taken to increase teacher retention and resilience, and amplifying the benefits of mentoring through mentorship training to increase leadership can be one way to improve upon teacher resilience. When mentors are trained to be better mentors, mentors see themselves in

leadership positions, improving their retention rates, as well as those of the mentees who they are serving more effectively.

The gap in the literature that was reviewed for this study showed that there is a need for mentorship training to increase leadership and promote resilience. While there is a lot of literature on positive psychology and mentoring, the benefits of mentor training, and ways to increase teacher resilience and retention, there is little that combines all of those factors into one study to see the effects on schools when combined. Although the benefits of mentorship for novice teachers and the importance of teacher wellbeing are well documented, the intersection of mentorship, wellbeing, and teacher leadership remains underexplored. Much of the existing research focuses on either the structural elements of mentoring programs, or on teacher wellbeing as an outcome of supportive work environments. There is limited qualitative research, however, examining how mentorship training specifically fosters teacher wellbeing for mentors while simultaneously promoting teacher leadership as a strategy for improving teacher retention. Furthermore, while studies highlight the value of transformational and shared leadership, few explore how these leadership models can be embedded within structured mentorship programs to strengthen teacher resilience and long-term commitment to the profession. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating how a structured mentorship program, grounded in wellbeing and leadership development, can create sustainable support systems that not only retain teachers but also empower them as leaders within their school communities.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the well-documented benefits of mentorship supporting novice teachers, and the growing recognition of teacher wellbeing as critical to professional sustainability, a gap remains in understanding how these two areas intersect to increase mentorship intent and involvement and improve teacher wellbeing. Existing research primarily addresses mentorship structures, administrative compliance, or general wellbeing initiatives, but little is known about how structured mentorship programs can intentionally integrate wellbeing practices while fostering teacher leadership and improve mentoring practices. Without this focus, schools risk missing opportunities to not only retain teachers but also to develop them as leaders who contribute to a positive and resilient school culture. Therefore, there is a need for participatory action research that explores how mentorship training grounded in wellbeing and leadership development can strengthen teacher resilience, enhance job satisfaction, and improve retention. To explore how mentor training can improve teacher retention, this study will use participatory action research to examine the development of a strong teacher mentoring program through mentor training.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative participatory action research study:

1. In what ways do mentor architects describe how participating in two action research cycles to develop and implement a structured teacher mentoring program influence their intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices?

2. In what ways do teacher mentors describe their perceptions the first year of implementation after two action research cycles of a structured mentor training program, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly hired teachers and promoting aspects of wellbeing as described by Seligman's PERMA model with (a) positive emotions, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, (e) accomplishment?

The sources of data that were used to answer research questions were through individual interviews, a survey, and a focus group. This data showed the growth of the mentor architects and mentors as they go through the development of mentorship training, rolling it out to the school and promoting the program, and then at the end of the school year, covering two cycles of the action research process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted along with a focus group interview, as well as artifacts from the mentor training program where mentors wrote reflections and their thoughts throughout the training as they relate to the various components of Seligman's PERMA (2011), and their perceptions of the mentor training program.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research design was most appropriate for this study because the goal was to examine the lived experiences of both the participating teachers and me as we engaged in the research process. Using qualitative methods allowed for the collection of detailed data through both individual interviews and a survey (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A central component of this study was the collaborative development of a mentor training program with the mentor architects, designed to improve mentorship quality, strengthen teacher leadership, and enhance teacher retention. Given this focus

on collaboration and improvement within a specific school context, participatory action research emerged as the most fitting methodological approach.

Although action research is defined in various ways, Herr and Anderson (2015) emphasize that researchers must explicitly state the definition guiding their work, as it shapes the research process. Argyris and Schön (1989) define action research as practitioner-led inquiry situated in local practice contexts, bounded by the realities of that setting, and tested through interventions that simultaneously investigate hypotheses and drive desired change. This definition reflects the collaborative and practice-oriented nature of the mentor training development. Kurt Lewin's development of action research emphasizes the active involvement of those affected by the research, which makes it personal to the researcher in identifying real-world problems and implementing direct solutions (Lewin, 1946). Lewin's approach also recognizes the specific context where the research is taking place, and the need to adapt the methods accordingly while participating in the different stages of action research (Adelman, 1993).

Participatory action research was particularly well suited to this study because it aligns with the three circumstances that spurred the practitioner research movement: the push for more systematic qualitative research as a counterbalance to positivist approaches; evidence that collaborative, school-based change efforts are more effective than externally imposed initiatives; and the movement to reclaim teachers' knowledge about practice as valid (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As I examined the development and implementation of the mentor training program, action research provided the structure to both co-create the training with teachers and critically reflect

on its effectiveness in fostering mentorship and teacher leadership. This dual focus on inquiry and improvement ensured that the study contributed both to practice and to the broader understanding of mentorship in schools.

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative action research design, which is both participatory and iterative in nature. The focus is on addressing a real-world problem by actively involving practitioners in the research process. Action research follows cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, enabling responsive adjustments based on participants' experiences and feedback. This design is particularly well-suited for educational contexts where the aim is not only to understand but also to improve practice.

In this study, two full cycles of action research were conducted, utilizing multiple data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, surveys, and focus groups. The research takes place within a local K–5 elementary school, where mentor architects were co-creating and refining the mentorship training program. The initial cycle was the development of the program, and the second cycle was the enactment of the program with the mentors. Mentors then applied the training while supporting new teachers and provided feedback for ongoing program improvement. I also served as a participant and one of the mentor architects, a role that aligns with the collaborative and practitioner-driven nature of action research. The stages of action research, which then later turn into cycles based upon reflection and continuous improvement, narrows the focus of the project (Mertler, 2016). This provides the rationale for the research design and why participatory action research with two cycles is the best methodology for this study.

The design was used to collect data through interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Since there were two cycles, there were multiple data points throughout each cycle to track progress, feedback, and reflection for improvement. I answered the research questions of intent and involvement by progressively seeing mentorship improve over the course of the action research cycles, and the perceptions of mentors on the effects of PERMA when participating in the mentorship training. Participants were interviewed at different points throughout the research cycle stages to understand improvement as the study continued. The specific instruments and data resources include semi-structured interview protocols, focus group discussion guides, and reflective journals and field notes. Additionally, data from the Schoology course (mentor training platform) will be pulled as the mentors participate in the training. The analysis will include ongoing, cyclical and reflective data analysis, as well as transcribed interviews, focus group themes, and reflective journal entries. The first cycle of coding identified patterns, key concepts, and emerging insights. The second cycle of coding categorized data into broader themes with pattern coding to explore the relationships between the themes. After the two cycles, a cross cycle comparison was completed to identify shifts in perspectives, leadership behaviors, and implementation.

Population and Sample

The population for this study is relatively small and purposefully focused. It consists of the mentor architects who collaboratively designed the mentorship program and the teachers who participated in the mentor training. All participants are located within the same K–5 elementary school, which provides a clearly defined context for the action research. This bounded population allows for a deep exploration of the lived

experiences of participants while maintaining the collaborative and iterative nature of action research.

From this population, the study sample includes five mentor architects and fifteen mentors. All mentors and mentor architects possess at least three years of teaching experience within the district, ensuring that they bring both knowledge and expertise to their mentoring roles. All participants were considered co-researchers, contributing meaningfully to the design, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention. A convenience sampling method was used, as the participants were drawn directly from those engaged in the mentorship program. This approach was appropriate given the relatively small and specific context of the study. Comparable action research studies use a small population and sample size in order to dive into the perceptions of each participant and engage in meaningful reflection and feedback in the action research process. Additionally, participatory research requires the researcher to participate in the group setting as an equal, active member and enables the researcher to learn how the actions of participants correspond with their words and develop a deeper quality of trust that motivates participants to share, which is beneficial with a small population size for individual or small group interviews (Mertler, 2016).

To be included in this study, participants have to be mentor architects of the mentor training program or mentors who are going through the program. They must be teachers within the same elementary school and in order to be mentors or mentor architects, and they must have at least three years of teaching experience. The confidentiality measures are using pseudonyms for mentor teachers, informed consent

of all participants, controlled access and locked storage of documents, and private communication.

Participants

All of the mentor architects who participated in designing the mentor training program are experienced teachers who had previous negative mentoring experiences or felt that our current mentoring system was not effective. Overall, they considered the new program necessary and each could identify both strengths and weaknesses in the mentor training program.

Caroline is a tenured and well-respected teacher in our school. She has been voted as teacher of the year numerous times and was a teacher at the previous elementary school for ten years before our new school opened to close the old building. This carries weight in the building, and she is known as the go-to teacher in her grade level. She has taken on leadership roles in the school building such as grade level chair and a coordinator of after school programs. She has participated as a mentor almost every year for the past five years due to increasing turnover, especially in her grade level. She has always taught the same grade in the same district and is very opinionated about leadership decisions that are being made at the school. She is also currently obtaining her masters in instructional leadership from a local university.

Missy is an experienced teacher coming from several different states, districts, and grade levels. Her unique experiences give her a broad view on mentorship. She also serves as an adjunct professor to new early elementary educators who are being mentored by cooperating teachers. She is the grade level chair and serves on many district committees. She also has leadership ambition and is obtaining her masters in

instructional leadership with the hopes of going into administration. Even though Missy had a wealth of experience, she had a very negative mentoring experience upon entering our school and district and was very overwhelmed by the changes and expectations at our high performing school compared to positions in her past.

Ivy is another experienced tenured teacher who has taught in several states and districts. She has taught a myriad of grades and in different school settings. Ivy has a strong personality and is a master teacher. She does not always “play by the rules” of the school and often pushes to do things her own way. She wants to be in leadership positions but is overlooked because she struggles to work cohesively with her team and other members of the school staff. She is a polarizing teacher, well-loved by many parents and students, but also has had some issues with those who do not see her way or intentions. She has years of mentoring experience and helped create a mentoring training program in her former district in another state. She brings a wealth of knowledge as well as a different perspective to the mentor training program.

Sarah is a teacher that is new to our school within the past two years but has been teaching the same grade level for over ten years in the surrounding area. She is looking to be a professor for college education majors to teach early childhood education and is currently pursuing an advanced degree. She is well respected as a teacher and had a negative mentoring experience as a new teacher to our school due to the fact that she did not get along well with her grade level team. She wants to use that experience to create a more unified training program for all new teachers to our school and district, specifically for veteran teachers that are new to our school. She is passionate about mentoring and is a strong researcher and writer.

Kimberly is also a veteran teacher who was new to our school this year. She moved from across the country and is finding our school and culture to be very different from her previous location. She has strong opinions on how a school should operate based on her last placement, where she was for eight years before moving. Coming to a larger elementary school has also been adjustment for her and she has had a negative mentoring experience with her mentor, specifically related to the involvement aspect. Although she is a veteran teacher, being new to our school made her feel like a new teacher again. She participated in several mentoring programs in her old school system and brings a fresh perspective of other ways that mentoring could operate given our context and getting to know our school setting.

The fifteen mentors in this study, who also include the mentor architects, have varying years of experience but all have five or more years of mentoring experience. Table 1 shows their demographics and information. Each mentor was given a number for anonymity, and their experience, years in our current school district, highest degree, and age range were all listed.

Table 1. Mentor Information

Mentor	Years of Experience	Years in District	Highest Degree	Age Range
1	12	12	Bachelors	40s
2	10	4	Bachelors	30s
3	16	12	Bachelors	40s
4	30	23	Bachelors	60s
5	6	6	Bachelors	20s
6	5	5	Masters	20s
7	5	5	Masters	30s
8	10	3	Masters	40s
9	16	4	Doctorate	40s
10	8	5	Masters	30s
11	10	7	Masters	30s
12	8	3	Masters	30s
13	7	3	Masters	30s
14	22	7	Masters	40s
15	22	5	Masters	40s

Table 1 describes participating mentors' years of experience, total years in education, highest degree, and age range to show the demographics of the population.

Routine

This participatory action research project consisted of two cycles. The initial cycle was co-created with the mentor architects before the study began, and the second was during the enactment of the program with the mentors. The second cycle was more loosely designed to allow the research spiral of the initial cycle to play out iteratively to

inform the design of the second cycle (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I implemented the first cycle with the understanding that the program would be changed depending on analysis and feedback from mentors because the co-construction of the second iteration of the mentor training program was central to the research. The first cycle was conducted in the spring of 2025, and the second in the fall of 2025.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study includes semi-structured interview protocols, which were used as a guide with open ended questions that were aligned to research questions. These interviews were conducted throughout the action research cycles to capture growth and reflection. A focus group discussion guide was also developed to generate dialogue among participants about the shared challenges and suggestions for the program, and a flexible set of guiding questions was put into place for this focus group discussion. Reflective journals and field notes were used to collect ongoing reflections about their mentorship practices, challenges, and leadership identity. These were used throughout the research cycles and while they participated in the training and were asked to provide feedback and reflections on new learning. These instruments were developed in conjunction with action research best practices (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Mertler, 2016) and suggestions for effective instrumentation during an action research study.

Validity and Reliability

I determined if data was true and certain through several criteria for establishing the validity of qualitative research by using concrete actions taken by the researcher. These five criteria were incorporated into the study and contribute to the overall

trustworthiness of the data and research (Mertler, 2016). Descriptive validity was used by verifying the factual accuracy of the account provided in the research, and interpretive validity represented the accuracy of the interpretations of the participations behavior by representing their data correctly from interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Theoretical validity was incorporated to extend beyond the study to relate to a broader theory on mentorship and teacher leadership. Finally, evaluative validity confirmed the extent to which the researcher behaved objectively to report the findings in an unbiased way (Mertler, 2016). Using the interview protocols, surveys, and focus group discussion guide as well as several other documents noted in the appendices, this study is reproducible through the validity measures taken.

The reliability of this participatory action research study focuses on ensuring trustworthiness, consistency, and credibility of the findings through triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and consistency through action research cycles. Triangulation will take place through the use of multiple data sources, methods, and perspectives to ensure consistency of the findings. This will combine interviews, focus groups, field notes, and surveys to cross check themes and patterns. Additionally, member checking will occur as co-researchers review transcripts, interpretations, and findings to confirm accuracy. This ensures that participants voices are authentically represented. Reflexivity through journal documents that show personal biases, assumptions, and evolving perspectives ensure that interpretations are critically examined for consistency, and finally consistency through action research cycles provide a built-in check in on reliability, as findings and interventions are tested and refined collaboratively with participants. In this participatory action research study,

reliability was ensured not by replicability in the traditional quantitative sense, but by establishing trustworthiness through strategies such as triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and transparent documentation. These measures supported the credibility and consistency of the findings while honoring the collaborative and iterative nature of action research.

Data Collection and Management

This participatory action research study employed multiple data collection methods to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of participants while also documenting the iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The following data sources were used: individual interviews, a survey, and focus groups. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with mentor architects at key points in the study to gather in-depth insights into their experiences, perceptions, and growth. These interviews were recorded and transcribed with participant consent and cross checked to ensure accuracy. A short survey was also administered to capture broad trends, perceptions of the mentorship program, and self-assessments of teacher leadership, wellbeing, and resilience. The survey data was collected electronically and stored in a password-protected database. Focus group discussions were facilitated to encourage dialogue about shared challenges, successes, and recommendations for improvement. Additionally, the researcher and mentor architects kept detailed field notes documenting interactions, reflections, and observations throughout each action research cycle. Handwritten and digital notes were chronologically organized and coded after each cycle of action research. Finally, Relevant program artifacts, including mentoring plans, training materials, reflective journals, and professional development

documents, were collected as evidence of the program's design and implementation. Digital and physical artifacts were cataloged and stored in secure, labeled folders to maintain a clear audit trail. Using a combination of these data sources allowed for triangulation, strengthening the trustworthiness of the findings and ensuring that multiple perspectives were considered.

Participants were informed of consent through an initial recruitment and explanation, potential participants were provided with a clear and detailed explanation of the study's purpose, scope, and procedures. This included the goals of collaboratively developing and refining a mentorship training program, the types of activities involved, and the intended outcomes of the research. Both verbal and written explanations were given to ensure comprehension. Written informed consent consisted of the purpose of the study and the nature of participatory action research, the types of data to be collected and expected time commitments, the voluntary nature of participation, with the right to withdrawal at any time. Confidentiality measures, including pseudonyms and secure data storage, and potential benefits and risks were explained. The researcher's dual role as participant and investigator was also brought into consideration for written consent. Additionally, ongoing consent and transparency was necessary because participatory action research is iterative, and it was treated as an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. To maintain trust, all data were de-identified through the use of pseudonyms, and identifying information was removed from transcripts and artifacts. Digital data was stored on a password-protected device, and hard copies were kept in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher. Summaries of findings were shared with participants for feedback (member checking) before being included in the

dissertation. This practice extended the principle of informed consent into data analysis and dissemination, giving participants shared ownership of the knowledge produced. By approaching informed consent as both an ethical requirement and a collaborative practice, this study ensured that participants were fully aware of their rights, actively engaged in shaping the research process, and protected throughout their involvement.

Data Analysis Procedures

The research questions for this participatory action research are as follows:

1. In what ways do mentor architects describe how participating in two action research cycles to develop and implement a structured teacher mentoring program influence their intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices?
2. In what ways do teacher mentors describe their perceptions the first year of implementation after two action research cycles of a structured mentor training program, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly hired teachers and promoting aspects of wellbeing as described by Seligman's PERMA model with (a) positive emotions, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, (e) accomplishment?

The data collected is relevant to the research questions in the interviews and survey data to measure how mentor's intent and involvement changed over time. The interview data was also used to measure the perceptions of the participants of the mentor training program with the elements of PERMA to see the effects that the training program had. Data will be managed through recording and transcription of interviews,

field notes, and survey data collected electronically and stored in a database with anonymity. Coding systems and confidentiality procedures will also be put in place.

The analysis of data in this participatory action research study followed an iterative and cyclical process aligned with the principles of action research: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Data analysis occurred after each research cycle and again at the conclusion of the study to ensure both immediate responsiveness and long-term synthesis of findings. Survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns and the intent and involvement of mentorship. Likert-scale responses were summarized to show changes across action research cycles, while open-ended responses were coded qualitatively to capture recurring themes. Comparisons were then made across pre, mid, and post program surveys to identify shifts in perceptions and attitudes. Semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic coding. Member checking was employed by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to ensure accuracy. Focus group transcripts were analyzed to capture collective dialogue, shared challenges, and collective insights. Themes from focus groups were compared with interview data to strengthen triangulation and provide deeper insight into the mentorship program's effectiveness. This ensures the quality of data analysis through cross-data triangulation and iterative reflection throughout the research cycles.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed rigorous ethical standards to protect participants while honoring the collaborative and participatory principles of action research. Because teachers and mentors were engaged as co-researchers, special attention was given to

issues of power, confidentiality, and respect for professional roles. Participants were fully informed about the purpose, goals, procedures, and potential outcomes of the study before providing consent. The collaborative nature of participatory action research was explained, including their roles as both participants and co-researchers. Consent was documented in writing and noted as voluntary with the ability to withdrawal at any time, which would not affect their employment, professional standing, or relationships within the school. Opportunities were also given to reaffirm or revisit consent throughout the action research cycles.

To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, and identifying details were removed from data collection. Because I as the researcher was also a mentor architect and participant in the study, particular attention was given to the power imbalances. Reflective journaling and peer debriefing were employed to monitor bias and ensure that participants voices remained central. Additionally, being their supervisor as assistant principal was addressed and made known that their participation, or lack of participation, in this program would not affect their employment status. The study also made sure that risk was minimized and wellbeing was protected through the PERMA framework through non-evaluative environments, and participants were reminded they could decline to answer any questions. Member checking and institutional approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was conducted in alignment with district policies and ethical guidelines for research. By addressing informed consent, confidentiality, power dynamics, and collaborative ownership of findings, this study upheld ethical standards while honoring the participatory values of

action research, ensuring that teachers' voices were respected and safeguarded throughout the process.

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used during the dissertation development process to clarify writing, refine language, and expand upon ideas during the brainstorming phase. All intellectual contributions, interpretations, and final decisions regarding content, structure, and analysis were made by the researcher. The AI tools did not generate original research findings, perform data analysis, or replace the researcher's critical judgment.

Limitations and Delimitations

This participatory action research study includes several limitations that may affect the scope of the findings. First, the study was conducted within a single K–5 elementary school, which limits the transferability of results to other contexts with different cultures, structures, or resources. Additionally, as the researcher also served as a mentor architect and participant, the potential for bias and subjectivity was present. While reflective journaling, peer debriefing, and member checking were used to reduce this risk, complete objectivity cannot be guaranteed. The action research process was also time intensive, requiring sustained engagement from both the researcher and participants, which could impact the depth of data collected within the study's timeframe. Finally, the success of the study was dependent on consistent participation, and any absences or disengagement by participants had the potential to limit the comprehensiveness of the findings.

The delimitations of this study reflect intentional boundaries established by the researcher to maintain focus and feasibility. The study was delimited to one elementary

school within a single district to allow for close collaboration and contextual depth. Only teachers participating in the mentorship program were included, excluding other school staff or district personnel. The research focused specifically on the development and implementation of a structured mentor training program designed to improve teacher leadership, retention, and wellbeing, rather than addressing all aspects of professional development. Data sources were limited to interviews, surveys, focus groups, and field notes to provide a multi-faceted yet manageable approach to analysis. These delimitations were chosen to ensure the study remained practical, context-specific, and closely aligned with its action research goals.

