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# Master Teacher Perceptions on the Impact Mentoring Programs Have on Teacher Retention

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## **Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership**

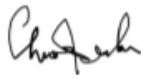


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September 17, 2020

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Abilene Christian University  
School of Educational Leadership

Master Teacher Perceptions on the Impact Mentoring Programs Have on Teacher Retention

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Rose Michelle Zuniga

September 2020

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my beautiful family. I am so grateful for all your love, patience, and support you have bestowed upon me throughout my doctoral journey. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine. I could not have done it without you.

To my wonderful husband, Jerry, thank you for always being my number one fan by motivating me to complete my doctoral degree. You have been my rock during this arduous process. Thank you for never letting me quit and for always believing in me. I could not have accomplished my dream without you by my side encouraging me along the way. Most importantly, thank you for always putting our family first and taking care of our babies when I was busy researching. I am so appreciative for all the delicious meals that you cooked for us and for all the other honey do's you work on at home. I hit the jackpot when I married you! I am forever grateful to God for bringing us together to build our family. I love you more than you'll ever know.

To my handsome son, Ryan, you are the twinkle of my eyes. Thank you for always being so supportive of me and offering your words of encouragement and your hugs and kisses. Now that I have completed my degree, we can go on a vacation after the pandemic. You have been so understanding and patient throughout this journey and I cannot express to you enough how thankful I am for having you as my son. I am proud of the young man that you are becoming every day. Keep believing in yourself because you are set for greatness, and I will be there to cheer you on the rest of the way. I love you unconditionally, my sweet boy!

To my beautiful daughter, Camilla, you are the spark of my heart. Thank you for loving me the way that you do. You have been so amazing throughout this journey, and I cannot thank you enough for always checking on me when I was working and giving me your sweet hugs and

kisses. Now that I have completed my doctoral degree, we are going to have more girl time together. I am so proud to have you as my daughter and as my best friend. I want you to know that you can do anything you set your mind to; keep believing in yourself and reach for the stars. You are going to do amazing things in life, and I will be there to motivate you every step of the way. I love you unconditionally, my beautiful Princess!

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To my father, Richard, thank you for being an amazing and loving dad. I have always admired the love that you have for our family and your selflessness to care for others. You have taught me how to be compassionate and empathetic towards others, and I am grateful for those

qualities. I love our father daughter conversations and the way we make each other laugh. Thank you for always having me look at the bright side of things and teaching me to never give up on my dreams. I am blessed to be your daughter.

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To my grandmother, Gabriela, the matriarch of our family, she was a force to be reckoned with. She was one of the most loving, caring, and smartest women I knew. She was a woman of faith and always prayed for everyone. My grandmother was my number one fan and supporter throughout my educational journey. The bond and love we shared was like no other.

She would have been so proud of me completing this doctoral degree. I could hear her telling everyone, “Mi nieta, la Doctora!” I love you Grandma Gabby, and she’d say, “I too!”

To my deceased cousin, Cindy, who was more like my older sister growing up. We celebrated many life milestones together and I will miss sharing this moment with you. Your memory lives on through your children, Katie and EJ, whom I love with all my heart. I hold you close to my heart and you will never be forgotten.

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## Abstract

The problem investigated in this phenomenological study was the high teacher attrition in K-12 schools, which has caused a negative impact on classroom performance, and it has also demonstrated the inability to retain effective teachers. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand master teachers' perceptions of the impact the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. The self-determination theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study. The research design and methods for this phenomenological study utilized an in-depth semistructured interview protocol to collect qualitative data from participants. Twelve master teachers from two Rio Grande Valley High Schools from the same district participated in this study; they were interviewed on the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program, and they described their perceptions and lived experiences of mentoring beginning teachers and the impact they had on teacher retention. During the analysis of the data, 11 themes emerged: (a) effective skills sets used to build relationships, (b) professional development opportunities for master teachers, (c) supporting beginning teachers, (d) motivational factors for being master teachers, (e) master teachers' impact on teacher retention, (f) perceptions of Project *RISE* Mentoring Program, (g) mentoring using a coaching cycle of reflection, (h) positive outcomes of mentoring, (i) master teachers' relatability with mentees, (j) importance of mentoring beginning teachers, and (k) release time for mentoring support. The results from this phenomenological study concluded that master teachers do impact teacher retention by providing ongoing mentoring and support to beginning teachers.

*Keywords:* beginning teachers, experienced teachers, leavers, master teachers, mentor teachers, mentoring programs, movers, Project *RISE*, state accountability, stayers, teacher attrition, teacher retention, Title I schools

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Teacher attrition continues to increase throughout the United States causing teacher shortages. Many times, policy makers focus on recruiting more teachers rather than focusing on retaining existing teachers because they invest time and money to build capacity in the teaching profession that will meet students' needs and the higher academic standards needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Berry & Shields, 2017). Research shows that teacher retirement accounts for one-third of teacher attrition; preretirement attrition shows the largest share of teachers leaving the profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). As teacher attrition continues to cause teacher shortages, it is important to ask why teachers continue to leave the teaching profession early in their careers. Higher teacher attrition rates affect new teachers more than veteran teachers, and they identified four major factors that heavily influence teacher attrition: compensation, preparation, teaching conditions, and mentoring (Sutcher et al., 2016). Sutcher et al. (2016) found that new teachers leave at rates between 19% and 30% within their first five years of teaching. Beginning teachers in Title I schools have a higher attrition rate of nearly 50% compared to teachers that do not teach at Title I schools, which serve low-income families. Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) explained that 43% of teacher attrition is also due to family and personal matters.

Teacher attrition rates vary across the United States. Research has identified the Southern states have the highest teacher attrition rate at 16% with the Northeastern states at 10% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). States with annual teacher attrition rates above 20% are Arizona, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Texas (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Learning Policy Institute indicated that Texas had a 21% teacher attrition rate: 6% retirement leavers, 7% preretirement leavers, and 8% movers. According to the Employed Teacher Attrition

and New Hires 2011-12 through 2018-19 report from the Texas Education Agency Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) database (2020), in the 2018-19 academic school year the number of Texas teachers was 358,919, and 37,297 teachers left the profession, indicating an attrition rate of 10.43%.

This phenomenological study was conducted with high school teachers from two Rio Grande Valley (RGV) high schools within the same RGV school district. The RGV school district is located in South Texas near the U.S. Mexico Border. Teacher attrition has been an evident problem at both campuses. To maintain the confidentiality of the campuses in the study, I used the pseudonyms RGV high school-A and RGV high school-B.

The RGV high school-A has encountered many challenges with teacher attrition for a couple of years. The principal currently at this campus started at the beginning of the 2018-2019 school year, and he continued as the principal for the 2019-2020 school year. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year while also completing his first year as principal, there were 10 teachers that had not returned for the 2019-2020 school year. At the end of the 2017-2018 school year, there were 12 teachers not returning for the following reasons: moving to another state, retiring, and seeking another career. In the 2017-2018 school year, there was a total of 174 teachers at this campus and by the end of 2019-2020 there were only 155 teachers at this campus. This campus had three principals in the last five years. RGV high school-A is one of three comprehensive high schools in the district, and it serves students in an economically disadvantaged community. Based on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) 2018-2019 School Report Card, the student population of grades 9-12 is 2,429. According to the TEA School Report Card 2018-2019 Campus Profile, 99.9% of the students enrolled are Hispanic, 98.5% are Economically Disadvantaged, 49.7% are English Learners, and 80.5% of the student population is considered



At-Risk. RGV high school-A received an accountability rating of Met Standard with an overall performance rating of a B. The Texas State Accountability System measures the academic performance of districts and campuses in the performance areas of Student Achievement, School Progress, and Closing the Gaps. The overall performance details for each domain are as follows: Student Achievement had a rating of C, School Progress had a rating of B, and Closing the Gap had a rating of C. It is also a Title I campus, and all students are on free and reduced lunch programs.

The RGV high school-B has also had challenges with retaining teachers at the campus. Although there has been teacher attrition at this campus, the principal has remained consistent for five years. The teacher attrition at this campus has been attributed to the socioeconomic factor of the campus, teachers moving elsewhere out of state, and teachers going into other professions. In the 2017-2018 school year, there was a total of 160 teachers at this campus and by the end of 2019-2020 there were only 143 teachers at this campus. According to Texas Education Agency 2018-2019 School Report Card, the student population for grades 9-12 was 2,189. The campus profile for RGV high school-B indicates that 99.2% students are Hispanic, 93.4% are Economically Disadvantaged, 32.9% are English Learners, and 77.4% are considered At-Risk. RGV high school-B received an accountability rating of Met Standard with an overall performance rating of a B. The overall performance ratings for each domain are as follows: Student Achievement had a rating of B, School Progress had a rating of B, and Closing the Gaps had a rating of C. They also received Distinction Designations in five out of the seven distinction areas for outstanding performance. The distinctions received were as follows: Academic Achievement in ELA/Reading, Academic Achievement in Mathematics, Academic Achievement

in Social Studies, Top 25% Comparative Closing the Gaps, and Postsecondary Readiness. RGV high school-B is also a Title I campus, and all students are on free and reduced lunch programs.

