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Addressing Student School Refusal Through Effective School, Family And Community-Based Interventions

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ADDRESSING STUDENT SCHOOL REFUSAL THROUGH
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS

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Presented to the Affiliated Faculty

Of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to examine the factors causing school refusal and in-turn diagnose a school-based intervention designed to retain students. This study specifically addressed the use of a teacher mentor intervention for school refusal students as a means of improving attendance, academics, social and emotional well being and improve their overall mindset about school. The focus group for this study was 15 general education sophomore students enrolled in a resiliency program at a large suburban Massachusetts high school. These students selected for the resiliency intervention program met the following criteria: a) all participants are sophomores; b) participants were absent 10% or more during their freshman year; c) participants were struggling or failing courses during their freshman year; and e) participants, once selected for the resiliency intervention program, agreed to participate. Two instrument tools were utilized to gain qualitative data for this study. A student questionnaire and survey allowed for data to be coded and placed into four themes. The four key themes emerged from student responses to the instrument tools: 1) examining the relationship between the teacher mentor and the student, 2) impact on student growth and academic improvement due to mentoring, 3) student satisfaction and overall positive experience with their mentor, and 4) as a result of mentoring received, school attendance and retention had become important. When paired with a teacher mentor, school refusal students experienced improved academics, better attendance and an overall improved attitude towards school.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

As a high school administrator, I distinctly remember the first student under my supervision that dropped out of school. After attempting to persuade the student not to drop out and reconsider giving his education another chance, he signed the document and walked out of the building. In reflecting on how the school and specifically how I failed this student, I took a closer look at this student's records. Throughout his three years in high school, he was consistently absent and tardy. The student was offered special education services but did not receive a comprehensive school-based intervention to address his refusal to attend school consistently. This student did not have quality relationships with teachers and staff members in the school. Having a quality and trusted teacher mentor may have encouraged him to want to come to school consistently and ultimately stay enrolled in school. "Students report that having a person at school who is checking up on them gives the sense that someone care and motivates them to come to school" (Gonzales, Richards & Seeley, 2002, p. 12). My observations of this student and this momentous situation informed my decision to address student school refusal in my research and make staying students' school experience more enriching.

This study addressed school refusal, truant student behaviors, risk factors, the demographics of students most involved in school refusal, and the interventions designed to assist students. A specific intervention using teacher mentors to support and collaborate with school refusal students builds trust among many disenfranchised students, which then could potentially result in retaining the student. When school refusal is identified early an intervention

is applied, “attitudes and behaviors can often be changed before they are deeply entrenched” (Smink & Reimer, 2005, p. 1). Within the research, the literature revealed a variety of yet similar definitions of school refusal, truancy and absenteeism. Additionally, specific studies supported the “relation between students from low socioeconomic status and absenteeism” (Fantuzzo, Grim, & Hazan, 2005, as cited in McConnell & Kubina, 2014, p. 249). A variety of interventions were uncovered in the research. “Several best practices to improve attendance and reduce truancy have been identified: collaboration, use of incentives, and sanctions, family involvement, establishment of a supportive context, and assessment and evaluation of the program” (Smink & Reimer, 2005, p. 3). Family interventions were addressed in this study in addition to a strong emphasis on the primary focus, addressing school-based interventions, and their direct impact on student retention. By studying and testing a school-based intervention, the results, both positive and negative, can be shared with other school leaders to address this growing issue at all academic levels. Additionally, the data collected will be shared with the community to inform and educate them about school refusal and retention actions being enacted to ensure all students consistently attend school.

Statement of the Problem

Research points to specific school-based factors leading to students’ school refusal. Specific school-based factors contributing to school refusal include weak teacher-student bonds, social issues, a lack of connection with the curriculum, unwelcoming school climate, push-out policies, and F’s for poor attendance (McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Smink Reimer, 2005; Spencer, 2009). As a result of truant behavior due to school-based factors, it is imperative that school-based interventions are developed and implemented to address this growing issue. School-based factors that push students away from school must be recognized and replaced with

retention strategies. School-based interventions need to address the student's academic and social needs. "To prevent and correct serious attendance problems, schools need to change the way they are structured, improve the quality of courses, and intensify interpersonal relationships between students and teacher" (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002, p. 309).

School refusal, if not recognized and treated, can be the foundation for a variety of social, behavioral and academic issues plaguing students (Sutphen et al., 2010). The goal for school officials is to create and implement interventions that can deter school refusal behaviors and re-engage students in their learning.

Purpose of Study

School refusal, truancy and absenteeism are all references to a behavior demonstrated by students at all levels of schooling. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors causing school refusal and in-turn diagnose a school-based intervention designed to retain students. Pelligrini (2009) argued that truancy should be referred to as school refusal because the word school "aims to direct one's attention to the school environment, a significant factor in understanding the behavior" (p. 66). Recognizing patterns of school-based factors contributing to school refusal will assist in defining strategies to keep students in school. These strategies will include a comprehensive school-based intervention designed to support students in overcoming their school refusal and truant behavior through a partnership with a teacher mentor. Ultimately the goal of the study is to determine if a school-based teacher mentor intervention will assist in improving school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention of these disenfranchised students.

Significance of the Study

The current research has revealed that students refuse to attend school because of poor relationships with teachers, a lack of connection with the traditional curriculum and an overall unwelcoming school environment (McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Smink Reimer, 2005; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). By addressing school refusal with retention efforts, like use of a teacher mentor, many stakeholders within the school and community will benefit. Students that have consistently refused to attend school due to social and/or academic issues can create a relationship with a staff mentor. This mentor-mentee relationship will allow trust to be built within those resistant students, improving their social capital, problem-solving skills and personal recognition (Rodriguez et al., 2009). The teacher mentors benefit as they are assisting school refusal students by allowing them to become more interested in school, and in turn, create a school culture focused on positive behavior support. The school benefits as more students are retained, improving graduation rates and creating a climate of success through effective school-based interventions. The community benefits as students are staying in school and are off the streets, limiting potential for crime and substance abuse.

Questions

The study focuses on family, community and primarily school-based interventions. The specific school-based intervention being addressed at retaining school refusal students is the influence of a teacher mentor. The study revolves around three vital questions:

How do identified students characterize their relationship to teacher mentors?

What makes an effective mentoring program from the student participant's perspective?

How do identified students characterize the mentoring partnership's effect on their academic, social and emotional well-being?

Conceptual Framework

In choosing this specific topic to review, the goal of the study was to analyze the influence of a teacher mentor on mitigating school refusal and truant behaviors. The goal was to uncover an intervention that draws from family, community, and school that has been successfully applied to assist in retaining school refusal students. DeSocio et al. (2007) noted the importance of a relationship-based approach in a quantitative study in engaging school refusal students and retaining them in school. “Mentors provide adolescents with opportunities for prosocial identification, offer empathetic support to mobilize self-development, encourage emulation and practice of self-regulatory skills and promote experiences that refute students’ lowered academic aspirations” (DeSocio et al., 2007, p. 3). Rodriguez et al. (2009) wrote that mentors are necessary to “support a climate that recognizes the experiential, intellectual, and community cultural wealth that youth bring to schools and communities” (p. 222). The path-goal theory is an appropriate theory for this study because mentor-leaders are offering coaching and direction to school refusal students, and utilizing an intervention to remove a particular roadblock. The path-goal theory determines a path, or in this case, an intervention, with a focus on reaching a goal and addressing the students’ needs to assist them in successfully remaining in school full time. A qualitative phenomenological study testing this theory will determine if a mentor intervention is effective in retaining school refusal students.

Assumptions and Limitations

The research documented that many of the interventions designed to limit or prevent school refusal, both school and community-based, are short term. The data collected from some applied interventions demonstrated improved student attendance within the year of the applied intervention (DeSocio et al., 2007). Additionally, there is a lack of data demonstrating if the

researched interventions have been sustainable and useful for students over an extended period. Furthermore, the applied study will be taking place within the researcher's organization, so maintaining a bias-free approach will be essential. The researcher must maintain the role as a participant-observer and allow the collected data to drive the outcomes (Coughlin & Brannick, 2014). As a scholar-practitioner, the researcher must be mindful of his dual roles as an administrator and doctoral student and not allow them to conflict in a way that may compromise the study. Another significant limitation is that this study is only taking place in one setting. As a result, there will be limitations of student profiles, setting within a high school and a limited socio-economic group.

Definitions

Researchers have offered varying, yet consistent, student traits or definitions that warrant deeming a student as school refusal or truant. Sutphen, Ford, and Flaherty (2010) argue, "students with three unexcused absences in an interval should be assessed and perhaps receive a parent notification" (p. 169). Vance, Block, and Heuston (2008) defined school refusal as a student who has missed four or more days within a month. Teasley (2004), citing Bell, Rosen and Dynlacht (1994) stated, "truancy is defined as an unexcused and unlawful absence from school without parental knowledge or consent" (p. 117). Rodriguez and Conchas (2009) defined truancy as "young people who are continuously late to class or who do not present themselves in class at all for long periods of time" (p. 223). Chang and Jordan (2011) further defined habitual truancy and school refusal as "chronic absence or children missing 10% of school, or about eighteen to nineteen days over the course of an academic year for any reason-excused or unexcused" (p. 6). Sutphen et al. (2010) noted, "truant behavior should be defined as a student missing 20% of the school year, regardless of whether the absences were excused or unexcused"

(p. 169). For this study, school refusal and truancy will refer to any student that has been absent for a minimum of 10% of the school year.

School Refusal- An umbrella term referring to all student motivated refusal to attend school and/or an inability to remain in classes for the entire school day (Pelligrini, 2007).

Absenteeism- Students identified as having high rates of absences, ranging from 5 to 10% (Spencer, 2009).

Intervention-academic, emotional and or social strategies implemented to address a student need and reshape the behavior (Benson, 2014).

Early Interventions- Family engagement has a direct and positive effect on a child's achievement and is one of the most consistent predictors of a child's success (Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Collaboration-When groups in a school and/or community offer collective support creating a strong infrastructure allowing youth to thrive in a positive environment (Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Teacher Mentoring- One-to-one supportive relationship between a teacher mentor and a student mentee that is based upon trust (Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Conclusion

Addressing school refusal through a teacher mentor intervention can potentially re-engage students in their academics; improve their social capital and broker relationships with their teachers. As a result, it is time for school administrators, personnel and community members to recognize the need to create interventions that address this issue. Creating and implementing an intervention designed to reengage students in consistently attending school could be designed by utilizing resources already available within any school. A specific intervention using teacher mentors to support and collaborate with school refusal students is both

cost effective and builds trust among many disillusioned students. (Young & Fusarelli, 2001; McConnell & Kubina, 2014). Within the next chapter, the literature will be analyzed with a critical eye. A review of the results of previous studies will be measured along with the methodologies used to gain data. The results of previous studies will guide the researcher's conceptual framework and define the methodology of the researcher's study.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Student School Refusal and Interventions

It is important to examine previous studies and research to identify characteristics and factors contributing to student school refusal. The literature revealed specific demographics of students, specifically urban students, engaging in school refusal and truant behaviors.

Furthermore, the literature revealed a variety of interventions that have emerged over the course of the decade to address school refusal, improve student attendance and increase student's social capital and academic grades.

The literature addressed the need for and importance of early detection of the behavior and addressing student retention through a collaborative approach. The interventions documented throughout the last decade used a similar tactic for deterring school refusal behaviors and interventions for improving student retention.

School personnel and administrators deal with student school refusal and attendance issues on a daily basis. Many administrators have been limited in their approach to addressing and handling these students. In choosing this specific topic to review, the researcher can address school refusal in a more comprehensive way and discover factors and reasons as to why some students refuse to attend school. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to unveil the demographics of students, based on the literature, which is most consumed by school refusal truancy. Finally, the goal was to uncover a variety of interventions that have been successfully applied to assist school refusal students in modifying their behavior.

Demographics of Students Exhibiting School Refusal and Truant Behavior

Research from the past ten years has remained consistent in demonstrating that a majority of school refusal and truant students are male and belong to a specific socio-economic status

(Reid, 2014). Retaining school refusal students is one of the top concerns for both teachers and school leaders. The need to address school refusal students through interventions is necessary from the elementary through the high school levels. Marvul (2012) noted, “poverty is the source of most of the problems” (p. 147). Reid (2012) documented that males are five to six times more likely to commit a criminal offense than females. In more recent research, Reid (2014) remains consistent that many school refusal students “are likely to come from families at the lower end of the social scale, families on low incomes or those that require state support such as income support or housing benefit and families with children who have free school meals” (p.17). Additionally, Teasley (2004) stated, “large school systems in low-income, inner-city urban school districts experience higher rates of absenteeism and truancy compared with suburban and rural school systems” (p. 118). Chang and Jordan (2011) point out, “poor children are four times more likely to be chronically absent than their peers” (p. 7). The research reflected a pattern that male students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, in urban school settings, represent the most significant cases of school refusal. The research noted that a specific demographic of a student is more affected by school refusal and the consequences associated with not attending school regularly. The need to address this group with specific interventions that are relevant to this population is paramount to ensure they attend school consistently and receive an education.