Summary

In summary, this study employed a qualitative participatory action research design to collaboratively develop and implement a structured mentor training program within a K–5 elementary school. By engaging mentor architects, mentors, and mentees as co-researchers, the study emphasized shared ownership of both the process and outcomes. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, field notes, and artifact analysis, with iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection guiding continuous improvement. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and attention to power dynamics, were prioritized to protect participants and uphold the collaborative values of action research. While the study was limited by its single-site context, small sample size, time-intensive process, and dependence on participant engagement, its delimitations ensured a focused examination of mentorship, teacher leadership, and wellbeing. Through this design, the study sought not only to generate meaningful insights but also to enact positive change

in the mentoring culture of the school community. The following chapter presents the findings that emerged from these participatory action research cycles, highlighting how the collaboratively developed mentor training program influenced teacher leadership, wellbeing, and mentorship practices within the school community.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the two cycles of action research enacted over the course of the spring and fall of 2025. As a reminder, the problem statement for this participatory action research study was related to the teacher retention problem. Teachers are leaving the profession at high rates, which negatively impacts student achievement and contributes to a negative school culture. Specifically, the school in this study had thirteen teachers leave the previous year. Mentoring is one of the possible solutions to the teacher retention problem, but a strong mentoring program must be in place for mentoring to be effective. The purpose of study was to work with mentor architects to develop a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through intent, involvement, and wellbeing leading to greater leadership and retention in our school. Then, the teacher mentors in the program would participate in the developed training and provide feedback. Since it is action research, two cycles were employed following the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting phases, with adjustments made based on data and feedback. The following research questions guided this qualitative participatory action research study:

1. In what ways do mentor architects describe how participating in two action research cycles to develop and implement a structured teacher mentoring program influence their intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices?
2. In what ways do teacher mentors describe their perceptions the first year of implementation after two action research cycles of a structured mentor training program, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly

hired teachers and promoting aspects of wellbeing as described by Seligman's PERMA model with (a) positive emotions, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, (e) accomplishment?

These questions related to the problem statement by measuring the effectiveness of the mentoring training program with its intent and involvement within the Mertz framework, as well as seeing the perception of effects of the PERMA framework within the mentor training and how it might support increased teacher retention. The context of this study was my local elementary school district, which promotes teacher mentorship and retention while also reflecting the broader educational landscape that emphasizes mentorship as a key strategy for improving teacher retention and leadership development.

It must also be noted that an important part of this study was the fact that I worked with teachers (mentor architects and teacher mentors) as co-researchers. Thus, they were active and respected members of the study whose feedback and suggestions were used to develop the program. I hoped that the development of this mentor training program could be expanded for use on the district level in coming years. It was important for me to have mentor architects and teacher mentors in the school as collaborators in the development of this program because I believed they had a real stake in the process and an integral perspective that needed to be considered in the development of the mentorship development program.

The methodology for this study was qualitative participatory action research, where the lived experiences of both participating mentor architects, teacher mentors, and myself could be examined as we engaged in the research process. This allowed for

data collection through detailed interviews and surveys. With the collaborative development of the mentorship training program being a central component to improve mentor quality, strengthen teacher leadership, and increase retention, participatory action research was the most fitting approach. This is due to the systematic nature of qualitative research, evidence that school-based change is more effective than external initiatives (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Action research provided the structure to support co-researchers and critically reflect on its effectiveness. Additionally, the focus on inquiry and improvement was fitting for participatory action research within my study to contribute directly to practice and the broader topic of mentorship within schools.

In this chapter, I organize my findings into five themes. The first is *mentorship as a pathway to leadership, identity, capacity, and advancement* where data shows that mentorship served as a path to leadership that increased intent, involvement, and wellbeing. In the second theme, *intentional, structured and accountable design*, I explore how both the first and second cycles increased accountability for mentorship and produced more positive results leading to stronger teacher retention. The third theme is *relational trust, professionalism, and wellbeing centered practice*, where I consider how the impact of PERMA and how this is showcased in Cycles 1 and 2. In the fourth theme, *reflective growth and transformational learning through mentoring*, I explain the growth that came from mentorship development, both as developers and participants. The fifth and final theme, *collective leadership, shared vision, and organizational impact* inspects how mentorship as a form of leadership positively impacts an organization. Before I present the thematic findings, I overview the development of the program in the first cycle and the changes through the second

cycle. This detailed overview of the process helps the contextualize the subsequent findings.

The Cycles

Cycle 1

The first cycle of action research was the development of the mentoring training program with the mentor architects: Caroline, Missy, Ivy, Sarah, and Kimberly. The mentor architects helped to develop and refine the program to maximize mentoring potential and effectiveness at our school. These mentor architects were chosen due to their advanced teaching skills, experience as a mentor, and a desire to pursue leadership positions in the school building. Each mentor architect was asked to volunteer. When questioned why they wanted to join, Missy replied, “I wanted to be a part of this program because it is your vision and I think we really need to strengthen our climate here” (Missy, Interview 1, December 11, 2025). Additionally, Ivy added in the same vein that she was looking for leadership opportunities and wanted to add a positive contribution to the school, and mentoring has been a way that she has been able to do that. She said:

I’ve wanted to branch out into leadership for my entire career. Not being seen for leadership has made me feel rejected. Because of this program I have been more vocal that I want leadership positions, and it has made others more receptive to my feedback. (Ivy, Interview 1, December 12, 2025)

The mentor architects (Caroline, Missy, Ivy, Sarah, and Kimberly) and I initially met with a certified mentor trainer for one full day in a professional development session to build a background on mentoring and better understand the development and design

of a program and a micro-credential badge. From there, the mentor architects and I met monthly and discussed what we believed to be the core competencies of mentorship based on our personal research, understanding, and mentorship experiences. We discussed what was essential for the teacher mentors participating in the program to learn. After several meetings, we decided that these four micro-credentials (areas of learning) were paramount to our school and district context to create effective mentoring situations: purpose of mentoring, professionalism in mentoring, connections in mentoring, and celebrations in mentoring. Within each of these micro-credentials, research was embedded through Mertz's theory of intent and involvement and Seligman's PERMA theory, aligning with Wheeler's (2024) framework. Once we were able to narrow down the most important topics, we started placing them into categories and found overall themes. The first micro-credential, purpose, focuses on the meaning behind mentoring, roles and responsibilities of mentors, the importance of strengths and values in mentorship, and implementing positive psychology strategies (PERMA) with yourself before meeting with your mentee. The next micro-credential, professionalism, covers mentorship confidentiality, providing feedback, effective communication, difficult conversations, and being a role-model teacher. The third micro-credential, connections, discusses building a mentor-mentee relationship, helping your mentee connect to others in the building, understanding the culture and systems in a school building, and provides a mentoring calendar with topics to discuss throughout the school year month by month. The last micro-credential, champion, covers being a champion for your mentee to help them succeed professionally and personally. It highlights introducing PERMA and positive psychology, motivating mentors, helping with professional growth and

development, and celebrating wins both big and small. Overall, it took several meetings for the mentor architects and I to come up with these sub-topics, and then group them into broader themes that fit each micro-credential. Once we decided what content we wanted in each micro-credential, we would choose the area that we wanted to focus on within the overall theme. For example, Kimberly chose to work on the roles and responsibilities of mentors within the first micro-credential: purpose. Then, we would take one month and complete individual research on that topic, and come back to present our findings. In these meetings, feedback would be provided to each mentor architect as well as notes and formatting suggestions. According to Kimberly, these meetings were helpful. She stated:

I loved that we could all bring out the frustrations we felt with the current system and discuss our perspectives, and take those frustrations and problem solve and figure out how we can move forward. That gave me the intent as a mentor, I had this experience and I wanted to provide something different for others. I think that it came from us being open and able to be vulnerable at the beginning (Kimberly, Interview 1, December 4, 2025).

Then, at the end of that subsequent meeting, we would decide which topic we wanted to cover the next month. The entire process took about 6 months total to develop the initial phase of the program. Once it was completed, we uploaded the content to an online platform for the mentors to easily access before the new school year began. Mentor architects were interviewed about their experience developing the program and Missy added this sense of accomplishment once the first phase was finished, “I felt a sense of achievement because we created something, started

something, and that was hard. Getting started is the hardest part and I'm proud that we took on this endeavor that we knew we needed, we were willing to put in the work" (Missy, Interview 1, December 11, 2025).

We often reflected as a group of mentor architects on what we thought would work and what would not. Each mentor architect added our own context and experience mentoring along with the research we were collecting. Mentor architect teachers were asked how developing this program helped them personally with their own views of mentorship and leadership. Caroline responded, "This program helped me open my eyes that there is more than I can do than just be in the classroom. It helped me feel a sense of accomplishment that I want to continue in a bigger and more impactful way" (Caroline, Interview, 1, December 16, 2025). Developing a program with the intention of benefitting others and improving the overall culture and retention at our school helped many of the mentor architects see the larger picture of educational leadership and realize the impact that they could continue to make. Similarly, Kimberly added, "This program has been overall positive, it helped me find a leadership role and a voice in the building. One teacher that I otherwise wouldn't talk to came up to me and said I've listened to you talk two times today, and you are a very natural speaker, it was great to have people see me in that different way and in leadership roles" (Kimberly, Interview 1, December 4, 2025). Sarah also added that this made her want to continue to pursue educational leadership, "I feel like I have seen behind the curtain of leadership and decision making now, it was like a new starting point for me in my career" (Sarah, Interview 1, December 17, 2025). Table 2 presents themes derived from interview data related to the collaborative development of the structured mentor training program.

Table 2. Themes Relevant to the Development of the Structured Mentoring Training Program

Theme	Description of Theme in Program Development	Representative Interview Codes	Illustrative Participant Evidence
Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity, Capacity, and Advancement	Mentors described the program as a leadership-oriented structure that validated prior experience, expanded leadership capacity, and created accessible leadership pathways without leaving the classroom.	Mentorship as pathway to leadership; Program as leadership credential; Increased leadership confidence; Seeking leadership beyond the classroom; Professional validation	“Being part of designing the program made mentoring feel like leadership work, not just extra responsibility.”
Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Program Design	Participants emphasized the need for clear structures, roles, scheduling, and accountability to ensure mentoring was effective, sustainable, and equitable across participants.	Need for structured accountability; Mentor accountability; Structured scheduling and checkpoints; Desire for input in mentor selection; Dedicated mentor leadership role	“Having a structure kept mentoring from feeling overwhelming and helped us stay consistent.”
Relational, Non-Evaluative, and Wellbeing-Centered Mentoring	The program was intentionally designed to foster trust, professionalism, and emotional support, prioritizing relational safety and mentor–mentee wellbeing.	Non-evaluative mentoring; Wellbeing checks; Intentional relationship building; Empathy-driven mentor planning; Professional communication	“It mattered that mentoring wasn’t evaluative. It felt safe to be honest.”
Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring	Reflection and iterative refinement shaped program development, allowing mentors to identify gaps, adjust practices, and deepen mentoring effectiveness over time.	Self-reflection before leadership; Reflective interpersonal growth; Learning through prior negative mentoring experiences; Growth mindset	“Each cycle helped us rethink what was working and what needed to change.”
Collective Ownership and Shared Vision	Collaborative development strengthened commitment, cohesion, and collective responsibility for new teacher success and school improvement.	Shared vision; Collaborative program creation; Collective mentorship culture; Team bonding and trust	

Table 2 describes the five themes found during the program development, how they are represented when coding interviews, and illustrative participant evidence with direct quotes from interviews.

Cycle 2

A key component of this study is that in the second cycle teacher mentors would be able to participate the mentorship training program and then work with mentees, then provide feedback. At the end of the first cycle in the spring, the mentor architect developers and I critiqued the version that we designed to make modifications and adjustments. The feedback from cycle 1 allowed us to begin the second cycle during the fall of 2025.

The second cycle of the action research project, although similar to the first, incorporated specific changes based on feedback received from the first cycle. These changes include the micro-credentials on Schoology (the virtual platform hosting the micro-credential), increased focus on mentorship as a form of leadership, a more structured program design for accountability, relational mentoring, and multiple places for reflection. After the teacher mentors went through the online mentor training development program and then mentored for the first semester of the 2025-2026 school year, they were surveyed on their experiences. The major themes found from the survey included (1) intentional and consistent mentoring practices, (2) high levels of engagement and accountability, (3) positive emotion and strength-based support, (4) mentoring as a source of meaning, leadership, and purpose, and finally (5) reflective learning and continuous improvement. These themes aligned with the themes found during Cycle 1, as well. In the next section, I will explain how the themes from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 are aligned and how specific survey responses match those themes.

Theme 1, intentional and consistent mentoring practices, aligns with Theme 2 from Cycle 1 (intentional, structured, and accountable mentoring design). These themes aligned in both cycles because teacher mentors described intentionality of the program as deliberate, ongoing, and relationally grounded, rather than sporadic or informal. After participating in the mentorship training program, teacher mentor survey responses consistently emphasized that the effective mentoring required intentional planning, consistent presence, and purposeful relationship-building. Teacher mentors framed intentionality as an active practice demonstrated through regular contact and reflection, as well as responsiveness to mentee needs. This was shown in survey responses, most notably through an answer to the question “How do you demonstrate intentionality?” by a teacher mentor after participating in the program. She stated,

I demonstrate intentionality in my mentorship practices by building relationships, using reflective questioning and providing timely feedback. My hope is for positive interactions with my mentee. This could include modeling effective instructional strategies and following up to support implementation in the classroom. (Teacher Mentor A, Survey 1)

Additionally, another teacher mentor described their mentor/mentee relationships as becoming more positive and relationship-based since participating in the training program.

Theme 2, high levels of engagement and accountability in the mentoring role, aligns with Theme 2 from Cycle 1 (intentional, structured, and accountable mentoring design) as well as Theme 3 (relational trust, professionalism, and wellbeing-centered practice). Theme 2 from Cycle 2 shows that mentors reported strong engagement

characterized by frequent interaction, shared instructional work, and increased professional accountability. This was evidenced when teacher mentors reported speaking and meeting with their mentors daily, and an appreciation for increased accountability so that teacher mentors could ensure they are aware of roles and responsibilities. Finally, a teacher mentor shared how participating in the mentor training program provided a strong sense of accomplishment, “Yes, participating in the mentorship training program and serving as a mentor has given me a strong sense of accomplishment. Seeing mentees grow in confidence affirms the impact of the support I provide” (Teacher Mentor A, Survey 1). The mentor training program increased teacher mentors’ sense of responsibility and engagement in their professional roles. Even when time constraints were limited, participants demonstrated a strong commitment by maintaining meaningful engagement within their capacity.

The next theme in Cycle 2, positive emotion and strength-based support showed that teacher mentors intentionally cultivated positive emotional climates through encouragement, reframing challenges, and celebrating growth. This aligns with Theme 3 (relational trust, professionalism, and wellbeing-centered practice) and Theme 4 (reflective growth and transformative learning through mentoring). In Cycle 2, teacher mentors focused on positive connections, celebrating wins, and looking at things through an overall positive lens. One participant stated, “I celebrate small wins, acknowledge effort, and provide encouraging feedback. I approach mentoring conversations with optimism, helping my mentee reframe challenges of the classroom as opportunities for growth” (Teacher Mentor B, Survey 1). Another participant stated, “My relationships as a mentor have become more intentional and collaborative. I am

more purposeful in building connections, actively listening, and using reflective questioning rather than offering solutions” (Teacher Mentor C, Survey 1). Mentors described positive emotion not as avoidance of challenges, but as a deliberate mentoring strategy as a result of the mentor training program that supported resilience, confidence, and emotional wellbeing. This had a strong alignment with PERMA’s Positive Emotions component.

Theme 4, mentoring as a source of meaning, leadership, and professional purpose matches with Theme 1 from Cycle 1 (mentorship as a pathway to leadership identity, capacity, and advancement) in several ways. This theme shows that teacher mentors experience mentoring as meaningful work that reinforced professional identity and leadership through influence rather than position. A teacher mentor stated the following:

I have more accountability, but also more resources. Being a mentor doesn't mean knowing everything. Being a mentor means being able to share the knowledge you know while also being humble enough to learn new concepts or skills. My mentee is teaching me just as much as I am teaching her. (Mentor Teacher D, Survey 1) Another teacher mentor shared, “As a mentor, I feel like I am supporting the next generation of educational leaders. It is a lifestyle, not a hobby. Every support leads to the support of children” (Teacher Mentor E, Survey 1). Teacher mentors found that they were able to support through classrooms, be reminded of their “why,” model leadership and influence, and view mentorship as a responsibility since participating in the mentorship training program. Finally, a teacher mentor stated, “Through mentoring, I am able to lead by influence by supporting colleagues, modeling effective instructional practices,

and guiding conversations focused on growth (Mentor Teacher F, Survey 1).

Participating in the mentoring training program provided teacher mentors with a renewed sense of purpose and professional meaning.

The last theme of Cycle 2, reflective learning and continuous improvement, aligns with Theme 4 (reflective growth and transformative learning through mentoring) and Theme 5 (collective leadership, shared vision, and organizational impact). When teacher mentors in Cycle 2 demonstrated reflective awareness of past experiences and articulated thoughtful recommendations for strengthening the mentoring program. After the mentor training program, participants reflected on prior ineffective mentoring, emphasized trust, listening, and safety. Teacher mentors teachers also called for improved mentor selection, and the need for more time and recognition of growth. Participants shared, “Having experienced both effective and less effective mentorship, I understand the importance of building trust, actively listening, and providing meaningful support” (Teacher Mentor G, Survey 1). Teacher mentor also provided suggestions as seen here, “One suggestion is to offer ways to track and celebrate mentee and mentor growth in order to reinforce motivation and highlight the program’s impact” (Teacher Mentor H, Survey 1). Teacher mentor showed strong reflective capacity in survey responses, using both past experiences and current participation to inform program improvement. Their feedback highlighted a desire for intentional design, psychological safety, and sustainability. All of these are key elements for long term program success and retention.

Taken together, the survey data reveals that teacher mentors experienced the training program as an intentionally designed, relationally grounded, and meaningful

professional development that increased engagement, supported wellbeing, fostered leadership identity, and strengthened commitment to mentoring, thus increasing retention. The themes found in Cycle 2 are important because they align tightly with the themes from Cycle 1, demonstrating convergence in action research. Additionally, they map clearly into the PERMA framework, answer both research questions in sections found below, and provide clear evidence linking mentoring to wellbeing, leadership, and teacher retention. Table 3 presents the overarching themes identified from open-ended survey responses, illustrating mentors' perceptions of intentionality, engagement, wellbeing, leadership, and program improvement during the first year of implementation.

Table 3. Overarching Themes Identified from Open-ended Survey Responses

Survey Theme	Theme Description	Representative Survey Evidence
Intentional and Consistent Mentoring Practices	Mentors described intentionality as purposeful, relational, and ongoing, demonstrated through regular check-ins, reflective questioning, and timely feedback to support mentees' professional growth.	"I check in with my mentee daily..."; "By consistently meeting at the end of the day with my mentee to debrief."
High Engagement and Accountability in the Mentoring Role	Participants reported frequent interaction, shared instructional work, and increased accountability that strengthened engagement in both mentoring and classroom practice.	"Daily contact – multiple times per day"; "There is a little more accountability for me to make sure I'm aware of what's happening."
Positive Emotion and Strength-Based Support	Mentors intentionally fostered optimism, encouragement, and emotional support, using positive framing and celebration of small wins to promote resilience and confidence.	"I try to focus on the positive..."; "I celebrate small wins, acknowledge effort, and provide encouraging feedback."

Table 3 describes the three themes found in surveys from cycle 2 of action research, with descriptions and evidence with direct quotes from the survey.

Results

Data Analysis

Thematic coding for this action research study occurred across two iterative cycles of data collection and analysis, consistent with the cyclical nature of participatory action research. Data sources included semi-structured interviews conducted during Cycle 1 and open-ended survey responses collected during Cycle 2. The analytic process was designed to capture the mentor architects and teacher mentors' lived experiences and the evolving impact of the structured mentor training program over time.

Transcription and Data Preparation. All Cycle 1 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve participants' authentic voices. Transcripts were reviewed multiple times by the researcher to verify transcription accuracy and to develop familiarity with the data. During this initial review, reflective memos were written to document early impressions, emerging ideas, and potential connections to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. Cycle 2 survey data consisted of open-ended responses and was compiled into a single dataset for qualitative analysis. Survey responses were reviewed in their original written form to maintain the integrity of participants' language and intent.

Cycle 1: Interview Coding and Theme Development. The initial round of open coding, using the actual words from interviews, was conducted during the interview transcripts. During this phase, meaningful segments of text were labeled with descriptive codes that reflected participants' words, actions, and perceptions related to mentoring practices, leadership development, wellbeing, and retention. Following open coding, codes were reviewed through axial coding, grouping similar sentences and phrases, to identify relationships patterns, and recurring concepts across participants.

These clustered codes were then synthesized into broader themes that captured shared experiences and meanings. Throughout this process, the researcher consistently revisited the research questions to ensure that emerging themes remained aligned with the study's purpose.

Cycle 2: Survey Coding and Cross-Data Comparison. Open-ended survey responses from Cycle 2 were coded using the process of open and axial coding. Initial codes were generated based on recurring language and concepts related to intentionality, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, and leadership. These survey-derived codes were then compared to the themes identified in Cycle 1 interviews. This cross-cycle comparison allowed the researcher to identify areas of convergence, extension, and confirmation between interview and survey data. Survey data often reinforced and deepened interview themes, providing additional evidence of consistency across data sources.