These two RGV high schools have been given the opportunity to participate in a Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) Grant called Project *RISE* through Region One Education Service Center (ESC). One of the initiatives of the grant was to implement a teacher induction and mentoring program to provide support to first year, beginning (three years or less), and other identified teachers that need assistance in becoming an effective educator. The induction and mentoring program consisted of the following support components: (a) two-day new teacher induction training for all first year, beginning teachers and other identified teachers; (b) ongoing support from master and mentor teachers; (c) opportunities to observe or co-teach with experienced teachers; (d) provide feedback on observations; (e) targeted professional development; and (f) formative review of first year and beginning teachers' classroom performance (Region One ESC- Project *RISE* Grant, 2016). The master and mentor teachers also attended a Summer Institute that focused on knowledge and skills needed to work with adult learners. The main mentoring components focused on the importance of pedagogy, planning, teaching, and reflecting (Region One ESC – Project *RISE*, 2016). In addition to the mentoring components, instructional coaching was included to ensure best practices such as: (a) conducting walkthroughs and observations; (b) providing feedback; and (c) creating actions plans for refinement would be instrumental in providing effective instructional strategies, technology integration, curriculum alignment, and student-centered activities (Region One ESC – Project *RISE*).

The induction, mentoring, and coaching provided to master and mentor teachers was also a retention strategy by providing the master teachers a salary augmentation of \$7,000 and the mentor teachers a salary augmentation of \$5,000 (Region One ESC – Project *RISE*). Project

*RISE* partnered with the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) and created a Master's in Education in Teacher Leadership for master and mentor teachers that had not attained a master's degree. Master and mentor teachers accepted into this program were provided with a fully paid scholarship to complete their master's degree. Project *RISE* has provided the master and mentor teachers career pathway opportunities through salary augmentation and career advancement with the Master of Education in Teacher Leadership.

The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET; 2018) suggested teacher retention strategies that could entice teachers from leaving the profession. Comparing to the Project *RISE* master teacher positions, NIET (2018) explained, "expanding formal teacher leadership roles can be a powerful strategy for addressing teacher retention if those roles are carefully designed" (p. 8). The positive outcome in doing this kind of work would be to influence teacher retention instead of attrition.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem investigated in this phenomenological study was the high teacher attrition in K-12 schools, which has caused a negative impact on classroom performance, and it has also demonstrated the inability to retain effective teachers. The educational support and guidance that beginning teachers need has become an area of concern in K-12 schools because of the high attrition rate among teachers (Hallam et al., 2012). High levels of teacher attrition have also caused teacher shortages throughout the United States. It is estimated that nearly 8% of the U.S. annual workforce are teachers that have left the teaching profession before their retirement age (Sutcher et al., 2016). The first few years for teachers can be difficult and it may cause teachers to leave the profession early on their career due to the lack of support provided as they adjust into their role as a teacher. There are also many teachers that do not return after their first year of

teaching. Research shows that teachers leaving the profession varies, and approximately 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Bennett et al., 2013). There are several reasons why it is difficult to retain teachers. Some factors that impact teacher attrition are due to working in districts with low salaries, lack of administrative support, dissatisfaction from the campus culture, no career advancement opportunities, and pressures of state accountability (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Teacher attrition usually occurs in schools that are high in poverty and have high minority populations. Research revealed that teachers that have had little preparation tend to leave the teaching profession at a higher rate than teachers who have completed a comprehensive preparation program before they enter the profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). Due to all the contributing factors, K-12 schools that have high teacher attrition make it difficult to have viable instructional curriculum in their classrooms. By developing teacher retention pathways to assist in teacher attrition, they will be able to retain teachers and impact student performance. Providing mentoring programs to support beginning teachers early on into their teaching career can benefit teacher retention and attrition.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand master teachers' perceptions of the impact the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. This program assists with teacher retention by providing beginning teachers with support that will impact pedagogy and educator effectiveness within their content area. The master teachers that participated in this phenomenological study work at campuses that have a history of high teacher attrition rates, and it has affected the campus culture. The campus culture has also affected the perceptions of the administrators and teachers that have chosen to stay. A

few years ago, at RGV high school-A, 50 out of 160 teachers left the campus. RGV high school-B also had a similar situation with high numbers of teacher turn-over from year to year. Due to the teacher attrition from both campuses, they were identified to participate in the Project *RISE* - TIF grant. Project *RISE*-TIF grant has also provided teachers and administrators the opportunity to attend professional development and participate in performance-based compensation that focuses on educator effectiveness. The metrics used to identify teacher performance is the teacher evaluation from Texas Teacher Evaluation & Evaluation System (T-TESS) and the metrics used to identify the educator effectiveness is from Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and Value-Added measures based on state assessment scores.

With the support and guidance from master teachers, beginning teachers will be supported throughout their first years of teaching and will less likely leave the teaching profession. Studies have shown that mentoring programs that consist of mentor teachers can assist in the development of novice teachers (Stanulis et al., 2018). Mentoring programs that can provide support, guidance, and professional development to both the mentor teachers and beginning teachers can play an intricate role in teacher retention.

Although many studies have been done on teacher attrition, not many have covered the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that motivate master teachers to support beginning teachers in mentoring programs at their respective campus.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: How do master teachers perceive their impact on teacher retention at their campus?

RQ2: How do master teachers describe their mentoring experiences with beginning teachers?

RQ3: How do master teachers perceive the impact of the mentoring practices that have been implemented by Project *RISE*?

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Beginning teacher.** Teachers with less than three years of teaching experience (Hofmann et al., 2017).

**Experienced teacher.** Teachers that have three or more years of teaching experience (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

**Leavers.** Teachers that leave the teaching profession voluntarily because of retirement, change in profession, or personal issues (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

**Master teachers.** Teacher leaders who have release time from their regular classroom schedule or they are sometimes released from all classroom responsibilities to solely provide instructional leadership support to their colleagues (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2018).

**Mentor teachers.** Teacher leaders who remain in their own classrooms but also spend hours providing support to a group of colleagues to improve teaching and learning (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2018).

**Mentoring programs.** Mentoring programs that are well-designed to improve the retention rates of new teachers, as well as their self-efficacy, attitudes, and instructional delivery (Sutcher et al., 2016).

**Movers.** Teachers that leave to another school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

**Project *RISE*.** Federal grant that focuses on a Human Capital Management System (HCMS) and Performance Base Compensation System that enhances educator effectiveness in

K-12 teachers. Project *RISE* is the given name of the Teacher Incentive Fund grant that was granted to Region One Education Service Center. *RISE* is the acronym for Region One Incentive Strategies for Educators (Region One ESC-Project *RISE*, 2015).

**State accountability.** Texas State Accountability provides campus and district ratings on standard assessments and campus evaluations. The state accountability rating system includes the Texas Academic Performance Reports, school report cards, and Texas Performance Reporting System (Texas Education Agency, 2019b).

**Stayers.** Teachers that continue to teach at the same school (Goldring et al., 2014).

**Teacher attrition.** Teachers leaving the teaching profession because of retirement, different job opportunity, and mobility to another location (Sutcher et al., 2016).

**Teacher retention.** The factors and characteristics that teachers access when deciding to stay in the teaching profession and at their school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

**Title I schools.** Title I schools receive federal funds for students that are economically disadvantaged (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

## Summary

The United States educational system has shown that teacher attrition in K-12 schools has increased throughout the years. Research indicates that the United States annual teacher attrition is 8% and it accounts for 90% of the demand for new teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Approximately 3.6 million full-time-equivalent elementary and secondary teachers were classroom teachers in 2016 (The Digest of Education Statistics, 2016). Although there are large amounts of teachers in the workforce, there is still a continuous problem with retaining teachers in schools. Sutcher et al. (2016) explained the public school teacher attrition rate of 7.68% in 2012 represented a loss of 238,000 teachers in that year. Research also shows if

the teacher attrition rate is reduced from 8% to 4%, it can benefit in hiring selection of teachers and improve educator effectiveness in the classroom (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Teacher retention has become extremely difficult due to the many barriers and adversity teachers face in their profession. Beginning and experienced teachers most often quit when they work in districts where their salaries are lower than surrounding areas. Research indicates that teachers' salaries have been declining for many years and teachers with ten years of experience are making less than unskilled workers (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teacher preparation has also become a concern because beginning teachers that lack appropriate teacher preparation are most likely leaving within their first year of teaching. Boyd et al. (2008) explained that researchers found that classrooms led by novice teachers were less effective. Teachers that do not have an effective mentoring and induction program at their campus are also prone to leaving the profession because they do not have the support needed to effectively teach students.