Negative Impacts of School Refusal

School refusal has catastrophic consequences for the student beyond simply missing school. Research highlights the relationship between consistent absences and overall poor student performance. School refusal is associated with a variety of individual poor outcomes for the student, including dropping out of school. Dembo and Gullede (2009) citing Ingersoll and Lebouf (1997) added, “it has been estimated that each year’s class of dropouts costs the United

States more than \$240 billion in lost earnings and taxes over their lifetimes” (p. 438). Addressing this disconnect between students and regular school attendance has led to an assortment of school, community and mixed interventions to stem the tide of school refusal and truant behaviors. Finally, Reid (2014) noted in order to address school refusal and truancy; necessary changes need to occur at several levels. These changes include ensuring all students enjoy school and achieve success, have appropriate student at risk strategies in place, improve students’ self-esteem, prevent bullying in school, effectively use data to drive school decisions, make curriculum more relevant to students and create more effective uses of the law for punitive measures.

Refusing to attend school can lead to gaps in a student’s education, impair literacy and poor social skills and is a pre-cursor to student dropout. Sutphen et al. (2010) reviewed the literature of school refusal students and noted, “nonattendance is associated with an array of negative child well being outcomes such as poor academic performance, low school attachments, delinquency, drug use, sexual promiscuity and school dropout” (p. 162). Santelmann-Richtmann (2007) added truancy and school refusal can lead to “crime, unemployment, underemployment, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and risky sexual activity” (p. 422). Baker, Sigmon, and Nugent (2001) noted the research of Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht (1994), Dryfoos (1990), Garry (1996), Huizinga, Loeber, and Thornberry (1995), and Rohrman (1993) when stating school refusal has been found to be related to “substance abuse, gang activity and involvement in criminal activities such as burglary, auto theft, and vandalism” (p. 1). The negative effects of school refusal take the greatest toll on a student’s education. Kelly, Barr, and Westherby (2005), Lee (2002), Lochner and Moretti (2004), and Rumberger (1995), were cited by Marvul (2012) when stating, “researchers have shown that chronic absenteeism is a precursor to dropping out of school” (p.

146). This theory is reinforced by Rodriguez and Conchas (2009) who cited the research of both Fine (1991) and Wasley (2002) who contended, “large urban high schools often function as dropout-producing factories, poorly able to engage the most vulnerable youth” (p. 218). Research conducted by both Rumberger (2000) and Orfield (2004) as cited by Rodriguez et al. (2009) noted, “school refusal and dropout are concentrated, and worsening, in racially segregated central cities in primarily large high schools attended by mostly low-income youth of color” (p. 220). School refusal, if not recognized and treated, can be the foundation for a variety of social, behavioral and academic issues plaguing students. Most importantly, school refusal, truancy and habitual absences are strongly considered a pre-cursor to poor academic grades.

The research revealed students that exhibit school refusal behaviors are at a greater risk for a variety of negative outcomes, most notable being gaps in their education, criminal activity and substance abuse. Additionally, the research noted a link between school refusal, truancy and absenteeism to the student dropping out of school.

Contributing Factors of School Refusal and Truant Behaviors

Although the specific reasons for school refusal, and truant behaviors vary from case to case and individual to individual, the research has revealed consistent factors contributing to the truant behavior. The most prevalent factors leading to school refusal over the past decade have been school-based structures that limit access to positive relationships between the student and his or her peers and or teachers and family circumstances (Reid, 2014).

School Factors

The research revealed that a variety school factors contribute to student school refusal. The main factor specifically cited was a lack of meaningful relationships between the adults in the school and the students. Poor social interactions and poor student relations have led to

student school refusal (Teasley, 2004). Sutphen et al. (2010) claimed, “schools factors include conflictual relationships with teachers, deficient attendance policies, non-accommodation of diverse learning styles and bullying” (p. 162). DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewitt, Kitzman, and Cole (2007) noted, “students also reported comments made by teachers who discouraged them from continuing to come to class as the year progressed, and it became apparent that their grades were too poor to allow them to pass” (p. 6). School structures including curriculum and a lack of meaningful programs have led to school refusal among students. Reid (2012) argued for “better in-school initiatives, which broaden pupils’ experiences and provide them with rich experiences they might otherwise never enjoy” (p. 218). The need to broaden the curriculum to reach all students and keep them interested in school is essential in retaining this population of students. This curriculum includes more enrichment courses, electives and vocational courses for students. Additionally, this curriculum includes a secondary curriculum of support, assistance, accommodations and modifications for students (Benson, 2014). Conchas (2001) stated, “high dropout rates, non-attendance and truancy are the results of unpleasant and under resourced learning environment” (p. 476). Marvul (2012) added that school refusal is due in part to “under resourced learning environments” (p. 146). A remedy to this in-school factor is offered by Marvul (2012) who suggested, “most research has indicated that connecting with schools starts with student-teacher relationships...if young people perceive that adults at school care about them personally and as students, probabilities will increase that they will engage, connect and bond to the school” (p. 146). Baker et al. (2001) added school climate concerns contribute to school refusal, like “school size and attitudes of teachers, other students and administrators and inflexibility in meeting diverse cultural and learning styles of the students” (p. 2). The research

over the last decade is consistent, indicating that school personnel need to build relationships with students and construct a curriculum that students find valuable, meaningful and applicable.

Family Circumstances

Family circumstances, based on the research, seem to be the most consistent factor contributing to school refusal and truant behaviors. Reid (2014) added, “local authorities and teachers believe that parental attitudes and parental incompetence, parental condoned absence and problems within the family homes are the main cause” (p. 11). Marvul (2012) stated, “attendance problems...are the result of dysfunctional family environments” (p. 146). The trend of the negative family circumstances leading to school refusal continues with the research of Dembo and Gulledege (2009) who added “many of these youths’ difficulties can be traced to troubled families and troubled family relationships, which began at an early age” (p. 438). Sutphen et al. (2010) support those claims by noting, “family factors linked to truancy include low-income, single-parent status, child maltreatment, parental disabilities, lack of parental involvement in education and family mobility” (p. 162). DeSocio et al. (2007) noted school refusal “was symptomatic of family problems; poor attendance was part of a family’s efforts to cope with social and economic demands” (p. 6). Teasely (2004) asserted, “home dynamics such as crowded living conditions, weak parent-child relationships, and frequent relocation may negatively affect school attendance” (p. 119). Baker et al. (2001) pointed to the “lack of guidance or parental supervision, domestic violence, poverty, drug or alcohol abuse at home” (p. 2). Many of these students have parents that are actively engaged in abusing alcohol and/or drugs. Many of these parents do not encourage their child to attend school consistently and may send a message that education is not important.

The literature points to the family, specifically negligent parents, as a direct cause of student school refusal and truant behaviors. Parents that condone school refusal or simply turn a blind-eye to the issue are exacerbating and perpetuating the behavior (DeSocio et al., 2007). The obvious pattern is that students engaging in school refusal and truant behaviors have negative or nonexistent relationships with their parents.

Interventions

An intervention, specifically a school-based intervention, is an accommodation or strategy designed to target an academic and/or social-emotional need of a student. A school-based intervention is designed for school application, applied within the school and is overseen by a teacher/staff member. Through the implementation of the intervention, specific targeted positive outcomes are the goal of the school-based intervention. Typically these interventions are tracked, monitored and frequently assessed for overall effectiveness.

Early Detection

For any intervention to be successful and meet the intended goals of addressing student school refusal, the need for early detection of the behavior is critical. Also, a collaborative and joint effort among all stakeholders, who are directly affiliated with the student, need to comply with one-another when the intervention is selected and implemented. Henry (2007) suggested, “interventions designed to improve engagement in school and/or improve the school environment may have beneficial effects on truancy” (p. 34). Reid (2014) continued with this notion and suggested, “many pupils start their non-attendance and truanting in primary school, therefore, as soon as possible, early intervention strategies are worthwhile to prevent pupils from developing the habit and reaching the persistent stage” (p. 11). Reid (2012) pointed out, “early interventions are six times more likely to be successful than those after pupils’ non-attendance

has reached the persistent stage” (p. 214). Dembo and Gullledge (2009) also argued the need for early intervention by underscoring the importance of “assessing and providing needed services to truant youth and families at the earliest point at which problem behavior is identified” (p. 438). The Abolish Chronic Truancy (ACT) Now Program in Arizona is designed to address school refusal and student truancy at its earliest stage. Teasley (2004) wrote, “The ACT Now Program is only one example of a comprehensive program to reduce chronic truancy” (p. 125). Baker et al. (2001) added the ACT Now program “requires parents to ensure that their children are supervised and holding parents accountable would increase school attendance and decrease juvenile crime” (p. 3). Reid (2014) agreed with the previous research adding, “intervention programs that tend to show the most potential for improvements in school attendance cases normally involved specialized and/or intensive case management, was family-oriented and focused, and incorporated both sanctions for continued truancy and rewards for good attendance” (p. 7). By addressing school refusal and truant behaviors at the earliest point, specifically elementary-aged students, school refusal can be addressed and mitigated through interventions.

Collaboration

The consistent and specific interventions most successful for combating school refusal and truant behaviors among students are the implementations of specific interventions that engage the student, families and the community. Through a collaborative, comprehensive and constructive intervention plan involving all three parties, the intervention may be successful. Baker et al. (2001) added to this idea that, “one of the most important elements of any effective prevention effort is the existence of a collaborative partnership of public agencies, community organizations and concerned individuals that interact with and provide services to truant youth and their families” (p. 7). Huck (2010) cites the National Center for School Engagement (2007),

who suggested, “that an effective truancy reduction program should include parent/guardian/family involvement, a continuum of supports of incentives and consequences, [and] collaboration with various community organizations” (p. 505). Hendricks, Sale, Evans, McKinley, and DeLozier-Carter (2010), citing Bell, et al. (1994) and Mogulescu and Segal (2002), stated “experts agree that effective truancy intervention is a collaborative, or multimodal, approach that involves some combination of community stakeholders: schools, juvenile courts, law enforcement agencies, parents, community organizations and social service agencies” (p. 180). Marvul (2012) highlighted, “only through a multimodal approach involving students, school, family and community can any serious behavior reversals ever be accomplished” (p. 147). Teasley (2004) wrote of the importance of collaborative efforts to address school refusal by “conducting parent workshops on the importance of attendance, opening communication with diverse families, assigning a truant officer to students with chronic attendance problems, referring chronically absent students to counselors...and making home visits” (p. 123). Before any intervention can be implemented, a collective and collaborative action plan involving the student, school, parents and community needs to be in place. Once the key players are identified, the proper intervention can be determined and utilized in order to retain the student.

School-Based Interventions

Interventions from the last decade have remained consistent with the prime goal of minimizing or eliminating school refusal and truant behaviors. The most common interventions noted over the last decade have been school-based interventions. School members, attendance administrators and/or school leaders work in conjunction with the student and his or her family to coordinate and implement the intervention. The research has revealed a variety of successful interventions. Roderick et al. (1997) as cited by DeSocio et al. (2007) noted, “without

intervention, school refusal and truancy becomes a habitual pattern that increases over time” (p. 9). School-based interventions are specific interventions utilized by school personnel with the assistance of the student’s family and community members. Reid (2012) noted one school intervention used “one-to-one strategies involving classroom assistants or learning school mentors” (p. 217). With this strategy, at risk students would have a support plan created with the assistance of the student’s family. An attendance officer would also be involved in monitoring the student’s data. Typically, attendance officers are the community truant officers. Marvul (2012) wrote about a similar school based intervention focusing on communication. “Increasing parent involvement through daily phone calls increases student attendance...employing a school staff member as the contact person for family members to work with has been identified as critical to gaining parental trust, which in turn, has had positive effects on truancy” (p. 149).