Selection of Representative Quotes. After themes were finalized, representative quotes were intentionally selected from both interview transcripts and survey responses. Quotes were chosen based on their ability to clearly illustrate the essence of each theme and directly address the research questions. Rather than selecting quotes based on frequency, emphasis was placed on analytic relevance, clarity, and representativeness. Interview quotes were attributed to participants using pseudonyms and date-stamped to maintain confidentiality and transparency. Survey quotes were presented anonymously. Selected quotes were embedded within the narrative findings to allow participants' voices to substantiate the thematic interpretations.

Alignment with Research Questions and Theoretical Frameworks.

Throughout the analytic process, themes and selected quotes were continuously cross-referenced with the study's research questions and guiding theoretical frameworks.

Wheeler's (2024) framework includes Mertz's (2004) theory of mentorship and Seligman's (2011) PERMA model. This ensured that findings remained grounded in both participant experiences and established theory, while accurately reflecting how mentoring practices influenced leadership development, wellbeing, and teacher retention.

Data Quantity

Interviews took place with all five mentor architects that helped co-create the mentor training program in Cycle 1 of the action research study. This was the original population. There were 15 teacher mentors that participated in the mentor training program and then mentored new teachers the fall semester. Of these 15 mentors, 10 answered the open-ended survey questions.

Theme 1: Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity, Capacity, and Advancement

Of the five themes that emerged from interview and survey data, mentorship as a way to increase leadership was among the highest. The data found that teachers reported that they viewed mentorship as a leadership role, and it advanced their capacity for other leadership positions and started to picture themselves in other leadership roles. Mentorship legitimized the developmental pathway where participants were able to learn about leadership, confidence, and professional advancement. Expanded codes from the interview and survey themes represented exposure to

leadership and growth, increased leadership capacity, boosted confidence and initiative, participating in the program as a leadership credential, and an opportunity for professional advancement. It also showed them how to develop future leadership capacity with skills, align professional goals, and apply their prior expertise. Participants viewed this structured mentoring program as both a leadership incubator and a professional credential, where experienced educators sought mentorship as a means of continued growth. Mentor architect Ivy stated, “I don’t pass up leadership opportunities, to redevelop or remodel something- this can make an impact for many” (Ivy, Interview 1, December 12, 2025). Additionally, mentor architect Caroline described the role in relation to leadership, “This was an important leadership opportunity for me and others, where we could play into our strengths and roles and grow into our own leadership” (Caroline, Interview 1, December 16, 2025). As a different perspective, mentor architect Kimberly talked about how the development of this program was important for her as a veteran teacher at a new school, where she could showcase her knowledge and leadership while being in a new role. She stated, “Levels of experience you carry from other schools/districts/states don’t always transfer over. You start at the ground floor, and being a part of this team made me feel like I could branch out into a leadership role and show my skills” (Kimberly, Interview 1, December 4, 2025). In terms of leadership capacity, mentor architect Missy described how leadership capacity could be developed through the structure of specific mentoring programs and the development of them, as well as being a mentor in general. She summarized by saying, “I am looking further into leadership roles, so I thought that this would be something great to be involved in, not only for helping teachers, but also building a further leadership capacity” (Missy,

Interview 1, December 11, 2025). Mentor architect Sarah was in the process of taking educational leadership courses, and was able to relate her learning on organizational change in leadership classes to the first cycle of our action research project. She was able to draw on that knowledge to advance our program and write about it for her classes. She shared, “This program played into a couple of other courses that I was taking at the time, so It was a dual benefit. I was working on this program but also doing research for my leadership classes” (Sarah, Interview 1, December 17, 2025). In the survey data, all participants indicated that mentorship had become a form of leadership for them, specifically leading through influence and focusing on the growth of mentees to increase overall teaching ability in the building. Overall, the findings indicate that the structured mentor training program functioned as a meaningful leadership pathway, enabling participants to recognize, develop, and apply their leadership capacities while legitimizing mentorship as both a professional credential and a catalyst for continued leadership growth.

Theme 2: Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design

Mentor architects and mentor teachers involved in the study emphasized that mentoring must be intentionally designed, structured, and supported through clear accountability mechanisms to ensure an equitable and successful approach. Many recurring data points include a need for structure within a mentorship program, mentor accountability and support, a desire for structured scheduling and checkpoints, and professional development district-wide on mentoring. Additionally, teacher mentors recognized the need for cohesive, holistic mentorship focused on wellbeing and the person, not just mentoring related to the profession. Input for mentorship selection and

intentional time investment aligned with leadership goals and overall school mission/vision was also visible. This structure, not rigidity, was essential to sustainability with the program and promoted stronger intent and involvement as well as mentor and mentee wellbeing. Clear expectations, checkpoints, and accountability were seen as safeguards against both ineffective mentor experiences and mentor burnout. Mentor architect Sarah stated about accountability, “An outline needed to be created for accountability, mentorship wasn’t really taking place the way it should have been and no one even knew about it” (Sarah, Interview 1, December 17). Because of the development and participation in this program, many teacher mentors are discovering the meaning and need for intent. Mentor architect Ivy stated, “I am now more intentional about creating relationships and maintaining them, because that is an important part of leadership. You need to make people feel welcome, heard, and supported” (Ivy, Interview 1, December 12, 2025). Accountability also showed up several times in survey responses, with participants indicating that the intentional design of the program held them more accountable to meet with their mentor regularly and focus on specific topics that would increase teaching practices. Teacher mentors also indicated that this accountability increased engagement and made their time together more purposeful, and thus increased mentor/mentee relationships. The increase in mentoring resources from the mentor training program also allowed mentors to deepen and clarify their purpose. Due to the increase in accountability and more intentional mentoring practices, the school increased teacher retention, with 14 teachers leaving the previous year and only 3 leaving after the first year of the mentorship training program being enacted.

Table 4 below shows how teacher retention increased in just one year due to the mentorship training program.

Table 4. Teacher Retention after the Mentorship Training Program

School Year	Teachers Retained	Teachers Left
2024-2025	45	14
2025-2026	56	3

Table 4 shows teachers that were retained before and after the mentorship training program.

Theme 3: Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing Centered Practice

Throughout the process of developing the mentor training program, it became apparent that high quality mentoring was grounded in relational trust. If trust was not present, the mentoring relationship was not beneficial. Additionally, professionalism within the relationship, including confidentiality, and intentional attention to emotional and professional wellbeing were important to the teacher mentors. The mentor architect team had many important conversations on the importance of professional communication, and the ways that can look during mentorship, specifically in a teaching role. Before those conversations can occur, mentor architects explained the need for trust to be there first, and one way to establish that was through wellbeing checks centered around PERMA. These wellbeing checks built upon intentional positivity and relationship centered care allowed for hard conversations to take place. Expanding these relationships outside of traditional grade-level mentorships was also important to the teacher mentors, who felt like mentorship should not be limited by grade level, but instead a strength and values-based approach to pair like-minded teachers. Having an overall positive mindset and attitude of teamwork was also important to the mentor

architects and was an essential part of the overall training development program to promote a positive school culture and retain teachers. Teacher mentors framed mentoring as relational labor requiring emotional intelligence, intentional communication, and care. The mentor architects specifically found that through the development of this program they were reminded the importance of relationships behind mentoring, and that comes from a place of taking care of the individual first, and then working on the professional side after. These were viewed as core mentoring practices, not peripheral supports. From the interviews, many mentor architects shared how they were reminded of this importance, including Caroline who stated, “This program has helped me to take a step back and evaluate the whole picture, and react less. I keep the negative out of the conversation” (Caroline, Interview 1, December 16, 2025). Mentor architect Missy also found great relational meaning from participation in this action research study, sharing, “This program helped me develop relationships, and now I know that certain responses I’ve had in the past, I wouldn’t have now knowing what I know” (Missy, Interview 1, December 11, 2025). Sarah also drew relationship-driven conclusions in her interview and the importance of this element in mentoring, and her overall perspective. She stated, “I have made a point to be more positive myself and focus on relationships in the building after going through this experience” (Sarah, Interview 1, December 17, 2025). Many of the teacher mentors found that while having a solid relationship with their mentor is of course important, they also needed to foster other positive relationships around the building to improve culture and add to their mentoring relationship by having more positive relationships with other people. This also went along with the idea of being a “role model teacher” that was discussed to be a

good mentor. Sarah added, “I really wanted to see stronger bonds being formed at our school through this program—branching out beyond grade levels and making connections with people based on values.” (Sarah, Interview 1, December 17, 2025). Teacher mentors shared how the mentor training increased their relational trust and wellbeing centered practice by focusing more on the positive and celebrating small wins. Teacher mentors also noted that the intentional time spent with mentees after participating in the training program instead of “checking in when needed” was much more beneficial and built a more trusting relationship. Overall, the findings indicate that trust-centered, wellbeing-informed, and relationship-driven mentoring practices were foundational to effective mentor engagement, positive school culture, and sustained teacher retention.

Theme 4: Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring

After reviewing the data, it was clear that mentoring catalyzed both personal and professional transformation through reflection, perspective-taking, and application of learning to practice. When we first started discussing the growth that is possible through mentorship, many negative mentoring experiences came up from the original mentor architects. The mentor architects discussed how unhelpful some mentoring experiences were and how they wanted to them be different, and in order to do that the teacher mentors had to be trained to be reflective in order to be transformed. This included both personal and professional growth. Positive mindset and perspective taking was critical for the mentor architects, as categorized by some quotes above, as well as the mentors participating in the training. Some of what was learned in the mentor training program could also be applied to students in the classroom, which transformed some teaching

practices as well. Overall, this increased engagement and awareness, and intentional positivity through reflection. Mentor teachers contrasted prior negative experiences with the current program, highlighting reflection and intentional design as transformative elements for them. Learning extended beyond mentoring into professional identity. Mentor teachers reiterated these feelings during individual interviews, where they realized the need for greater reflection in mentorship and how they could approach it better. Mentor architect Kimberly stated, “I need to be more reflective and check in on needs, this is a point of growth for me. I need to be able to identify when mentoring- this is where we are and what do you need from me” (Kimberly, Interview 1, December 4, 2025). It also helped participants to see the larger picture of the school and consider the overall culture, not just what was happening in their own classrooms or grade levels. Ivy shared, “This program helped give me a positive mindset, and be more reflective and to see the bigger picture. I became more self-reflective, this helped me understand more of who I am as a teacher, mentor, and leader” (Ivy, Interview 1, December 12, 2025). Kimberly discussed how her participation in the development of the mentor training program made her examine interactions, “This program helped me think about how I interact with others and how I contribute to their success, I took my strengths and their strengths to better align my approach to mentorship” (Kimberly, Interview 1, December 4, 2025). Teacher mentors also noted reflective growth in responses. They stated that by participating in the mentor training program they were able to analyze their own mentoring practices, including mentoring experiences in the past, and were able to learn and grow from those experiences. Teacher mentors also learned more about the most effective ways to spend time as a mentor and how their mentorship can have a greater

impact across the whole building when done correctly. In summary, the findings illustrate that reflective, intentionally designed mentoring practices fostered meaningful personal and professional transformation, enabling mentors to reframe prior experiences, strengthen professional identity, and extend reflective learning beyond mentoring into broader school culture and instructional practice.

Theme 5: Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact

The last theme that was found from the data in this action research study was that mentoring functioned as a collective leadership endeavor that helped promote a shared vision, collaboration, and long-term school improvement. Teacher mentors concluded that with the shared vision of the mentor architects, they were able to achieve something greater than they would have if mentoring alone, and this collaboration built a collective mentorship culture. Additionally, team bonding and trust occurred among mentor architects when a commitment was made to improve school culture and climate. This resulted in mentor architect pride in collaborative program creation. Participants experienced mentoring as community work rather than an individual responsibility. This collective ownership strengthened trust, cohesion, and commitment to improving school climate and teacher retention. Mentor architects identified this collective leadership in the interviews. Missy shared, “I am hoping that the mentor participants will get a sense that it is not only their mentor that they can go to, they can come to anyone in the building and receive the support they need, I hope this program increases our building networking” (Missy, Interview 1, December 11, 2025). Sarah stated, “I saw your vision clearly for the program so I was excited about joining. I loved the collaboration and how we were able to bounce ideas off of each other” (Sarah,

Interview 1, December 17, 2025). Teacher mentors found that participating in the mentor training program helped them better understand their own “why” for mentoring and were able to see the big picture of the impact of mentoring on a school building. Additionally, the mentor training program increased collective leadership by allowing mentors to see themselves as leaders in the building and people who could bring about active change, rather than just bystanders in the school. Overall, the findings indicate that when mentoring is enacted as a collective leadership practice grounded in shared vision and collaboration, it strengthens school culture, fosters collective efficacy, and supports long-term teacher retention.

Research Question Findings

Research Question 1

In what ways do mentor architects describe how participating in two action research cycles to develop and implement a structured teacher mentoring program influence their intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices?

Intent to Engage in Mentorship. The data shows that Themes 1 (mentorship as a pathway to leadership identity) and 5 (collective leadership, shared vision, and organizational impact) answer this question directly. They demonstrate that mentor architects’ intent to engage was strongly shaped by the collaborative design process and the leadership-oriented framing of mentorship. This is consistent with Mertz’s theory that mentors move from viewing mentorship as an informal or an add-on responsibility to perceiving it as a purposeful leadership role (Mertz, 2004). Mentor architects reported an increased motivation to mentor when mentorship was positioned as a leadership

pathway rather than a compliance task (Theme 1: mentorship as a pathway to leadership identity) and viewed as a collective responsibility supported by a shared vision and peer collaboration (Theme 5: collective leadership, shared vision, and organizational impact). The action research format of co-creating the program increased ownership, professional validation, and commitment, reinforcing the intrinsic motivation to engage in mentorship. Across the cycles of action research, teacher mentors' intent deepened rather than diminished. Reflection and revision cycles strengthened the alignment between personal leadership goals and mentoring roles, indicating a sustained and growing intent to engage.

Depth of Involvement in Mentoring Practices. The depth of involvement was evidenced by mentor architects' movement from surface-level support to intentional, reflective, and relational mentoring practices consistent with Mertz's emphasis on developmental, reciprocal mentorship. Structure and accountability consistent with Theme 2 *Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design*) enabled mentor architects to engage consistently, allocate time intentionally, and move beyond reactive support toward proactive mentoring. Relational practices related to Theme 3 *(Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing Centered Practice)* demonstrated depth through emotional attunement, wellbeing check-ins, and non-evaluative trust-based relationships. Additionally, reflection cycles related to Theme 4 *(Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring)* allowed mentor architects to refine practice, respond to challenges, and apply learning across contexts. This demonstrated increasing sophistication of mentor behaviors over time. The mentors' depth of involvement increased as the program progressed, especially after reflection cycles

highlighted gaps, workload tensions, and relational needs. This led to intentional adjustments in practice.

Research Question 2

In what ways do teacher mentors describe their perceptions the first year of implementation after two action research cycles of a structured mentor training program, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly hired teachers and promoting aspects of wellbeing as described by Seligman's PERMA model with (a) positive emotions, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, (e) accomplishment?

P- Positive Emotions. Positive emotions were supported by Theme 3 (*Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing Centered Practice*) and Theme 4 (*Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring*). Teacher mentors reported that positive emotions increased after participating in the structured mentor training program through perspective taking, renewed professionalism and optimism, and emotional regulation through reflection. Intentional positivity and supported relationships reduced stress for both teacher mentors and mentees, contributing to more sustainable mentoring relationships.

E- Engagement. Engagement was shown to be present in Theme 1 (*Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity, Capacity, and Advancement*) when teacher mentors saw mentoring as aligned with leadership goals. Additionally, in Theme 2 (*Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Design*) when clear structures and expectations were put in place. Finally, in Theme 5 (*Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact*) where mentors felt part of a collaborative mentor

community. Structured scheduling, accountability, and shared ownership in the mentor training program enhanced sustained engagement across the action research cycles.

R- Positive Relationships. Positive relationships were strongly supported by Theme 3 (*Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing Centered Practice*) when teacher mentors emphasized trust-building, cross-grade collaboration, and non-evaluative, empathy driven relationships gained from participating in the structured mentor training program. These relational practices were perceived as critical to new teacher retention, especially during transitions to new roles and high-stress periods.

M- Meaning. Meaning was found from the data related to Theme 1 (*Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity, Capacity, and Advancement*) and 5 (*Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact*). Teacher mentors described mentorship as purpose-driven work and a way to leave a professional legacy. Mentorship was also seen as a meaningful contribution to school climate and teacher success, and thus student success.

A- Accomplishment. Accomplishment was supported by Theme 2 (*Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Design*) and Theme 4 (*Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring*). Teacher mentors identified accomplishments in program creation and implementation, improved mentoring competence both individually and throughout the school, through the mentor training program, and observable growth in mentees. The program itself functioned as a tangible achievement and leadership credential, reinforcing professional efficiency.

Synthesis

Together, these themes demonstrate that collaborative program design increased the mentor architects' intent to engage, and that structured, reflective implementation deepened the mentors' involvement. Relational, wellbeing centered practices supported new teacher retention, and action research cycles enabled continuous refinement aligned with Mertz's theory. Rather than mapping PERMA to a single theme, the findings show that wellbeing outcomes emerged holistically across themes, reinforcing the program's comprehensive design. PERMA outcomes emerged organically, validating the program's holistic impact. Below, Table 4 shows a thematic PERMA alignment table that clearly identifies sections of wellbeing that were integrated throughout the data set.

Table 5. Alignment of Emergent Themes with Seligman's PERMA Model

Emergent Theme	Positive Emotions (P)	Engagement (E)	Positive Relationships (R)	Meaning (M)	Accomplishment (A)
Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity and Growth	Increased confidence, optimism, and validation through leadership recognition	Sustained participation due to alignment with leadership goals	Strengthened mentor–mentee and peer leadership relationships	Purpose-driven mentoring and legacy-building	Program participation as leadership credential; growth in leadership capacity
Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design	Reduced stress and overwhelm through clarity and structure	Increased consistency and intentional involvement	Trust strengthened through reliability and clear expectations	Meaning derived from aligned goals and shared mission	Successful program implementation; effective mentoring outcomes
Relational Trust, Professionalism, and	Emotional safety, positivity, and	Deeper relational engagement in	Trust-based, non-evaluative relationships	Meaning found in caring for	Improved relational competence

Wellbeing-Centered Practice	psychological wellbeing	mentoring interactions	across grade levels	the whole person	and communication
Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring	Positive mindset shifts through reflection and perspective-taking	Increased awareness and intentional practice	Improved interpersonal responsiveness	Professional identity development	Application of reflective practices to mentoring and classroom instruction
Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact	Pride, morale, and collective optimism	Engagement through collaboration and shared ownership	Stronger professional networks and collegial bonds	Meaning through contribution to school-wide improvement	

Table 5 describes how the five major themes from the data aligned with the elements of the PERMA model with direct language showing how each element was represented.

Triangulation

Triangulation across interview data, open-ended survey responses, and reflective action research cycles strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Consistent patterns emerged across data sources indicating that teacher mentors experienced the structured mentor training program as an intentionally designed, relationally grounded, and leadership-oriented practice. Mentor architects described mentorship as a pathway to leadership development, professional validation, and collective responsibility, while mentor teachers echoed these findings through reports of intentional relationship building, frequent engagement, accountability, and renewed sense of purpose. Additionally, both data sources highlighted the importance of trust, wellbeing-centered mentoring practices, and reflective learning as essential components of effective mentorship. Across action research cycles, participants

identified similar needs for structure, collaboration, and continuous refinement, further reinforcing the alignment of findings. The convergence of themes across multiple data sources supports the credibility of the results and demonstrates that mentors' perceptions of increased engagement, wellbeing, leadership development, and retention were not isolated experiences, but shared and sustained outcomes of the mentor training program.

Relation to Retention

The findings in this chapter relate to teacher retention through leadership identity and professional validation, belonging and support, structure, wellbeing, increased school climate, and sustainability over time. Retention through leadership identity and professional validation strongly correlate with Themes 1 (*Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership Identity, Capacity, and Advancement*) and 5 (*Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact*). One of the strongest predictors of teacher retention in the findings was professional validation. When mentorship was framed as a leadership pathway rather than a formal obligation, mentors felt seen, valued, and invested in. Teachers also pursued future opportunities within the district, and experienced teachers were less likely to seek leadership fulfillment elsewhere (in another field). This aligns with retention literature showing that teachers remain where they can grow without leaving the classroom. Teacher mentorship offers a career-sustaining role, reducing attrition among mid-career and veteran teachers who often leave due to stagnation rather than burnout alone. The mentorship training program increased leadership capacity and helped teachers view mentorship as another way to be valued in their profession.

Retention through belonging and support are consistent with Themes 3 (*Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing Centered Practice*) and 5 (*Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact*). New teacher attrition is strongly linked to isolation and lack of belonging. The themes found in this study show that intentional, non-evaluative mentoring relationships build psychological safety, normalize struggle and growth, and create a sense of relational attachment to the school community. Teacher mentor's emphasis on wellbeing checks, empathy, and trust directly addressed the emotional labor of teaching. This scaffolding from the mentorship training program increased new teachers' likelihood of staying by ensuring that they felt rather than judged, particularly during their most vulnerable first semester and first year.

Retention through structure that prevents burnout is another element that aligns with Themes 2 (*Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design*) and 4 (*Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring*). Teacher mentors and mentor architects identified lack of structure as a risk factor for attrition when a formal program or expectations are not set up. The structured mentor training program mitigated this risk by clarifying roles and expectations, providing schedules, checkpoints, and accountability, and reducing cognitive overload and role ambiguity. For teacher mentors, structure prevented overcommitment and role strain. This in turn helped mentees by insuring consistent support and not sporadic help. This balance was critical for retaining both groups, as unstructured mentoring often leads to frustration, inequity, and burnout.