Lastly, teachers leave the profession because of the teaching conditions. Teacher attrition is most likely to occur in areas that are low socioeconomic and in urban communities. Research shows teacher attrition rates are 70% higher for teachers in schools with students of color and 50% higher in Title I schools (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers have also become dissatisfied with campus administration, lack of decision-making, and growth opportunities so they choose to leave the teaching profession. As a result of the adversity, schools that have high teacher attrition make it difficult to have viable instructional curriculum in classrooms (LoCascio et al., 2016). An initiative commonly used to address teacher quality and high rates of teacher attrition are teacher induction and mentoring programs (LoCascio et al., 2016). Although there are high rates of teacher attrition in our educational system, there are



mentoring modalities that can be explored and utilized to retain beginning teachers from leaving the profession.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

There are many reasons why teacher attrition has become a concern within school systems and communities. High teacher attrition is most evident in teachers who enter the teaching profession without adequate preparation. Glazer (2018b) recently explained there has been an unwavering amount of teacher strikes and walkouts throughout the United States. The concern of K-12 public school educators leaving the profession has been portrayed as a “huge silent protest right in front of our eyes” (Glazer, 2018b, p. 72) that requires much needed attention from policy makers and educator practitioners. According to Ingersoll et al. (2014), teacher attrition rates have increased substantially that most teachers leave their teaching job before making it a career. High teacher attrition is also very expensive for schools because they are asked to recruit new and qualified teachers who are willing to stay in the field of education. Teacher attrition impacts the preparation, recruitment, and retention of high-quality teachers and therefore, it can be extremely costly for schools and districts (Vagi et al., 2019). Teacher attrition particularly impacts beginning teachers, teachers of color, and teachers that work in urban and high-needs environments (Haynes, 2014). High teacher attrition rates not only affect student achievement, but it also creates additional costs for schools which can spend close to \$20,000 or more for every teacher that leaves a district (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). According to Muller et al. (2014), cost estimates for teacher attrition nationally range from \$2.1 billion to over \$7 billion annually. The reason for the excessive cost in teacher attrition is due to the recruitment, hiring, and training of new teachers. When beginning teachers in high-need content areas leave the school, it is common for schools to hire teachers with minimal teaching experience and instructional knowledge, therefore, causing lower student academic gains.

## **Literature Search Methods**

A comprehensive online search was conducted using Abilene Christian University's online library portal to locate literature that was relevant to mentoring programs, teacher attrition, teacher retention, and mentoring self-determination in work motivation. I also utilized my local university library at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to access books, journals, and articles pertaining to my research. Additional databases and search tools used included EBSCO Host, ERIC (EBSCO), Google Scholar, Sage Journals, Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Management Administration & Leadership, Educational Researcher, Educational Theory, Digital Commons @ ACU, and ProQuest. The search terms used included the following key terms and combination of terms: teacher attrition, mentoring programs, mentor support, teacher retention, effective mentoring, induction programs, beginning teachers, teacher self-efficacy, mentoring in K-12 public schools, motivation in work, self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, teacher preparation programs, qualitative research in mentoring programs, and phenomenology research. Preference was given to current textbooks, peer-reviewed articles, and academic journals within five years of anticipated year of dissertation completion.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Self-determination theory (SDT) was the appropriate theoretical framework for this phenomenological study. According to Rigby and Ryan (2018), "SDT provides a strong framework for building motivational quality" (p. 138). This theory covers the spectrum of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in motivation and personality. Vansteenkiste et al. (2010) defined SDT as a macro-theory that consists of motivation, emotion, and personality in social contexts and it has gradually evolved and developed for nearly forty years. SDT is best described as a

puzzle because throughout the years researchers and practitioners have added new ideas that are research driven and integrated into SDT (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). Since SDT has steadily evolved throughout the years, the development of five mini theories constitute the self-determination theory. The five mini theories of SDT are the following: cognitive evaluation theory, organismic integration theory, causality orientations theory, basic psychological needs theory, and goal content theory (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010).

This phenomenological study focused on the self-determination theory and how it relates to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is based on the satisfaction of behaving for the good of the person. It also addresses the social contexts and intrinsic motivation is factored into areas such as nontangible rewards, interpersonal controls and the person's ego involvement impacts intrinsic motivation (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). Intrinsic motivation also encompasses the areas of autonomy and competence within SDT. Unlike intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation focuses on different factors such as properties, determinants, and consequences of specific actions. There are four subtypes of extrinsic motivation which include external regulation, introjection identification, and integration. Extrinsic motivation supports the areas of autonomy and relatedness (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). According to Ryan and Deci (2017), "SDT research critically inquires factors, both intrinsic to individual development and within social contexts that facilitate vitality, motivation, social integration and well-being" (p. 3). Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that SDT focuses primarily at the psychological level and it differentiates types of motivation through a continuum that is controlled to autonomous. According to Rigby and Ryan (2018), SDT specifically argues there are three basic psychological needs that contribute to high quality motivation across all cultures and workplaces. Ryan and Deci (2017) explained, "The theory is

particularly concerned with how the social-contextual factors support or thwart people's thriving through the satisfaction of their psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy" (p. 3). Many studies have been conducted in United States' work organizations that focus on motivational processes that have been derived from the self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2001). The functional approach of SDT is both practical and critical because it involves the psychological growth and social behavior in people. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), SDT is practical because it facilitates the motivations and satisfactions that effect self-regulation and wellness. SDT is considered critical because it examines and compares social contexts by supporting and not impairing human's thriving.

Self-determination theory can be applied by various social contexts such as education, organizations, families, and healthcare (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Ryan and Deci (2017) stated, "SDT is an organismic perspective, approaching psychological growth, integrity, and wellness as a life science" (p. 4). SDT presumes that humans are innately proactive and are able to learn as they gain experience through their life domains. The motivation to learn and develop are inherent in both tendencies of intrinsic motivation and integration. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), "Intrinsic motivation has particular theoretical significance because it represents one means through which the active assimilatory nature of organisms is expressed and because, in humans, it is a prototypical example of autonomous behavior, being willingly and volitionally done" (p. 117). Extrinsic motivation is geared toward behaviors that are externally imposed by feelings of incompetence, dependence, or isolation. Extrinsic motivation differs from intrinsic motivation because it is "represented by behaviors that are instrumental for some separable consequence such as external reward or social approval, avoidance of punishment, or the attainment of a

valued outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 14). This phenomenological study correlated SDT and how it contributed to master teachers’ motives to mentor others.

### ***Three Basic Psychological Needs***

The three basic psychological needs focus on the psychological needs of a person’s well-being and optimal function in the three basic human needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). Autonomy is defined as the need for people to have a sense of choice and self-endorsement of their own actions (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that autonomy is self-endorsed or congruent in with one’s authentic interests and values. Teachers’ sense of autonomy is the feeling of internal control and freedom of their choices and actions in their classrooms (Schunk et al., 2014). Another basic need of SDT is competence, which refers to feeling effective and achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to Rigby and Ryan (2018), competence is the need to feel effective, successful, and to grow. Competence is extremely important for teachers because of the need to feel able to function effectively within their work contexts as educators. Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that competence can also be thwarted because there could be challenges that are difficult to resolve, negative feedback, or the feelings of mastery and effectiveness are criticized or diminished. According to Deci and Ryan (2017), the concept of competence in SDT promotes positive feedback and optimal challenges that assists in matching a person’s abilities with the demands for a task. Teachers that receive positive feedback develop a feeling of mastery and they experience competence making them feel satisfied with their work (Deci & Ryan, 2017). The last basic human need is relatedness. Relatedness is the need to have meaningful relationships and interactions with people and a sense of belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Teachers feel an essence of relatedness by belonging to a group such as colleagues that have

common interests within their work contexts. Relatedness most typically involves people to feel cared by others and belonging to social groups (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Research shows that when the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, employees show both their highest quality efforts and their highest well-being (Ryan et al., 2010). The three human needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness integrate two types of motivation that are developed within the SDT. The two types of motivation are intrinsic and extrinsic; these types of motivations work simultaneously within self-determination theory.

### ***Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation***

Motivation within the self-determination theory is best defined as what “moves” people to action (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT differentiates motivation into two types of motivational concepts which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is considered autonomous motivation because people are engaged in activities, they find interesting to do (Gagné & Deci, 2014). According to Ryan and Deci (2017), intrinsically motivated behaviors are performed out of interest in which the sole reward is the feeling of effectiveness and enjoyment. Ryan and Deci (2017) explained, “Typical intrinsically motivated actions include play, exploration, sports, games, and avocations” (p. 117). Competence promotes intrinsic motivation by building capacity with teachers through professional development (Firestone, 2014). Teachers that receive positive feedback on their performance, become intrinsically motivated to do more at their campus. When teachers receive positive feedback, it helps them acknowledge their success in their classroom. According to Firestone (2014), there are four conditions that help teachers experience success: (1) administrative support, (2) adequate physical facilities, (3) adequate instructional materials, and (4) workloads (p. 103). These types of intrinsic rewards drive teachers to be satisfied in their jobs and be willing to stay longer in the teaching profession.

Teachers that are intrinsically motivated are more likely to remain in the classroom and this can assist in retaining teachers.

Extrinsic motivation is referred to as controlled motivation because the activities may not be interesting to participate in, but people consider participating for implicit approval or tangible rewards (Gagné & Deci, 2014). Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that extrinsic motivation is represented in behaviors that are separable in consequences such as an external reward, social approval, avoidance of punishment, or the attainment of an outcome. One form of external motivation that is frequently used in the workplace is the use of incentive pay to motivate high performance. Such is true in the use of incentive pay for teachers in the workplace. Additional pay for teachers in the workplace induces job motivation and it entices teachers to stay in the teaching profession. According to Firestone (2014), another form of extrinsic incentive is based pay also known as the single-salary schedule in which the incentive is given based on the teacher's degrees and years of service to establish the incentive amount. Another form of extrinsic incentive is the career advancement model, which teachers earn when they take on additional roles and responsibilities at their campus. Such roles may include being teacher-leaders, facilitating a professional development, mentoring beginning teachers, and leading curriculum instruction development (Firestone, 2014). There is another extrinsic incentive related to teacher attrition which is used to recruit and retain teachers in hard-to-staff or economically disadvantaged schools. School districts compensate teachers by providing extra pay for teachers that teach mathematics, science, and special education because these subject areas that have the highest need of teachers. Lastly, performance-based pay has become an incentive variation used for teachers and it is based on student achievement on state assessments (Firestone, 2014). The Teacher Incentive Fund grant is issued by the U.S. Department of



Education, and it focuses on building teacher capacity through a Human Capital Management System (HCMS) and a Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS). These types of extrinsic incentives are beneficial for teachers to make competitive salaries and motivate them to stay in the teaching profession.