Dembo and Gullledge (2009) highlighted an intervention called Check and Connect which is a “school-based intervention program designed to engage students in school and support regular attendance that has been implemented in various elementary, middle and high schools in both urban and suburban settings” (p. 441). The check part of the intervention has school personnel assessing student risk factors and checking school data for signs of withdrawal. The connect aspect has a mentor assigned to the student. The goal of the mentor is to create and establish a trusting relationship with the student and family. Dembo and Gullledge (2009) cited the work of Sinclair, Christenson, Evelo, and Hurley (1998) who utilized empirical results with multiple Check and Connect students to indicate, “students within the treatment groups were significantly less likely to drop out of school than were students in the control groups” (p. 442). A Check and Connect qualitative study was conducted by Lehr, Sinclair, and Christenson (2004), as cited by Dembo and Gullledge (2009) who confirmed, “high-quality relationships a between

student and staff mentor-monitor were associated with improved school engagement” (p. 442). The goal of these school-based interventions was to engage the school refusal student. This was accomplished through both the building of relationships and consistent communication with the student and the home. This was typically accomplished using a school-based mentor.

Sutphen et al. (2010) noted the importance of school-based interventions by citing the work of McPartland, Balfanz, Jordan, and Legter (1998) who utilized an in-school plan through school reorganization to improve retention of school refusal students at a low-performing high school. Small, vocational and career orientated academies were created in the high school. Through this program, the focus was on improving school attendance and offering a curriculum that interested the students. The students then became interested in school because they were offered specialized curriculum within the career academy. This research also addressed another factor of school refusal students, which is poverty. School-to-work programs or career academics strive to provide adolescents with job skills.

DeSocio et al. (2007) implemented a mentoring program combined with mental health services for truant students at an urban, poverty-stricken, high school in the Northeast. Through the collection of data, the school-based mentoring intervention led to meaningful results in addressing and retaining school refusal students. For this specific qualitative study, students were chosen who had 15 or more unexcused absences from the previous school year. Of the 103 students that fit the profile, 29 students received the intervention. Teachers at the school where the mentor intervention was tested were invited to be a mentor and encourage “students with high absenteeism to develop positive attitudes toward school” (DeSocio et al., 2007, p. 4). Mentors at the school who were chosen received an orientation preparing them for the intervention and were assigned four to five students each. The role of the mentor was to build a

personal relationship with the student through check-ins, interactions and tutoring sessions after school. If a student was struggling with a teacher or teachers, “the mentor would offer to mediate by checking in with the teacher to gain a better understanding of the student’s problems and then set up meetings with the student and teacher to explore options for resolving the problem” (DeSocio et al., 2007, p. 5). Through the mentor’s assisting in mediation between the student and teacher, the student experienced successful problem solving and began to learn self-advocacy skills. Within this intervention, a school-based coordinator was the point person for the mentors, assisting them when needed and offering guidance to students. The coordinator communicated regularly with parents, often making home visits when the students did not attend school. The final and integral piece to this intervention was the clinical support offered to the truant student. DeSocio et al. (2007) noted, “pediatric and psychiatric nurse practitioners provided health services and followed-up on identified health risks and problems” (p. 6). The results of the intervention were favorable in retaining school refusal students. The students who received the intervention missed fewer classes and remained in school for the remainder of the year.

The use of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a useful and is often applied as a school-based intervention. The essence of PBS is through supervision, high visibility, accessibility and pro-social interactions with students both inside and outside the classroom. This heightened visibility is designed to deter student refusal, absences and tardiness. Pre-correction is being proactive rather than reactive to student absences, tardiness and negative behaviors. Johnson-Gros, Lyons, and Griffin (2008) defined the pre-correction strategy within PBS as “to cue the student to engage in a more appropriate behavior before the problem behavior even occurs” (p. 40). PBS requires specific training for those supervisors or administrators who intend to use the intervention. In one specific rural middle school where PBS was utilized with 950 students it was

noted that there was a 42% reduction in problem behaviors (Johnson-Gros et al., 2008). Tyre, Feuerborn, and Pierce (2011) offered a continuation of the school-based intervention, PBS. Tyre et al. (2011) utilized the mixed methods study by Johnson-Gros, Lyons, and Griffin (2008) and expanded on their findings. The authors examined tardiness and the effects of tardiness both on the tardy student and the students interrupted by the tardy student. All students, because of the tardy student, were losing valuable instruction time. Over the course of a full school year lost instructional time is significant. Tyre et al. (2008) refined the strategies of PBS to include the reinforcement of behavior expectations, consistent consequences for violations of school rules and using data to determine intervention planning and outcomes. Like the Johnson-Gros et al. (2008) study referencing PBS, the Tyre et al. (2011) study notes the importance of hallway supervision and the need for supervisors to interact with the students. Tyre et al. (2011) performed their research method at a combined middle/high school in Washington State. The school had an active plan to address tardiness ranging from punitive interventions to meeting with parents of students with frequent tardies. Over a 17-month study, data was collected and because of the implementation of PBS within this specific school, there was a “67% decrease in average daily tardy rates” (Tyre et al. 2011, p. 135). As a result of this study, Tyre et al. (2011) noted that supervisors in the participating school noted that positive interactions with students and positive reinforcements for students when they met expectations had a significant impact on curbing student tardy rates.

Community-Based Interventions

Community-based interventions focus on community members or activists assisting in addressing the school refusal student as a means of retention. Community members or organizations lead the intervention process and work closely with the school and the student’s

family. The research has noted a variety of successful community-based interventions. Dembo and Gullledge (2009) cited the work of Fantuzzo, Grim, and Hazan (2005) and noted the community-based intervention Stop Truancy and Recommend Treatment or START as a “community-based intervention designed to reduce truancy that also collaborates with various community agencies within large urban cities” (p. 442). Caseworkers work with families and the court system to offer services and other referrals to each family they assist. Rodrigues and Conchas (2009) noted The Truancy Project in Atlanta as a successful community-based intervention program, pairing truant and school refusal students with volunteer lawyers. Based on the research conducted by Gullatt and Lemoine (1997) and cited by Rodrigues et al. (2009), 50 percent of the students who were once nearly failing out of school and enrolled in the Truancy Project refocused and finished the year.

The Boston Urban Youth Foundation (BUYF) is a community-based intervention program designed to address student truancy, school refusal and dropout among urban young people. The goal of BUYF is to go beyond the school and address the issues with students at their homes, knocking on doors, and driving them to school or after-school safe places, like community centers (Rodriguez et al., 2009). The BUYF implemented incentive plans for all students within the foundation aligns students with mentors and initiates youth advocacy for all students. The BUYF had very clear goals for their program and students to “decrease truancy by 70%, improve academic skills and grades, prepare youth to enter and complete college and overcome the digital divide that affects urban youth” (Rodriguez et al., 2009, p. 223). By 2001, the BUYF was servicing more than 500 students. Over 70% of the students were African American and the remaining youths were Hispanic. Using qualitative data collected by the BUYF through interviews and observations, Rodriguez et al. (2009) noted the strengths of this

community-based intervention approach. In regards to the need for a safe and structured space where students could go after school, many students identified this element as a positive and effective experience in their truancy rehabilitation. By the BUYF providing a space for these students, many built peer relationships and “young people were given opportunities to co-construct each other’s knowledge and truth through dialogue” (Rodriguez et al., 2009, p. 230). Within this space, community mentors and many former BUYF members spent time with students, engaging in weekly activities. The incentive structure of the BUYF was beneficial, as students in the after-school program were provided food, tutoring, rides and college visits.

Offering students the chance to visit colleges and see first-hand a college campus, allowed those in the BUYF incentive program to envision themselves at a higher education institution. Based on a student interview regarding a recent college visit, Rodriguez et al. (2009) stated, “she not only recognized the possibilities of attending college but also acknowledged the role of positive engagement with school in making that dream a reality” (p. 233). Creating a student advocacy network was a crucial part of the BUYF initiative. The group achieved this goal using caseworkers. Adult advocates allowed students to recognize that people did care and allowed a trusting relationship to be built. “Caseworkers would check in with program participants twice a week by making school visits and encouraging them to attend after-school tutoring” (Rodriguez et al., 2009, p. 236). Based on the data, many students believed that the caseworker and the advocacy program created safety for students both in and out of school.

Bazemore, Stinchcomb and Leip (2004) reflected on the findings and the empirical data in a community-based intervention in Florida in the year 2000. The police in Southeastern County created a Truancy Unit aimed and designed to “improving subsequent attendance and reducing subsequent delinquency of youths processed through the Truancy Unit” (Brazemore et

al., 2004, p. 271). The study revealed in one year, 1999-2000, the Truancy Unit stopped 12,330 youths from walking the streets during school hours. Of that 12,000-plus number of youths, 7,395 were picked up and processed by the unit. The remaining numbers were released after questioning. Based on the data, Brazemore et al. (2004) noted the mixed results, “a larger percentage of processed youths returned to school the next day and missed fewer total school days 30 days after processing than did non-processed youths. But when analyzing the number of days absent for the entire year after the youths were either processed or stopped, the non-processed youths missed fewer days and were more likely to have perfect attendance” (p. 286-287). Brazemore et al. (2004) concluded that two factors explained the data: (a) the processing of the youths further aggravated the truant behavior; and (b) “could also be due to other factors, including the possibility that processed youths were, for a variety of reasons, more prone to long-term truancy prior to intervention than non-processed youths” (Brazemore et al., 2004, p. 287).

The community-based interventions noted in the literature reflect programs designed and aimed at assisting school refusal and truant students. The interventions involved all stakeholders in the student’s life, with a community program leading the initiative. The START program, the BUYF and the Truancy Unit are each representations of community-based intervention programs formulated to assist school refusal students and curb truant behaviors.

School and Community-Based Interventions

School and community-based interventions combined these two enterprises to address the school refusal student and their truant behavior through a collaborative intervention approach. The goal was that these two entities could confront school refusal and the truant behavior both in and out of school. Dembo and Gullede (2009) cited a study by McClusky, Bynum, and Patchin (2004) who piloted an intervention at a mid-western urban elementary school for students who

missed 20% of school. The parents of these students received a letter informing them of the truant behavior. If attendance failed to improve, an attendance officer would reach out to the family. If the visit failed to initiate the re-entry of the student, the family was referred to casework or community service agency. If attendance did not improve after two weeks, a police officer, specializing in community service, would conduct home visits. If this tactic continued with unsuccessful results, the family would be prosecuted under state law.

Huck (2010) described the Truancy Prevention Initiative (TPI) currently being utilized at the Recovery School District in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. The goal of TPI is to “merge school, family, community and law enforcement to reintegrate students with a positive school environment” (Huck, 2010, p. 500). TPI specifically works as a collaborative effort to address both student truancy and improve graduation rates among these students. As a collaborative approach, all stakeholders play an important role within the TPI framework. The school district works to encourage school attendance and retention with the family and informs them of the state law, requiring the mandatory attendance of their child. Social workers, behavioral health services, juvenile court and other community-base organizations are also involved in the TPI intervention. Students are assigned to the TPI intervention program based on school data and attendance records. The first two school referrals for the student to TPI will require mandatory school meetings between school officials, the student and the parents. Additionally, students will “be assigned to counseling sessions, Saturday suspension, or referred to other community-based resources” (Huck, 2010, p. 502). An additional truancy offense by the student will require them to attend juvenile court, with their parents, with possible charges being placed on the parents.

School, family and school and community-based interventions have one core focus, the student. Each category of interventions addresses the reasons why the student is engaging in the

behavior and determines measures to reassert the student into school. Once re-engaged, the focus remains on ensuring the students is successful and retained in school. Throughout the process, leadership will be needed to create and monitor comprehensive interventions.

Leadership

Northouse (2013) contended, “leadership also motivates when it makes the path to the goal clear and easy to travel through coaching and direction, removing obstacles and roadblocks to attaining the goal and making the work itself more personally satisfying” (p. 138). This notion encapsulated the truant student and the interventions utilized and are noted within the literature review. The path-goal theory is the best framework for this study because leaders are offering coaching and mentoring to school refusal student’s and utilizing an intervention to remove a particular roadblock. The path-goal theory determines a path, or in this case, an intervention, with a focus on reaching a goal and addressing the students’ needs to assist them in retaining them in school. An important component of the path-goal theory is motivation. Motivating students through an intervention is critical to supporting the needs of the school refusal student. Within this framework, the specific leadership styles, supportive, directive and achievement-orientated are all useful and applicable approaches for assisting students. The varying interventions all require a leader to support the student. Northouse (2013) noted, “supportive leadership consists of being friendly and approachable as a leader and includes attending to the well-being and human needs of subordinates” (p. 140). With interventions noted in the literature review, a few called upon school and community leaders/organizations to act as a mentor to assist truant students. A specific example from the literature review is the Boston Urban Youth Foundation, who go beyond the school and address the truancy issue with students at their homes, knocking on doors, driving them to school or after-school safe places, like community

centers (Rodriguez et al., 2009). This supportive nature allows for a relationship and trust to foster between the school/community mentor and the truant student. Through a supportive partnership as the basis of the intervention, the student feels supported in school and will begin to attend more frequently.