Retention through wellbeing (PERMA) as a systematic outcome relates to the first four themes presented in this chapter. The PERMA-aligned findings reveal that

retention was supported through systemic wellbeing, not surface level morale boosts. This was evidenced through positive emotions, which reduced stress and increased optimism through supportive relationships. It was also evidenced through engagement, sustained involvement through meaningful, goal-aligned mentoring, and relationships that involved trust-based connections that anchored teachers to the school. Additionally, meaning was brought in through purpose driven mentoring work that reinforced why teachers are here in the first place. Finally, accomplishment through visible growth in mentors and thus mentees related to professional pride for mentors. Teachers were more likely to remain in their positions when their emotional, relational, and professional needs were met simultaneously.

Retention through collective efficacy and school climate relates directly to Theme 5 (*Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact*). The mentor training program fostered collective efficacy, a key predictor of retention. Teacher mentors described shared ownership of teacher success, collaborative problem-solving for retention challenges, and pride in contributing to school-wide improvement. This collective approach shifted retention from an individual leadership burden to a shared organizational responsibility, strengthening school climate and reducing turnover.

Finally, retention was found across action research cycles, resulting in sustainability over time. Importantly, retention-related benefits intensified across cycles of action research. Reflection identified stress points and workload challenges early within the first cycle. The program adjustments then increased sustainability, and the teacher mentors' commitment deepened as they saw a tangible impact. This initiative process ensured the program remained responsive across cycles rather than static,

increasing long-term retention potential. In conclusion, the findings suggest that teacher retention improves when mentoring is structured (reducing burnout), relational (increasing belonging), leadership-oriented (providing growth pathways), wellbeing centered (supporting PERMA), and collectively owned (strengthening school climate). Rather than retaining teachers through incentives alone, this mentor training program retained teachers by meeting the human and professional needs that cause teachers to stay.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of this action research study, which examined how the collaborative development and implementation of a structured mentor training program shaped mentors' intent to engage in mentorship, depth of involvement in mentoring practices, and perceptions of wellbeing and retention. Data was collected across two cycles of action research and included semi-structured interviews from Cycle 1 and open-ended survey responses from Cycle 2. These data sources were systematically analyzed using thematic coding procedures to identify patterns and shared meanings across participants' experiences.

Analysis of the interview and survey data revealed five overarching themes: (1) *Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership and Growth*, (2) *Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design*, (3) *Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing-Centered Practice*, (4) *Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring*, and (5) *Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact*. These themes were consistent across data sources, demonstrating convergence between interview and survey findings, as demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6. Alignment of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Themes Across Action Research**Cycles**

Cycle 1 Themes	Aligned Cycle 2 Themes	Explanation of Alignment
Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership and Growth	Mentoring as a Source of Meaning, Leadership, and Purpose	Both themes emphasize mentoring as a developmental pathway that enhances leadership capacity, professional identity, and a deeper sense of purpose in educators.
Intentional, Structured, and Accountable Mentoring Design	Intentional and Consistent Mentoring Practices; High Levels of Engagement and Accountability	Cycle 2 refines this theme by highlighting the implementation of consistent practices and increased accountability as outcomes of structured mentoring systems.
Relational Trust, Professionalism, and Wellbeing-Centered Practice	Positive Emotion and Strength-based Support	The relational and wellbeing focus from Cycle 1 evolves into a more explicit emphasis on positive emotions and strengths-based mentoring approaches (PERMA alignment).
Reflective Growth and Transformative Learning Through Mentoring	Reflective Learning and Continuous Improvement	Reflection remains central across both cycles, with Cycle 2 emphasizing ongoing improvement and sustained reflective practices embedded in mentoring.
Collective Leadership, Shared Vision, and Organizational Impact	High Levels of Engagement and Accountability; Mentoring as a Source of Meaning, Leadership, and Purpose	Cycle 2 captures how collective leadership translates into shared responsibility, engagement, and a unified sense of purpose that impacts the broader organization.

Table 6 describes how themes from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 aligned in action research after the development and implementation of a mentorship training program.

In relation to the first research question, the findings indicated that participation in the collaborative design and implementation of the mentor training program influenced mentor architects' intent to engage in mentorship by positioning mentoring as a meaningful leadership role rather than an informal responsibility. The data also showed

that intentional structure, accountability, and reflection supported increased depth of involvement in mentoring practices across cycles of action research.

In relation to the second research question, mentors described the first year of program implementation as supportive of both new teacher development and mentor wellbeing. Teacher mentors' responses reflected elements of Seligman's PERMA model, including positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Teacher mentors' emphasized the importance of relational trust, positive and strength-based support, reflective practices, and collective collaboration in promoting wellbeing and contributing to a supportive school culture. These practices were also perceived as contributing to teacher retention by strengthening professional relationships, increasing engagement, and reinforcing a shared commitment to the school community.

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that the structured mentor training program was experienced as intentionally designed, relationally grounded, and a leadership-oriented that supported mentor engagement, professional growth, wellbeing, and retention. The convergence of findings across interviews, surveys, and action research cycles strengthened the credibility of the results and provided a comprehensive understanding of mentors' experiences during the first year of implementation.

Chapter 5 builds upon these findings by discussing the implications of the results in relation to the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and existing literature. It also addresses implications for practice, policy, and future research related to mentor training, teacher leadership development, and retention.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This participatory action research study explored two cycles of inquiry involving five mentor architects who collaborated with the researcher to design a structured mentorship training program, as well as ten teacher mentors who participated in the training and subsequently implemented it with their mentees. The first cycle was the development of the program with the mentor architects, and the second cycle was where feedback was taken and the program was enacted with teacher mentors and mentees. Over the course of these two cycles, I collaborated with my co-researchers to improve the program to make an impact on mentorship in the school building. The research focused on the intent and involvement of the mentor architects, and overall elements of wellbeing of mentors as described by Seligman's PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) and the impact of teacher retention in a school building. Each participant's experiences were translated through the researcher by transcribing their accounts and coding them into themes through two action research cycles. Research regarding teacher retention suggests that teachers are leaving the field more and more each year (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Due to this problem, this study investigated building and participating in a mentorship development program using Seligman's (2011) positive psychology framework, PERMA, and the Mertz (2004) mentoring framework to see if enhancing mentor practices would impact teacher retention and wellbeing. Five themes emerged and were aligned from the first and second research cycles. The key findings in this study showed the following outcomes from developing and participating in a mentorship training program:

- Mentorship as a pathway to leadership

- Improved accountable design of the mentorship program
- Improved wellbeing centered practice
- Transformational learning through mentorship
- Improved collective leadership

This final chapter includes a discussion of my findings in light of the literature and the conceptual framework (Wheeler, 2024) followed by my recommendations and implications. My first contribution to the literature is the intent and involvement of mentors after engaging in a participatory action research project codesigning a mentorship program, and the self-efficacy that came with it. My second contribution is the retention element along with increased wellbeing that the mentor teachers experienced along with their mentees as a result of the mentorship development program and the increased retention rates. After discussing my findings in the light of the existing literature and my theoretical framework, I make recommendations and draw out implications for teacher mentorship. I conclude this chapter with a brief final reflection.

Summary of the Study

This participatory action research study was used to explore the experience of mentor architects and teacher mentors acting as coresearchers designing a mentor training program, and the influence the program had on the intent to engage, involvement, and wellbeing of those teacher mentors. The basis for this study is grounded in Mertz's theory of mentorship (2004) and Seligman's PERMA theory (2011) to combine intent and involvement with wellbeing for increased effectiveness in mentorship practices, ultimately with the goal of retaining teachers. Teacher mentors

must be actively engaged in the mentorship process in order for successful mentoring outcomes (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). When mentors are engaged, not only do mentees benefit, but their students as well, creating overall success in the building (Washburn-Moses, 2010). Ideally, when effective mentorship is taking place, new teachers feel more successful and are more likely to stay in their current teaching roles, but the development of mentor training programs to do so is an underutilized area of educational research. This study hopes to fill that gap in the literature on the influence of mentoring to promote wellbeing and increase teacher retention.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this qualitative participatory action research study:

1. In what ways do mentor architects describe how participating in two action research cycles to develop and implement a structured teacher mentoring program influence their intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices?
2. In what ways do teacher mentors describe their perceptions the first year of implementation after two action research cycles of a structured mentor training program, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly hired teachers and promoting aspects of wellbeing as described by Seligman's PERMA model with (a) positive emotions, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, (e) accomplishment?

Review of Methodology

I used a qualitative participatory action research study to explore the experience of mentor architects and teacher mentors over the course of two action research in the development of a teacher mentor training program. The research questions were aligned with the conceptual framework focusing on Mertz's (2004) intent and involvement, and Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory under the umbrella of Wheeler's (2024) framework through positive psychology. The mentor architects were interviewed and the interviews were then coded and transcribed. The teacher mentors participated in an open-ended question survey. Following open coding, the data were analyzed using axial coding to group similar phrases and statements, allowing for the identification of relationships, patterns, and recurring concepts across participants. These grouped codes were then synthesized into broader themes that reflected shared experiences and collective meaning.

Limitations

1. This study focused only on one K-5 elementary school in the state of Alabama.
2. The researcher served as a mentor architect and participant.
3. The action research process was time intensive, requiring sustained engagement from the researcher and participants.
4. The success of the study was dependent on consistent participation.

Major Findings Related to Literature and Interpretations

Mentorship as a Pathway to Leadership

The participants in this action research study experienced mentorship as a form of leadership and as a way to gain new leadership experiences while practicing

mentoring. This relates to the literature showing that when teachers are given leadership opportunities, they are able to maintain autonomy while relying on collaboration to increase their leadership practices and collective efficacy around the school (Ghosh et al., 2013). Additionally, the study found that mentors increased in confidence, leadership identity, and agency through their participation in the mentorship training program as evidenced by interviews and survey results. This aligns with the research indicating that teacher leadership emerges when educators extend their influence beyond their own classrooms through collaboration and support of others (Danielson, 2006). As mentors engaged more deeply in mentoring practices, they demonstrated the characteristics that described teacher leaders in the literature, including advocacy, collaboration, and instructional influence.

The study's finding of mentorship as a pathway to leadership reflects a strong connection between leadership, self-efficacy, confidence, and leadership development. The literature suggests that mentorship increases confidence, and in turn confidence strengthens leadership capacity (Zuckerman, 2001). This was evident with the participant's experiences, as mentors described growing confidence in their abilities which translated to a willingness to take on broader leadership roles. The participants' words further support this finding:

"This was an important leadership opportunity for me and others, where we could play into our strengths and grow into our own leadership." (Caroline)

"I am looking to further my leadership roles, so I thought that this would be something great to be involved in, not only for helping teachers, but also building more leadership capacity." (Missy)

Furthermore, the findings support the literature suggesting that mentoring shifts teachers professional identity, leading them to see themselves as leaders within their schools (Thornoton, 2014; Ponte & Twomey, 2014). Participants in this study similarly described a transformation in how they viewed their roles, moving from classroom practitioners to contributors to broader school improvement efforts:

“I feel like I have seen behind the curtain of leadership and decision making now, it was like a new starting point for me in my career.” (Sarah)

The findings also align with the research on shared and transformational leadership, which emphasizes that leadership is not confined to administrators but can be distributed across teachers through structures like mentoring. When teachers are given leadership opportunities like mentoring, they develop both autonomy and collaborative capacity, reaching higher levels of professional interdependence (Ghosh et al., 2013). Similarly, the transformational leadership theory highlights those mentoring relationships, when grounded in encouragement, modeling, and vision, can inspire and develop leadership roles in other (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014). This directly reflects the leadership growth observed in this action research study.

Finally, this study reinforces the idea that organizational conditions, such as trust, support, and intentional program design, are essential for leadership to emerge through mentorship. Literature emphasizes that when a school fosters trust and provides opportunities for mentoring, teachers are more likely to engage in leadership behaviors and contribute to a positive school culture (Basaran & Cakir, 2023; Cobangolu & Bozbayindir, 2019). The structured mentor training program in this study creates these

conditions, enabling mentorship to function as a sustained and meaningful pathway to leadership.

Improved Accountable Design of the Mentorship Program

The finding in this action research study that accountability within mentor training strengthens mentoring effectiveness is strongly supported by the literature, which emphasizes that intentional structures, clear expectations, and ongoing evaluation are essential parts of high quality-mentoring programs. In this study, participants identified that structured expectations, consistent follow-through, and clearly defined roles increased their engagement and commitment to mentoring practices. This aligns with literature indicating that strong mentoring cultures are built through accountability, alignment, communication, and intentional training structures (Carmeli et al., 2009). When mentoring programs incorporate these elements, they move beyond informal support systems and become purposeful, results-driven professional practices.

Additionally, the finding reflects the importance of organizational support and monitoring of mentoring practices. The literature highlights that effective mentor training requires not only initial preparation but also ongoing assessment of progress, clear program goals, and continuous support (Lunsford, 2022). Participants in this study similarly described how accountability measures, such as structured check-ins, defined expectations, and feedback loops, enhanced both their intent to engage and their level of involvement in mentoring.

The finding also reinforces research suggesting that without accountability and structure, mentoring programs often lack depth and effectiveness. When mentors are left without guidance or expectations, they tend to rely on surface-level topics and

support rather than engaging in educative and collaborative mentoring practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Langdon & Ward, 2014). The accountability embedded in the mentor training program in this study addressed this gap by promoting intentional, reflective, and skill-based mentoring practices, and the results from the interviews with the mentor architects and surveys from the teacher mentors show the appreciation of accountability:

“An outline needed to be created for accountability, mentorship wasn’t really taking place the way it should have been and no one even knew about it.” (Sarah)

Furthermore, the findings align with the literature on program implementation and policy, which stresses that successful initiatives require clear directives, measurable outcomes, and fidelity of implementation (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983; Spillane et al., 2009). The structured mentor training program provided these elements, ensuring that mentoring practices were not only implemented but also sustained with integrity. Participants described the importance of the improved accountability in the following ways:

“There is more accountability for me to make sure I’m aware of what’s happening and can support my mentee.” (Teacher Mentor B)

“I have more accountability and also more resources. Being a mentor doesn’t mean knowing everything. Being a mentor means being able to share the knowledge you know while also being humble enough to learn new concepts or skills. My mentee is teaching me just as much as I am teaching her.” (Teacher Mentor D)

Finally, accountability in mentor training also contributed to improved mentoring quality and reduced negative mentoring experiences, which is supported by literature

indicating that poorly structured or unsupported mentoring can lead to ineffective or harmful relationships (Eby et al., 2000; Washington & Cox, 2016). By embedding accountability into the training process, the program helped establish clear expectations, ethical practices, and consistent support, thereby strengthening the overall mentoring experience.

Improved Wellbeing Centered Practice

The finding from the study that wellbeing centered practices strengthen mentoring experiences and outcomes is strongly supported by the literature on positive psychology, which positions wellbeing as essential to both teacher effectiveness and sustainability in the profession. In this study, mentors emphasized the importance of intentionally incorporating wellbeing practices, such as emotional support, relationship building, and strengths-based conversations into mentoring. This aligns directly with positive psychology theory, which shifts focus from deficit-based models towards strengths, flourishing, and optimal functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The literature suggests that when educators operate within a wellbeing-centered framework, teachers are more resilient, engaged, and likely to remain in the profession, which reinforced the outcomes observed in this study.

Additionally, the findings closely align with Seligman's PERMA model, which identifies positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment as the core components of wellbeing. Mentors in this study described practices that directly reflect these elements, such as building strong relationships, fostering positive emotions through encouragement, and helping mentees find meaning in their work. Research indicates that these components collectively contribute to increased job

satisfaction, reduced burnout and improved professional performance (Seligman, 2011; Fredrickson, 2011), further supporting the impact of well-being centered mentoring.

Also, the findings support research indicating that strength-based mentoring approaches increase wellbeing, trust, and engagement. When mentors initially identify and build on strengths, they foster optimism, confidence, and resilience among mentees (Seligman, 2005). This was evident that the study, where teacher mentors' focus on encouragement and growth contributed to stronger relationships and more meaningful mentoring interactions. The study also aligns with literature suggesting that wellbeing-centered mentoring can transform school culture. Positive psychology practices embedded within mentoring relationships contribute to increased collaboration, trust and overall school climate (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2022). As mentors in this study engaged in wellbeing-centered practices, these effects extended beyond individual relationships to influence broader organizational culture. The participants in the action research study described improved wellbeing practice in interviews and survey responses:

“Checking in specifically on wellbeing is very important- asking how someone is mentally is not considered enough, and learning how to balance everything that comes with being a classroom teacher.” (Sarah)

“The program helped my mindset because I didn’t feel like I belonged until I became a part of this mentor team. There was a camaraderie of- this has been hard for me- what do we do about it? It helped my mental health at school to feel less alone.” (Kimberly)

“My relationships as a mentor have become more intentional and collaborative. I am more purposeful in building connections, actively listening, and using reflective questioning rather than offering solutions” (Teacher Mentor A)

Finally, the findings reinforce emerging research that positions mentorship as a key driver of wellbeing awareness and application in schools. Mentors play a critical role in helping teachers understand and apply wellbeing strategies, making their work more sustainable and meaningful (Wheeler et al., 2024). This study contributes to that emerging body of research by demonstrating how structured mentor training can intentionally embed wellbeing practices into mentoring.

Transformational Learning Through Mentorship

The finding that mentorship fosters transformational learning is strongly supported by the literature, which positions mentoring as dynamic, reciprocal, and growth-oriented process that extends beyond skill development to reshape professional identity, practice, and thinking (Langdon & Ward, 2014). In this study, participants described mentorship as a process that led to deep reflection, shifts in instructional practice, and changes in how they viewed themselves as educators. This aligns with literature defining mentorship as more than guidance or coaching, but rather as a holistic and developmental relationship that promotes both professional growth and career advancement (Kram, 1988; Mertz, 2004). The emphasis on intent and involvement within Mertz’s framework further supports this finding, as higher levels of engagement in mentoring relationships lead to deeper, more meaningful learning experiences.

Additionally, the findings strongly align with the concept of educative or collaborative mentoring, which is explicitly described in the literature as a process that promotes continuous professional growth, reflective practice, and transformation of teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Carver, 2012). Participants in this study engaged in reflective dialogue, co-learning, and application of new strategies. These are key characteristics of educative mentoring that lead to pedagogical transformation and improved instructional practices. The study also supports literature emphasizing that transformational learning occurs through meaningful, often challenging conversations within mentoring relationships. Research indicates that moving beyond surface-level interactions to include critical, constructive dialogue and reflection is essential for deep learning and professional change (Stanulis, 2006; Wexler, 2019). Participants' experiences in this study mirrored this process, as they described growth resulting from reflection, feedback, and navigating complex professional conversations.

Furthermore, the findings align with literature highlighting the mutual and reciprocal nature of transformational mentoring. Mentors and mentees both grow through the relationship, engaging in a process of shared learning rather than one-directional knowledge transfer (Langdon & Ward, 2014). This mutual growth was evident in the study, where mentors also reported changes in their own practices and perspectives. The study also reinforces research suggesting that transformational mentoring contributes to broader organizational and cultural change. Mentorship is described as a "change agent" within schools, capable of influencing instructional practices, professional culture, and overall school improvement (Mullen, 2005). As participants in this study applied their learning beyond individual mentoring interactions,

the impact extended to classroom instruction and collaboration across the school. This is evident in the findings from participants noted here:

“Checking in specifically on wellbeing is very important- asking how someone is mentally is not considered enough, and learning how to balance everything that comes with being a classroom teacher” (Mentor Teacher A).

“This program helped me open my eyes that there is more than I can do than just be in the classroom. It helped me feel a sense of accomplishment that I want to continue in a bigger and more impactful way” (Caroline)

Finally, the finding support literature that connects transformational learning in mentorship to resilience, confidence, and sustained professional growth. Educative mentoring has been shown to increase teacher resilience and shift mindsets toward continuous improvement (Trevethan & Sandretto, 2017). This was reflected in the study, where participants demonstrated increased adaptability, reflective capacity, and commitment to ongoing development:

“As a mentor, I feel like I am supporting the next generation of educational leaders. It is a lifestyle, not a hobby. Every support leads to the support of children.” (Mentor Teacher D).

This finding reinforces that transformational learning through mentorship not only enhances individual growth but also cultivates a sustained commitment to leadership, resilience, and the long-term success of both teachers and students.

Improved Collective Leadership

The finding from the action research study that structured mentor training contributed to improved collective leadership is strongly supported by the literature,

which emphasizes that mentorship serves as a key mechanism for developing shared leadership, strengthening school culture, and expanding teacher influence across the organization (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019). In this study, participants described mentoring as extending beyond individual relationships to foster collaboration, shared responsibility, and unified vision for school improvement. This aligns with the literature indicating that developmental networks within school promote shared leadership, allowing teachers to function with both autonomy and interdependence (Ghosh et al., 2013). As mentoring structures were strengthened through the mentor training program, participants moved toward this interdependent model, contributing collectively to school-wide growth as shown in this response:

“I have implemented positive emotion as a mentor after going through the training through constructive, supportive, feedback” (Mentor Teacher B).