### ***Self-Determination Theory in Mentoring***

As teachers begin their teaching career, it has become evident that not all beginning teachers stay in the profession for more than three years. Research has shown that providing beginning teachers the opportunity to work side-by-side with a mentor has positive outcomes for both the teacher and the students (American Institutes for Research, 2015). Establishing mentoring relationships is prevalent in organizations and in schools; mentoring beginning teachers can provide them with a “sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role” (Janssen et al., 2014, p. 266). There has not been much research on the impact that mentors have on beginning teachers and the reasons why they mentor others. According to Janssen et al. (2014), it is important to gather insight in the mentors’ motives to engage in mentoring relationships with colleagues. Although there are different motives that prompt mentors to mentor others, research shows some general intentions that mentors have for mentoring that has been examined in previous studies that indicate the following:

- Some mentors show that they are more willing to assist mentees that have favorable characteristics such as being a high-performing teacher as opposed to assisting mentees that need more support.
- Mentoring research has not fully studied the extent of mentors’ motivations that engage mentors to build relationships with their mentees. In this case, SDT is used to explore the

different forms of motivations used to perform a certain behavior during building relationships.

- There have been minimal studies on mentors' motives and how they attribute to their willingness to mentor others. Some studies have indicated mentoring as a rewarding exchange, where mentoring is solely benefiting the mentor. This type mentoring approach does not allow there to be any relational motivations that will lead to connectedness and belonging that is much needed in a mentoring relationship. Through SDT, relatedness is needed to establish mentoring relationships. (Janssen et al., 2014)

The self-determination theory is a beneficial theoretical framework that was used to conduct this phenomenological study because it enhanced the understanding on the master teachers' motives for mentoring and the impact it has had on beginning teachers.

### **Teacher Attrition**

Over the last 30 years, teachers leaving the profession has caused an increase in teacher attrition and it continues to increase at an exponential rate (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Research has shown a link between the high rates of beginning teacher attrition and the teacher shortages that plague the teaching profession (Sutcher et al., 2016). According to Sutcher et al., (2016) the U.S. loses about 8% of teachers annually and the attrition rate in this country is twice as high as it is in the top-performing nations like Finland and Singapore. Teacher demand across the nation includes about 90% of teachers that are leaving the teaching profession (Espinoza et al., 2018). Goldring et al. (2014) indicated that among the 3.4 million public school teachers that taught during the 2011-2012 school year, 84% remained at the same school, 8% moved to a different school, and 8% left the teaching profession. Additional findings indicated that 80% of teachers with 1-3 years of teaching experience stayed at the same school, 13% moved to another school,

and 7% left the teaching profession by the 2012-2013 school year (Goldring et al., 2014).

Research also showed 51% of the teachers that left teaching in 2012-2013, worked in a more manageable job and 53% of the public-school leavers worked in better work conditions than in their previous teaching jobs (Goldring et al., 2014).

Sullivan et al. (2017) explained that teacher mobility in the state of Texas has the largest amounts of teachers leaving public schools. Additional key findings from their study indicated the following:

- 19% of Texas teachers moved schools within a school district, Texas school districts, or left Texas public schools during the 2011-2012 school year.
- Teacher mobility rate had reached 22% by the 2015-2016 school year.
- Teachers with a special education certification left twice the rate as opposed to teachers that had different certifications.
- Higher teacher mobility rate was evident in schools that had a higher proportion of special education, low-performing, and racial/ethnic minority students. (pp. 13-14)

Teacher attrition is not only a problem at the national level, but it is also an alarming problem at the state level. Although teacher attrition has been a topic of concern for many years, it is evident that educators and policy makers are focusing more on this problem to ensure all students have access to an excellent education and teacher (Sullivan et al., 2017).

### ***Cost of Teacher Attrition***

Teacher attrition does not only affect teacher shortages in public school systems, but it also causes financial constraints in school districts. The cost of teacher attrition begins as soon as the teachers leave the school and immediately when the district needs to replace them. Another factor that is considered within the district is the “total cost of turnover must factor in both the

net difference in salary and the net difference in productivity between a departing teacher and his or her replacement” (Papay et al., 2017, p. 436). Research shows that financial costs of hiring range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 in urban districts (Papay et al., 2017). Cost estimates for teacher attrition nationally range from \$2.1 billion to over \$7 billion annually (Muller et al., 2014). In the state of Texas, teacher attrition costs between \$108 million and \$235 million (Haynes, 2014). Research shows teacher attrition costs are most prevalent in economically disadvantaged school districts where teacher turnover is the highest and where social and academic resources are scarce (Goldring et al., 2014).

The reason teacher attrition is problematic and costly for public school districts is due to teacher preparation, recruitment, and replacement cost that are needed for new hires in districts (Vagi et al., 2019). School districts spend their resources on teacher attrition by recruiting new teachers and providing professional development to train them on school and district policies and procedures. According to DeFeo and Tran (2019), there are three distinct teacher attrition processes that are led primarily by district-level administrators:

1. Recruitment includes the activities necessary to find suitable applicants to fill an open teaching position.
2. Selection and hiring includes screening, interviewing, and selecting applicants, background checks, contract preparation, school board approval, setting up payroll and benefits, creating accounts, updating web content, and facilitating the state licensure process.
3. Orientation and training include activities that prepare and support new teachers such as curriculum training, team building, mentoring, and mandatory district professional development. (p. 2)

The cost of teacher attrition has peaked throughout the years at the national and state level. Educators in public school systems acknowledged teacher attrition as being a significant concern within the teaching profession. District administrators have an unwavering amount of responsibility to allocate their funds in the most cost-effective manner within the areas of recruitment, selection and hiring, and orientation and training for new hires in their campus and district.

### ***Causation of Teacher Attrition and Retention***

Teacher attrition is an ongoing problem within the educational system and sources of literature address the different reasons teachers leave the profession. Berry and Shields (2017) explained several reasons why the teacher demand is causing teacher attrition throughout the nation:

1. Student enrollment is on an upward trend and expected to grow by 3 million in the next decade.
2. Many districts and schools are trying to restore teacher positions and course offerings cut during the Great Recession.
3. Fewer individuals are entering the teaching profession: Between 2009 and 2014, enrollments in teacher preparation programs dropped 35% nationwide. (p. 9)

Glazer (2018a) explained a variety of explanations as to why teachers exit the teaching profession early on into their career. Some of the teacher explanations focused on rational choice, self-efficacy, school culture, looking at labor markets, qualifications, job satisfaction, and feelings of competence (Vagi & Pivovarova, 2016). According to Vagi and Pivovarova (2016), teacher attrition can be divided into three theoretical approaches which are the following: (1) *organizational theory*: focuses on fit between worker and organization; (2) *rational choice*

*theory*: individuals theorize the way they act that maximizes their satisfaction; and (3) *self-efficacy theory*: emphasizes their feelings of competence. There are other teacher attrition studies that explain the individual approach and contextual factors (Glazer, 2018a). The individual approach focuses on different characteristics such as “degree attainment, academic performance, pathway into teaching, or feelings of self-efficacy” (Glazer, 2018a, p. 63) that relate to teachers leaving the profession. Studies that focus on contextual factors focus on areas that affect “working conditions, initial placement, administrative support, school facilities, or student achievement to determine their contribution to teacher attrition” (Glazer, 2018a, p. 63). According to Schaefer et al. (2012), studies on teacher attrition focus on having support and autonomy within their jobs and another focal point emphasizes the quality of the individual teacher such as their preparation, education, resilience, and commitment. Vagi and Pivovarova (2016) explained that teacher attrition continues to be a problem throughout the education profession and not all situations are the same for all systems in place, rather it is a dilemma that many schools face throughout the United States and different approaches need to be considered when making a plan of action to assist teacher retention.

According to one poll conducted in Georgia, found that teachers leaving the teaching profession felt devalued and under constant stress because of high stakes testing and teacher evaluation ratings (Downey, 2016). There has been a culmination of concern for the teacher attrition and the need for training and supporting new teachers. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) suggested the problems that arise in teacher shortages is the lack of experience that beginning teachers may have, causing them to leave the profession early in their career. Research has shown that there is a higher attrition rate among nonminorities, females and teachers that teach Science and Math (Vagi et al., 2019). The U.S. Department of Education 2015-2016 report

identified 48 states that had teacher shortages in special education, 42 states had a teacher shortage in mathematics, 40 states had a teacher shortage in Science, and 30 states had a teacher shortage for English Learners. Many of these teacher shortages have occurred due to the lack of enrollment in teacher education programs causing an emerging need for teachers as student enrollment has increased (Sutcher et al., 2016). According to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017), high attrition rates are due to unprepared and unsupported teachers which in turn causes teachers to leave the profession. Researchers have identified additional factors that cause teachers to enter and leave the teaching profession in exponential rates include teacher preparation, mentoring and induction programs, compensation, and teaching conditions (Sutcher et al., 2016). Furthermore, Vagi et al. (2019) explained teacher preparation, recruitment, and retaining are concerns that public school systems need to overcome. It is important to increase awareness on teacher attrition and provide the appropriate resources that teachers need to remain in the field of education.

