Impact of Induction and Mentorship Programs on the Retention of New Teachers

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Abstract

This study assesses the effectiveness of induction programs and providing mentorship in retaining teachers in their first and second years of teaching. Induction programs and mentorship guidance are implemented in many schools as a form of support to new-hire teachers. Data was collected through a survey emailed to 45 educators, regarding their participation in induction and mentorship programs in their first and second years of employment. 25 educators chose to participate in the study. The results of this data analysis indicate induction programs are currently ineffective in retaining new teachers at their original school of employment.

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Induction and mentorship programs are provided to new teachers at many schools to support teachers in becoming highly effective in completing their duties and supporting student success (Bullough 2012). These initiatives are intended to reduce teacher attrition rates and increase teacher retention (Bullough 2012).

As induction and mentorship programs are being implemented, it is necessary to evaluate their impact in retaining teachers. Programs that do not have a significant impact on teacher retention, should be adjusted to improve the programs. If proper adjustments do not improve retention, discontinuing use of induction programs should be considered. These programs can be costly for schools and therefore if they are not proving effective, should be reconsidered. Induction and mentorship programs that prove effective, should continue the effective strategies and more schools could consider implementation. Research on the topic will provide necessary support to schools attempting to develop and implement effective programs to support teachers and retain them past the first or second years of employment.

This study assesses the impact of induction programs and mentorship in retaining teachers in their first and second years of teaching. Data was collected through a survey emailed to educators to evaluate their experience with induction and mentorship programs. Participants responded to questions reflecting on the amount and types of support offered in their first and second years of teaching. One interview was also conducted to obtain qualitative data further supporting the results of the survey. Data was then analyzed to draw connections between teacher support and retention. “Retention” includes teachers that remained in the original school of employment during these initial years of employment, in comparison with teachers that left the original hiring school and moved to a new school. The results of this study remain mostly consistent with previous research indicating that induction programs are currently ineffective in retaining teachers in the first and second years of teaching.

**Research Question**

The following question was addressed:

1. How do induction programs and mentorship impact the retention of new teachers in the first and second years of teaching?

**Literature Review**

The transition into teaching can be challenging leading to high attrition rates in the first three years of teaching (Fry, 2007). According to Bullough 2012, induction and mentorship programs are not only necessary for teacher retention but are also playing a significant role in increasing efforts to produce highly effective teachers. In fact, the two are quite closely related as teacher retention is important in filling high-demand positions with highly qualified teachers to ensure student achievement. Research states that student success is linked to teacher retention rates (Papay and Kraft, 2016). When retention rates are low, there is an increased number of first-year teachers and a lack of organizational stability leading to lower student achievement (Papay and Kraft, 2016).

Both of these concepts are supported by Long, McKenzie-Robblee, Schaefer, Steeves, Wnuk, Pinnegar and Clandinin, 2012 which describes induction and mentorship programs as being conceptually focused on teacher retention and teacher quality. While the research acknowledged that the program focused in part on teacher retention, it did not strongly support that the programs were successful in retaining teachers (Long, McKenzie-Robblee, Schaefer, Steeves, Wnuk, Pinnegar and Clandinin, 2012).

Research suggests that induction and mentorship programs are effective in retaining new teachers through first-year mentors (Gray and Taie, 2015). In a study conducted by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), findings revealed that there was a larger number of continuing teachers that received mentoring in the first year of teaching than those that did not receive mentoring in the first year of teaching (Gray and Taie, 2015). The study collected data over the 4 years (2008-2012) following the teachers first or “beginning” year of teaching in 2007. The exact statistics tracking percentages can be seen in “Table 2” from the study (Gray and Taie, 2015). This data serves to support the idea that mentorship is successful in retaining teachers in the field of education.

In contrast, Fry (2010) suggests that while induction programs can be built on effective strategies, ineffective implementation can have negative impacts on new teachers. In this case study, a new teacher was increasingly frustrated with the implementation of the induction program at her school after only about five months of teaching. It was perceived by the teacher that the generic topics and meetings were a waste of time with a lack of support specific to the needs of the teachers (Fry, 2010). Fry (2010) suggests that the time and financial commitment from the school should result in a greater success rate of retaining teachers. Despite induction and membership support, in this study the teacher’s contract was not renewed and the teacher resigned in her second year of teaching (Fry, 2010).