Additionally, the findings reflect research on trust as a foundational condition for shared leadership. The literature emphasizes that teachers are more likely to engage in leadership roles when they are trusted members of the organization, and that school leadership plays a critical role in fostering this trust (Basaran & Cakir, 2023; Cobangolu & Bozbayindir, 2019). In this study, the structured mentoring program created conditions of trust and psychological safety, enabling teachers to collaborate more openly and take on leadership responsibilities. The study also supports literature connecting mentorship to increased teacher self-efficacy and leadership capacity, which are essential components of collective leadership (Kangas-Dick & O’Shaugnessy, 2020). As mentors developed confidence and professional agency, they were more likely to contribute to broader school initiatives and influence their peers. This aligns with the research

indicating that mentorship strengthens confidence, which in turn enhances leadership behaviors and promotes collaborative practices (Zuckerman, 2001; Harris & Jones, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings align with the literature on transformational and distributed leadership, which highlights that leadership is most effective when it is shared among members of the organization. Transformational leadership fosters collaboration, open communication, and collective commitment to improvement (Kilic et al., 2023). Participants in this study demonstrated these characteristics, as mentoring became a vehicle for collective problem-solving, shared learning, and continuous improvement. This study also reinforces research suggesting that mentorship can serve as a driver of cultural transformation within schools. When teachers view themselves as leaders and mentors, they contribute to a culture of reflection, collaboration, and innovation (Thornton, 2014). Participants in this study describe similar outcomes, where mentoring strengthened relationships across grade levels and fostered a more cohesive and supportive school environment, as shown here:

“I am hoping that the mentor participants will get a sense that its not only their mentor that they can go to, they can come to anyone in the building and receive the support they need, I hope this program increases our building networking.” (Missy)

Finally, the findings support literature indicating that organizational support and intentional structures are necessary to sustain collective leadership. When school and district leaders prioritize mentorship through resources, time, and professional development, they create the conditions necessary for shared leadership to flourish

(Searby et al., 2017). The structured mentor training program in this study provided these supports enabling mentoring to evolve into a system of collective leadership.

Findings Related to the Research Problem

Chapter 1 discussed the research problem as teacher attrition without positive mentorship supports in place. Mentoring has been identified as a potential strategy for addressing teacher retention challenges (Johnson & Kaslow, 2014); however, its effectiveness depends on the presence of a well-structured mentoring program. There is limited formal evidence examining the impact of the development of a mentor program and promoting retention among both mentors and mentees within a local school setting.

The findings in this study support improved teacher retention due to a structured mentorship training program, evidenced by the mentors' increased intent, involvement, and wellbeing. The leadership, confidence, structure, and accountability of the mentorship training program allowed mentors to be more effective in their mentoring roles and have better relationships with their mentees, causing more teachers to stay in their positions at one elementary school. Specifically, the leadership role that mentorship provided reinvigorated many mentors in their own roles as teachers and reminded them of their love for education, which led them to be better mentors and encourage mentees. The accountability of the program also helped to keep mentors on track and focus on specific topics and skills to maximize the mentoring relationship, increasing its effectiveness. Additionally, the wellbeing practices of the mentorship training program taught many mentors to take a more holistic approach, allowing them to focus on the teacher's wellbeing, not just general tips in their first years of teaching at

the local elementary school, which increased retention as well. Transformational learning also took place through the mentorship training program, which reframed mindsets and enhanced relationship building skills to be effective mentors. Finally, the improved collective leadership strengthened the entire school building by furthering the mission and vision of the school, increasing teacher buy in and improving the culture and climate of the school.

Findings Related to the Research Questions

This study examined how participation in the two cycles of action research to develop and implement a structured mentor training program influenced mentor architects' intent and involvement in mentoring, as well as teacher mentors' perceptions of the program's impact on teacher support, retention, and wellbeing. Findings indicate that engaging in the collaborative design and implementation process strengthened mentor architects' commitment to mentoring by engaging in it as a meaningful leadership opportunity. The introduction of intentional structures and accountability measures further increased mentors' consistency and depth of involvement in mentoring practices.

In the first year of implementation, teacher mentors perceived the program as highly supportive of new teachers with a focus on wellbeing, particularly through its emphasis on relationship building, structured engagement, and reflective practice. These supports aligned with Seligman's PERMA model, as mentors reported fostering positive emotions, increasing engagement, building strong relationships, enhancing meaning in their roles, and experiencing a sense of accomplishment. Collectively, the findings suggest that a structured, collaboratively developed mentoring program can

enhance mentor engagement, promote teacher wellbeing, and contribute to improved teacher retention within a local school context.

Significance of the Study

Teacher retention increases school improvement and student achievement (Brill & McCartney, 2008). The importance of understanding mentor training and the impact on teacher retention is crucial to ensuring that teachers remain positive in their professions and develop meaningful relationships that enhance their wellbeing. The influence of the teacher mentor is no longer about one single relationship, but the collective efficacy that ensues due to effective mentoring practices in a local school building. This study advances both local practice and the broader understanding of teacher mentoring as a lever for leadership development, wellbeing, and retention within elementary school settings through two cycles of action research.

The study contributes to the field by addressing the notable gap in the literature regarding structured mentor training programs. While mentoring is widely recognized as a support for new teachers, this research provides evidence that intentional, collaboratively developed mentoring training grounded in Mertz's framework of intent and involvement can meaningfully shape how mentors engage in their roles. Findings indicate that when mentors are trained with clear structures, expectations, and opportunities for reflection, their intent to mentor deepens and their level of involvement becomes more consistent and impactful.

The study also highlights mentoring as a pathway to leadership. Participants described increased confidence, professional agency, and a clearer sense of leadership identity through their involvement as mentor architects and teacher mentors. This

positions mentoring not simply as a support mechanism for novice teachers, but as a leadership development model that builds internal capacity within a school. As a result, this study offers practical implications for school leaders seeking sustainable ways to cultivate leadership without relying solely on formal administrative roles. The findings also emphasize the importance of the structure and accountability in mentoring design. The development of consistent practices, such as scheduled check-ins, clear expectations, and intentional mentor-mentee matching, was directly linked to improved engagement and effectiveness. This provides a replicable framework for schools and districts aiming to strengthen mentoring programs in ways that move beyond informal or inconsistent implementation.

Additionally, this study in its significance of the integration of wellbeing centered practices, aligned with Seligman's PERMA framework. Mentors reported that the program fostered positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, not only for mentees but also for themselves. This suggests that mentoring, when intentionally designed, can serve as a mechanism to enhance teacher wellbeing. The research also underscores the role of mentoring in building relational trust and collective leadership. Findings revealed that structured mentoring contributed to a more collaborative and supportive school environment where teachers feel valued and connected beyond their grade levels. This cultural shift supports the development of a shared vision and collective responsibility, aligning mentoring with broader school improvement efforts.

Finally, the use of participatory action research enhances the study's significance by demonstrating the power of practitioner-led inquiry. By engaging mentor architects

and teacher mentors as co-researchers, the study not only produced meaningful findings but also built ownership, reflection, and continuous improvement into the process. This reinforces the value of action research as both a methodology for change and a professional learning strategy in schools. In sum, this study is significant because it shows that a collaboratively developed, structured mentor training program can simultaneously strengthen mentoring practices, develop teacher leadership, promote wellbeing, and contribute to teacher retention, offering both a practical model for schools and a meaningful contribution to the research on mentoring in education.

Implications for Practice

The responsibility for applying these implications to practice lies with all individuals who have the ability to influence the policies that shape K-12 education. This can be anyone who cares deeply for those that impact education the most. Effective mentorship ensures that teachers feel supported and less alone in their first years of teaching or at a new school. The work of a teacher mentor, and the effective training of them, can reduce the stress of teachers and increase their overall wellbeing and increase confidence. The implications for practice from this action research study center on how schools can design, implement, and sustain mentoring in ways that strengthen teacher effectiveness, leadership, wellbeing, and retention.

The development of structured, intentional mentor training programs shows that mentoring should move beyond informal support to a clearly defined, structured program. Schools should establish explicit expectations, timelines, mentor-mentee interactions, and consistent protocols. The findings suggest that structure increases both the mentors' intent and level of involvement, leading to more meaningful and

consistent mentoring practices. The use of mentoring as a leadership development pipeline was also another important implication. Mentoring should be positioned as a formal pathway to teacher leadership. Providing opportunities for experienced teachers to serve as mentor architects or mentors builds leadership capacity, strengthens professional identity, and supports succession planning within the entire school. This approach allows schools to cultivate leadership from within rather than relying solely on external hires or administrative roles.

Mentor training also shows an important implication for prioritizing wellbeing-centered mentoring practices. Incorporating the training with practices from Seligman's PERMA framework and embedding strategies that promote positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment helps mentors and mentees manage stress, build resilience, and remain committed to the profession, directly related to supporting retention efforts. Establishing accountability and consistency in mentoring also highlights the need for accountability systems such as scheduled meetings, documentation of mentoring interactions, and progress monitoring. School leaders should ensure that mentoring is not optional or inconsistent, but rather a monitored and supported component of school improvement efforts.

Strengthening relational trust and professional norms is an implication for practice in that effective mentoring requires a foundation of trust, confidentiality, and professionalism. Schools should train mentors in communication skills, including how to facilitate reflective conversations and navigate difficult discussions. Intentional mentor-mentee matching based on strengths, values, or needs can further enhance relational trust. Embedded reflective practice and continuous improvement also is important to

realize that mentor training should include structured opportunities for ongoing reflections, journaling, peer discussions, and feedback cycles. This supports transformational learning and allows mentors to continuously refine their practice, which was a key driver for growth identified in the study.

Another important implication was promoting collective leadership and collaborative culture. Mentoring should be leveraged as a school-wide practice that builds collective leadership. Encouraging cross-grade collaboration, shared problem-solving, and team-based mentoring structures helps break down silos and fosters a unified vision aligned with school improvement goals. Aligning mentoring with school improvement and retention goals is another implication that mentoring programs should be intentionally aligned with broader initiatives such as school improvement priorities, instruction goals, and teacher retention strategies. The findings indicate that when mentoring is embedded into the larger systems of school improvement, it contributes to stronger organizational culture, increased teacher support, and improved teacher retention outcomes. Overall, this study implies that mentoring is most effective when it is intentional, structured, wellbeing-focused, and leadership-driven, transforming it from a support strategy into a core component of sustainable school improvement.

Implications for Future Research

Future research in the area of teacher mentoring and wellbeing, specifically in relation to action research and the development of a mentor training program, should continue to address how mentorship can be improved and the impacts it has on the mentors and mentees. Action research can be used as a method to explore other ways mentors can be trained and effective practices to increase wellbeing and sustained

mentoring success. Mentorship as a pathway to teacher leadership also has important implications for building internal capacity and sustaining school improvement efforts over time. Additionally, the emphasis on wellbeing-centered practices highlights the importance of supporting teachers holistically. By intentionally integrating elements of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, the mentoring program contributed to a more supportive and resilient professional culture. Efforts should be made to continue to address the teacher retention problem and ways that can effectively reduce teacher attrition and promote student success.

Mentor intent and involvement should continue to be studied as well as the impacts of mentorships in various academic settings. Future research may also build on this work by examining long-term impacts on teacher retention, expanding the model across multiple sites, or further exploring the relationship between mentoring, leadership development, and student outcomes.

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

This action research study sought to examine how the collaborative development and implementation of a structured mentor training program influenced mentors' intent to engage in mentoring and their level of involvement in mentoring practices, through two cycles of action research. Grounded in Mertz's (2004) framework of mentoring intent and involvement and informed by positive psychology through Martin Seligman, this study contributes to a growing body of research that positions mentoring as both a support system and a catalyst for professional growth. The findings across both cycles of action research demonstrate that mentoring, when intentionally designed and collaboratively developed, becomes far more than a compliance-based initiative.

Instead, it evolves into a dynamic structure that fosters leadership development, reflective practice, relational trust, and collective efficacy. Mentor architects and teacher mentors reported increased clarity in their roles, stronger commitment to mentoring, and deeper engagement in mentoring practices as a result of the development of and participation in structured training and iterative cycles of reflection and refinement. These outcomes affirm that both intent and involvement are not static traits, but rather constructs that can be developed through purposeful training and sustained support.

A key conclusion of this study is that mentorship serves as a powerful pathway to teacher leadership. Participants consistently described growth in confidence, professional identity, and leadership capacity, suggesting that mentoring can function as an embedded leadership development model within schools. The study also underscores the critical roles of structure and accountability in effective mentoring. Clearly defined expectations, consistent meeting structures, and opportunities for reflection created a sense of purpose and direction that strengthened mentor engagement. At the same time, the findings emphasize that structure must be balanced with flexibility, allowing mentors to respond to the individual needs of mentees. Furthermore, the development of relational trust and professionalism emerged as a foundational element, reinforcing that effective mentoring depends on safe, supportive relationships where honest dialogue and growth can occur.

Another important conclusion is the impact of mentoring on collective leadership and school culture. As mentoring practices became more consistent and intentional, participants described a shift toward greater collaboration, shared responsibility, and

alignment with school goals. This suggests that mentoring can serve as a unifying force within a school, strengthening both individual practice and organizational coherence.

The use of participatory action research was instrumental in achieving these outcomes. By engaging mentor architects and teacher mentors as co-researchers, the study fostered ownership, voice, and continuous improvement throughout the process. The iterative nature of action research allowed participants to reflect on practice, implement changes, and evaluate their impact in real time, making the findings both meaningful and immediately applicable to the local context. While this study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its context-specific nature. Conducted within a single elementary school setting, these findings may not be universally generalizable. However, the principles of intentional design, collaborative development, and wellbeing-centered mentoring offer transferable insights for other schools and districts seeking to strengthen mentoring programs.

In conclusion, this study affirms that a structured, collaboratively developed mentor training program has the potential to significantly enhance mentoring practices, develop teacher leadership, support wellbeing, and contribute toward improved retention. Mentoring, when grounded in theory and implemented with intentionality, can transform school culture and serve as a cornerstone of sustainable school improvement.

References

- Adair, A. C. & Reames, E. H. (2025). Mentoring for well-being: Flourishing across career stages. *The Chronicle of Mentoring and Coaching*, 9(1), 44-56.
<https://doi.org/10.62935/w6092r>
- Adelman, C. (1993). Kurt lewin and the origins of action research. *Educational Action Research*, 1(1), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965079930010102>
- Allen, T. D., & Eby, L. T. (2021). The art and science of mentoring. In E. H. Reames & L. J. Searby (Eds.), *The art and science of mentoring: A Festschrift in honor of Dr. Frances Kochan* (pp. 15–22). Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1989). Participatory action research and action science compared: A commentary. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 32(5), 612–623.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764289032005008>
- Arthur, L., & Bradley, S. (2023). Teacher retention in challenging schools: Please don't say goodbye! *Teachers and Teaching*, 29(7–8), 753–771.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2201423>
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122–147. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122>
- Basaran, O., & Cakir, R. (2023). A Factor predicting teachers' organizational trust: School happiness. *International Technology and Education Journal*, 7(2), 39–50.
<http://itejournal.com>
- Bayraktar, H. V., & Girgin, S. (2020). The examination of teachers' levels of organizational happiness. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 9(5), 170.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v9n5p170>

- Benner, G. J., Strycker, L. A., Berry, L. A., Logan, A. J., & Lee, E. O. (2023). Associations between childhood trauma, perceived resilience, and teacher burnout. *Teachers and Teaching*, 29(3), 291–309.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2173167>
- Brewer, A. M. (2016). *Mentoring from a positive psychology perspective*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40983-2>
- Brill, S., & McCartney, A. (2008). Stopping the revolving door: Increasing teacher retention. *Politics & Policy*, 36(5), 750–774.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.17471346.2008.00133.x>
- Bullough, R. V. (2012). Mentoring and new teacher induction in the United States: A review and analysis of current practices. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 20(1), 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2012.645600>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership* (1st ed). Harper & Row.
- Carmeli, A., Brueller, D., & Dutton, J. E. (2009). Learning behaviors in the workplace: The role of high-quality interpersonal relationships and psychological safety. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 26(1), 81–98.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/sres.932>
- Carrillo, C., & Flores, M. A. (2018). Veteran teachers' identity: What does the research literature tell us? *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 48(5), 639–656.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2017.1394982>
- Carroll, D. (2005). Learning through interactive talk: A school-based mentor teacher study group as a context for professional learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(5), 457–473. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.03.005>

- Cherkowski, S., & Walker, K. (2019). Mentorship for flourishing in schools: An explicit shift toward appreciative action. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 8(4), 345–360. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-02-2019-0018>
- Childre, A. L., & Van Rie, G. L. (2015). Mentor teacher training: A hybrid model to promote partnering in candidate development. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 34(1), 10–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051503400104>
- Chizhik, E. W., Chizhik, A. W., Close, C., & Gallego, M. (2018). Developing student teachers' teaching self-efficacy through Shared Mentoring in Learning Environments (Smile). *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 7(1), 35–53. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-02-2017-0014>
- Çobanoğlu, N., & Bozbayindir, F. (2019). A study on shared leadership and positive psychological capitals of teachers at primary and secondary schools. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 7(5), 1265–1274. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2019.070512>
- Colomeischi, A. A., & Ursu, A. (2024). Exploring the mediating role of emotion regulation on the relationship between teachers' resilience and their perceived stress. *Social Psychology of Education*, 27(4), 1755–1774. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-023-09874-z>
- Cosenza, M. (2015). Defining Teacher Leadership: Affirming the Teacher Leader Model Standards. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 24(2), 79–99.
- Crasborn, F., Hennissen, P., Brouwer, N., Korthagen, F., & Bergen, T. (2008). Promoting versatility in mentor teachers' use of supervisory skills. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(3), 499–514. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.05.001>

- Danielson, C. (2006). *Teacher leadership that strengthens professional practice*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Darling-Hammond, L., & Youngs, P. (2002). Defining “highly qualified teachers”: What does “scientifically-based research” actually tell us? *Educational Researcher*, 31(9), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X031009013>
- Darwich, L. (2021). Whom do I see in the staff room every day? The sources of resilience of teachers of color. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 2(1), 69–89. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1304631.pdf>
- Dutton, J., Wilson, K., Holmes, M., & Garofano, R. (2024). The INSITE executive mentoring and coaching program: A framework to support and transition mid career professionals into secondary teaching. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2330247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2330247>
- Dwyer, D. (2000). *Interpersonal relationships*. Routledge.
- Eby, L. T. D. T., et. al (2013). An interdisciplinary meta-analysis of the potential antecedents, correlates, and consequences of protégé perceptions of mentoring. *Psychological Bulletin*, 139(2), 441–476. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029279>
- Eby, L. T., McManus, S. E., Simon, S. A., & Russell, J. E. A. (2000). The protege’s perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1999.1726>
- Elmore, R. F. (1979). Backward mapping: Implementation research and policy decisions. *Political Science Quarterly*, 94(4), 601–616. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2149628>

- Evertson, C. M., & Smithey, M. W. (2000). Mentoring effects on protégés' classroom practice: An experimental field study. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(5), 294–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598721>
- Feiman-Nemser, S., & Carver, C. L. (2012). Creating conditions for serious mentoring: Implications for induction policy. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 114(14), 342–364. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811211401406>
- Forgeard, M. J. C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M. L., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring well-being for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v1i1.15>
- Fransson, G., & K. McMahan, S. (2013). Exploring research on mentoring policies in education. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 2(3), 218–232. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-05-2013-0031>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 218–226. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218>
- Garza, R., Reynosa, R., Werner, P., Duchaine, E., Harter, R. (2019). Developing a mentoring framework through the examination of mentoring paradigms in a teacher residency program. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(3), 122. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v44n3.1>
- Gareis, C. R., & Grant, L. W. (2014). The efficacy of training cooperating teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 39, 77–88. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.12.007>

- Gearity, B., & Mertz, N. (2015). From “bitch” to “mentor”: A doctoral student’s story of self-change and mentoring. *The Qualitative Report*.
<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1748>
- Ghosh, R., Haynes, R. K., & Kram, K. E. (2013). Developmental networks at work: Holding environments for leader development. *Career Development International*, 18(3), 232–256. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-09-2012-0084>
- Hamlin, R. G., & Sage, L. (2011). Behavioral criteria of perceived mentoring effectiveness: An empirical study of effective and ineffective mentor and mentee behavior within formal mentoring relationships. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 35(8), 752–778. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090591111168311>
- Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2022). *Well-being in schools: Three forces that will uplift your students in a volatile world*. ASCD.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2019). Teacher leadership and educational change. *School Leadership & Management*, 39(2), 123–126.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1574964>
- Herr, K., & Anderson, G. L. (2015). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Higgins, M. C., & Kram, K. E. (2001). Reconceptualizing mentoring at work: A developmental network perspective. *The Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 264. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259122>
- Hobson, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P. D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don’t. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(1), 207–216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.09.001>

- Hobson, A. J., & Malderez, A. (2013). Judgementoring and other threats to realizing the potential of school-based mentoring in teacher education. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 2(2), 89–108.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-03-2013-0019>
- Iannucci, C., Richards, K. A. R., & MacPhail, A. (2021). The relationships among personal accomplishment, resilience and teachers' experience of teaching multiple school subjects role conflict. *European Physical Education Review*, 27(3), 613–635. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X20980777>
- İhtiyaroğlu, N. (2018). Analyzing the relationship between happiness, teachers' level of satisfaction with life and classroom management profiles. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 6(10), 2227–2237.
<https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2018.061021>
- Illies, M., & Reiter-Palmon, R. (2020). The effect of perceived values on negative mentoring, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and perceived career success. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 18(1), 20–30. <https://doi.org/10.24384/q242-8973>
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201–233. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323>
- Irby, B. J., & Boswell, J. (2016). Historical print context of the term, “mentoring.” *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 24(1), 1–7.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2016.1170556>
- Johnson, W. B., & Kaslow, N. J. (Eds.). (2014). *The Oxford handbook of education and*

training in professional psychology. Oxford University Press.