### **Teacher Preparation Programs**

With the recent interest in teacher preparation and teacher quality, it is significant to suggest that teacher preparation programs can benefit from preservice teachers' decisions to pursue the teaching profession (Vagi et al., 2019). Research shows that many new teachers going into the teaching profession are young, recent college graduates; furthermore, there are also older inexperienced beginning teachers entering the teaching profession (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Ingersoll et al. (2018) identified an age trend of beginning teachers which consisted of "42% of beginning teachers were 29 or older and 19% percent were over 40" (p. 10). Most would say having a teaching force that is younger would be most beneficial for schools because they are energized to begin their profession, use technological savviness, and earn a respectful salary

(Ingersoll et al., 2014). In some instances, the idea of younger and vivacious beginning teachers is beneficial to schools, but on some occasions, it is not, because educator effectiveness increases after several years of experience. Teachers with more experience have already undergone challenges and have developed best practices in pedagogy, differentiated instruction strategies for students with diverse backgrounds and abilities, managing student behavior, teacher-parent communication, and meeting the socio-emotional needs of students (Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Recently, federal and state policy makers are focusing on the correlation between teacher preparation programs and their effect on teacher attrition and retention. Zhang and Zeller (2016) explained the increase of teacher attrition and retention rates is partly due to the level of education and quality of teacher preparation programs beginning teachers enroll in. Research shows teachers with minimal preparation leave the teaching profession two to three times higher than those in comprehensive preparation programs (Sutcher et al., 2016). The purpose of teacher preparation programs is to recruit, hire, and retain highly effective teachers in public schools and to ensure student academic achievement. McBrayer and Melton (2018) explained that effective teacher preparation provokes effective teaching by using best practices in curriculum and instruction. Hofmann et al. (2017) also acknowledged the first five years of teaching are critical, and they refer to it as the “induction period” because it is important for both the educational system and the individual. The induction period is when beginning teachers are learning to adapt to the real world experiences that take place in a school (Hofmann et al., 2017).

To better understand the different types of real world experiences that beginning teachers encounter in a teacher preparation program, Zhang and Zeller (2016) further explained the different types of teacher preparation programs that lead toward a teaching career:



1. *Traditional college or university-based teacher education programs* are for students that are baccalaureate level and will become teacher certified under this program. Students usually do their preservice hours throughout this program as an internship with no pay at a public school district.
2. *Alternative Certification Programs (ACP)* are best described as a “sink-or-swim” route to the teaching profession. This alternative route is for individuals that have already obtained a bachelor’s degree in any area of study from an accredited college or university. Individuals can obtain a teaching position and begin looking for employment after meeting specific requirements from the ACP they are enrolled in. Many times teachers that go through an ACP route do not have prior knowledge of pedagogical practices.

According to Zhang and Zeller (2016), by Year 2, retention for teachers that had taken part in an ACP was lower than teachers that had gone through a traditional education program. Some explanations as to why ACP teachers and traditional education program teachers differed in teacher retention are due to factors that they experienced through their preparation program. According to Evans (2011), ACP teachers are “more likely to work in disadvantaged schools” as opposed to “fully certified teachers are more likely to work in more affluent advantaged schools” (p. 271). Another explanation is relevant to teachers that had clinical experiences within their traditional education programs were more aware of pedagogical practices, types of school culture, and school organizational structures (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). According to LoCascio et al. (2016), alternative certification programs were developed to certify candidates with strong academic content knowledge, but with limited or no background in formal teacher preparation. In the Alliance for Excellent Education Report, Haynes (2014) stated that “many administrators

and teacher educators conclude that the lack of well-supervised clinical training throughout preparation and during the initial years of teaching accounts for many of the problems facing new teachers” (p. 5). The literature on teacher retention revealed that teachers seek professional development opportunities, mentor programs, collaboration with peers, and real world experiences that are needed to be successful.

Teachers in teacher preparation programs take on a critical role as an educator in which they show accountability for all students they teach and the positive relationships they must maintain for student engagement. Research has shown that although teachers are maintaining a positive relationship with their students, teachers in education programs are lacking competencies such as “collaboration with families, teaching social skills, and collaboration among professionals are not being sufficiently addressed” (Peterson-Ahmad et al., 2018, p. 2). In order for teachers to feel better equipped in the teaching profession, it is essential for teacher preparation programs, whether traditional or alternative, increase and improve professional learning opportunities that target areas of need that are specific to community and schools, school culture, behavior management in the classrooms, differentiated instruction, and pedagogical best practices. Ensuring that teacher retention is increased in public school systems, teacher preparation programs can improve their preparation before entering the classroom.

### **Induction and Mentoring Programs**

Teacher attrition and retention is an educational problem that needs further research to address the high teacher attrition rates. Although there are several factors that contribute to teacher attrition, one factor is the lack of support and guidance that beginning teachers need within their first years of teaching. Research has shown that mentoring programs can develop mentor teachers and beginning teachers with the appropriate tools and resources that will

positively influence teachers from leaving the teaching profession (Sparks et al., 2017).

According to Sutchter et al. (2016), well designed mentoring programs can improve retention rates of beginning teachers, as well as their attitudes, self-efficacy, and instructional skills. The U.S. Department of Education (2016) Title II, Part A of amended Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is designed to encourage state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) to use funds to: establish and support high quality educator induction and mentorship programs that where possible are evidence-based and are designed to improve classroom instruction and student learning and achievement and increase the retention of effective teachers, principals, or other school leaders (pp. 9-10). Many states across the nation have implemented induction programs for beginning teachers. Goldrick (2016) explained there are 29 states throughout the nation that require induction and mentoring programs for all beginning teachers, with only 11 states requiring only first year new teachers to attend. Coggschall et al. (2019) also indicated that mentoring and induction policies were implemented throughout state equity plans across the nation and the findings were that many “states are using the Title II funds to support mentoring and induction” (Lachlan-Haché & Hayes, 2018). Their research provided evidence on mentoring and induction programs effectiveness within states; the data analysis reflects the following: (1) 29% require mentoring and induction for new teachers, (2) 45% highlight mentoring and induction in state equity plans, (3) 25% commit to using title II funds to support mentoring and induction, (4) 12% commit to using mentoring and induction as a strategy to promote teacher retention, and (5) 13% commit to using mentoring and induction as a strategy to promote equitable access to teachers (Coggschall et al., 2019). The state of Texas is one of the states that has a Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program that is “designed to increase teacher retention for beginning teachers” (Texas Education Agency, 2019a, para. 1).

The induction and mentor training should be researched-based and approved by the commissioner of education; such training will be delivered by the school district. It is evident the efforts states are making across the nation to implement induction and mentoring programs that will impact in improving teacher retention rates, educator effectiveness, and access to all economically disadvantaged students and low-performing schools (Coggshall et al., 2019).

Espinoza et al. (2018) explained that a strong induction program and support for early-career and beginning teachers can be an effective policy to ensure well-prepared individuals remain in the classroom. Research suggests having a high-quality induction for beginning teachers reduces teacher attrition because of mentors assisting beginning teachers within their first years of teaching (Espinoza et al., 2018). Induction and mentoring programs can be beneficial to beginning teachers by providing them with the needed support and guidance as they enter the teaching profession. Such efforts are vital toward teacher retention.

### ***Components of Induction and Mentoring Programs***

The need to build capacity through teacher induction and mentoring programs is a possible solution towards teacher retention. Tucker (2015) mentioned that induction is not an activity that is checked off a list and never done again, instead, induction is a “stage of continuum of teacher development and it is essential in supporting 21<sup>st</sup> century learning communities” (p. 62) of educators. During induction, the role of the beginning teacher is to grow as a teacher and increase student achievement. According to the American Institutes for Research (2015), beginning teachers will be engaged in activities that will enhance their pedagogical skills in the areas of self-assessment, reflection and planning, and to articulate their thinking by collaborating with their mentor teacher. Podolsky et al. (2016) suggested that strong induction programs that support beginning teachers by mentoring, coaching, and feedback from

experienced teachers has assisted in teacher retention more than twice as much as opposed to teachers that have not received support. The U.S. Department of Education (2016) identified resources and factors that should be considered when developing induction and mentoring programs, such recommendations include:

- Requiring that all beginning teachers and principals receive induction support during their first two years.
- Requiring a rigorous mentor/induction coach selection process.
- Establishing criteria for how and when mentors/induction coaches are assigned to beginning educators and determining the training they will receive to serve in this role.
- Requiring regular observations by mentors/induction coaches and opportunities for new teachers to observe classrooms. (p. 10)

Induction and mentoring programs do not work in isolation, on the contrary, they work systemically together because induction is the name of the process and mentoring is the action for the induction process. The American Institutes for Research (2015) defined induction as a program-level support that spans all the roles and responsibilities teachers fulfill and can be used to improve their effectiveness in serving students (p. 1). Tucker (2015) identified six components of induction: (1) mentoring and coaching, (2) communication skills, (3) network connections for additional resources, (4) collaboration with peers, (5) commitment to continuous improvement, and (6) considerations for additional support. The purpose of having an induction program is to provide professional development opportunities that will assist beginning teachers to acquire knowledge about their content, best practices, and school/district policies (American Institutes for Research, 2015). Experienced teachers that assist beginning teachers as they transition into the teaching profession usually guide induction programs.