Within the path-goal theory, directive leadership calls on leaders to offer, “instructions about their task, including what is expected of them, how it is to be done and the timeline for when it should be completed” (Northouse, 2013, p. 139). Some interventions are more directive-based in nature. Interventions noted in the literature focused on directives offered to students, specifically from juvenile court judges and school personnel.

The final element of the path-goal theory that forms the framework of this study is achievement-oriented leadership. Northouse (2013) stated, “achievement-oriented leadership is characterized by a leader who challenges subordinates to perform work at the highest level possible” (p. 140). School leaders applying interventions to truant students will have this achievement-oriented theory as the basis for the students’ success. The goal of any intervention is ultimately to help the student achieve success and return to school. Many of the interventions included in the literature not only focus on students returning to school with greater frequency but are also designed to see them succeed academically, socially and emotionally. With this framework, the achievement-oriented approach is the overarching goal of all the interventions.

Conceptual Framework

In choosing this specific topic to review, the goal of the study was to analyze the influence of an adult mentor on mitigating school refusal behaviors. The goal was to uncover an intervention that draws from family, community and school that has been successfully applied to assist in retaining school refusal students. DeSocio et al. (2007) noted the importance of a

relationship-based approach in a quantitative study in engaging school refusal students and retaining them in school. “Mentors provide adolescents with opportunities for prosocial identification, offer empathetic support to mobilize self-development, encourage emulation and practice of self-regulatory skills and promote experiences that refute students’ lowered academic aspirations” (DeSocio et al., 2007, p. 3). Rodriguez et al. (2009) wrote that mentors are necessary to “support a climate that recognizes the experiential, intellectual and community cultural wealth that youth bring to schools and communities” (p. 222). The path-goal theory is an appropriate theory for this study because mentor-leaders offer coaching and direction to truant students, and utilize an intervention to remove a particular roadblock. The path-goal theory determines a path, or in this case, an intervention, with a focus on reaching a goal and addressing the truant students’ needs to assist them in successfully returning to school full time. A qualitative case study testing this theory was completed to determine if a mentor intervention was effective in retaining school refusal students.

Concluding Thoughts

In reviewing the literature, the goal was to categorize each intervention and align the intervention with the contributing factor leading to the school refusal student and truant behavior. Notable successful interventions were based on empirical and tested data. An additional goal or purpose was to situate these interventions into specific categories. These categories of interventions were school-based interventions, community-based interventions and a combination of both school and community-based interventions.

Based on the literature review, it is clear that school refusal is a significant issue. Multiple factors, specifically school and family circumstances, are major contributors to school refusal. Students, specifically males, in urban and lower socio-economic areas have the largest

and most prevalent cases of this behavior. Addressing this student issue has led to an assortment of school, community and mixed interventions to curtail school refusal and allow schools to retain this population of students. The literature has revealed success among these interventions. However, there was not one specific intervention that was considered a cure-all or stood out over all others. Multiple studies noted the use of positive relationships and mentoring as effective interventions. Additionally, there was a lack of data demonstrating if the researched interventions have been sustainable and useful for students over an extended period. Finally, Reid (2014) noted to address school refusal, necessary changes need to occur. These changes include ensuring all students enjoy school and achieve success, build positive relationships, have appropriate student at-risk strategies in place, improve students' self-esteem, prevent bullying in school, effectively use data to drive school decisions, make curriculum more relevant to students and create more effective uses of the law for punitive measures. Theory needs to be put into practice to address truancy and ensure the success of this population of students.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine a teacher mentor intervention in response to students refusing to attend school and exhibiting truant behaviors. School refusal is defined as an umbrella term referring to all student motivated refusal to attend school and/or an inability to remain in classes for the entire school day (Pelligrini, 2007). At the high school where the study was conducted, a resiliency intervention program for school refusal students is currently in place. These students qualify for the resiliency intervention program based on a variety of criteria. These criteria include a) all participants are sophomores; b) participants were absent 10% or more during their freshman year; c) participants were struggling or failing courses during their freshman year; and e) participants, once selected for the resiliency intervention program, agreed to participate. As part of their intervention program, these students received a full year of mentoring from a teacher within the school. Findings from the study allowed the researcher to determine if the teacher mentor intervention assisted in improving school refusal students' school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention.

Qualitative Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative phenomenological methodology for this study. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Through a questionnaire and direct interview survey instrumentation, the data and findings allowed the researcher to determine if the teacher mentor intervention assisted in improving school refusal students' school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention. Creswell (2013) noted in a phenomenological study, the researcher “identifies

the essence of human experience concerning a phenomenon as described by the study's participants" (p. 15). Merriam (2009) added, "phenomenology becomes a focus on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness" (p. 24). For this study, high school students already enrolled in an intervention program received an additional retention intervention, a teacher mentor.

Focus Group Design

High school students that are engaged in a school-based teacher mentoring intervention program were the focus of this study. All of the participants for this study are currently enrolled in a resiliency intervention program. These students selected for the resiliency intervention program met the following criteria: a) all participants are sophomores; b) participants were absent 10% or more during their freshman year; c) participants were struggling or failing courses during their freshman year; and e) participants, once selected for the resiliency intervention program, agreed to participate.

A total of 22 sophomore students were selected and accepted enrollment in the school-based resiliency intervention program. As an additional intervention, all of these students received a teacher mentor. "School-based mentoring tends to deliver better outcomes when the mentoring relationships are longer, and the mentor-mentee contacts are frequent and consistent" (Simoes & Alarcao, 2014, p. 114). All 22 participants in the resiliency intervention program were recruited for this study. Of these 22 students, 16 are male, and six are female. (See Appendix F)

To gain data for this study, the researcher used the two instruments used by Wilkins (2008) in her dissertation, *Effective School-based Peer Mentoring: The Participant's Perspective*. The Wilkins (2008) questionnaire and interview instruments were used to gain

direct student data at three different schools in Vermont. For this study, the researcher received permission from the author and slightly modified the two instruments (See Appendix G). The data instruments have been previously vetted and used in the Wilkins (2008) study and dissertation at multiple grade levels, including the high school level. For her study, Wilkins (2008) interviewed nearly 80 students using the instrumentation tools. In addition to using vetted and previously used instrumentation tools, the researcher received permission from the district superintendent to conduct a site study at the high school.

Each of the students within the intervention program receiving mentoring from a teacher received a questionnaire (See Appendix A) and was interviewed by the researcher. The researcher used open-ended interview questions (See Appendix B) to gain data. The instrumentation tools allowed the researcher to examine qualitative data to assess the overall fidelity and effectiveness of the mentoring intervention from the student perspective. Additionally, the instruments yielded ample data, allowing the researcher to determine the overall effectiveness of the mentoring intervention in assisting school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention of school refusal students.

Research Questions

The researcher focused the study on a teacher mentoring intervention as a means of addressing school refusal and improve overall school retention. As a result, the following research questions were addressed:

R1: How do identified students characterize their relationship with their teacher mentor?

R2: What is an effective mentoring program from the student participant's perspective?

R3: How do identified students characterize the mentoring partnership's effectiveness on their school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention?

Research Setting

The setting for the teacher mentoring intervention study for school refusal students was conducted at a large suburban Massachusetts high school serving grades 9-12. The high school has approximately 1,700 students (See Appendix E) and nearly 150 teachers. The high school has a significant amount of services for its large special education population yet only one program for its general education school refusal students. The current program addressing school refusal students is a resiliency intervention program aimed at retaining students through relationship building curriculum, group meetings and pairing students with a teacher mentor. For the current 2015-2016 school year, the intervention program will be in its second year. The interventions are expanding to include a teacher mentor partnership with its school refusal students. The intervention program services 22 students, situated in two groups of 10 and 12 students respectively. Over the course of the school year, these students will attend group meetings daily, which will be led by a point teacher and will meet with their teacher mentors throughout the school year.

Participants/Sample

The resiliency intervention program is in its second year using interventions to address school refusal students. In the 2014-2015 school year, the program consisted of 12 sophomore students with the program increasing to 22 students during the 2015-2016 academic school year. A point person, a teacher, leads the program using groups and a social skills curriculum to address school refusal students. This school year, the program introduced the use of a teacher mentor as an intervention to assist sophomore students in the resiliency intervention program.

Creswell (2013) recommends identifying interviewees that can best answer questions within a study. All 22 students currently enrolled in the intervention program who are receiving

mentoring from a teacher were recruited and invited to participate in the study. Of the 22 students recruited, 15 were issued both the questionnaire and survey interview questions. Both instrument tools were administered within the school and during school hours, creating a more effective and efficient method for gaining data.

Creswell (2013) clearly articulated to “obtain consent from the interviewee to participate in the study...have the interviewee complete the consent form” (p. 166). All participants in this study had a parental consent form sent to their parents/guardians detailing the study and its purpose (See Appendix C). The consent form was adapted from the Wilkins (2008) parental consent form used in her dissertation site study. Following the return of the signed consent form, the students were admitted into the study and were interviewed once during the 2015-2016 academic school year. Additionally, prior to each interview, the researcher received each student’s permission to be interviewed. This was completed even though the researcher collected parental consent forms. The student consent form was read to each interviewee, and the researcher answered all questions the interviewee had. Once this exchange was completed, the interviewee was asked to sign the student consent form (See Appendix D). The student consent form was adapted from the Wilkins (2008) student consent form used in her dissertation site study.

Data Collection and Analysis

The next session addresses data collection and analysis procedures.

Data Collection

The researcher used a questionnaire (see Appendix A) and an open-ended survey (see Appendix B) as instrument tools to gain data. The interviews were used to collect a bulk of the data for this study. DeMarrais (2004) defined an interview as “a process in which a researcher

and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (p. 55). All 22 students receiving teacher mentoring were invited to receive each of the instrument tools, a questionnaire and survey. For the study, the researcher believes this is a manageable size of participants to gain statistically significant data. The researcher met with each student individually in a setting within the high school that was comfortable for both the researcher and the interviewee. The goal was to use a space that was formal yet not intimidating for the interviewee. Each student interviewee received the questionnaire, designed to be quick and simple with both open and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed to collect qualitative data and act as a catalyst for the interview. The one-on-one interviews, which were all scheduled in advance, was designed to gain data from the primary source, the students engaged in the teacher mentor program. All 15 students participating in the data collection were only interviewed once to gain their perspective of the teacher mentor program.

Data Analysis

In analyzing data, Creswell (2013) noted the importance of coding data, which “involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from a different database being used in a study and then assigning a label to the code” (p. 184). For this study, the data was coded into categories, specifically the mentor-mentee relationship, the mentee’s experience with the teacher mentor and overall effectiveness of the school mentoring intervention on students’ social capital, attendance and academic performance. Creswell (2013) confirmed the use of categorical aggregation in qualitative research to establish themes or patterns. Categorizing this student data from both the questionnaire and survey allowed for the researcher to assess over nearly a yearlong, collected data. The researcher was

able to determine if the teacher mentor intervention was effective through improved student social and academic experiences, daily attendance and overall retention.

In summary, this qualitative study utilized a questionnaire and survey instrument tools as they resulted in the most meaningful data to assess the overall fidelity of the teacher mentoring intervention. The collected information remained confidential and was not shared with any other individuals, including school administrators, teacher mentors and the point person for the intervention program. Each student participant's real name was not used and when necessary an alias, student initials, was created to allow for confidentiality within this study. Following the completion of the data collection coupled with a completed defense of the study, all collected student interview information was destroyed.

Delimitations of the Research Study

The study was designed to document students' perceptions of the role of the teacher mentor intervention and it resulted in improved social and academic experiences, daily attendance and overall retention of school refusal students. The study was conducted at a high school, with a selected number of students who meet a specific criterion. As a result, there were clear limitations of student profiles, within a high school setting and a limited socio-economic group.

The selection of a teacher mentor for each student also had its limitations. The pool of mentor teachers that applied to be part of the intervention was limited. The selection process was limited, and mentor-mentee pairings were based on limited information, criteria and research. Many quality teachers that have meaningful relationships with students within the school had chosen not to become a mentor in the intervention program. Additionally, the mentoring process can replicate tensions and conflicts school refusal students have dealt with leading to the

consistent absenteeism. Mentors needed to be able to manage the higher degree of emotional and behavioral issues that a particular student profile represented. As a result, mentors may not have had all the necessary skills and strategies to assist the school refusal student. Mentor training and professional development were not required by mentors, which was a clear limitation in the preparation of these teacher mentors.