Kangas-Dick, K., & O'Shaughnessy, E. (2020). Interventions that promote resilience among teachers: A systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 8(2), 131–146.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2020.1734125>

Karathanos-Aguilar, K., & Ervin-Kassab, L. (2022). Co-teaching as an opportunity for mentor teacher professional growth. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 11(3), 245–261.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-06-20210070>

Kasten, S. E., Noblitt, B. A., & Bacevich, A. (2024). Developing practice-based educative mentoring with secondary mathematics mentor teachers. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10857-024-09648-0>

Kern, M. L., Waters, L., Adler, A., & White, M. (2014). Assessing employee wellbeing in schools using a multifaceted approach: Associations with physical health, life satisfaction, and professional thriving. *Psychology*, 05(06), 500–513.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/psych.2014.56060>

Kilic, G. N., Karabay, A., & Kocabaş, İ. (2023). Examining the relationship between school administrators' leadership styles and teachers' organizational happiness. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 12(1), 91–112.

<https://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2023.60352>

Kochan, F. (2013). Analyzing the relationships between culture and mentoring. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 21(4), 412–430.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2013.855862>

- Kochan, F. K., & Pascarelli, J. T. (Eds.). (2004). *Global perspectives on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities, and cultures*. Information Age Pub.
- Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management Journal*, 26(4), 608–625. <https://doi.org/10.2307/255910>
- Kram, K. E. (1988). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life* (Reprinted, orig. publ.: Glenview, Ill. : Scott Foresman, c1985). University Press of America.
- Langdon, F., & Ward, L. (2014). Educative mentoring: From policy to practice. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 2(1), 28–40.
- Lee, K.-C., Chang, I.-H., Wang, I.-L., & Chen, R.-S. (2023). Effects of knowledge sharing on sustainable happiness of preschool teachers: The mediating roles of self-efficacy and helping behavior. *Current Psychology*, 42(16), 13648–13657. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02725-8>
- Leshem, S. (2014). How do teacher mentors perceive their role, does it matter? *Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(3), 261–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2014.896870>
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), 34–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.tb02295.x>
- Luft, J. A., Roehrig, G. H., & Patterson, N. C. (2003). Contrasting landscapes: A comparison of the impact of different induction programs on beginning secondary science teachers' practices, beliefs, and experiences. . *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 40(1), 77–97.
- Lunsford, L. G. (2022). *The mentor's guide: Five steps to build a successful mentoring*

- program* (2nd edition). Routledge.
- Mackey, E. (2022). *Teacher Supply and Demand: Defining the Teacher Shortage Problem* (pp. 1–10). State of Alabama Department of Education.
- Malen, B. (2011). An Enduring Issue: The Relationship between Political Democracy and Educational Effectiveness. In *Shaping Education Policy: Power and Process* (pp. 23–60).
- Mansfield, C. F., Beltman, S., Broadley, T., & Weatherby-Fell, N. (2016). Building resilience in teacher education: An evidenced informed framework. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54, 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.11.016>
- Mazmanian, D. A., & Sabatier, P. A. (1989). *Implementation and public policy: With a new postscript*. University Press of America.
- McManus, S. E., & Russell, J. E. (2007). Peer Mentoring Relationships at Work. In *The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research, and practice*. (pp. 273–297).
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (Fourth edition). John Wiley & Sons.
- Mertler, C. A. (2016). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (Fifth edition). SAGE Publications.
- Mertz, N. T. (2004). What's a mentor, anyway? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(4), 541–560. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X04267110>
- Mertz, N. T., Welch, O. M., & Henderson, J. (1988). Mentoring for top management: How sex differences affect the selection process. *Career Planning and Adult Developmental Journal*, 4(2), 34–39.
- Meyer, J. W. (1977). The effects of education as an institution. *American Journal of*

- Sociology*, 83(1), 55–77. <https://doi.org/10.1086/226506>
- Miller, E. R., & Gkonou, C. (2023). Exploring teacher caring as a “happy object” in language teacher accounts of happiness. *Applied Linguistics*, 44(2), 328–346. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amac034>
- Moir, E. (2009). *New teacher mentoring: Hopes and promise for improving teacher effectiveness*. Harvard Education Press.
- Morettini, B., Luet, K., & Vernon-Dotson, L. (2020). Building beginning teacher resilience: Exploring the relationship between mentoring and contextual acceptance. *The Educational Forum*, 84(1), 48–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2020.1679933>
- Mullen, C. A. (2005). *Mentorship primer*. P. Lang.
- Mullen, C. A. (2016). Alternative mentoring types. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 52(3), 132–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2016.1191901>
- Mullen, C. A., & Klimaitis, C. C. (2021). Defining mentoring: A literature review of issues, types, and applications. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14176>
- Nguyen, D., See, B. H., Brown, C., & Kokotsaki, D. (2024). Leadership for teacher retention: Exploring the evidence base on why and how to support teacher autonomy, development, and voice. *Oxford Review of Education*, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2024.2432635>
- Ortogero, S. P., Barcarse, T. O., & Ray, A. B. (2022). Developing the knowledge and mentoring skills of future special education leaders. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 41(4), 211–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/87568705221092765>

- Papatraianou, L. H., & Le Cornu, R. (2014). Problematising the role of personal and Professional relationships in early career teacher resilience. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(1). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n1.7>
- Peiser, G., Ambrose, J., Burke, B., & Davenport, J. (2018). The role of the mentor in professional knowledge development across four professions. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 7(1), 2–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-07-2017-0052>
- Polikoff, M. S., Desimone, L. M., Porter, A. C., & Hochberg, E. D. (2015). Mentor policy and the quality of mentoring. *The Elementary School Journal*, 116(1), 76–102.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/683134>
- Ponte, E., & Twomey, S. (2014). Veteran teachers mentoring in training: Negotiating issues of power, vulnerability and professional development. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 40(1), 20–33.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2013.864015>
- Portner, H. (Ed.). (2005). *Teacher mentoring and induction: The state of the art and beyond*. Corwin Press.
- Ramos-Diaz, M., & Kochan, F. (2020). Transformative co-mentoring: Changing the Healthcare profession by honoring roots and fostering wings. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 28(4), 439–458.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2020.1793088>
- Reames, E. H. (with Searby, L. J.). (2021). *The art and science of mentoring: A festschrift in honor of dr. Frances Kochan*. Information Age Publishing, Incorporated.

- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2008). *The Sage handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (2nd ed). SAGE Publications.
- Robinson, V. M., Hohepa, M. K., Lloyd, C., & New Zealand. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why : best evidence synthesis iteration (Bes)*. Ministry of Education.
- Roegman, R., Reagan, E. M., Goodwin, A. L., & Yu, J. (2016). Support and assist: Approaches to mentoring in a yearlong teacher residency. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 5(1), 37–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-09-2015-0026>
- Rosen, L. (2009). Rhetoric and Symbolic Action in the Policy PRocess. In *Handbook of Education Policy Research* (1st ed., pp. 264–283). Routledge.
- Rusk, R. D., & Waters, L. (2015). A psycho-social system approach to well-being: Empirically deriving the Five Domains of Positive Functioning. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 10(2), 141–152.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.920409>
- Sagar, M. E. (2021). Emotion regulation skills and self-control as predictors of resilience in teachers candidates. *International Education Studies*, 14(6), 103.
<https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v14n6p103>
- Santoro, N., Pietsch, M., & Borg, T. (2012). The passion of teaching: Learning from an older generation of teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 38(5), 585–595.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2013.739796>
- Searby, L. (2014). The Protégé mentoring mindset: A framework for consideration.

International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education, 3(3), 255–276.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJMCE-04-2014-0012>

Searby, L., Ballenger, J., & Tripses, J. (2017). Climbing the ladder, holding the ladder: The mentoring experiences of higher education female leaders. *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, 35, 98–107.

<https://doi.org/10.21423/awlj-v35.a141>

Searby, L. J., & Brondyk, S. K. (Eds.). (2016). *Best practices in mentoring for teacher and leader development*. Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Seligman, M. (2016). *Learned Optimism: How to change your mind and your life*. Vintage Books.

Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(4), 333–335.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1437466>

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.5>

Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410–421. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.5.410>

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1987). *The principalship: A reflective practice perspective*. Allyn and Bacon.

Sezer, S., & Can, E. (2019). School happiness: A scale development and

- implementation study. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 19(79), 1–24.
<https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2019.79.8>
- Siedlecki, K. L., Salthouse, T. A., Oishi, S., & Jeswani, S. (2014). The relationship between social support and subjective well-being across age. *Social Indicators Research*, 117(2), 561–576. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0361-4>
- Smith, T. M. (2007). How do state-level induction and standards-based reform policies affect induction experiences and turnover among new teachers? *American Journal of Education*, 113(2), 273–309. <https://doi.org/10.1086/510168>
- Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681–714. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041003681>
- Soulen, R. R., & Wine, L. D. (2021). Building resilience in new and beginning teachers: Contributions of school librarians. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 80–91.
<https://doi.org/10.29173/slw8230>
- Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387–431. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543072003387>
- Stanulis, R. N. (2006). *Keeping content and context central: Comprehensive induction in the Michigan State University Teachers for a New Era project*. American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, San Francisco, CA.
- Stanulis, R. N., et.al. (2019). Mentoring as more than “cheerleading”: Looking at educative mentoring practices through mentors’ eyes. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(5), 567–580. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487118773996>

- Stoll, L., Fink, D., & Earl, L. M. (2003). *It's about learning (And it's about time)*.
Routledge/Falmer.
- Thornton, K. (2014). Mentors as educational leaders and change agents. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*, 3(1), 18–31
- Tore, E., & Duman-Saka, B. (2023). The relationship between teacher leadership and organizational happiness of secondary school teachers. *European Journal of Educational Management*, volume–6–2023(volume–6–issue–4–December 2023), 247–259. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eujem.6.4.247>
- Trevethan, H., & Sandretto, S. (2017). Repositioning mentoring as educative: Examining missed opportunities for professional learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 68, 127–133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.08.012>
- Tschannen-Moran, B., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2010). *Evocative coaching: Transforming schools one conversation at a time*. Jossey-Bass.
- Tugade, M. M., & Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86(2), 320–333. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.320>
- Uyanik, N., & ÇeviK, Ö. (2022). Examining the relationship between teachers' self compassion, forgiveness, and psychological resilience. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 9(4), 1208–1221. <https://doi.org/10.52380/ijpes.2022.9.4.837>
- Van Tiem, D. M., Moseley, J. L., Dessinger, J. C., & O'Brien, C. (2002). Performance improvement interventions: Enhancing people, processes, and organizations

- through performance technology. *Performance Improvement*, 41(1), 45–49.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.4140410110>
- Viera, C. A. (2021). A comparison of mentoring and coaching: What's the difference? *Performance Improvement*, 60(7), 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21993>
- Washburn-Moses, L. (2010). Rethinking mentoring: Comparing policy and practice in special and general education. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 18, 32.
<https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v18n32.2010>
- Washington, R., & Cox, E. (2016). How an evolution view of workplace mentoring relationships helps avoid negative experiences: The developmental relationship mentoring model in action. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 24(4), 318–340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2016.1252109>
- Wexler, L. J. (2019). Working together within a system: Educative mentoring and novice teacher learning. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 27(1), 44–67.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2019.1583406>
- Wexler, L. J. (2020). 'I would be a completely different teacher if I had been with a different mentor': Ways in which educative mentoring matters as novices learn to teach. *Professional Development in Education*, 46(2), 211–228.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1573375>
- Wheeler, R. (2024). *Well-Being: An Outcome of Mentoring* [Dissertation]. Auburn University.
- Wheeler, R., Reames, E., & Adair, A. (2024). Informal Mentoring: An Innovative Practice for Promoting Principal Wellbeing. In *Mentoring for Wellbeing in Schools* (pp. 287–305). Information Age Publishing.

Whitworth, L. (Ed.). (2007). *Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people toward success in work and life* (2. ed). Davies-Black Publ.

Zuckerman, J. (2001). Veteran Teacher Transformations in a collaborative mentoring relationship. *American Secondary Education*, 29(4), 18–29.

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval



EXPEDITED/FULL BOARD

BASIC PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Title: *Developing a Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Practice and Wellbeing*

Version: V2

Version Date: 11/11/2025

Other IRBs associated with this project: N/A

FUNDING INFORMATION:

Check all that apply.

☒ Not funded by any source.
☐ Internal funding. Provide the source/mechanism of internal support:
☐ U.S. Federal government funding (i.e., DoD, NIH, NSF, etc.) via one or more direct awards or a sub-award. Provide the source of federal support:
☐ Other sources of funding (please specify):

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Name: Dr. Ellen Hahn

Department: EFLT- College of Education

Telephone Number: 706-573-7563

Email Address: reamseh@auburn.edu

Department Head/Chair Name: Dr. William (Hank) Murrah

☒ PI is not a student.

☒ I have read the PI eligibility statement and confirm that the above-named PI meets criteria to be a PI on an IRB protocol at AU.



Table of Contents

1.0	Study Summary	4
2.0	Objectives	4
3.0	Background*	4
4.0	Study Intervention/Investigational Agent.....	4
5.0	Procedures Involved*	5
6.0	Data and Specimen Banking*	6
7.0	Sharing of Results with Participants*	6
8.0	Study Timelines*	6
9.0	Study Endpoints*	7
10.0	Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*	7
11.0	Local Number of Participants	7
12.0	Vulnerable Populations*	7
13.0	Recruitment Methods	8
14.0	Withdrawal of Participants*	8
15.0	Risks to Participants*	9
16.0	Potential Benefits to Participants*	9
17.0	Data Management* and Confidentiality	9
18.0	Provisions to Monitor the Data to Ensure the Safety of Participants*	10
19.0	Compensation for Research-Related Injury	11
20.0	Economic Burden to Participants	11
21.0	Consent Process.....	11
22.0	Process to Document Consent in Writing	13
23.0	Setting	14
24.0	Resources Available	14
25.0	Multi-Site Research*	14



1.0 Study Summary

This study employs a qualitative research approach using participatory action research to explore the experiences of mentor teachers developing and participating in a mentorship training program.

A convenience sample of mentor architects will take part in semi-structured interviews designed to capture a thick-description of the educators' experiences with developing a teacher mentor program to strengthen practice and wellbeing. A convenience sample of all mentors will also participate in an online survey via Qualtrics. **UPDATE:** Teachers volunteered for the mentor training program. They met the criteria if they were employed at one specific elementary school, with at least 3 years of teaching experience, and a desire to mentor. The mentor architects, the teachers who helped develop the training program, were chosen to participate based on their desire to be teacher leaders in the building and improve the existing mentoring structure.

Interviews will be recorded, either via Zoom for electronic meetings or audio recording for in-person meetings. The research will then be analyzed, member-checked, and value-coded for results. mentor architects and mentors who were involved in the program architects will participate in an online survey where they are asked about their role as mentors and their perceptions of wellbeing in the mentorship program and the effect it had on them in their experience as mentors. Participants must be either mentor architects who helped develop the program and are also mentors, or mentors who participated in the training program. Email invitations will be sent to these participants.

The results of this study will be published in a dissertation illuminating how teachers experience developing and participating in a mentor training program. Ultimately this study seeks to inform educational leaders and researchers about the development of a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through intent, involvement, and wellbeing leading to greater leadership and retention in our school.

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Describe the purpose, specific aims, and objectives.

The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to work with mentor architect teachers to develop a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through intent, involvement, and wellbeing leading to greater leadership and retention in our school. The specific aims of this study are to then use the results of this study to positively impact a local school through positive mentorship experiences and improve upon the program through cycles of action research. The objective of this study is to use the perceptions of the mentor architects and mentors to gauge the intent and involvement and wellbeing created by the development and participation in the program.

2.2 State the hypotheses to be tested.

RQ 1: “To what extent does the collaborative development and implementation of a structured mentor training program, grounded in Mertz’s theory of mentorship, shape mentor architects’ and mentors’

- (a) intent to engage in mentorship and
- (b) depth of involvement in mentoring practices as they go through cycles of action research?

RQ 2: “How do teacher mentors perceive the first year of implementation of the structured mentor training program they developed, particularly in relation to supporting and retaining newly hired teachers and promoting aspects of well-being as described by Seligman’s PERMA model with

- (a) Positive Emotions
- (b) Engagement
- (c) Positive Relationships
- (d) Meaning
- (e) Accomplishment?”

3.0 Background*

3.1 Describe the relevant prior experience and gaps in current knowledge.

Teacher retention problem- teachers are leaving the profession at high rates, this has negatively impacted student achievement and contributes to a negative school culture. Mentoring is one of the possible solutions to the teacher retention problem, but a strong mentoring program must be in place for mentoring to be effective. To date there is little formal evidence on the practice of training mentors to increase teacher leadership through mentoring practices and wellbeing, thus promoting retention among mentors as well as mentees. (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Mackey, 2022; Soulen & Wine, 2021; Arthur & Bradley, 2023).

3.2 Describe any relevant preliminary data.

At this stage no formal preliminary data has been collected specific to the context of this study on educators developing a mentor training program focused specifically on leadership and wellbeing. However there has been research that points to gap in the literature around the data this study seeks to find:

The reviewed literature establishes mentorship as a key factor in teacher wellbeing, retention, and leadership development, drawing strong connections between positive psychology and mentoring practice. Using the PERMA Framework (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment), research highlights how mentorship supports positive school relationships, culture, and professional growth. Studies further emphasize that structured mentor training enhances leadership capacity, self-efficacy, and school culture, while mitigating negative mentoring experiences.

However, despite clear evidence of mentorship’s benefits, there remains a research gap: few studies focus specifically on the intentional design of mentor training programs that integrate leadership development and positive psychology, particularly for teachers new to a district. Current research primarily addresses induction and retention, not how structured training can empower mentors as leaders or bolster emotional resilience.

This synthesis provides preliminary justification for the dissertation's focus—developing a structured mentor training program that (a) embeds positive psychology principles, (b) fosters teacher leadership, and (c) supports both mentor and mentee wellbeing within the unique context of district transitions.

3.3 Provide the scientific or scholarly background for, rationale for, and significance of the research based on the existing literature and how will it add to existing knowledge.

This study advances scientific knowledge by addressing a critical gap in the literature regarding how structured mentor training programs can be intentionally designed to build teacher leadership, enhance wellbeing, and improve retention—particularly for teachers new to a district. While mentoring is widely recognized as beneficial for teacher retention, few studies have examined how intentional training grounded in leadership development and positive psychology can elevate mentoring effectiveness and contribute to school improvement efforts.

The research is guided by the Wheeler Framework (2024), which integrates Seligman's PERMA theory and Mertz's mentoring framework within a positive psychology lens. This conceptual foundation supports a participatory action research design that links mentor development to teacher wellbeing, leadership growth, and shared problem-solving within school contexts.

The study's significance lies in its potential to inform both theory and practice by demonstrating how collaboratively designed mentor training can promote teacher empowerment, strengthen school culture, and increase mentor and mentee wellbeing. It contributes practical guidance for districts seeking to implement sustainable mentorship systems that foster leadership and retention, ultimately supporting positive social change in education.

4.0 Study Intervention/Investigational Agent

4.1 Description: N/A

4.2 Drug/Device Handling: N/A

4.3 If the drug is investigational (has an IND) or the device has an IDE or a claim of abbreviated IDE (non-significant risk device), include the following information: N/A

- **Identify the holder of the IND/IDE/Abbreviated IDE.**
- **If your test article meets the criteria for a waiver of IND or IDE, please describe:**
- **Explain procedures followed to comply with sponsor requirements for FDA regulated research for the following:**



FDA Regulation	IND Studies	IDE studies	Abbreviated IDE studies
21 CFR 11	X	X	
21 CFR 54	X	X	
21 CFR 210	X		
21 CFR 211	X		
21 CFR 312	X		
21 CFR 812		X	X
21 CFR 820		X	

5.0 Procedures Involved*

5.1 Describe and explain the study design.

This study employs a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology using a qualitative, iterative design aimed at addressing a real-world problem—enhancing mentorship, leadership, and teacher retention through the collaborative development of a structured mentor training program. The PAR approach engages practitioners directly in the research process through continuous cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, enabling responsive adaptations based on participant feedback. Two cycles of action research guide the study: the development phase, in which the mentor training program was co-constructed with teacher participants (“mentor architects”), and the implementation phase, in which the program was applied and refined. **UPDATE (tense and explanation):** Data will be collected through interviews, surveys, and focus groups to capture mentor teachers’ perceptions of the program’s impact on their leadership, wellbeing, and engagement in mentorship. As a participant-researcher, the researcher collaborated with mentors to design and examine the training process, aligning with the principles of Mertler’s (2016) action research framework. This design not only fosters professional growth among participants but also generates practical, context-driven insights for improving mentorship systems and teacher retention within the district. The training has already been designed and is currently taking place, but data will not be collected until the training is complete along with IRB approval. The mentorship training program was conducted by me, the action researcher, along with the team of mentors (teacher leaders at this school) who worked together for one year to design the program and implement it at the start of the new school year.

5.2 Provide a description of all research procedures being performed and when they are performed, including procedures being performed to monitor participants for safety or minimize risks.

This research involves semi-structured interviews and a survey for data collection. This approach allows for questions to be focused but open ended to allow the participants to explore any ideas or interpretations of questions they may encounter. It also allows for follow up questioning through a survey after the interviews are completed. The identified safety risk is a minimal risk of a breach of confidentiality. These risks have been outlined in the consent letter and recruitment email. **UPDATE (procedures):** the



study procedures that will take place are a one hour open ended interview for mentors as well as a 10 question open ended survey through Qualtrics for all mentors involved in the mentor training program. The interview transcripts will be sent to mentors after the one-hour interview for member checking via email. The open-ended survey will take roughly 30 minutes to complete. The survey will be delivered via email with the recruitment letter included and with follow up emails (included) sent to increase participation.