Fry’s findings in the 2010 study remain consistent with her findings in an earlier study she conducted in 2007. The 2007 study was also concerned with teacher induction and mentorship programs in the induction years, defined as the first three years of teaching. Fry 2007 concluded that while mentorship could prove effective, if not implemented properly the program lacks effectiveness in supporting the new teacher. In the study, one teacher was assigned a mentor that was new to teaching the specific grade level and was only in her 4th year of teaching (Fry 2007). As this is only one year outside of the induction period, the teacher was unqualified to be of much assistance to the new teacher mentee (Fry 2007). In this example, mentorship was ineffective because it was improperly implemented.

Bullough 2012 identifies that mentorship with the addition of collaboration, external teacher networks, and extra resources increase the success rate of teacher mentorship. While mentorship alone can prove successful, adding additional diverse methods of teacher assistance decreased attrition rates or “leavers” from the profession (Bullough 2012).

In conclusion, research identifies that there are benefits to induction and mentorship programs in supporting new teachers if properly implemented. When these programs are not implemented effectively, it can be potentially harmful to the new teacher’s success, possibly leading to increased attrition rates. It acknowledges that adding diversity to the methods of new teacher support can lead to higher success in teacher retention. This study analyzes data to determine the impact of induction and mentorship programs in retaining new teachers in their first and second years of teaching.

**Data Collection: Sampling, Recruiting, and Instruments**

An electronic survey developed using Google Forms was sent to 45 educators via email to collect quantitative data. This was done with the permission of administration. Google Forms was chosen for survey development due to the ease of its use, the researchers familiarity with the program, and the diverse options for viewing participant responses. The survey link was then emailed using the school-wide email “All Staff” address as a means of reaching the most participants. The 45 educators that received the survey link are all currently teachers of a wide range of subjects in grades 6-8 or administrators with a background in teaching. The participant group was selected based on accessibility to the research study, as the researcher responsible for this study is also an educator at the school.

Of the 45 participants that received the survey, 25 chose to participate and responded to the survey questions. One of the 25 survey participants also chose to participate in a one-on-one interview. This resulted in 25 survey responses and one one-on-one interview for final data collection.

The survey asked questions that required participants to reflect on their first and second years of teaching and the types of support or lack of support that was offered. Each survey concluded by asking the participant about their willingness to take part in a one-on-one interview to provide more details on their past experiences. Survey questions are available in Appendix B.

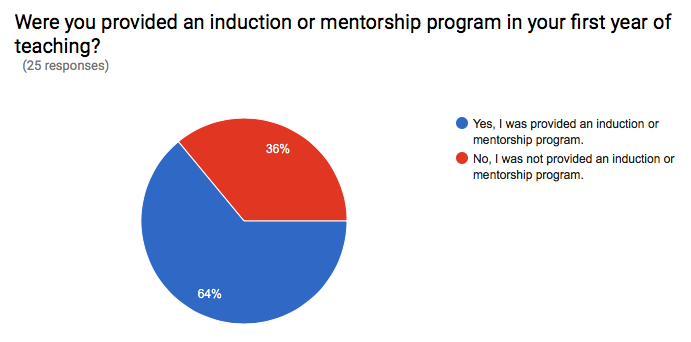
The one, one-on-one interview was conducted in the individual teacher’s classroom at a planned meeting time. This interview provided qualitative data offering further insight into the specific positive and negative experiences of the individual participant’s induction program experiences.

**Data Analysis**

Survey results were evaluated using the “responses” tab on the Google Form. This feature allows the researcher to toggle between “individual” participant responses and a “summary” of the data with automated graphs combining participant responses per question. Further analysis was conducted by comparing participant responses as they related to various survey questions to draw conclusions. Connections between data were compiled into graphs for presentation. The results of individual interview responses were analyzed to further develop survey outcomes.

**Findings/Results**

Of the 25 participants surveyed, 64% were provided an induction or mentorship program in the first year of teaching.



***Figure 1: Provided and Induction or Mentorship Program***

56% of those provided an induction or mentorship program in the first year of teaching found it to be “somewhat effective” or “effective.” 44% found the induction or mentorship program provided to be “not very effective” or “ineffective.”