As a scholar-practitioner, the researcher had to be mindful of his dual role as an administrator and doctoral student and not allow them to conflict in a way that could compromise the study. The researcher had to limit his influence as a school administrator as a means of gathering data. Students may have viewed the researcher as an authority figure, and he needed to act in an ethical fashion to ensure he did not coerce interviewees. Additionally, the researcher needed to overcome the presupposition that students would be willing to offer a great deal of information during interviews because of his role and title within the school.

Conclusion

Interventions for school refusal students can vary, with teacher mentors being a developing model that will require a great deal of research and data collection. Further research and development of the intervention are required to assess the overall effectiveness of this school refusal model in retaining school refusal and truant students.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine a teacher mentor intervention in response to students that refused to attend school and exhibited truant behaviors. The site study for this research was conducted at a high school in Massachusetts where general education students were enrolled in a resiliency intervention program for school. These students qualified for the resiliency intervention program based on a variety of criteria. This criterion included a) all participants were sophomores; b) participants were absent 10% or more during their freshman year; c) participants were struggling or failing courses during their freshman year; and e) participants, once selected for the resiliency intervention program, agreed to participate. As part of their intervention program, these students were receiving a full year of mentoring from a teacher in the school. The goal of the study was to determine if the teacher mentor intervention assisted in improving school refusal students' school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention. The study addressed three key research questions: RQ1: How do identified students characterize their relationship with teacher mentors? RQ2: What is an effective mentoring program from the student participant's perspective? RQ3: How do identified students characterize the mentoring partnership's effect on their academic, social and emotional well-being?

This chapter will offer a synthesis of the data collected from students who were enrolled in the resiliency program. The qualitative data used in this study was derived from two instruments. For the first instrument all students received was a questionnaire. The second instrument was an interview survey containing a variety of open-ended questions. All students received both instruments and the standard amount of time for both the questionnaire and interview was approximately 15 minutes. All interviews were conducted at the school during

students' homeroom period. No students lost any direct instruction time as a result of the study. Additionally, all students were interviewed in a conference room away from any distractions or outside influences. In chapter 5, recommendations and implications will be identified. Based on the data accumulated from the site study, four major themes have been identified and will be discussed throughout this chapter.

The data collected from the two instruments, the questionnaire and the interview survey, were coded and placed into various themes based on the relationship and the direct experience between the student and mentor. The objective was to find specific themes that portrayed the importance of the coaching and mentoring that the students received to maintain the conceptual framework and the path-goal theory. Additionally, the data revealed the academic growth and the overall experience the mentoring directly had upon them. All interviews for this study were recorded using the Rev app and their answers were transcribed using the same app. By having both an audio and written version of each interview, coupled with each focus group member's questionnaire, a more in-depth analysis of the data occurred allowing the researcher to formulate consistent themes.

Participant Group

The participant group targeted for this study was 22 general education students currently enrolled in the resiliency program. Of the 22 students, 15 students completed the consent form and participated in the study. Two students were hospitalized during the data collection period and were unavailable to complete both the questionnaire and the interview. Additionally, the other five students never returned the consent form even after further notification from the researcher. Table 1 represents each student profile addressing each student's initials, age and gender. Student's full names will remain confidential to protect their identity.

Table 1.

Participant	Gender	Age
WI	Female	15
WP	Male	15
RJ	Male	16
RS	Male	16
CL	Male	15
GV	Male	16
JH	Female	16
ZW	Female	15
JO	Male	16
TM	Male	15
IR	Male	15
JM	Male	15
SA	Male	15
KT	Male	15
KM	Female	16

Of the 15 participants, four were female and 11 were male. All students were sophomores and enrolled in the resiliency program.

Themes of Significance

As a result of the data collected from the 15 sophomore students receiving mentoring through the resiliency program, four major themes were identified and will be discussed in detail.

The four themes are as follows:

1. Examining the relationship between the teacher mentor and the student
2. Impact on student growth and academic improvement due to mentoring
3. Student satisfaction and overall positive experience with their mentor
4. As a result of mentoring received, school attendance and retention had become important

Theme 1 addresses the relationship between the mentor and student because of the mentoring experience. This theme emerged immediately based on student feedback in the questionnaire and student responses in the interviews. The data presented offered an authentic and genuine look into students' views and feelings about their mentor. The relationship is an inverse look at the path-goal theory as students offer their interpretations of their relationship with the mentor and how it has resulted in their widespread view of school. The second theme specifically addressed how mentoring directly effected their growth as a student. This entailed that student academic progress was a majority of the data collected and primarily focused on academic growth of the student due to the mentoring received. Theme 3 is similar to the second theme but focused more of the actual experience of the mentoring process with a variety of students offering their emotional connection and tie to the mentor. It was important to note this because students began to view and recognize that their relationship with their mentor went beyond academic support. Students articulated and discussed the progression of the mentoring to include conversations about topics outside of school. Finally, theme 4 looks at the student perspective of attending school because of the mentoring they received. All of these general

education students were identified as school refusal due to their poor attendance during their freshman year. All students profiled missed a minimum of 10% of school with multiple students far exceeding that minimum amount during their freshman school year. Students offered poignant and compelling correlations between consistent school attendance and the mentoring they received.

Overall, the data collected revealed that the mentoring resulted in a positive relationship between the mentor and student with a focus on academics and attendance. Next, each specific theme and the direct student data will be presented for the four significant themes.

Theme 1: Examining the relationship between the teacher mentor and the student.

“I work with my mentor every day; I trust her...”

This theme emerged immediately based on data collected from the questionnaire and student accounts of their relationship with their mentor. This theme was placed first for multiple reasons. For the mentoring to be successful and the student to improve academically and with their attendance, a meaningful relationship is necessary. Additionally, students needed to buy into their mentor and determining if the established relationship would address this. From the student questionnaire, one specific question asked all participants to describe their mentor using assigned characteristics. Table 2 represents the feedback offered by the student participants. All students checked multiple characteristics representing the scope of their relationship with their mentor.

Table 2.

Mentor Characteristic	Total Responses
Guide	10
Role Model	11
Helper	13
Motivator	14
Friend	10
Someone who care about you	14

This feedback shows the data demonstrating each student’s personal feelings about their mentor and is a view of the relationship they have constructed with their mentor. Based on the student data, it is evident that all but one student views their relationship with their mentor as one based on caring. These students note that their mentor is someone who cares for them, which offers a rich emotional bond between student and mentor. Additionally, 14 of these students view their mentor as a motivator. Most notable was that 10 of the 15 students viewed their teacher mentor as a friend.

An additional piece of data collected from the questionnaire asked students directly how they would rate their relationship with their mentor. Students had the option of choosing great, good or fair. Of the 15 students that participated in this study, 14 chose great as a rating to assess their relationship with their mentor. The one outlier chose well. The data is quite persuasive that an overwhelming majority of students receiving mentoring view their relationship as great with their mentor.

Based on the student interviews, participants offered a variety of viewpoints of their relationship with their mentor. JO noted:

I truly appreciate and respect my mentor. I like that she is caring and makes me feel important. She lets me know I need to be here, and I know she is real...She makes me feel important.

JH revealed the significance of her relationship with her mentor:

I am very close with my mentor; I can tell her anything, and I know that she'll help me with it. I trust her. I can go to her with completely anything, not even about school or anything and she'll help me. I view her as both a teacher and friend.

When the researcher asked JH why her relationship progressed beyond simply a teacher mentor, JH stated:

She made me feel like she cared about me. She cared about everything that was happening in my life. That's what I like about my mentor; she treats me like a person, not a number. I have never had this experience with a teacher in my life.

KM noted a similar experience with her mentor as their relationship went beyond simply addressing schoolwork.

Since I have worked with my mentor, she is more than just a normal regular teacher. We talk; it's more helpful because I can go to her for different things other than just what I need to do on my schoolwork and my class work and stuff. It just built a better relationship.

TM added:

My mentor is so nice. He is a great person to have helped you with anything you need. Anything you need, you could just ask him, and he'll help you.

The theme of the significance of the relationship based on student feedback was evident when WP stated:

100% of my success with my mentor is due to my relationship with her. She offers me extra help whenever I need it. She is very open, nice, never in a bad mood really, never mean. She is easy to talk to and very approachable.

ZW had a similar response about her mentor:

He is easy to approach, and I am very comfortable with her and our relationship.

RS went on to say:

I trust my mentor; I think she is very helpful. She has my best interests in mind.

The most compelling data collected regarding the relationship between the student and mentor was from RJ, who offered a great deal of information. He noted:

When I started the mentoring program, I didn't feel like I had a teacher that I could just come to and talk to, and now I can go to her with anything. She's like a (became emotional)...I don't know how to describe it. She's my mentor, but she's somebody that I can trust outside of just being a teacher or mentor.

RJ continued to reflect and describe the relationship with his mentor:

She's nice. She takes the time to actually sit down and have a conversation with me one to one. She actually cares. She is not saying things to make you do your work. She actually does care. She is totally different; she'll actually take the time to help you. Sit down; make sure you're getting things done. Check in if they are done. If not, she will check with my teachers to make sure you didn't hand something in, that you will hand it in and still get credit for it.

RJ offered such a rich description and personal perspective of this relationship with his mentor that the researcher followed up with why this teacher mentor was different than other teachers he had worked with. He offered:

I trust her with everything; I know she won't go talk to anybody else if I don't want her to.

This theme was evident based on student responses to the questionnaire and their perspectives from the interview survey. There was one outlier who noted that his experience was "fine" and that his relationship was not "deep" and "we don't talk any more than professionally, I guess." It was not clear if the student failed to forge the relationship or the mentor. Overall, this theme was significant, as students have created a deep and emotional bond with their mentors that far extend beyond academics.

Theme 2: Impact on student growth and academic improvement due to mentoring

"My mentor helped me realize the importance of school, therefore making me work harder in school."

The second theme is the essence of this intervention, which is to address student academic success due to the mentoring they received. All of these students were struggling students with major attendance issues. They avoided school for a variety of reasons with academics being the core factor. The collected data revealed that students improved and grew academically due to the mentoring. Furthermore, students noted a growth socially, growth in how they view themselves, school and their future. The data collected from both the questionnaire and interviews helped strengthen this theme.

The student questionnaire offered a representation of this theme by asking students since they began receiving mentoring in what areas have they had grown and/or improved. Table 3

shows student choices and responses. Students had the option to check off all that applied to them as a result of the mentoring.

Table 3.

Area of growth/improvement	Number of Responses (15 participants)
School Attendance	6
Social Settings	5
Study Habits	12
Grades	11
Self-Confidence	8
Overall Attitude	12
Attitude Towards School	11
Standards for Yourself	10
Plans for Your Future	12
Motivation to Stay in School	10

As a follow-up, all 15 students stated yes to the question if their involvement in the mentoring program led to their improvement or growth in any/all categories. Additionally, students wrote that the mentoring resulted in greater organization, more focus, motivation, study habits, improved homework, becoming a better person, proper planning, future and pressure to keep working.

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire the overall attitude and attitude towards school scored well. A correlation exists between the two prompts. There was an improvement in their overall attitude when there was an improved attitude towards school by the

student participants. The data revealed evidence that when school improvement occurred these participants' attitudes were improving. Academically, the data reveals that direct mentoring has improved student study habits and grades, which coincides with students' plans for the future. From the student interviews, a variety of students also noted that the mentoring has improved their homework and the consistency in which they now complete homework. It is also noteworthy that 10 out of 15 students noticed an improvement in school attendance, which will be further discussed in Theme 4. The questionnaire allowed students to comment further on any areas of improvement. WI stated that her mentor "motivated me and showed me how important my education should be to me." RJ noted, "my mentor helped me learn that you actually have to do something because nobody else is going to do it for you." RS added, "I would have never changed if I wasn't pushed by my mentor." GV said, "My mentor showed me many ways to keep on track and be more organized." The student interviews offered the overall importance and the lifeline these students needed from a mentor to be successful in school.

The goal for coding the data for the Theme 2 was to highlight how the mentor and the mentoring process improved an area or aspect of student academic growth. The responses from students during the interview revealed a variety of areas in which students improved based on the mentoring and mentor.

When interviewing JO, the researcher asked how his mentor specifically helped him academically. JO responded:

Organization, what classes I needed to get focused on, what I needed to do, pretty much like homework. She gave me a piece of paper; we wrote down the homework that I needed to do, what I needed to do and to get signatures from each teacher to make sure I was getting this done.

This data revealed that the mentor established a means for documenting homework so the student would follow through on assignments. Also, this student's mentor took the initiative to follow up with JO's teachers to ensure all homework was being completed. JH noted that importance of her mentor in improving her academics:

My mentor motivated me to do my work and not just blow it off. She made me set academic goals. One goal was to do more homework because I never did homework before. We worked on that.