5.3 Describe procedures or methods in place to lessen the probability or magnitude of risks.

Interview transcripts, survey data will be kept in a secure Box folder. The interviews are not anonymous. Interview recordings and transcripts will be kept in the Box folder as well with permission. The researchers will use the email list from the mentorship documentation to send out invitations. The recruitment/invitation email, with a link to the consent form and survey, will be sent to the mentor architects and mentors by the researchers through Qualtrics. Participants will submit their survey directly through Qualtrics. The Qualtrics feature that collects IP addresses will be turned off to keep the survey anonymous. Two to three weeks after the initial email invitation, a second invitation will be sent out to the same group. A follow up email will ask the mentors and mentor architects who have submitted the survey to ignore the message and make a second request to those who have not completed the survey to do so. A third email will be sent to mentors and mentor architects two to three weeks after the follow up email. No additional messages will be sent after this time. The Zoom recordings will be deleted as soon as the transcripts are downloaded. All identifiable information will be removed from the transcripts after they are downloaded. The data will be kept in a Box folder for no more than 3 years.

5.4 Describe all drugs and devices used in the research and the purpose of their use, as well as their regulatory approval status: N/A

5.5 Describe the source records that will be used to collect data about participants.

Interview scripts and surveys will be uploaded under "Local Site Documents" in Endeavor.

5.6 What data will be collected during the study and how will that data will be obtained?

Data will be collected via teleconferencing software, Zoom, and audio files on the researcher's computer for in-person interviews. All information will be stored in an encrypted online storage platform (auburn.box.com). All survey data will be collected via Qualtrics and stored on Box.

Data source(s): ☒ New Data ☐ Existing Data	Will recorded data directly or indirectly identify participants? ☒ Yes ☐ No
--	---



Data collection will involve the use of: ☐ Educational Tests (cognitive diagnostic, aptitude, etc.) ☐ Internet / Electronic ☒ Interview ☐ Audio ☐ Observation ☐ Video ☐ Locations or Tracking Measures ☐ Photos ☐ Physical / Physiological Measures or Specimens ☐ Digital Images ☒ Surveys / Questionnaires ☐ Private records or files ☐ Other (please specify):	Will study data be stored within a HIPAA covered facility? ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, which facility(ies)? (To determine AU HIPAA covered entities, please refer to Auburn University's HIPAA page):

5.7 If there are plans for long-term follow-up (once all research related procedures are complete), what data will be collected during this period? None

6.0 Data and Specimen Banking*

6.1 If data or specimens will be banked for future use, describe where the specimens will be stored, how long they will be stored, how the specimens will be accessed, and who will have access to the specimens. N/A

6.2 List the data to be stored or associated with each specimen. N/A

6.3 Describe the procedures to release data or specimens, including: the process to request a release, approvals required for release, who can obtain data or specimens, and the data to be provided with specimens. N/A

7.0 Sharing of Results with Participants*

7.1 Describe whether results (study results or individual participant results, such as results of investigational diagnostic tests, genetic tests, or incidental findings) will be shared with participants or others



(e.g., the participant's primary care physicians) and if so, describe how the results will be shared.

Dissemination methods: Individual's data will be shared with interview participants for member-checking via password protected documents.

Aggregated findings for Action Research Cycles: Once the study is concluded and data analysis is complete the findings will be shared via a comprehensive report in the researcher's dissertation to contribute to the broader field of educational research.

8.0 Study Timelines*

8.1 Describe:

- **The duration of an individual participant's participation in the study:** 1 hour for individual interviews, 30 minutes for survey, 15-20 minutes for member checking
- **The duration anticipated to enroll all study participants:** 1 month
- **The estimated date for the investigators to complete this study (complete primary analyses).** The estimated end date for the completion of this study is May 2026, with the primary analysis to be complete within 3 months.

9.0 Study Endpoints* (Exempt)

9.1 Describe the primary and secondary study endpoints.

Primary: Educators' Perception interviews: involving capturing and the description of educator experiences with developing and participating in a mentorship training program.

9.2 Describe any primary or secondary safety endpoints.

Primary: There are no physical or safety risks or traditional safety endpoints in this study as it involves a non-invasive interview and survey method.

10.0 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

10.1 Describe the targeted population.

The target population for this study consists of the faculty of one central Alabama city school district's elementary school. The key characteristics are:

- Minimum 3 years' experience teaching
- Participated in the mentor training program

This population will help the study focus on the experiences of educators regarding mentorship training.

10.2 Describe how individuals will be screened for eligibility

Participants will be considered eligible if they:

- Have 3 years of experience teaching
- Are a current mentor teacher
- Developed or participated in the mentorship training program



10.3 Describe the criteria that define who will be included or excluded in your final study sample.

Exclusion criteria:

- Insufficient experience: teachers who have not worked for 3 years or who are not currently mentors at our school.
- Unwillingness to participate: individuals who are unwilling to complete the interview or survey will not be included.

10.4 Indicate specifically whether you will include or exclude each of the following special populations:

☐ Pregnant people/fetuses	☒ Known interpersonal relationships INCLUDE	☐ At risk for/Experiencing substance use disorder	☐ LGBTQIA+
☐ Minors	☐ At risk of/Experiencing homelessness	☐ Refugees	☐ American Indian/Alaskan Native
☐ Prisoners/Justice-Involved	☐ Persons with economic disadvantages	☐ Disabled people/People with disabilities	☐ AU faculty, staff, students
☐ Persons with educational disadvantages	☐ Decisionally or intellectually impaired	☐ Unauthorized immigrants	☒ Non-AU Students INCLUDE

11.0 Local Number of Participants

11.1 Indicate the total number of participants to be accrued locally. 15

11.2 If applicable, distinguish between the number of participants who are expected to be enrolled and screened, and the number of participants needed to complete the research procedures (i.e., numbers of participants excluding screen failures.) N/A

12.0 Vulnerable Populations*

12.1 If the research involves individuals who are vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, describe additional safeguards included to protect their rights and welfare. N/A

13.0 Recruitment Methods

13.1 Describe when, where, and how potential participants will be recruited

Due to the nature of this study, single site, convenience sampling will be utilized. Mentor architects will be recruited for their participation through email to meet in person or via zoom for individual, semi-structured interviews. **UPDATE: (email recruitment):** Email addresses will be obtained through their school email accounts, which are public through the school website. Mentor architects and mentors will be recruited for the survey through email. Participants are not associated with Auburn University. Recruitment materials will provide an overview of the study, including its purpose, eligibility criteria, and the voluntary nature of participation. These materials will be distributed in accordance with the University's distribution policies and specific policies of the individual research site.

13.2 Describe the source of participants.



Faculty of local Elementary School

13.3 Describe the methods that will be used to identify potential participants.

Willing participants at study site. **UPDATE: (participant identification)** Participants will be identified as mentor teachers who have at least 3 years of teaching experience and volunteer to mentor, as well as possess leadership qualities that have deemed them qualified to mentor a new teacher to the school as set by school administration.

13.4 Describe materials that will be used to recruit participants

Recruitment email and consent forms are attached in Local Site Documents

13.5 Describe plans to compensate participants, keeping in mind the institutional policies set forth by Procurement and Business Services. Be sure to include the amount and timing of any payments to participants: N/A

14.0 Withdrawal of Participants*

14.1 Describe anticipated circumstances under which participants will be withdrawn from the research without their consent.

Participants may be withdrawn from the research without their consent under the following circumstances:

- Non-compliance: if participant fails to complete the required interview
- Ineligibility: if it is discovered that the participant does not meet the eligibility criteria
- Adverse Events: if any unforeseen risks or discomforts arise that could affect the participants safety or well-being, the researcher may withdraw the participant to ensure their protection

Participants will be notified of any such decisions if they become necessary.

14.2 Describe any procedures for orderly termination.

In the event of participant withdrawal or termination, the following procedures will be followed to ensure an orderly termination:

- Notification: participants will be notified via email if they are withdrawn from the study, along with an explanation for the withdrawal
- Data Handling: any data collected from the participant up until the point of withdrawal will be securely stored and, if necessary, will be removed from the study upon request
- Closure: the participant will be thanked for their time and contributions, and any further participation in the study will cease. No additional follow-ups or requests will be made post-withdrawal

These steps will ensure a respectful and organized termination process.

14.3 Describe procedures that will be followed when participants withdraw from the research, including partial withdrawal from procedures with continued data collection.



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

When participants withdraw from the research, the following procedures will be followed:

- Voluntary Withdrawal: If a participant chooses to withdraw, they may do so at any time without penalty. They will be informed that their participation is no longer required, and they will not be contacted further.
- Data Handling: Participants will have the option to request the removal of their previously collected data. If no such request is made, existing data will continue to be used in accordance with their prior consent.

These procedures ensure participants' autonomy is respected throughout the study.

15.0 Risks to Participants*

15.1 List the reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, hazards, or inconveniences to the participants related the participants' participation in the research

Psychological or Emotional Discomfort:

- Risk: Participants may feel uncomfortable discussing topics related to vulnerable mentorship experiences.
- Magnitude: This discomfort is likely minimal and temporary but may cause mild stress during interviews.
- Mitigation: Participants will be reminded that they can skip any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Supportive, non-judgmental language will be used in all communications.

Breach of Confidentiality:

- Risk: A breach of confidential or identifiable data could occur, leading to unintended exposure of participants' responses.
- Magnitude: This risk is low but could have moderate consequences, such as discomfort or social impact within the workplace if identities are revealed.
- Mitigation: All data will be stored securely. Identifying information will be removed from records, and only the researcher will have access to the data. Participants will be assured that confidentiality is a priority.

Coercion or Pressure:

- Risk: Educators might feel pressured to participate due to perceived expectations from their school or colleagues.
- Magnitude: This risk is low but could lead to an unwilling or less open participation.
- Mitigation: Recruitment materials and consent forms will emphasize the voluntary nature of participation, ensuring that there is no obligation to take part. Participants can withdraw at any point without consequences.

Time Inconvenience:

- Risk: Participants may find that the time required to participate in interviews is an inconvenience.
- Magnitude: This is a low-level risk, but participation may take up to an hour of their time.



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
Approved 12/2/2025 to 12/2/2028
Protocol STUDY00000948

- Mitigation: The study will provide clear time estimates upfront.

By implementing these mitigation strategies, the risks to participants are minimized to ensure a safe and comfortable research experience.

15.2 If applicable, indicate which procedures may have risks to the participants that are currently unforeseeable.

At this time, there are no anticipated unforeseeable risks associated with the study procedures. However, as with any research involving personal and professional experiences, unforeseen psychological or emotional reactions could arise during discussions of workplace well-being or job satisfaction. If such risks emerge, participants will be reminded that they can pause or withdraw from the study at any time and will be provided with resources for additional support if needed.

15.3 If applicable, indicate which procedures may have risks to an embryo or fetus should the participant be or become pregnant. N/A

15.4 If applicable, describe risks to others who are not participants (e.g., risks to ethnic or cultural groups, risks to sexual partners of participants, etc.). N/A

16.0 Potential Benefits to Participants*

16.1 Describe the potential benefits that individual participants may experience from taking part in the research.

Participants may not experience direct personal benefits from taking part in this study. However, some participants might find value in reflecting on their experiences through the interview process, which could increase their self-awareness about mentorship. Additionally, participating may provide a sense of contributing to research that aims to improve mentorship practices. The probability of these benefits is moderate, with minimal magnitude and short-term duration.

17.0 Data Management* and Confidentiality

Data will be collected:

☐	Anonymously with no direct or indirect coding, link, or awareness by key personnel of who participated in the study
☒	Confidentially, but without a link to participant's data to any identifying information (collected as "confidential" but recorded and analyzed "anonymous")
☒	Confidentially with collection and protection of linkages to identifiable information.

17.1 Describe the data analysis plan, including any statistical procedures. Provide a power analysis as necessary.

Qualitative Analysis: Data from interview responses will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns in participants' experiences. Coding will be conducted to categorize responses, and the findings will be used to explain and contextualize the quantitative results. Survey responses will be coded using thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns and then categorized into broader themes, with pattern coding to explore the relationships between themes. Cross cycle comparison will take place along with member checking and collaborative analysis.

17.2 Describe the steps that will be taken to secure the data (e.g., training, authorization of access, password protection, encryption, physical controls, certificates of confidentiality, and separation of identifiers and data) during storage, use, and transmission.

Interview transcripts and survey data will be kept in a secure Box folder. The interviews are not anonymous. Interview recordings and transcripts will be kept in the Box folder as well with permission. The researchers will use the email list from the mentorship documentation to send out invitations. The recruitment/invitation email, with a link to the consent form and survey, will be sent to the mentor architects and mentors by the researchers through Qualtrics. Participants will submit their survey directly through Qualtrics. The Qualtrics feature that collects IP addresses will be turned off to keep the survey anonymous. Two to three weeks after the initial email invitation, a second invitation will be sent out to the same group. A follow up email will ask the mentors and mentor architects who have submitted the survey to ignore the message and make a second request to those who have not completed the survey to do so. A third email will be sent to mentors and mentor architects two to three weeks after the follow up email. No additional messages will be sent after this time. The Zoom recordings will be deleted as soon as the transcripts are downloaded. All identifiable information will be removed from the transcripts after they are downloaded. The data will be kept in a Box folder for no more than 3 years.

17.3 Describe any procedures that will be used for quality control of collected data.

To ensure the quality and accuracy of the collected data, the following procedures will be implemented:

- Data Entry Verification: Any manually entered data (e.g., from interviews) will be double-checked for accuracy.
- Standardized Protocols: All interviews and data collection procedures will follow standardized protocols to ensure consistency across participants.
- Member-checking: Individual interviews will be member-checked during the data integration phase to ensure accuracy and consistency in analysis.
- Anonymous surveys- all survey data will be collected anonymously without surveys and limited to one response per participant.

17.4 Describe how data or specimens will be handled study-wide.

- Information Included: Data collected will include interview transcripts and survey responses. No biological specimens will be collected. Data will not include Protected Health Information (PHI), it also will not include Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) or Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) data. All identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms.
- Storage: Data will be stored on encrypted, password-protected servers via Auburn Box. Physical materials (e.g., consent forms) will be securely locked in cabinets and uploaded to Box. Data will be kept for up to five years after the study concludes, in compliance with institutional policies.



- Access: Only authorized members of the research team will have access to the data. Permissions will be granted based on the role and necessity of access to ensure confidentiality.
- Data Transmission: Data will be transmitted electronically via secure, encrypted channels. No identifying information will be transmitted alongside sensitive research data. The research team is responsible for securely receiving and transmitting any participant data.
- Transportation: If data needs to be transferred physically, it will be encrypted and stored on secure drives, with strict tracking protocols in place.
- Access to Information: The research team is authorized to access information through participants' voluntary consent, and no external sources of information (e.g., school records or mentorship documentation) will be accessed without appropriate permissions.

These procedures ensure proper protection, handling, and confidentiality of the data across the study.

17.5 Describe the steps that will be taken to protect participants' privacy interests.

To protect participants' privacy interests, the following steps will be implemented:

- Informed Consent: Participants will be fully informed about the nature of the study, what information will be collected, and how their data will be used. Consent will be obtained voluntarily without any pressure.
- Anonymity and Confidentiality: Participants' identities will be anonymized using pseudonyms. Personal identifiers will not be linked interview data. Data will be stored securely and shared only with authorized members of the research team. Anonymity will also be retained during the survey.
- Private Data Collection: Interviews will be conducted in a private setting (e.g., over secure video calls or in a private room), ensuring participants' personal and professional information is not disclosed to others. Survey data will be private and IP addresses will not be collected.
- Limited Access: Access to personal data will be restricted to authorized personnel only. Information provided during interviews will not be shared with employers, colleagues, or other third parties.

These steps will ensure that participants' personal information is protected, and their privacy interests are respected throughout the study.

17.6 If data are collected with identifiers and coded or linked to identifying information, describe the identifiers and how identifiers are linked to participants data. Provide the rationale for coding or linking the data with identifying information.

Initials will be used to link the participant to their corresponding audio transcript and visual file. The identifiers will be stored separately from the research data to ensure confidentiality. The linking of identifiers is necessary for:





- Participant Tracking: To ensure accurate and organized data collection across different phases of the study.

17.7 Describe how and where identifying data and/or code lists will be stored. Be specific (building, room number, AU Box, etc.). Describe how the location where the data is stored will be secured. For electronic data, describe security measures. If applicable, describe where IRB-approved and participant signed consent documents will be kept on campus for 3 years after the study ends.

All participants will be asked to maintain confidentiality. All identifying information will be coded and kept in a separate file. The information collected will only be used for its intended purpose and will not be provided to any other organization or entity. The information will be stored in a secure, encrypted cloud-based storage platform (AU Box) when not in use.

17.8 Describe how and where data will be stored (e.g., hard copy, audio/visual files, electronic data, etc.), and how the location where data is stored is secured. If data is separated from identifying data, please indicate that. For electronic data, describe data security.

The data collected will be used solely for the research study and will not be shared with any external organizations or entities. The information will be stored in a secure, encrypted cloud-based storage platform (AU Box) when not in use.

17.9 Indicate the latest date that identifying information will be retained and how the information or links will be destroyed.

Identifying information will be retained until one year after the study ends to allow for data verification. After this date, all identifying information and any links between the identifiers and data will be securely destroyed. Electronic files will be permanently deleted from all storage devices.

18.0 Provisions to Monitor the Data to Ensure the Safety of Participants*

18.1 Describe:

- The plan to periodically evaluate the data collected regarding both harms and benefits to determine whether participants remain safe. The plan might include establishing a data monitoring committee and a plan for reporting data monitoring committee findings to the IRB and the sponsor. N/A
- What data are reviewed, including safety data, untoward events, and efficacy data. N/A
- How the safety information will be collected (e.g., with case report forms, at study visits, by telephone calls with participants). N/A
- The frequency of data collection, including when safety data collection starts. N/A
- Who will review the data. N/A
- The frequency or periodicity of review of cumulative data.
- The statistical tests for analyzing the safety data to determine whether harm is occurring. N/A

- **Any conditions that trigger an immediate suspension of the research.** N/A

19.0 Compensation for Research-Related Injury

19.1 If the research involves more than Minimal Risk to participants, describe the available compensation in the event of research related injury. N/A

19.2 Provide a copy of contract language, if any, relevant to compensation for research-related injury. N/A

20.0 Economic Burden to Participants

20.1 Describe any costs that participants may be responsible for because of participation in the research. N/A

21.0 Consent Process

21.1 Indicate whether you will be obtaining consent, and if so describe the consent process.

Yes, informed consent will be obtained from all participants. **UPDATE: (Consent):** subjects will complete the consent process in person when they sign the consent form before the interview as well as before the survey that takes place. It will be given to them in their local school building.

- **Location:** The consent process will take in-person or via email prior to beginning the interviews. Surveys will take place online, participants may complete it at a location of their choosing.
- **Waiting Period:** Participants will have an opportunity to review the consent document as long as they need before making a decision. They will not be required to proceed immediately. There will be a consent form for the interview and the survey.
- **Ongoing Consent:** Ongoing consent will be ensured by reminding participants at the beginning of each phase of the study (interviews/survey) that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time without penalty.
- **Consent Process Adherence:** We will follow the procedures outlined in HRP-090 - SOP - Informed Consent Process for Research to ensure compliance and participant understanding.
 - If HRP-090 is not followed, the following alternative steps will be taken:
 - **Role of Individuals:** The primary investigator will be responsible for administering and overseeing the consent process.
 - **Time Devoted:** Participants will have unlimited time to review the consent form provided and ask questions via email before proceeding.
 - **Minimizing Coercion or Undue Influence:** The consent form will clearly state that participation is voluntary, and participants are free to decline or withdraw at any time. No compensation or incentives will be tied to signing the consent.
 - **Ensuring Understanding:** The consent form will use clear, accessible language, and a brief summary of key points will be provided at the start.



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

Participants will also have the option to contact the research team for further clarification before proceeding.

This approach ensures that participants have ample opportunity to review the consent, understand their rights, and decide whether to participate without pressure or influence.

Non-English Speaking Participants N/A

Waiver or Alteration of Consent Process (consent will not be obtained, required information will not be disclosed, or the research involves deception) N/A

Participants who are not yet adults (infants, children, teenagers) N/A

Cognitively Impaired Adults N/A

Adults Unable to Consent N/A

22.0 Process to Document Consent in Writing

22.1 Describe whether you will be following HRP-091 - SOP - Written Documentation of Consent. If not, describe whether and how consent of the participant will be documented in writing.

We will follow the procedures outlined in HRP-090 - SOP - Informed Consent Process for Research to ensure compliance and participant understanding. If HRP-090 is not followed, the following alternative steps will be taken:

Role of Individuals: The primary investigator will be responsible for administering and overseeing the consent process.

Time Devoted: Participants will have unlimited time to review the consent form provided and ask questions via email before proceeding.

Minimizing Coercion or Undue Influence: The consent form will clearly state that participation is voluntary, and participants are free to decline or withdraw at any time. No compensation or incentives will be tied to signing the consent.

Ensuring Understanding: The consent form will use clear, accessible language, and a brief summary of key points will be provided at the start. Participants will also have the option to contact the research team for further clarification before proceeding.