One of the components in a teacher induction program is mentoring, which means an experienced teacher is paired with a beginning teacher to provide support and guidance (American Institutes for Research, 2015). Mentoring is considered a skill set that experienced teachers learn through job-embedded activities such as lesson planning, establishing learning goals, managing student behavior, differentiating instruction, and using pedagogical best practices in their classrooms. The primary role of a mentor is to “lay a strong foundation for evidence-based instruction by guiding the beginning teacher in examining his or her own assumptions and instructional practices and reviewing student data” (American Institutes for Research, 2015, p. 2).

Most mentor teachers are experienced teachers that have exemplified best practices in their classroom through student achievement data and performance evaluation; however, “being effective in the classroom does not translate to success as a mentor” (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018). Mentors are instrumental in coaching the beginning teacher their first year(s) of teaching because they can develop beginning teachers’ skill level in different areas of classroom instruction and classroom environment. Hallam et al. (2012) explained that school districts have responded to the high-level of beginning teacher attrition by providing teacher induction programs that provide mentoring processes that focuses on modeling and support, building personal relationships, and working in a professional learning community. Many new teacher induction programs pair up beginning teachers with mentor teachers that have more experience with instructional and pedagogical strategies. Hong and Matsko (2019) explained the process of assigning beginning teachers with mentor teachers provides new teachers with a structured support in learning how to teach which is referred to as formal mentoring. If formal mentoring is implemented with fidelity, it can enhance early experiences that improve instructional practices

and it increases commitment and retention in schools. Research explains that beginning teachers should have mentor teachers within the same subject area and common planning time, so they are able to collaborate effectively (Sutcher et al., 2016). Mentoring programs consist of experienced teachers that have acquired training in pedagogy and content areas to further assist beginning teachers.

Mentoring programs can impact teacher retention by entrusting mentors as teacher leaders within schools and redefining the importance of mentoring. According to American Institutes for Research (2015) strongly suggested to conduct a rigorous mentor selection process which included the following:

- Beginning teachers and mentor teachers that teach the same content area should be paired together to ensure that beginning teachers are developing best practices. If pairing in the same content area is not possible; beginning teachers and mentor teachers should be at the campus.
- Release time should be set aside so that mentors and beginning teachers are able to communicate effectively and develop a supportive and trusting relationship.
- Observations should be conducted regularly and provide timely feedback to assist beginning teachers in making appropriate adjustments in their classroom.
- Professional learning communities should be accessible to beginning teachers to help facilitate a collaborative working environment that offers support.

Mentor selection as previously discussed, needs to be done with fidelity and intentionality because mentors have a responsibility in building beginning teachers to effective educators. Weisling and Gardiner (2018) suggested that mentors be given professional development opportunities that will give them additional resources and tools in: (1) content areas and high

yield strategies to promote student engagement, (2) coaching and feedback protocols, and (3) metacognitive mentoring which consists of two mentors role playing as mentor and mentee to practice mentoring strategies. Providing mentor teachers professional development opportunities will enhance their skill sets to improve beginning teacher experiences.

### ***Common Practices of Mentoring***

Effective mentoring has many facets of learning for both the beginning teacher and mentors. According to Weisling and Gardiner (2018), there are common mentoring practices which are outside and inside practices. Outside mentoring practices are defined as mentor-mentee activities that “occur before or after classroom instruction when students are not present and teachers have time for collaborative problem solving, guided analysis of classroom data, and reflection on teaching and learning” (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018, p. 66). In contrast, inside mentoring practices occur during classroom instruction with students present. Sometimes mentors are reluctant to take part in inside mentoring practices because they feel they will lose credibility if their beginning teachers do not demonstrate growth (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018). Despite the mentor teachers’ perceptions of inside mentoring practices, these practices are effective forms of mentoring and should be utilized when mentoring beginning teachers. Three practices common to mentoring are planning/co-planning, observing and debriefing, and analysis of student work (Stanulis et al., 2018). These three types of practices are essential for both the beginning teacher and mentor teacher because they emphasize the importance of complex decision making, timely feedback, and uses data to monitor and adjust student learning.

### ***Planning and Co-Planning***

One of the essential components of effective delivery of instruction is planning and co-planning for both beginning and mentor teachers. Stanulis et al. (2018) indicated that planning is



an important component of effective instruction in learning to teach; it is basic level because it identifies ‘what’ will be taught and ‘how’ it will be taught focusing on teacher performance. It is important to know that planning can also be at a complex level because it focuses on what students are learning, how they learn it, and how they will demonstrate their learning (Reeves, 2011). Co-planning is very similar to regular planning activities, but in this case, there is a mentor-mentee having planning conversations that focus on the logistics such as scheduling planning days, lesson preparation and strategizing what types of activities that will be utilized during the lesson (Stanulis et al., 2018). During the co-planning, mentor teachers are encouraged to offer suggestions that may change and alter the lesson plan focusing on the what and when versus the how and why of lesson planning (Pylman, 2016). Co-planning between the mentor and mentee should be a conversation that involves the mentor making thoughts and decisions visible for the beginning teacher and giving them the opportunity to contribute into the planning. The co-planning between mentor and mentee is a side-by-side approach of mentoring for beginning teachers to develop pedagogical and content practices under the guidance of an experienced teacher (Shillingstad et al., 2014). During planning and co-planning, it is important for the mentor to guide the beginning teacher to align lessons to the district and state standards.

### ***Observation and Feedback***

Another common practice in mentoring is conducting observations and providing timely feedback. This practice is essential in mentoring because it also gives the mentor the opportunity to observe the beginning teachers’ teaching skills. Tucker (2015) suggested it is also in the best of interest for beginning teachers to have the opportunity to observe other experienced teachers so they can learn new strategies in content delivery and in classroom management. Beginning teachers can incorporate new learning into their instructional delivery. Mentor teachers will be

able to observe beginning teachers and provide constructive feedback from the observation.

Debriefing with beginning teachers is needed so they can reach their instructional goals. According to Stanulis et al. (2018), providing effective feedback to beginning teachers is a complex skill because the mentor needs to provide supporting evidence that will be discussed in the postobservation conversation. The evidence utilized during the debriefing should have been collected during the classroom observation and it should focus on the high-leverage area the beginning teacher needs further assistance in. NIET (2018) explained that master teachers should utilize a research-based framework for evaluating instruction and it should consist of the following: “(a) provide detailed feedback to teachers after each observation, (b) discuss an area for reinforcement based on an area of strength, and (c) discuss an area for refinement based on an area for improvement” (p. 15). Observing and debriefing must be significant when discussing the instructional practices of the beginning teacher and it is essential to focus on domains such as planning, instruction, and learning environment (Texas Teacher Evaluation & Support System, 2020).

Master teachers should always encourage beginning teachers to contribute into the debriefing conversation so there is “learning to teach” (Stanulis et al., 2018, p. 2) opportunities for the beginning teacher. There are key strategies that can be used when the mentor and mentee are co-planning for the delivery of instruction for a lesson. Co-teaching is a strategy that can be implemented by the mentor and mentee and it allows them to teach a lesson together which gives the mentor the opportunity to model effective teaching, and at the same time, the responsibilities are being shared amongst each other (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018). Having the mentor and mentee share teaching experiences together gives them the opportunity to discuss ineffective and

effective practices that need additional support. It is useful to record these types of teachable moments so the mentor and mentee can adjust accordingly.

Another teaching strategy that can be discussed during the co-planning is demonstration teaching also known as modeling. Modeling occurs when the mentor teacher demonstrates a lesson or activity to the mentee's students. Weisling and Gardiner (2018) suggested the mentor needs to include the mentee into the planning of the modeling that is going to take place within the lesson, so the mentee is prepared to answer students' questions. Modeling provides the mentee to reflect on the practices that are happening during the instructional delivery. This kind of reflection can assist the beginning teacher to focus on successes of the lesson and the areas for improvement.

Lastly, the stepping in strategy has also been proven to be effective when mentoring beginning teachers. The stepping in strategy can occur impromptu or planned ahead of time and used "during instruction to provide nonverbal or whispered cues, cover a portion of the instruction, or pose clarifying questions or feedback" (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018, p. 67). This strategy can help alleviate a stressful situation if the beginning teacher is struggling to get through the lesson. Mentors should let the mentees know in advance they will be stepping in occasionally to assist the beginning teacher so they do not interpret the stepping in as a bad connotation of their teaching. The planning, co-planning, and strategies are examples of inside mentor practices that occur in real-time during instructional delivery with students.

### ***Analysis of Student Work***

The last common mentoring practice to be discussed is the analysis of student work. When analyzing student work, Weisling and Gardiner (2018) suggested for the mentor to model and think aloud the thinking and understanding of the student. Based on the analyzation of

student work, the mentor can develop plans with the beginning teacher to find the learning gaps that need to be addressed to target individual learners and reflect on the “instructional moves possibly influencing student learning” (Pylman et al., 2017, p. 4). Although, there are additional mentoring and strategy practices that encompass mentoring, planning and co-planning, observing and debriefing, and analyzing student work; these practices need to be shared with mentees so they can see these practices in action.