***Figure 2: Effectiveness of Induction or Mentorship Program***

56% of participants were employed at the first school in their teaching career for only two years or less. This means that more than half of the participants were not retained; either choosing to leave their first school of employment or not being asked back by the employer during the initial period of 0-2 years. Of this population not retained during the initial period of 0-2 years, 64% were provided an induction or mentorship program and 36% were not provided and induction or mentorship program.



***Figure 3: Length of Employment at Initial School of Employment***

Of this population of participants, 29% reported leaving in the first 0-2 years as a result of employment being terminated or the contract not being renewed. 71% of this population left the first school of employment during the first 0-2 years, due to not being satisfied or finding a better opportunity.

***Figure 4: Reason for Leaving First Teaching Job***

Of this 71% of educators that chose to leave in the first 0-2 years, 50% were provided an induction program and 50% were not provided an induction program. While this would seem to indicate that the presence of an induction program did not impact an individual’s choice to leave, it is important to acknowledge that 80% of those offered an induction program found it ineffective. This implies that dissatisfaction with the induction program could have potentially impacted the decision to leave.

***Figure 5: Induction Program Effectiveness for Those Not Retained in the First 0-2 Years by Choice***

On the other hand, the 29% of individuals that we not retained at their first school during the 0-2 year period due to termination or lack of contract renewal were all participants in induction programs before employment termination. 100% of the educators that were not asked back to their first school during this initial period were provided induction programs. 75% of this group reported that they found the induction program they were provided at least “somewhat effective.”

***Figure 6: Induction Program Effectiveness for Those Not Retained in the First 0-2 Years by Employer Decision***

These results imply that the majority of individuals that were offered an induction program and left the first school of employment by choice, found the program to be ineffective in supporting them in their teaching responsibilities. On the contrary, most individuals offered an induction program and were then not asked back as a result of termination or nonrenewal of contract, reported the induction program to be “somewhat effective” or “highly effective” in supporting them in their teaching duties. These participants that were terminated or their contract was not renewed were then asked if they believed “a more effective induction or mentorship program would have helped you to be more successful?” 50% of these participants reported that they “strongly disagreed”, 25% were “neutral”, and 25% responded “strongly agree.”

***Figure 7: Induction Program Impact on Educator Success***

The data suggests that participants acknowledge minimal correlation between their overall success as an educator and the induction program they were provided. The population that chose to leave and found their induction program ineffective seemed to be successful enough to have a choice in whether to continue their employment at the first school in their teaching career. In this case, the participants may not have been “satisfied” or may have found a “better opportunity” but were successful enough in their teaching duties to keep the option of their position. Most of the population that were provided an induction program and had their employment terminated or their contract not renewed, found the induction program effective even though it did not lead to successful enough mastery of their teaching duties to remain employed in their position.

**Discussion/Implications**

Overall, the data demonstrates little correlation between the effectiveness of induction programs and the retention or success of new teachers which is consistent with the findings of previous studies. Of the participants that were provided induction or mentorship programs in their first or second years of teaching, there was a nearly even divide in those that found the program to be effective and those that found it to be ineffective. While many participants that found their induction program effective were not hired back by their employer during the initial period of 0-2 years, there were also many participants that found their induction program ineffective and left the position by choice. These findings support previous research stating that ineffective implementation of these programs can prove unsuccessful in supporting the new teacher (Fry 2007).

These findings would suggest that induction programs should be reevaluated to increase overall effectiveness. Without data clearly suggesting that induction programs generally improve new hire success and retention, they lack a definite purpose to justify their existence. For this reason, districts and individual schools that implement induction programs, should consider new methods that would prove more effective in preparing new hires for success and retention in their position.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the number of participants. With only 45 potential participants, the starting sample size was small and decreased as only 25 individuals chose to complete the survey with only two of these participants willing to participate in a one-on-one interview. This small sample population limits the overall scope of the study, as a wider range of participants would provide greater insight to more experiences with diverse induction programs. Another limitation of the study is that all participants are currently still in the field of education as either teachers or educators. This means that the study will lack the additional perspective of individuals that chose to leave teaching entirely after the first or second year rather than change schools.