KM noted during her interview the impact mentoring had on her academics by stating:

With my mentor, we usually talk about my grades. She helps me with what I need to get done. She's on me about what I need to work better with and what classes I need to do better in and what work I'm missing.

TM also noted how the mentoring experience made him more aware of his grades and ways to improve his grades through teacher communication. He stated:

My mentor would go through my grades with me. She would have me email teachers to ask about assignments and get more information.

WI noted the significance of the mentoring she received in regards to her future and her attitude toward school. She added:

I struggled with focusing and realizing how important school was. I always knew it was important, but when I went to my mentor, it was more like she'd tell me about our future and the things we need to do. It was a powerful message. My mentor has changed what direction I want to go in.

JM stated in the interview that the mentoring he is receiving has changed his perspective on his education. He included:

I never really cared much about high school. My mentor has worked with me, now I enjoy school, and for the first time, I have actually thought about my future, about college, about a career.

WP mentioned organization and goal setting as areas of improvement as a result of his mentoring experience.

She helps me get organized with everything and keep a solid workflow, making sure I'm updated with school and makes sure I am in school.

Additionally, WP talked about how his mentor has really stressed goal setting and working to achieve the set goal.

Another thing we do every month is goal setting. We sit down and go over our last goal, over the whole month, and she see's if I accomplished it. This month my goal is to do all of my homework. I sit down 30 minutes a night Monday through Friday, sit there, and do my homework for at least 30 minutes.

RS stated in his interview that his mentor also enforced the use of goal setting as a means of addressing issues with his academics. RS added:

We have been doing goal setting. We make a goal every few weeks, and it'll be about homework, or studying, or a test, or getting good grades. Then, I'll try to follow through on the goal and that's one thing that we talk about when we meet weekly...how we accomplished the goal and then if we need to revise it. I'm going to try the same process on my own next year when I am out of the mentoring program.

The researcher asked RS to articulate on one of the goals he has set this year and he responded with:

One of my goals was right after school I would go up into my room without any distractions and get my homework done. Then, after that I would study for 30 minutes, even if I didn't have a test. I never really did my homework at home. I'd always just do it in PLUS block or FLEX block, or whenever I could. This year I'm really getting it done when its time to get it done. Last year I didn't do too well in my grades. I didn't really do my homework. My mom always got upset because she was like, "You could be such a smarter student," but I didn't try that hard.

RJ's mentoring experience resulted in improved grades, and he credits his mentor for his significant academic jump.

My mentor motivates me to get my work done, and I saw a major improvement in my grades. I went from F's to B's in a matter of a few weeks.

Student SH noted the "constant pressure" he receives from his mentor. He noted that his mentor focuses primarily on academics and improving in work ethic. SH went onto say, "My mentor pushes me by saying, Do it, or, you can do it. Do it. Get it done. Yeah, it is easier to do it when you're being told to."

A major aspect of this intervention was having students improve their overall attendance and improve academically. The results of the questionnaire and survey indicated that this crop of school refusal students were growing and improving academically as a result of the mentoring they were receiving. This theme surfaced quickly during the data collection process and was crystalized when the coding process began. Based on the data there is a clear correlation between the mentoring these school refusal students received and an academic growth.

Theme 3: Student satisfaction and overall positive experience with their mentor

“The mentoring has been great; I have received more individualized instruction with this program.”

Addressing the overall satisfaction of the mentoring from the student perspective was an important element of this study. Additionally, the student experience was equally significant. As a result, both topics emerged in the data allowing the researcher to create themes based on the collected data. Based on the data collected from the two instruments, the data reflected the student’s views and perspectives regarding their experience and fulfillment with the mentoring and mentor. This theme will highlight student responses from the questionnaire and student feedback from the survey.

The student questionnaire asked students to rate their satisfaction with the mentoring experience, a basic yet direct question. Students had the opportunity to rate the mentor with one of three options. Those options included very satisfied, satisfied or somewhat satisfied. The results revealed a group of student mentees that were very satisfied with their experiences. The question from the questionnaire resulted in 14 of the 15 respondents offering a very satisfied response. The one remaining outlier offered a response of satisfied. An additional and corresponding question was asked within the same questionnaire asked the students if the mentoring been a good experience. These questions are similar; yet the clear distinction is the second corresponding question addressed the overall experience. From this question, an overall consensus of 15 students stated that the mentoring has been a good experience for them. Students had a chance to offer why the mentoring was a good experience. Multiple students offered interesting reasons and rationale as to why the experience was positive. CL noted on his questionnaire that his mentor “pushed me to become a better student and continues to push me.”

RJ wrote, “I feel like somebody actually cares to take the time to have a real conversation about my attitude towards my school work and help me achieve my goal.” Student WI filled in this section by adding that her experience was positive because, “I knew that I always [will] have someone there to remind me of my potential both academically and socially.” ZW completely agreed by writing that her experience was unique because her mentor “is an awesome person and teacher and is so understanding and willing to put others before herself.”

The questionnaire revealed evidence that students strongly believed that the mentoring experience was very satisfactory and positive. Students’ results from this instrument revealed that students felt connected to their mentor and the personal connection with the mentor was highly beneficial for them. More data regarding this theme was revealed during the individual interviews.

Theme 3 was further highlighted when the researcher interviewed students. The researcher asked standard and clarifying open-ended questions that resulted in data surfacing that revealed that the mentoring was both satisfactory and positive. The most notable firsthand student excerpts related to this theme will be offered.

The student responses were coded and placed into Theme 3 based on student satisfaction and overall experience with their mentor and the mentoring experience. Student TM noted his experience was positive because:

She offered more individualized instruction, and she helped me academically. My grades improved. It has been a fun experience for me.

IR talked about his experience with his mentor, and he was satisfied with the experience because of the results academically.

Because of my mentor and my time with her, I feel like I pay attention more in class, and I am doing better in school.

Students talked about how their mentor experience beneficially because their mentor supported them beyond academics. The data revealed the student participants were satisfied with the mentor because of the emotional support they received. The emotional intelligence a variety of these mentors possessed and the response these students had to that emotional support is noteworthy. Student WP exemplified this experience by noting:

I meet with my mentor a few times a week. There is academic support but also emotional. She has helped me out a lot emotionally. I had some stuff going on. I could literally talk to her about whatever I wanted.

CL noted his mentor cared just as much about his emotional well being as his academic success. He stated:

I like how my mentor cares about me. She is personal; she knows my situation and wants to make sure I am ok. She treats me like a person, not just some kid she has to see a couple times a week.

A variety of students noted that their experience with their mentor was positive because the mentor would advocate for them and was willing to speak to teachers on behalf of the student. This simple act of speaking to fellow teachers was recognized by multiple participants who believed this support element made their experience a positive one. Student GV talked about how he had not been doing well in science. He was satisfied with his mentor because:

She went down and talked to him. She made sure that I was doing everything all right. She spoke to the teacher and looked out for me.

Student RS had a similar experience:

My mentor will do teacher check-ins like every few weeks where she'll go to my teachers and look at my grades and they will sign off saying how I am doing.

JO talked about how his mentor was a strong advocate for him and spoke to his teachers as a means to support him.

I had trouble with a teacher. My mentor wanted some background why. She wanted to help me, so she talked to that teacher for me. This showed that she really cared about me.

Other students simply stated in the interview how the mentoring was a positive experience for them. Student KM said:

It definitely helped me think more about that I need to be more involved in school and finish up my homework and really focus more on my classes.

In his interview, RJ noted his satisfaction with his mentor because:

She would take the time to sit next to me and help me work my stuff out and achieve the stuff that I wanted to do, like bring my grades up to where I wanted them.

The participants of this study offered both academic and emotional reasons for why they were satisfied with their mentor and factors for why the experience was positive with the mentor.

Overall, the testimonies from participants were consistent; these mentors cared. They were willing to take that extra step to talk to a teacher, show the student their potential or offer a listening ear. These examples from the students demonstrate that mentoring includes academic and emotional support to create a positive experience for the student.

Theme 4: As a result of the mentoring received, school attendance and retention have become important.

“My mentor helped me realize that I have to go to school and that I need to be here so I can go to college...I actually want to come and see my teachers and learn new things.”

This study focused on school refusal students and the need to address these issues using an effective intervention. As part of this intervention, the goal was to improve both student academics and attendance. This Theme 4 was an essential part of the study and the instrument tools used in this study allowed for this theme to emerge. Student feedback allowed the researcher to code data and highlight participant perspectives to demonstrate the effect the intervention had on their current and future attendance.

The initial data collected to address the correlation between the mentoring and student attendance and retention was derived from the student questionnaire. The researcher asked one question related to attendance. The question asked students if being involved with mentoring improved how they felt about wanting to attend and stay in school. The question did not ask for a rationale or reasoning for their response. However, a variety of students offered factors and personal perspectives as a follow-up. A total of 15 students responded to the questionnaire with 12 students stating yes; the mentoring improved their feeling about wanting to stay in school. There were three students who stated no to the same question. One of the no responders, JM, stated that even with the mentoring, “I have never really liked school.” Another No responder was student WI who stated, “I was already interested in coming to school. The mentoring guided me in the right direction.”

Two specific responders who wrote why they responded Yes to the question were RS and ZW. These two students offered similar reasons for why the mentoring improved their

attendance. RS wrote, “It makes me feel more passionate about getting good grades in school and improving in school.” ZW penned, “Yes, it has motivated me to try harder and that life all around, in and out of school, is so much easier and stress-free if you just try and get good grades.” Multiple participant responders demonstrated the idea that improved academics leads to improved attendance. This idea was also articulated during the student interviews. A variety of notable interview responses will be offered.

All of the students placed in the resiliency program and receiving direct mentoring had attendance problems their freshman year. These students all demonstrated truancy behaviors and were considered school refusal students. Their absences from their freshman year in high school exceeded 10% with many students far eclipsing this percentage. The student data reflected that the mentoring program resulted in improved attendance. This was represented by JO, who talked about his attendance issues his freshman year. He said:

My mentor has helped me improve my attendance. It is way better than freshman year. I want to show up to school to see my mentor because she is kind and she pushes me. She knows how to talk to me.

RS also talked about the difference in attendance from freshman year to sophomore year due to his mentor:

My freshman year I had a lot of absences. I had like 30 or 40 absences. This year I have hardly been absent...I appreciate how she keeps me in check.

SH was another of the student participants that had a significant amount of absences during his freshman year. Now, as a sophomore and receiving mentoring, his attendance has improved. He talked about this with the researcher and added:

My attendance this year is much better. My mentor, we talk about school, about me graduating one day and my future plans. We talk about how I want to go to college and then law school. I want to be a lawyer.

Student RJ had a very passionate and emotional take on his attendance and the support he received from his mentor. He offered:

I think when I first started I didn't really come to school. I had 26 absences my freshman year, so I tried to improve and actually come to school this year. When I told her (mentor) that I didn't really like school because I didn't know how to... (long pause) really the whole friends thing, she helped me realize that not everybody's going to be your friend. You have to just come, get it done. Everybody has to do it. You need to be here. If you don't, your future's going to be affected by it. That's when I realized I need to come to school. I need to get it done. I don't care what the grade is, as long as it is done and it's handed in.

A bulk of the data for this theme derived from the questionnaire with a majority of students stating that their involvement with the mentoring improved their attendance and feelings about wanting to attend school. Student participants surveyed offered reasons and factors why the mentoring resulted in improved attendance from their freshman year. The idea of having someone to speak with, who will motivate them and once again support them, leads to students wanting to attend school because of their relationship with the mentor.