### **Effective Mentoring**

Effective mentoring is key to having a successful induction and mentoring program. According to Martin et al. (2016), “Mentors can impact the professional development of beginning teachers by establishing and implementing strategies that will provide individualized support to beginning teachers” (p. 7). Effective mentoring can develop the behavior and skills of beginning teachers through inquiry-based questioning that supports the individualized need of the beginning teacher. The American Institutes for Research (2015) explained that beginning teachers have potential to develop positive behavior skills such as:

- making connections between what is learned in professional development activities and the teacher’s own work context,
- analyzing and reflecting on practice,
- including various instructional approaches in their practice,
- using student work to inform practice, and
- making implicit knowledge about teaching explicit, by articulating their assumptions and testing them against new knowledge. (p. 5)

Through the process of mentoring, both the mentor and beginning teacher are gaining knowledge and learning through real world experiences. These types of behaviors and skills are being developed throughout the mentoring process.

Many mentors are not aware of their effectiveness and successes because their craft as a mentor has made their instructional and classroom management come naturally from being an experienced teacher. Other implications that make mentoring effective are experiences that consist of hands-on-learning with frequent feedback throughout the process. Professional development for mentors should be continuous throughout the school year so they are current and prepared to provide ongoing support to their beginning teachers (LoCascio et al., 2016). Effective monitoring provides mentees with easy access to meet with their mentors and mentors should be available to assist their mentee. Another form of support sometimes provided to mentor teachers is monetary incentives to support training and even a master's degree (LoCascio et al., 2016). Lastly, effective mentoring is beneficial and sustainable if it is established as a district culture and implemented district wide. Having effective mentoring can shape and establish a mentoring program that can provide collaboration and support to beginning teachers. These effective mentoring practices can assist in teacher retention.

### ***Mentor Characteristics***

For mentoring programs to be effective, mentors need to have certain characteristics that will enable them to build capacity among beginning teachers. According to Martin et al. (2016), key attributes for mentor teachers consist of having experience in coaching and facilitating, observation skills, experience working with diverse populations, love for teaching and commitment to collaboration. Research has indicated that excellent mentors have personal qualities that assist in developing and growing other educators such as passion for teaching,

continuous learner, trusted listener, supportive and challenging, and mentors have a positive mindset (Tucker, 2015). Martin et al. (2016) explained the most important aspect of quality mentoring is the ability to develop relationships. Another characteristic mentors should possess is the ability to provide emotional support to their mentees especially if they have never worked in a campus environment. This is extremely important because many beginning teachers lack the experience of having to deal with the socioemotional aspect of the teaching profession. Mentor teachers also acquire leadership skills that influence the success of their mentees.

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Another significant factor that affects teacher attrition is the feeling of effectiveness beginning teachers experience within their first years of teaching. The feeling of effectiveness refers to the self-efficacy that beginning teachers' belief in their ability to positively affect student learning. Teacher self-efficacy influences teacher motivation to teach their students, teaching practices, and job satisfaction, hence, teacher self-efficacy also motivates teacher retention in the profession (Schunk et al., 2014). According to Klassen and Chiu (2010), research supports that explanation of self-efficacy is an important influence on human achievement in a variety of settings including education. Schunk et al. (2014) explained that teacher self-efficacy can affect choice of activities, effort, persistence, and achievement. Research shows teacher self-efficacy influences teachers' teaching behaviors and their students' motivation and achievement, and it explains teachers' job satisfaction gained through their day-to-day activities, working with students, seeing student progress, working with supportive colleagues, and the school climate (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Schunk et al. (2014) explained that teachers with low self-efficacy may not show interest in their jobs when they avoid planning, lacks persistence in student engagement, and tends to not show interest in interacting with their colleagues. According to

Renbarger and Davis (2019), high levels of stress that pertain to negative student behavior or work environment has been a factor in lower teacher satisfaction and self-efficacy. Since high stress levels can lower job satisfaction and teacher burnout, Yoo (2016) suggested that professional development can increase teacher self-efficacy. Providing professional development opportunities to beginning teachers can enhance their commitment and performance. According to Firestone (2014), effective professional development

- challenges teachers intellectually, while giving them powerful images of teaching and learning and building their pedagogical content knowledge;
- actively engages teachers in collaborative settings;
- reinforces learning through congruent learning activities that permit practice and refinement; and
- offers teachers opportunities to solve their own real instructional problems. (p. 103)

Research shows that 80% of teachers participate in professional development yearly with only less than one-third of the professional development pertaining to mentoring, peer observation, or coaching (Goldring et al., 2014). Professional development can enhance teacher interaction to collaborate with other teachers and it can build sustained learning among teachers.

Teachers with higher self-efficacy are more engaged with their students by developing challenging activities, encourage student learning, support beginning and struggling teachers. Higher self-efficacy motivates teachers by giving them the belief they are successful carrying out certain tasks and when teachers have an expectancy of completing activities for great outcome results (Firestone, 2014). Beginning teachers that experience success had enhanced self-efficacy when they receive positive feedback from a mentor teacher.

During the first few years of teaching, beginning teachers have many challenges that affect them in the classroom environment. Bandura (1993) explained that teacher self-efficacy can be enhanced through vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences are gained by beginning teachers when they watch someone else teach (Bandura, 1993). Yost (2002) suggested that beginning teachers who are mentored have a higher self-efficacy because it makes them feel competent in their teaching. Beginning teachers will be better equipped in their first years of teaching and this will be vital for teacher retention. Mentor teachers can use measurable goals to influence the improvement of student outcomes, improve the pipeline toward highly effective teachers, and assist in teacher self-efficacy.

### **Summary**

Teacher attrition is of great concern in K-12<sup>th</sup> public school systems because it has caused a teacher shortage in different areas across the nation. Research has shown that public school teaching is no longer considered to be a long-term occupation for many teachers in the United States (Glazer, 2018a). The most critical years of teacher attrition come within the first two years in the profession and this is most often referred to as the survival period. With so many factors contributing to teacher attrition, it has become evident that many beginning teachers become discouraged to continue in the profession. Vagi and Pivovarova (2016) explained that beginning teachers exit the teaching profession due to rational choice, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and feelings of competence.

A mentoring and induction program can support and guide the beginning teachers to grow in their profession. Mentoring beginning teachers can be a key factor in retaining effective teachers that can impact K-12 schools by promoting a positive movement of beginning teacher success in the classroom. This phenomenological study utilized the self-determination theory to



focus on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that drives teachers to continue to stay in the profession through means of establishing a mentoring program that will enrich teacher best practices and strategies. Gagné and Deci (2005) explained that SDT is an approach to work motivation by confirming aspects of the theory within organizations. SDT's three basic needs are the driving force in researching the importance of mentoring programs. The research questions asked within this phenomenological study explored the autonomy, competence, and relatedness that master teachers have as they fulfill their role as a mentor to beginning teachers. The master teachers' lived experiences indicated their impact on teacher retention at their campus by providing ongoing mentoring and support to mentees. The literature has failed to look at the mentors' perceptions of mentoring beginning teachers in the field of education.

Chapter 3 will provide the research method and design that was used in this qualitative study. A phenomenological approach was used to immerse me as the primary source in performing interviews with participants. The phenomenological approach was decided to be used for this research to best collect accurate perspectives and lived experiences master teachers have on mentoring programs and the impact they have on teacher retention at their respective campus. It will also provide perspective on the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that entice master teachers to take part in the mentoring program.

### **Chapter 3: Research Method**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the master teachers' perceptions of the impact the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. For the purpose of this study, Project *RISE* master teachers were interviewed on the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program that is used as a support system for beginning teachers. Through their lived experiences and perceptions, their information provided insight on teacher retention and attrition at their campus. The research design and methods for this phenomenological study utilized a semistructured interview protocol to collect qualitative data from participants. The organization of this chapter is as follows: (a) research design and methods, (b) population, (c) qualitative sampling, (d) materials, (e) qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, (f) methods of establishing trustworthiness, (g) researchers role, (h) ethical considerations, (i) assumptions, (j) limitations, (k) delimitations, and (l) summary.

#### **Research Design and Method**

This research is a phenomenological study conducted through semistructured interviews to understand the master teachers' perceptions of the impact that the mentor program has on retaining beginning teachers. The purpose of conducting this phenomenological research was to better understand the lived experiences and perceptions that master teachers encountered when mentoring beginning teachers and their influence in the retention strategy for teachers to stay in the profession. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.

Phenomenology was appropriate to use for this study because it required to carefully capture and describe "how people experience some phenomenon, how they perceive it, describe

it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it , and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2015, p. 14). Patton (2015) also stated that in order to gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest, that is they have “lived experience” as opposed to secondhand experience (p. 115). Researchers who use phenomenology as a research method are able to determine patterns and experiences of the participants in the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), some common features to explore a phenomenon is to gather a heterogeneous group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. They also mentioned the size: “group may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 76). When conducting phenomenology, it is important for the researcher to take himself or herself out of the study so the discussion only focuses on the experiences participants are undergoing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is important so the researcher does not seem bias or judgmental toward the participants’ experiences and perspectives.

This phenomenological study used semistructured interviews to evoke the lived experiences and perspectives of master teachers and their impact on teacher retention of beginning teachers. The phenomenological researcher is the key instrument in collecting data through interviewing their participants in the study (Creswell, 2014). Semistructured interviews entail of questions that “are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more or less structured questions” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. During the interviewing process the participants were candidly willing to share their mentoring experiences and address the retention of beginning teachers. Creswell (2014) explained that qualitative interviews occur with

participants through telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also mentioned that online interviews can also be used to conduct face-to-face synchronous virtual interviews via Skype, Zoom, Google Meet, and many other online platforms available to use. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom.