22.2 Will participants be asked to sign the consent document? ☒ Yes ☒ No

22.3 Will you use an electronic consent document? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Please complete the table below:



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
Approved 12/2/2025 to 12/2/2028
Protocol STUDY19000049

☐	Waiver of Consent (Including existing de-identified data)
☒	Waiver of Documentation of Consent (Use of Information Letter, rather than consent form requiring signatures)
☐	Waiver of Parental Permission (in Alabama, 18 years-olds may be considered adults for research purposes)

Provide the rationale for the waiver request, if applicable:

The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to participants and involves no procedures for which written documentation of consent is normally required outside of the research context. The consent script is attached in relevant documentation.

23.0 Setting

23.1 Describe the sites or locations where your research team will conduct the research.

- The research team will identify and recruit participants through a convenience sampling of the research site. The chosen site is a local Alabama city school district elementary school.
- Research procedures will be performed online via Zoom or in a private location at the local school building.
- A community advisory board will not be involved.

24.0 Resources Available

24.1 Describe the resources available to conduct the research:

- We will be able to recruit the required number of participants since we have access to all involved and participating in the mentorship training program. We will recruit 100% of them, unless they decline to participate.
- I will conduct and complete the research over a 3 month period (December-March) in order to allow time for participation.
- The facilities are either online (Zoom interview/online survey) or in a classroom/private meeting room of a local school building for one on one interviews.

25.0 Multi-Site Research*

25.1 Study-Wide Number of Participants* N/A

25.2 Study-Wide Recruitment Methods*

- If this is a multicenter study and participants will be recruited by methods not under the control of the local site (e.g., call centers, national advertisements) describe those methods. *N/A*
- Describe when, where, and how potential participants will be recruited. *N/A*
- Describe the methods that will be used to identify potential participants. *N/A*
- Describe materials that will be used to recruit participants. *N/A*
- If this is a multi-site study where you are the lead investigator, describe the processes to ensure communication among sites. *N/A*

25.3 Describe the method for communicating to engaged participating sites. *N/A*



- 25.4 If this is a multicenter study where you are a participating site/investigator, describe the local procedures for maintenance of confidentiality. *N/A***

As a reminder, please upload all additional materials supporting your protocol to 'Local Site Documents' in Endeavor. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Data collection instruments
- Letters of support/permission
- Debriefing forms
- Vendor vetting documentation
- Scripts
- Data use agreements
- Conflict of Interest (COI) management plans
- Referral lists
- Emergency Action Plans (EAPs)
- Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) plans
- Data security plans
- Recruitment materials (i.e., flyers, social media posts, etc.)
- Additional training certificates that are external to CITI (i.e., phlebotomy certificates, youth protection training, etc.)
- Clinical trial registration confirmation
- Relevant appendices (i.e., mental health safety plan, MRI appendix (HRP-901), anonymous data collection assurance (HRP-902), etc.)



Appendix B: Local Cite Approval Letter



Midtown Elementary School

Helping Today's Stars Reach Tomorrow's Skies

Midtown Elementary School
140 Coefer Blvd
Madison, AL 35758
256-837-1189
sademeester@madisoncity.k12.al.us
11/30/2025

Institutional Review Board
Auburn University

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of Midtown Elementary School, I am pleased to offer this formal letter of support for Lauren Romano Cecil and the proposed doctoral dissertation study entitled "Developing a Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Practice and Wellbeing" which focuses on the collaborative development and implementation of a structured mentor training program.

Midtown Elementary is committed to fostering teacher growth, leadership development, and long-term retention within our school community. We recognize that high-quality mentorship plays a critical role in supporting both new and veteran educators, strengthening instructional practices, and promoting a positive professional culture. This action research project aligns directly with our school's goals and provides an opportunity for our staff to engage in a meaningful, practitioner-centered inquiry process.

We fully support the implementation of this study on our campus. This includes:

- Allowing the researcher to conduct interviews, focus groups, observations, and training sessions with volunteer staff members.
- Providing access to school facilities and resources as needed and appropriate.
- Supporting communication between the researcher and participating teachers.
- Collaborating to ensure that all research procedures respect instructional time, confidentiality requirements, and district policies.

Participation by staff members will be entirely voluntary, and we understand that all data collected will be handled confidentially and used solely for research and program-improvement

140 Coefer Blvd, Madison, AL 35758 Phone: 256-837-1189 Fax: 256-837-1258



purposes. We also acknowledge that findings from this study have the potential to strengthen our existing mentorship structures and contribute to long-term improvements in teacher resilience, leadership capacity, and retention within our school and district.

We appreciate the opportunity to partner in this work and look forward to the insights that will emerge from the study. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me at sademeester@madisoncity.k12.al.us.

Thank you for your consideration and for supporting meaningful research that enhances educational practice.

Sincerely,
Savannah Demeester
Principal, Midtown Elementary School

Appendix C: Informed Consent Document



INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

(NOTE: DO NOT SIGN THIS DOCUMENT UNLESS AN IRB APPROVAL STAMP WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN APPLIED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Title of research study: *Developing a Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Practice and Wellbeing*

Investigator: *Dr. Ellen Hahn*

KEY INFORMATION

The following table is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not you would like to participate in this research study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

General Information	You are invited to participate in a research study to better understand the experiences of mentor teachers who are developing and participating in a mentorship training program. The study is being conducted by Lauren Romano Cecil, Ph.D. candidate, under the direction of Dr. Ellen Hahn in the Auburn University Department of Education, EFLT. You are invited to participate because you are veteran mentor teacher with more than three years of experience. (UPDATE: Revised)
Purpose	The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to work with mentor architect teachers, teacher leaders who collaborated to design a mentorship training program, to develop a teacher mentorship program. The goals of this study are to increase mentorship in a local school building through intent, involvement, and wellbeing leading to greater leadership and retention in our school. This study will show the impact on training of mentor teachers and the ways to increase mentorship in local school buildings (UPDATE: verbs updated; clarification provided).
Duration & Visits	There will be one interview lasting 1 hour and the transcript and notes will be shared with you for member-checking. There will also be a survey that will take 30 minutes. The total duration of time spent for this study is 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes.
Overview of Procedures	If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sit for an in-person interview and answer questions in an open-ended study.
Risks	The risks associated with participating in this study are minimal as all identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms, and your answers will not be shared outside the boundaries of the study. Additionally, the survey will be anonymous and IP addresses will not be collected.
Benefits	There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study other than reflecting on your time in the mentorship program and acting as a mentor. The benefit to researchers is to build knowledge surrounding mentorship and the development of mentorship programs and the effects they have on the retention and benefits of new teachers.

Alternatives	The alternative is not to participate in this study.
Right to Withdraw from the Study	If you change your mind about participating, you can withdraw at any time by not signing the informed consent waiver or notifying the interviewer that you wish to leave the interview or stop the interview process. Your decision about whether to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Education or Lauren Romano Cecil, Ph.D.candidate.

DETAILED INFORMATION

The following is more detailed information about this study.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

You are invited to participate in a research study to record educator experiences as a mentor developing and participating in a mentorship training program. The study is being conducted by Lauren Romano Cecil, Ph.D. candidate under the direction of Dr. Ellen Hahn in the Auburn University Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership, and Technology. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a mentor teacher in a participating local elementary school with at least 3 years of teaching experience.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 15 people locally will be in this research study.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part in the research study is up to you. You may wish to talk to your family and friends about participating in the study.
- You can choose not to take part in the study.
- You can agree to take part in the study and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide whether you would like to take part in the study or not.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this qualitative action research study was to work with mentor architect teachers to develop a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through intent, involvement, and wellbeing leading to greater leadership and retention in our school. There is currently a teacher retention problem in local schools. Teachers are leaving the profession at high rates, this has negatively impacted student achievement and contributes to a negative school culture. Mentoring is one of the possible solutions to the teacher retention problem, but a strong mentoring program must be in place for mentoring to be effective. To date there is little formal evidence on the practice of training mentors to increase teacher leadership through mentoring practices and wellbeing, thus promoting retention among mentors as well as mentees. The potential benefits to others through this research will be finding the benefits and most effective parts of developing a mentorship training program and its effects on teacher leadership and wellbeing to mentors who developed the program and participated in the training.

What will be involved if I participate?

If you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 1 hour and a follow up 30-minute survey at a later date. Specifically, as a research participant, you will be asked to:

Page 2 of 5



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
Approved 12/2/2025 to 12/2/2028
Protocol STUDY00000949

Participant Initials: _____

Version Date: August 1, 2024

- Participate in a semi-structured interview conducted via teleconferencing or in-person per your convenience
- 1 hour for the interview
- Participants will interact with Lauren Romano Cecil, the interviewer
- Online via teleconferencing software or at the research site (School Conference Room)
- Your interview will be recorded, the purpose of the recording is to ensure accurate transcription and for participants to refer back to for member verification
- The recordings will be stored in an encrypted cloud-based storage platform and will be kept for 1 year after completion of the dissertation
- The recordings will be destroyed by 8/1/2026
- Participate in an open-ended survey via Qualtrics
- 30 minutes for the survey
- Survey responses will be collected anonymously and saved in an encrypted cloud-based storage platform and will be kept for 1 year after the completion of the dissertation

Interviews may be recorded using audio recording devices to assist with accuracy of your responses. You have the right to refuse the audio recording. Please initial one of the following options:

_____ YES, I consent to audio recording.
 _____ NO, I do NOT consent to audio recording.

Interviews may be recorded using video devices to assist with the accuracy of your responses. You have the right to refuse the video recording. Please initial one of the following options:

_____ YES, I consent to video recording.
 _____ NO, I do NOT consent to video recording.

How long will the research last and what will I need to do?

We expect that you will be in this research study for 1 hour and 30 minutes total.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

The risks associated with participating in this study are:

o Psychological Risk: The risks associated with participating in this study are minimal as all identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms, and your answers will not be shared outside the boundaries of the study.

o Physical Risk This study could involve in-person research activities that carry an inherent risk for transmission of illnesses including respiratory viruses such as COVID-19, flu, and RSV. Should you feel uncomfortable, you can either ask researchers to wear a mask, participate via teleconferencing software, or elect not to participate in this research project.

Will being in this study help me in any way?

If you participate in this study, you may find the experience reflective in your mentorship role and renew your passion for working with teachers new to a school or district, and you may become encouraged about the leadership and positive effects that effective mentoring brings to a school climate and culture. **UPDATE: (clarification):** Researchers cannot guarantee any direct benefit resulting from participation in this study.

Will I receive compensation for participating?

No

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You can decide to participate, not participate, or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision not to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, the Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Technology or the local school where the research is taking place. Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be withdrawn as long as it is identifiable.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Your privacy will be protected. Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. Information obtained through your participation may be used to complete the requirements of a dissertation. Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and medical records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and

There are some important things that you need to know. The Certificate **does not** stop reporting that federal, state or local laws require. Some examples are laws that require reporting of child or elder abuse, some communicable diseases, and threats to harm yourself or others. Disclosures that you consent to in this document, or you make yourself are not protected. The Certificate **cannot be used** to stop a sponsoring United States federal or state government agency from checking records or evaluating programs. The Certificate also **does not** prevent your information from being used for other research if allowed by federal regulations.

Researchers may release information about you when you say it is okay. For example, you may give them permission to release information to insurers, medical providers or any other persons not connected with the research. The Certificate of Confidentiality does not stop you from willingly releasing information about your involvement in this research. It also does not prevent you from having access to your own information.

We will protect your privacy and the data you provide by keeping your research data and your identifying information separate, linked only by a randomly generated participant code. Only study staff will have access to your research data.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at ler0018@auburn.edu. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may contact the Auburn University IRB at (334) 844-5966 or IRBadmin@auburn.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Having read the information provided, you must decide whether or not you wish to participate in this research study. Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research. A copy of this document will be given to you to keep.

Signature of subject Date

Printed name of subject Date

Signature of person obtaining consent Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Appendix D: Survey Questions

Survey Questions

Draft 1

Short answer open-ended questions

Population: mentor architects and mentors

Via Qualtrics- delivered through email

1. In what ways do you demonstrate intentionality in your mentorship practices?
2. How involved are you as a mentor?
3. How have you implemented positive emotion as a mentor after going through the mentorship training?
4. Has mentoring helped you stay engaged with your work as a classroom teacher?
5. In what ways have your relationships changed as a mentor since going through the mentorship training program?
6. In what ways has serving as a mentor given you a sense of meaning or purpose in your work as an educator?
7. After participating in the mentorship training program and mentoring, do you have a sense of accomplishment or achievement?
8. Has mentorship translated to a form of leadership for you?
9. How have your past mentoring experiences shaped you as a mentor?
10. How would you improve this program going forward?



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
Approved 12/2/2025 to 12/2/2028
Protocol STUDY00000949

Appendix E: CITI Program Certificates



Completion Date 19-Oct-2025
Expiration Date 19-Oct-2028
Record ID 72942806

This is to certify that:

Lauren Romano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

Responsible Conduct of Research

(Curriculum Group)

AU Basic RCR Training for ALL Faculty, Staff, Postdocs, and Students

(Course Learner Group)

1 - RCR

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Generated on 19-Oct-2025. Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wc480e2dc-146b-4d25-8a31-07e1a4399c10-72942806



Completion Date 04-Nov-2023

Expiration Date 04-Nov-2026

Record ID 59491524

This is to certify that:

Lauren Romano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel - Basic/Refresher

(Curriculum Group)

IRB # 2 Social and Behavioral Emphasis - AU Personnel

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University



101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US

www.citiprogram.org

Generated on 19-Oct-2025. Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wfc3a67-3014-4225-8ea5-903c920df929-59491524



Completion Date 13-Oct-2025
Expiration Date 13-Oct-2028
Record ID 59491525

This is to certify that:

Lauren Romano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

IRB Additional Modules

(Curriculum Group)

Hot Topics

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Generated on 19-Oct-2025. Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w359ecfc9-e613-466c-ac49-95d458ade479-59491525



Completion Date 14-Oct-2025
Expiration Date 14-Oct-2028
Record ID 59491523

This is to certify that:

Lauren Romano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

IRB Additional Modules
(Curriculum Group)
Internet Research - SBE
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Generated on 19-Oct-2025. Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wb7b874d3-ee95-461f-a1a5-cbd90663f416-59491523



Completion Date 14-Oct-2025

Expiration Date 14-Oct-2028

Record ID 59491521

This is to certify that:

Lauren Romano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

IRB Additional Modules

(Curriculum Group)

Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320

Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US

www.citiprogram.org

Generated on 19-Oct-2025. Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wc217b87f-be22-43da-9de8-d07e7cfff20-59491521



Completion Date 14-Oct-2025
Expiration Date 14-Oct-2028
Record ID 59491522

This is to certify that:

Lauren Romano

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

IRB Additional Modules
(Curriculum Group)
Research with Children - SBE
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Auburn University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Generated on 19-Oct-2025. Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w9bf65452-dcf1-4c59-b5e4-22459948e82d-59491522

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol
Mentor Architects
Action Research Cycle Round 1

Protocol: 1-hour transcribed interviews each (zoom); Interviews will develop survey will develop focus group (triangulate data); 5 intent, 5 involvement, PERMA questions (15 total)

General Questions

1. What were your first thoughts when you were asked to be a part of the development of this mentoring program?
2. What were your current thoughts about mentoring at our school at that time?
3. What did you hope to get out of this experience?

Intent

- What motivated you to take on a role as a mentor architect and a mentor?

Anticipated Benefits & Purpose

- What do you hope the mentors and mentees will gain from your involvement as a co-collaborator?

Commitment & Willingness

- Under what conditions would you be more likely to continue as a mentor architect in the future?

Influence of Training / Preparation (if relevant to your study)

- How has co-designing the mentor training program influenced your intent to mentor? Has it increased, decreased, or clarified your desire to mentor?
- What aspects of the training development most shaped your intent to serve as a mentor and mentor architect?

Reflective & Forward-Looking

- If you were given the chance to design your ideal mentoring role, what would it look like and why?

Involvement

- How do you balance being a mentor architect with your other professional duties?

Actions & Practices

- How often do you meet with the mentoring committee, other mentors, and mentees, and what do those meetings usually involve?

Level of Commitment

- What challenges, if any, affect the depth of your involvement as a mentor?

Influence of Training / Preparation

- How has co-designing mentor training shaped your involvement in mentoring?

Reflective & Forward-Looking

- Looking back, how would you describe your growth as a mentor since becoming involved?

PERMA Questions

- In spite of the daily stresses that come with your role in the classroom and as a mentor, have you found that the mentor training program or being a mentor architect was able to help you maintain a positive mindset? If so- can you describe that (Positive emotion)
- In the terms of staying connected to your work and daily engagement, did the mentor training program and being a mentor help you be successful in staying focused? (engagement)
- How has being a mentor architect helped you navigate relationships you have to manage? (Relationships)
- What professional priorities did the training program or being a mentor encourage you to make to be a leader in the school building? (Meaning)
- How has your professional achievement been influenced by being a mentor? (achievement)



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
Approved 12/2/2025 to 12/2/2028
Protocol STUDY00000949

Backup questions:

- What personal or professional values influence your decision to mentor others?
- How willing are you to dedicate time and energy to mentoring, and why?
- What kinds of responsibilities as a mentor are you most prepared to take on?
- What specific strategies do you use when working with mentees?
- How do you believe mentorship contributes to your school/district community?
- How do you envision your ongoing involvement in mentoring within this district?
- Can you share an example of a mentoring experience that reflects your involvement?
- What parts of the training have you applied most directly in your mentoring practice?
- What additional supports would help you deepen your involvement as a mentor?
- How do you see mentorship fitting into your professional goals?
- What outcomes do you hope to achieve for yourself as a mentor architect?
- Looking ahead, what role do you see your participating in this training play in your career?
- Can you describe how you are currently involved in mentoring at your school/district?
- To what extent has the training increased your confidence or ability to stay engaged in mentoring?
- How do you plan to maintain or expand your involvement in mentoring in the future?

Appendix G: Qualtrics Survey

Lauren Romano Cecil

Developing a Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Practice and Wellbeing
Survey Link

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b433VKjT1JiF9qu

Appendix H: Recruitment Letters

Recruitment Letters

Mentor Architect Individual Interviews

Initial Recruitment Email for Interviews:

Subject Line: Research Study Invitation: Mentor Architect Interview Request

Email Message Body:

Dear Mentor Architect

I hope this message finds you well. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that has been approved by Institutional Review Board at Auburn University. The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to work with mentor architect teachers to develop a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through best practices, leadership, and wellbeing leading to greater retention in our school.

We are seeking participants who had experience developing this program as mentor architects. Your insights and reflections are invaluable, and findings from this study can help inform the field of educational leadership and mentorship. Participation is voluntary.

If you would like to participate in the mentor architect interviews, please respond to this email with your availability to set up a one-on-one interview with me.

The individual interview will take approximately 1 hour to complete. I will be happy to come to your location at a time that works best for your schedule.

Here is the link to the consent form if you wish to participate in the interview:

[HRP 502a Consent](#)

If you have any study related questions or if any problems arise, please contact Lauren Romano Cecil, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Technology, Auburn University. 205-612-6572, ler0018@auburn.edu.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to this important research.

Best regards,

Lauren Cecil

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study. Protocol #STUDY00000949

Follow-up Recruitment Email:

Subject Line: REMINDER: Mentor Architect Interview Request

Email Message Body:

Dear Mentor Architect,

This is a follow-up message concerning my earlier invitation for you to schedule an individual interview on the effectiveness of a mentor training program. If you already scheduled and completed the interview, please ignore this message.

Here is the link to the consent form to review and complete if you wish to do so:

[HRP 502a Consent](#)

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact: Lauren Romano Cecil, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Technology, Auburn University. 205-612-6572, ler0018@auburn.edu.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to this important research.

Best regards,

Lauren Romano Cecil

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study. Protocol #STUDY00000949

Recruitment Letter for Survey

Subject Line: Research Developing a Teacher Mentoring Program to Strengthen Practice and Wellbeing

Email Message Body:

Dear Mentors,

I hope this message finds you well. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that has been approved by Institutional Review Board Auburn University. The purpose of this qualitative action research study is to work with mentor architect teachers to develop a teacher mentorship program, with the goals of increasing mentorship through best practices, leadership, and wellbeing leading to greater retention in our school.

We are seeking participants who have experience as a mentor who has participated in this training program. Your insights and reflections are invaluable, and findings from this study can help inform the field of educational leadership and mentorship. Participation is voluntary.

If you would like to participate, please complete the survey below via Qualtrics. The Qualtrics feature that collects IP addresses is turned off. If you complete the survey, you will also have an opportunity to volunteer to participate in a follow-up focus group interview. You can complete the survey without volunteering to participate in an interview.

If you decide to participate, please complete the following steps:

1. Click on the link to the survey below.
2. Read the consent form.
3. Complete the survey.
4. Submit the survey electronically

We estimate the survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Here is the link to the consent form and the survey for you to review and complete if you wish to do so:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b433VKiT1JiF9qu

If you have any study related questions or if any problems arise, please contact Lauren Romano Cecil, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Technology, Auburn University. 205-612-6572, ler0018@auburn.edu.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to this important research.

Best regards,

Lauren Romano Cecil The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study. Protocol #STUDY00000949

Follow-up Recruitment Email:

Subject Line: REMINDER: Research Study Invitation: Developing a Mentoring Program to Increase Practice and Wellbeing

Email Message Body:

Dear Mentor,

This is a follow-up message concerning our earlier invitation for you to complete and return an electronic survey on the role and practices of mentors participating in a mentorship training program. If you already have returned the survey, please ignore this message.

Here is the link to the consent form and the survey for you to review and complete if you wish to do so:

https://auburn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b433VKjT1JiF9qu

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Lauren Romano Cecil, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Educational Leadership, Foundations, and Technology, Auburn University. 205-612-6572, ler0018@auburn.edu.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to this important research.

Best regards,

Lauren Romano Cecil

The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study. Protocol #STUDY00000949