With the limitation to reach a small population of educators at only one school, the results could be limited to induction programs primarily in the school’s surrounding area. This would limit the results to an analysis of the local induction programs with fewer experiences outside the immediate area. Additional time to conduct the study could allow for the research to extend beyond the confines of a single school in order to reach a larger group of participants. This in turn could add the experiences of educators from more induction programs, resulting in a more diverse interpretation of the results.

**Ethical Considerations**

All participants were made aware that the survey would be included in a research study and that participation was entirely optional. Also, in an effort to avoid causing any mental or emotional stress, participants reserved the ability to terminate their participation in the survey or individual interviews if it became uncomfortable at any time. All participants that chose to take part in the survey and / or interviews remained anonymous by removing all identifiers and specific descriptions. This served to protect participant identity and reduce unnecessary stress or discomfort. Lastly, it is recognized that the nature of this study stems from the researcher’s own interest in the topic of education and educator preparation, resulting in some bias. The survey questions and interview questions were designed to remain unbiased and objective without guiding or affecting participant responses. All findings are reported to provide insight to education programs, district and / or individual school induction program planners, and mentors that work directly with new teachers through induction programs.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

In conducting further research, a researcher could obtain data from a larger population to provide more perspective on the topic. Additional participants, especially if from more than one school or location, would provide a more diverse interpretation of induction programs and their effectiveness. Research could also investigate the more specific strengths and weaknesses of individual induction programs to determine the effectiveness or need for change. This could be done through more one-on-one interviews to analyze the specific experiences of participants in induction programs. Data could also be collected from those responsible for developing the induction programs as a means of understanding the objectives of the induction programs when rating their effectiveness.

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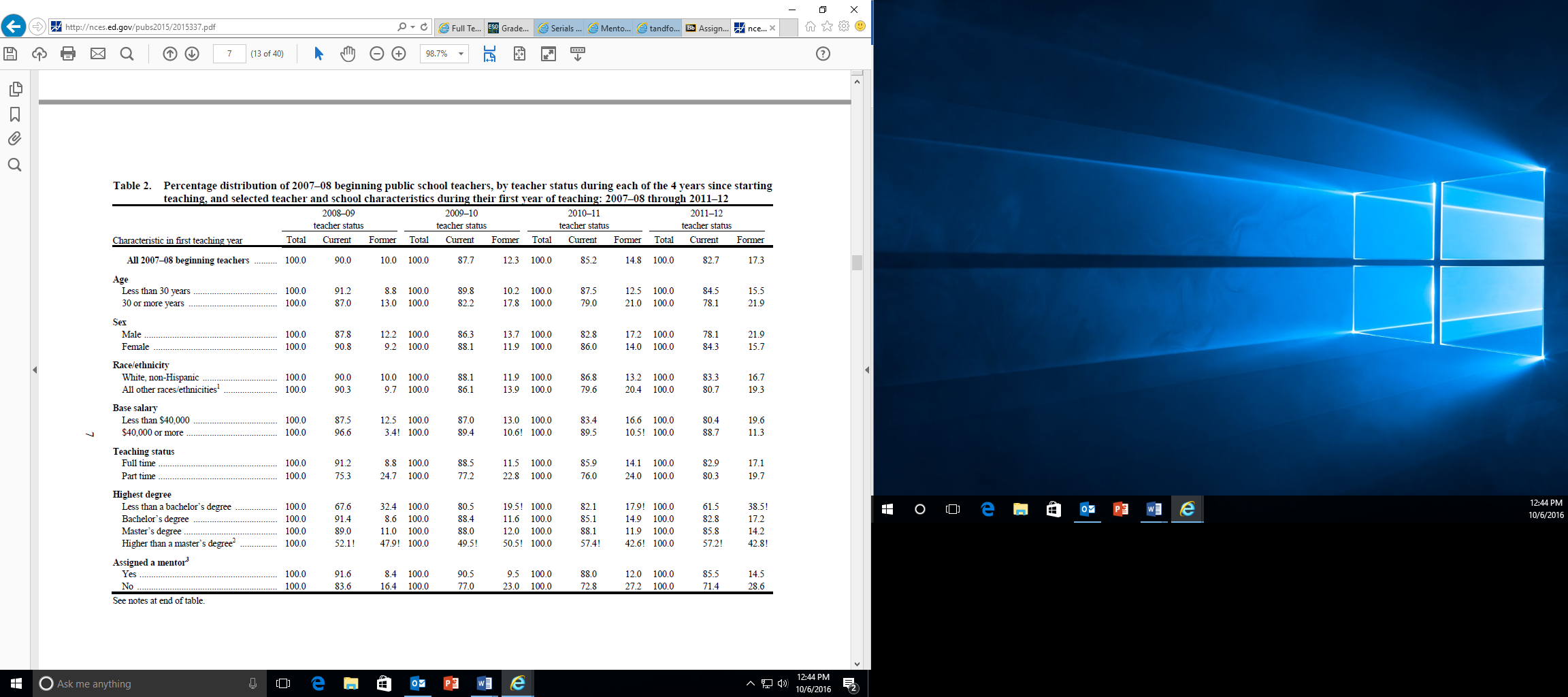
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Appendix A