Review of the Four Themes

Although these themes were presented in a singular fashion, they are all aligned and weave a similar story. All of these themes need to be represented by the students for the student to be successful and thrive academically, emotionally and attendance. The emerging four themes

based on the collected data were: 1) the relationship between the teacher mentor and the student, 2) impact on student growth and academic improvement due to mentoring, 3) student satisfaction and overall positive experience with their mentor and as a result of mentoring received, and 4) the importance of school attendance. For a truly effective intervention targeting school refusal students with truancy behaviors, students need to have a relationship with their mentor. They need to have an emotional bond and feel supported in all areas especially academically and socially. Students need to grow, especially academically, because of the direct mentoring they are receiving. In conjunction with their mentors, students need to diagnose and address areas of weakness and gain support to address positively and improve those areas. Students need to feel satisfied with their mentor and feel that their mentor is having a positive influence on their progression. Finally, students should want to attend school more frequently because of the mentor experience. The one-to-one relationship with the mentor and the academic improvement should be driving their consistent attendance in school. These themes need to work with one another to create a successful intervention for the targeted student.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered the experiences and perspectives from 15 student participants who are considered school refusal students due to their past poor attendance and truancy behaviors. These students are all general education students who are enrolled in a resiliency program and have received a mentor to address their poor attendance and struggling academics. To gain data on their experience with the mentoring program and their relationship with their mentor, these 15 student participants received a questionnaire and were interviewed by the researcher. The data collected was coded and compiled. The data revealed a genuine connection had been formed between the student and mentor. Additionally, students improved in a variety of

areas, including academically and a noted improvement in attendance. Furthermore, students addressed their future and goals of attending college. Finally, students offered their overall satisfaction and experiences with their mentor. In the next chapter, the research questions will be addressed along with the conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine a teacher mentor intervention in response to students refusing to attend school and exhibiting truant behaviors. The goal of the study was to determine if the teacher mentor intervention assisted in improving students' school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention. The study addressed three key research questions:

- How do identified students characterize their relationship with teacher mentors?
- What is it that makes an effective mentoring program from the student participant's perspective?
- How do identified students characterize the mentoring partnership's effect on their academic, social and emotional well being?

A phenomenological qualitative study was conducted at a Massachusetts-based high school to address and answer these essential research questions. The research data was generated by using two instrument tools, a student questionnaire and an interview survey. The targeted participants of this study were general education students who were enrolled in a resiliency intervention program for school refusal. These students qualified for the resiliency intervention program based on a variety of criteria. This criterion includes a) all participants are sophomores; b) participants were absent 10% or more during their freshman year; c) participants were struggling or failing courses during their freshman year; and e) participants, once selected for the resiliency intervention program, agreed to participate. As part of their intervention program, these students are receiving a full year of mentoring from a teacher within the school. The data collected from the students occurred during the mid-year point of the intervention.

Research Findings

The goal of the phenomenological qualitative study was to determine if the teacher mentor intervention assisted in improving school refusal students' school attendance, academic performance, social skills and overall retention. As previously noted, this study addressed three essential research questions. Based on student participants' responses from the two data collection instruments, the following findings and answers to the research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do identified students characterize their relationship to teacher mentors?

The student participants overwhelmingly characterized their relationship with their mentor as very strong. Students built strong relationships with their mentors based on simple principles, trust and respect. It was evident that teacher mentors truly cared about their student mentee and wanted the best for them. Students strongly believed that their relationship with their mentor went beyond academic support. The relationship between the mentor and mentee also extended to social and emotional support.

Multiple student participants clearly articulated that their mentor cared about them as a human being. Regardless of the fact that these were teacher mentors, some participants viewed their mentor as a friend. Students openly discussed that they could share personal and very intimate details with their mentor. This demonstrates the positive emotional involvement of these mentors, who have identified their role as an emotional support, not simply an academic support.

RQ2: What makes an effective mentoring program from the student participant's perspective?

Student participants identified the direct mentoring they received as the most significant aspect of the resiliency program in which they were enrolled. Students noted that the program

and the mentoring received helped them improve in many academic categories. These included a greater focus on studying, completion of homework, setting academic goals and improving overall grades.

Additionally, students brought into the mentoring reveals the effectiveness of the pairing or matching of the mentor and mentee. The proper teachers were utilized as mentors who exhibited specific characteristics like caring, compassion and time management. Student participants viewed the positive spirit of the mentor as an effective means for improving their academic and social-emotional well-being. The personal one-to-one attention and instruction offered by the mentor allowed for student growth on many levels.

RQ3: How do identified students characterize the mentoring partnership's effect on their academic, social and emotional well-being?

Each student participant improved in some capacity, academically, socially, emotionally and/or improved attendance as a result of the mentoring they received. The instruments utilized in this study offered ample opportunities for this question to be answered and addressed by the student. The clear goal of the mentoring was to assist and improve the students' attendance, academics and overall perception of school. The efforts of the teacher mentors allowed for students' overall view of school to change for the better.

Students in this study openly and genuinely discussed the profound and monumental effect the mentoring received had on them. Students discussed the improvements in academics and their grades. One student discussed how he went from failing classes to jumping multiple letter grades as a result of the mentoring. Other students freely discussed the powerful relationship they had with the mentor. Students noted the caring and compassion that the mentor had for them. For many of these struggling students, this was the first trusting and meaningful

partnership they have ever established with an educator. The mentoring partnership had a positive effect on 15 school refusal students that participated in this study.

Findings Related to the Literature

In chapter 4, four specific themes were noted and discussed. These themes that were identified based on the student data were:

1. Examining the relationship between the teacher mentor and the student
2. Impact on student growth and academic improvement due to mentoring
3. Student satisfaction and overall positive experience with their mentor
4. As a result of mentoring received, school attendance and retention has become important

The following section will discuss the relationship between each of these four themes and the literature review.

Theme 1: Examining the relationship between the teacher mentor and the student

The first and most significant theme to emerge from the student data was the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Student participants in this study stated that they had a very good relationship with their mentor, categorizing them as a motivator, helper and friend. Rodriguez et al., (2009) argued the mentor-mentee relationship would allow for trust to be built within those resistant students, improving their social capital, problem-solving skills and personal recognition of their own talents. For any success and student growth to occur, a positive relationship needs to be established and groomed throughout this process. Reid (2014) noted the most prevalent factors leading to school refusal over the past decade have been school-based structures that limit access to positive relationships between the student and his or her peers and teachers and family circumstances. As a result, Northouse (2013) noted, “supportive leadership consists of being friendly and approachable as a leader and includes attending to the well-being

and human needs of subordinates” (p. 140). With this prevailing thought, a positive relationship needs to be established for any effective and quality mentoring to occur.

DeSocio et al., (2007) wrote that a mentor could begin to build a personal relationship with the student through check-ins, interactions and tutoring sessions after school. This is supported by Marvul (2012) who suggested, “most research has indicated that connecting with schools starts with student-teacher relationships...if young people perceive that adults at school care about them personally and as students, probabilities will increase that they will engage, connect and bond to the school” (p. 146). Dembo and Gullede (2009) wrote at length about school refusal interventions and the need for a trusting relationship to be forged by the mentor with both the student and parents. Communication is a key element to building this relationship. The authors noted, “high-quality relationships between students and staff mentors were associated with improved school engagement” (Dembo and Gullede, 2009, p. 442).

The literature also referenced building a relationship through the use of Positive Behavior Support or PBS. The essence of PBS is mentor supervision, high visibility, accessibility and pro-social interactions with students both inside and outside of the classroom. Through these interactions, a meaningful and trusting relationship can be established leading to student growth, improved attendance and academics. Tyre et al. (2011) wrote about a PBS study where positive interactions with students and positive reinforcements for students by the mentor resulted in improved academics and a significant impact on curbing student tardy rates.

Theme 2: Impact on student growth and academic improvement due to mentoring

An important result of the mentoring program was a changing student mindset regarding academics and school. All of these student participants were placed in the intervention because of poor grades and attendance. Many students were failing classes and struggling to meet class

expectations. The students revealed that the mentoring they received allowed them to set and achieve academic goals. Students talked about their academic growth, specifically in areas of homework, grades and overall attitude towards school. All students noted specific growth in at least one academic area with students describing growth in a variety of areas. The mentoring allowed students to recognize school as a priority rather than a hindrance. The literature revealed similar findings.

Benson (2014) wrote about the need to address student basic needs, like emotional needs through a secondary curriculum. This secondary curriculum of trust and compassion will lead to student success with the primary content-based curriculum. Mentors that address the emotional needs of the student first will have greater success in assisting students academically (Benson, 2014). Furthermore, Henry (2007) suggested interventions designed to improve engagement in school may have beneficial effects on truancy and grades. Many students in the researcher's study noted that because of their mentor, their attitudes about school changed for the better. Student participants cared about school and their futures for the first time.

Building from Theme 1, a quality and meaningful relationship between the mentor and mentee must be established in order for the Theme 2 to emerge. Students can achieve academic success through mentoring as both the research data and the literature review revealed.

Theme 3: Student satisfaction and overall positive experience with their mentor

Theme 2 revealed that a result of the mentoring received by students was academic improvement. Theme 3 addressed the overall experience and student satisfaction with the mentor and the mentoring they received. The student data from the two instruments revealed that all the students were very satisfied except one, who reported being satisfied. Student participants also revealed the mentor experience allowed for them finally have an adult in school that they could

rely and lean on to support them socially and emotionally. Reid (2012) wrote about the benefits of having a one-to-one experience with a mentor and mentee. The ability for students to voice their concerns both academically and emotionally was a key component to this experience. Marvul (2012) offered the importance of communication and trust needed in an intervention like mentoring.

Additionally, students noted that the mentoring was a positive experience because they had an in-school advocate to support them. Student data revealed that mentors assisted students by speaking to their teachers on their behalf. The mentors spoke with the teachers of the mentee, gaining information about missed work and seeking means to support them. A similar approach was utilized by DeSocio et al., (2007) in their study where “the mentor would offer to mediate by checking in with the teacher to gain a better understanding of the student’s problems and would set up meetings with the student and teacher to explore options for resolving the problem” (p. 5). Achieving student satisfaction and creating a positive and lasting experience is essential for any mentoring to be successful and worthwhile for the student.

Student participants noted that their mentoring experience was so effective because their mentors supported them. Roderick et al. (1997) and DeSocio et al. (2007) revealed in their studies that a school-based intervention could be effective in addressing both student academic and social-emotional needs. Ultimately, the literature and the researcher’s site study found that student satisfaction with a mentoring program relied heavily on the openness and the willingness of the mentor to be an advocate who will listen and support the student.

Theme 4: As a result of mentoring received, school attendance and retention have become important

The literature focused heavily on the need for an intervention, like mentoring, as means to minimize student truancy and school refusal. Dembo and Gullede (2009) argued the need for an intervention by underscoring the importance of “assessing and providing needed services to truant youth and families at the earliest point at which problem behavior is identified” (p. 438). The sooner the school refusal student is identified the greater likelihood the intervention will assist the student and potentially assist in retaining the student in school.

The literature addressed serious consequences to absenteeism, specifically citing the lack of meaningful relationships between the adults in the school and the students. Poor social interactions and poor student relations have led to student school refusal (Teasley, 2004). Sutphen et al. (2010) claimed, “schools factors include conflictual relationships with teachers, deficient attendance policies, non-accommodation of diverse learning styles and bullying” (p. 162). DeSocio et al. (2007) noted, “students also reported comments made by teachers who discouraged them from continuing to come to class as the year progressed, and it became apparent that their grades were too poor to allow them to pass” (p. 6). The researcher’s data also revealed that the mentor and the mentoring indeed changed the participating students’ mindset about attendance, school, teachers and their future plans.

All students participating in the study had attendance problems, missing at least 10% of the school year as freshmen. The data collected from the two instruments revealed that student attendance improved, even dramatically with a few participants, due to their mentoring experience. Reid (2012) argued for “better in-school initiatives, which broaden pupils’ experiences and provide them with rich experiences they might otherwise never enjoy” (p. 218).

Additionally, student participants revealed that, for the first time, they thought about college and their future as a result of their mentoring.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The results of a program where general education students received phenomenological qualitative study revealed that mentoring as an intervention to limit school refusal behaviors and improve academics had widespread positive results. The student participants offered rich and robust perspectives regarding their relationship with their mentor. This relationship and partnership allowed for the occurrence of quality and meaningful mentoring. Student participants revealed an improvement in grades, attendance and overall attitude. The student participants viewed mentors as motivators, inspirers and friends. The mentoring experience was viewed as a positive experience for participants leading to a newfound appreciation for school, their self-esteem and their future.

However, this study was limited to only high school students in a suburban setting. These participants were students who were in their sophomore year only. The demographics of these students were also limited as a majority of participants were Caucasian and male. In addition, the researcher was limited to the 22 students enrolled in the resiliency program. Recruiting and convincing all 22 students to participate and submit consent forms was a difficult task. Five students chose not to participate and did not return the consent form even after multiple inquiries by the researcher. Two students were unable to participate because they were hospitalized during the data collection process. Additionally, the researcher was limited to school hours, specifically homeroom time, to obtain data. The researcher had to be cognizant of each student's schedule and ability to meet. Multiple times the researcher set up a meeting time and

date with a student only to have that student absent the day of the meeting, creating a scheduling logjam and the need to adjust meeting times for other students.