“Table 2” from National Center for Education Statistics



Appendix B

Survey Questions to be Answered by Research Participants

I agree to participate in this study by answering the following survey questions. I understand that my privacy will be protected through anonymity in this survey. I understand that I can choose to exit the survey at any time if I become uncomfortable.

* + I agree

1. How long have you been teaching in a K-12 classroom?
   1. 0-2 years
   2. 3-5 years
   3. 6-9 years
   4. 10 or more years
2. How long were you employed at the first school you taught at in your teaching career?
   1. 0-2 years
   2. 3-5 years
   3. 6-9 years
   4. 10 or more years
   5. I am still employed at the first school I taught at in my teaching career.
3. In what capacity did you leave the first school you taught at in your teaching career?
   1. I left by choice because I was not satisfied.
   2. I left by choice because I found a better opportunity.
   3. I left due to life circumstances such as a move or family change.
   4. My employment was terminated or my contract was not renewed.
   5. I have not left – I am still employed at the first school I taught at in my teaching career.
4. Were you provided an induction or mentorship program in your first year of teaching?
   1. Yes, I was provided an induction or mentorship program.
   2. No, I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
5. How long were you provided services from an induction or mentorship program?
   1. 1 semester
   2. 1 year (2 semesters)
   3. 1.5 years (3 semesters)
   4. 2 years (4 semesters)
   5. I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
6. What types of services were you provided through the induction or mentorship program?
   1. Professional Development
   2. Curriculum Planning Assistance
   3. Procedural Assistance
   4. Classroom Management Assistance
   5. Observations and Feedback
   6. Other – Please explain \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
   7. I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
7. Through the induction or mentorship program, did you have an assigned point-of-contact to help in the event of uncertainty?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
8. Please rate the effectiveness of the assigned point-of-contact in assisting you when needed.
   1. Highly effective
   2. Somewhat effective
   3. Neutral – not observed
   4. Not very effective
   5. Very ineffective
   6. I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
9. Please rate the overall effectiveness of the induction or mentorship program in preparing and supporting you as a first year teacher.
   1. Highly effective
   2. Somewhat effective
   3. Neutral – not observed
   4. Not very effective
   5. Very ineffective
   6. I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
10. If your employment was terminated or your contract was not renewed at the first school in your teaching career, do you believe that a more effective induction or mentorship program would have helped you to be more successful?
    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Somewhat Agree
    3. Neutral
    4. Somewhat Disagree
    5. Strongly Disagree
    6. I was not provided an induction or mentorship program.
11. If your employment was terminated or your contract was not renewed at the first school in your teaching career **and** you were not provided an induction or mentorship program, do you believe that an induction or mentorship program would have helped you to be more successful?
    1. Strongly Agree
    2. Somewhat Agree
    3. Neutral
    4. Somewhat Disagree
    5. Strongly Disagree
    6. I was provided an induction or mentorship program.
12. Please provide any additional comments you would like to add regarding the induction or mentorship program or the lack of an induction or mentorship program at the first school in your teaching career?
13. If you would be willing to participate in an individual interview to further discuss your experiences with an induction or mentorship program (or lack thereof) please provide your name and email address at which you can be reached below. *The data collected in this interview would remain anonymous.*

Appendix C