The data revealed that the mentoring program was effective and useful in this setting and with these students. The research revealed the need for early intervention for school refusal and truant students. Reid (2012) pointed out, “early interventions are six times more likely to be successful than those after pupils’ non-attendance has reached the persistent stage” (p. 214). It may be necessary that a mentoring program be instituted at the elementary and middle school levels to address school refusal in other settings, districts and/or locations. Furthermore, long term data collection and analysis of these students once they move on from a mentoring program needs to be collected in future research. It may be essential to track students once they move on from the mentoring program to ensure they are effectively and properly utilizing strategies they learned from their mentor.

Implications

The current research has revealed that students refuse to attend school because of poor relationships with teachers, a lack of connection with the traditional curriculum and an overall unwelcoming school environment (McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Smink & Reimer, 2005; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). The researcher addressed school refusal students by assessing a teacher mentor intervention, which resulted in students benefiting academically, socially and emotionally. Also, students participating in the intervention improved their overall attendance and school outlook. The data from two applied instruments, a student questionnaire and survey, yielded telling results. Students were able to build a trusting relationship with their mentor, improve academically and reverse their negative school attitude.

Implications for future research based on the researcher's findings need to address expanding this intervention for more students. The data from the site study revealed an overwhelmingly positive experience for the student mentee. The system of mentoring within this site study has shown that students who have had "checkered pasts" can improve and thrive. Schools and districts would benefit by adopting this intervention to serve a wide swath of students throughout all levels of schooling. The practice of mentoring disenfranchised students could even be adopted and implemented at the college level.

The mentors in this study were not interviewed but, based on the student responses, they were compassionate and caring people. They genuinely wanted to assist the mentee with their academics and personal lives. These mentors received no professional development or guidance from the school or resiliency program. In the future, it would be beneficial for effective professional development and a mentor support group to be instituted to broaden the knowledge base of these individuals. Also, by offering professional development and a toolkit for them to rely on and utilize more teachers may inquire about becoming mentors. Finally, to assess the fidelity of the mentoring throughout the entire year, a checklist or assessment needs to be created. All the students within the study enjoyed their mentor, but there was not a tangible piece of evidence to show growth or need from either the mentor or student. By having an assessment instrument in place, the data collected from that tool can inform future mentors and researchers.

Conclusion

The purpose and focus of this study were to assess the effectiveness of a teacher mentor program from the student mentee perspective. School refusal students at a high school were targeted and offered mentoring to address their truancy behavior, poor attendance, lack of academic effort and any other social and/or emotional issues with which they were dealing. To

gather data and properly determine the effectiveness of the mentoring these students were receiving, the researcher utilized two data collection instruments, a questionnaire and a survey. The results from these instruments resulted in the emergence of four themes. These themes addressed the relationship between the mentor and mentee, student growth, the effectiveness and satisfaction of the mentoring and overall improvement in school attendance. The data collected was quite revealing and telling as students created very strong bonds with their mentor. Students felt supported academically and emotionally. A trusting relationship allowed the students to flourish on many different levels, creating students that transformed their mindset about school and themselves. The mentoring resulted in students wanting to perform better in school and build a foundation for their future. Students were excited to convey this information in text and verbally during interviews.

The findings from this study have revealed that a positive teacher mentor and role model in school can change the course and future for struggling students. These students exhibit a common profile in today's educational landscape. Many students in schools today need guidance and support that focus on their emotions. Additional teachers that want to mentor students and offer a trusting partnership would result in many students becoming more invested in school, their future and their self-worth. The data collected from this site study clearly exhibits the effectiveness teacher mentors can have on students, their academics and their overall success as a student and person.

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APPENDIX A

MENTEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please CIRCLE the appropriate responses:

1. Your age: 15 16 17
2. Your gender: MALE FEMALE
3. Since you started mentoring, check ALL the areas in which you feel you have grown and/or improved:

_____ school attendance	_____ overall attitude
_____ social settings	_____ attitude towards school
_____ study habits	_____ standards for yourself
_____ grades	_____ plans for your future
_____ self-confidence	_____ motivation to stay in school

Other (specify): _____

4. If you have grown and improved, do you feel it is because of your involvement in mentoring? YES NO

If so, why? _____

5. Check ALL the items that describe your mentor:

_____ Guide
_____ Role Model
_____ Helper
_____ Motivator
_____ Friend
_____ Someone who cares about you

... there are more questions on the back --- →

APPENDIX B

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR MENTEES

I was wondering if you would tell me a few facts about yourself, so I could get to know you better....

How old are you?

You are a sophomore, correct?

How long have you been involved with the teacher mentoring as part of the Resiliency Program?

So I have a better idea about the mentoring in which you are involved, would you describe your mentoring situation to me?

Follow-up questions if necessary...

Who is your mentor?

Where and how often do you meet?

What do you do when you get together?

I am interested in your experience with the mentor program...

What are things you like about your mentor?

Are there things about your experience in the mentoring program you wish were different?

If yes: what are they?

If no: go to the next question

Let's say you were to introduce the mentoring program to some of your friends next year, what would you want to tell them about mentoring?

Prompt: What would be important for a new teacher mentor to know before they started mentoring?

Is there anything more about the teacher mentoring program you want to tell me?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I really appreciate your help with this project.

APPENDIX C

PARENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Parent/Guardian of Prospective Research Subject: Read this consent form carefully. If you would like, it can be read to you. You may ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want your child/ward to participate in this research study. You may ask questions at any time.

Project Title: Addressing Student School Refusal Through Effective School, Family and Community-based Interventions	
Investigator: Robert G. Lyons	Organization: University of New England
Location of Study: School	Telephone #: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michelle Collay	Organization: University of New England
	Telephone #: 207-602-2010

Purpose of this Research Study

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study that is designed to discover what mentees think about the mentoring experience they are receiving in the Resiliency Program. Your child is being asked to participate because of his/her mentoring experience. This information will help to make future teacher mentoring programs better and training sessions more useful. I am the researcher and this study is undertaken as partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree program at the University of New England.

Procedures

As a student participant in the Resiliency Program, your child receives mentoring from a teacher/staff member. Your child will be asked to take part in an interview and answer a questionnaire about their experience in the mentoring program. It will take 15-20 minutes for the interview and 10 minutes to answer the questionnaire.

All audio recordings and written and typed notes will become the property of the researcher. All non-essential documentation will be destroyed. All information will be stored in a secure location.

Should your child drop out of the study at any time or for any reason, all your child's data will be destroyed and not used.

Possible Risks

This study poses little to no risk to subjects. Completion of the interview and questionnaire will take place in one session.

This study has the potential to improve the quality of the teacher-mentoring program, to determine future training for teacher mentors, and to improve all aspects of the mentor/mentee relationship.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There may be an indirect benefit to others, the school and/or the Resiliency Program.

Financial Considerations

Your child will not receive any financial compensation for his/her participation in this research nor will it cost anything.

Confidentiality

Your child's identity will be treated as confidential. That means no one will know your child's responses. Results of the study may be published but will not give your child's name nor will include any identifiable references; however, any records or data obtained as a result of your participation in this study may be inspected by the persons conducting this study and/or by the University of New England's Institutional Review Board, provided that such inspectors are legally obligated to protect any identifiable information from public disclosure, except where

disclosure is otherwise required by law or a court of competent jurisdiction. These records will be kept private in so far as permitted by law.

Termination of Study

You are free to choose whether your child will participate in this study. Your child may also choose to stop at any time. Your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits if he/she chooses not to participate. Your child will be provided with any significant new findings that develop during the course of this study. In the event your child decides to terminate his/her participation, please notify me, Robert G. Lyons, 978-251-1111 *email* of his/her decision. The investigator may terminate your participation in the study without your child's consent should there be a loss of funding, illness, or other unforeseen circumstances beyond the researchers control.

Resources

I will answer any questions you and your child have about this study. My contact information is: Robert G. Lyons, 978-251-111 or *email*

Subject and Researcher Authorization

I have read and understand the consent form, and I voluntarily consent my child's participation in this research study. I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state or local laws.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Signatures

Child's Name (print):

Parent Name (print):

Parent Signature:

Date:

Researcher's Name (printed):

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX D

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Prospective Research Subject: Read this consent form carefully. If you would like, it can be read to you. You may ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You may ask questions at any time.

Project Title: Addressing Student School Refusal Through Effective School, Family and Community-based Interventions	
Investigator: Robert G. Lyons	Organization: University of New England
Location of Study: School	Telephone #: xxx-xxx-xxxx
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michelle Collay	Organization: University of New England
	Telephone #: 207-602-2010

Purpose of This Research Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is designed to discover what mentees think about the mentoring experience they are receiving in the Resiliency Program. You are being asked to participate because of your mentoring experience. This information will help to make future teacher mentoring program better and training sessions more useful. I am the researcher and this study is undertaken as partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree program at the University of New England.

Procedures

As a student participant in the Resiliency Program, you receive mentoring from a teacher/staff member. You will be asked to take part in an interview and also answer a questionnaire about your experience in the mentoring program. It will take 15-20 minutes for the interview and 10 minutes to answer the questionnaire.

All audio recordings and written and typed notes will become the property of the researcher. All non-essential documentation will be destroyed. All information will be stored in a secure location.

Should you drop out of the study at any time or for any reason, all your data will be destroyed and not used.

Possible Risks

This study poses little to no risk to subjects. Completion of the interview and questionnaire will take place in one session.

This study has the potential to improve the quality of the teacher-mentoring program, to determine future training for teacher mentors, and to improve all aspects of the mentor/mentee relationship.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. There may be an indirect benefit to other, the school and/or the Resiliency Program.

Financial Considerations

You will not receive any money for your participation in this research nor will it cost anything.

Confidentiality

Your identity will be treated as confidential. That means no one will know your responses. Results of the study may be published but will not give your name nor will include any identifiable references; however, any records or data obtained as a result of your participation in this study may be inspected by the persons conducting this study and/or by the University of New England's Institutional Review Board, provided that such inspectors are legally obligated to protect any identifiable information from public disclosure, except where disclosure is otherwise

required by law or a court of competent jurisdiction. These records will be kept private in so far as permitted by law.

Termination of Study

You are free to choose whether to participate in this study. You may also choose to stop at any time. You will not be penalized or lose any benefits if he/she chooses not to participate. You will be provided with any significant new findings that develop during the course of this study. In the event you decide to terminate your participation, please notify me, Robert G. Lyons, 978-251-1111 or *email* of your decision. The investigator may terminate your participation in the study without your consent should there be a loss of funding, illness, or other unforeseen circumstances beyond the researchers control.

Resources

I will answer any questions you have about this study. My contact information is: Robert G. Lyons, 978-251-1111 or *email*

Subject and Researcher Authorization

I have read and understand the consent form and I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state or local laws. I voluntarily choose to participate in this research study.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may call Olgun Guvench, M.D., Chair of the UNE Institutional Review Board at (207) 221-4171 or irb@une.edu.

Signatures

Participant Name (print):

Participant Signature:

Date:

Researcher's Name (printed):

Researcher's Signature:

Date:

My signature attests that I was present during the informed consent discussion of this research for the above-named participant and that the information in the consent form was accurately explained to, and apparently understood by, the prospective participant and that the informed consent decision was made freely by the participant.

Witness Name (printed):

Witness Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX E

SITE STUDY SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Enrollment by Gender (2014-15)			
	School	District	State
Male	761	2,576	489,731
Female	816	2,480	466,113
Total	1,577	5,056	955,844

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2014-15)			
Race	% of School	% of District	% of State
African American	1.6	1.7	8.7
Asian	9.8	12.1	6.3
Hispanic	2.7	4.0	17.9
Native American	0.1	0.1	0.2
White	84.7	80.1	63.7
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.1	0.1	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	1.1	1.8	3.1

APPENDIX F

DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS RECEIVING INTERVENTION

Gender Enrollment of Students Receiving Teacher Mentoring	
Male Students	16
Female Students	6
Total	22

Ethnic Breakdown of Students Receiving Teacher Mentoring	
White	19
Asian	2
Hispanic	1
Total	22

APPENDIX G

DISSERTATION INSTRUMENTATION APPROVAL

Re: Dissertation Instrumentation Request



Missy Wilkins <missy.wilkins@wnesu.com>

To: Robert Lyons;



Reply all |

Tue 10/27/2015 5:16 PM

Inbox

You replied on 10/28/2015 9:26 PM.

Bobby,

You most certainly have my permission to use my instrumentation for your dissertation. Great chatting with you, stay in touch.

Missy

On Oct 27, 2015, at 3:50 PM, Robert Lyons <rlyons@une.edu> wrote:

Missy,

Thank you for the return email. It was great talking to you and discussing the research process with you. Even though your dissertation is public, would you mind emailing me permission to use your instrumentation. I would like to place that documentation in the appendix of my dissertation.