This phenomenological study was well received by the participants because it captured a description of their lived experiences and perspectives from their responses. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), phenomenological interviews ask appropriate questions and rely on the participants to discuss the meaning of their experiences which require the patience and skill of the researcher. Participants were able to openly share their insights on the mentoring process they undergo with beginning teachers and how they impact teacher retention at their campus.

### **Population**

The population for this phenomenological study consisted of master teachers located in South Texas in the Rio Grande Valley. There are a total of 60 master teachers that work at campuses and participate in the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program. These master teachers are in elementary schools, middle schools, charter schools, and high schools. These campuses are in both rural and urban areas with approximately 1,200 educators across multiple schools. This provided context and depth to this phenomenological study because the qualitative sample consists of master teachers from two high schools within the same district.

### **Qualitative Purposive Sampling**

This phenomenological study used purposive sampling, also known as purposeful sampling. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore

must select a sample from which the most can be learned. The researcher determined purposive sampling by using the selection criteria for choosing the participants for the study. Criterion based selection is often used to decide the characteristics of the sample of the people that will be used for the phenomenological study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The criteria used to determine participants for the study were the following: (a) hold a valid Texas Teacher Certification; (b) possess three years of teaching experience; (c) hold a master's degree, currently enrolled in a master's program, or enrolled in the Teacher Leadership Master's Program that the grant funded; and (d) have two years of experience serving as a Project *RISE* master teacher at their current campus.

The sample utilized for this phenomenological study consisted of 12 master teachers from two high schools within the same district. Seven of the master teachers were from RGV high school-A and the other five master teachers were from RGV high school-B and they are both in RGV school district. The sampling size was determined on how many participants agreed to participate in the phenomenological study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), one general guideline for sample size in qualitative research is not only to study a few sites or individuals, but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied. The participants were selected to participate in this phenomenological study met all of the criteria requirements that was listed in the master teacher profile that I had given the master teachers to complete for selection. The master teacher profile in Appendix A included the following: (a) participant pseudonym, (b) gender, (c) teaching experience, (d) Project *RISE* master teacher years of experience, (e) mentoring years of experience, (f) educational background, (g) current teaching position, and (h) years at campus. I had direct contact with the 12 master teachers that

participated in this research. I did not have any difficulties fulfilling the participants for this phenomenological study.

### **Materials/Instruments**

The instrument used for this phenomenological study was a semistructured interview guide in Appendix B. This type of interview was preferred because there is more flexibility with the wording and the structure of the questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that semistructured interviews consists of the following: (1) interview guide consists of a mix of more or less structured interview questions, (2) questions are flexible, (3) specific data are required from all respondents, guided list of questions or issues to be explored, and (4) no predetermined wording or order. The semistructured interview guide had different types of questions to stimulate the interviewees' responses. Patton (2015) suggested six types of questions that can be used during the interview which include: experience and behavior, opinion and values, feeling, knowledge, background, and demographic.

The interview was audio recorded to capture the interviewees' responses. The recording ensured that the responses are preserved for analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used an audio recorder to record all 12 interviews and I used the virtual platform, Zoom, to conduct face-to-face virtual interviews. I also audio recorded the interview via Zoom and downloaded only the audio file. I used both recordings to toggle through the interviews when they were not clear to hear.

I transcribed all 12 interviews verbatim from the audio recordings. I utilized my laptop to type the interviews verbatim into Microsoft 365 Word. The dictation feature enabled me to use speech-to-text to expedite the process. Even though I used the dictation feature, I still needed to go back to review areas of the text not identified correctly during dictation. I listened to audio

recordings simultaneously when dictating what I was hearing. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested there is great benefit to transcribing the interview yourself, not the least of which is increasing your familiarity with your data. I did find that transcribing the interviews was extremely helpful in understanding the in-depth responses from the participants. I listened to the audio recordings multiple times to transcribe the interviews to the best of my ability.

A Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used to conduct data analysis of the interview. I purchased and used the Qualitative Data Analysis Software, NVivo, to assist me in analyzing, managing, shaping, and organizing my qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although, I used this software, I still had to determine codes and themes for the data analysis.

### **Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Data collection for the phenomenological study began once I received approval from the IRB (see Appendix C). Patton (2015) explained that qualitative inquiry included collecting quotes from people, verifying them, and contemplating what they mean. According to Patton (2015), “Qualitative findings are based on three kinds of data: (1) in-depth open-ended questions, (2) direct observations, and (3) written communications” (p. 14). The data collection that I chose for this phenomenological study was the use of semistructured interviews. According to Patton (2015), “Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (p. 14). The data collected pertained to participant interviews addressing the three research questions for this study.

The data collection process began once I notified the participants in person and by phone and asked if they were interested in participating in my research. All 12 participants verbally agreed to participate in my study. After they verbally agreed to participate, I sent a formal master

teacher recruitment letter (see Appendix D) via email to each individual with additional information about the phenomenological study. Once I received formal confirmation of participants willing to take part in my study, I sent the participants via email the informed consent form (see Appendix E), which included the purpose and description of my study. After receiving the informed consent form signed by the participants, I was then able to schedule a date and time for the interview. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all 12 interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that semistructured interviews are in between structured and unstructured, so the wording is more flexible to use during the interview. The semistructured interview is guided by a question protocol that has a list of questions that are not in any exact order and it is not determined ahead of time. When conducting interviews, it is essential that the interviewer and respondent take a stance that is nonjudgmental, sensitive, and respectful with one another (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Scheduled interviews began April 6, 2020 and ended on April 29, 2020. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

When analyzing the data, I used Creswell's six steps for data analysis to methodically analyze the data collected through this process. Creswell (2014) explained the six steps for data analysis in the following:

- Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis.
- Step 2: Read or look at all the data.
- Step 3: Start coding all of the data.
- Step 4: Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.



- Step 5: Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.
- Step 6: A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation in qualitative research of the finding or results. (pp. 197-200)

In the first step of data analysis, I transcribed all 12 interviews by typing verbatim from the audio recording and I utilized the dictate feature on Microsoft Word. As each interview was transcribed, I sent the participants a copy of their transcribed interview via email and they were able to member check that my interpretation of their interview was coherent with their lived experiences and perceptions. I also began considering possible themes to begin the data analysis process. During step two, I made sure to read and look at all of the data. This was helpful because I was able to get an in-depth overall meaning of what the participants were saying through their interviews.

I began the coding process in step three, and I was able to organize my data using NVivo to analyze the transcribed interviews. I first began the coding process using In Vivo Coding which “uses words or short phrases from the participant’s own language in the data record as codes” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 297). I was able to color-code the codes within NVivo for organization of data. After coding the qualitative data, I categorized the data by finding patterns that were consistent and relatable in this phenomenological study. In step four, I engaged in memo writing after the qualitative data had been coded and I categorized and themed so it could be interpreted (Leavy, 2017). I interpreted the qualitative data and made connections towards the purpose of my research. After reviewing the coding, I continued to theme the data. Saldaña (2016) explained “theming the data is unlike a code because it is an extended phrase or sentence that identifies

what a unit is about or what it means. A theme may be identified at the manifest level or at the latent level” (p. 297).

During step five of the process, I began to plan the narrative passage of my findings based on the data analysis. According to Creswell (2014), the narrative passage can be mentioned in the discussion in chronology of events, the detailed discussion of several themes and subthemes, or a discussion with interconnecting themes. For the basis of my study, I used detailed discussion of emerging themes with subthemes including verbatim participant responses. Lastly in step six, I was able to provide an interpretation of the phenomenological study by reflecting the findings of my research. My interpretation of the “lessons learned” were based on the lived experiences and perceptions that participants mentioned within their interviews and from my own understanding of mentoring programs and teacher retention.

Throughout the course of the study, phenomenological reduction also known as data reduction was conducted when finalizing the transcriptions of the interviews. Patton (2015) explained the experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essence of the phenomenon. Data reduction was essential during this study because it assisted me in conducting a study with phenomenological focus, which instilled the participants’ lived experiences and perspectives.

### ***Methods of Establishing Trustworthiness***

Establishing trustworthiness in phenomenological research is essential when presenting participants’ perspectives as valid and credible. The trustworthiness in a project speaks to the quality and rigor of the study being conducted (Leavy, 2017). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), “To establish the trustworthiness of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use unique terms such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability” (p. 256).

During the course of the study, I focused on using credibility to establish trustworthiness with the participants. This was done by having prolonged engagement with the participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), prolonged engagement with participants is essential to the relevance of the study because the researcher is able to build rapport with the participants of the study. As I conducted my research, I was able to build relationships and rapport with the participants, and trust was established. After I transcribed interviews and interpretations, I sent each participant a copy of their transcribed interview for member checking to establish trustworthiness. Member checking is also known as respondent validation because the researcher will “solicit feedback on the preliminary or emerging findings” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246) from the participants that were interviewed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checking as a critical technique for establishing credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By doing member checking, participants were able to recognize the interpretation of their experience and provide feedback if needed. I sent transcribed interviews and interpretations to all 12 participants with two out of the 12 participants providing additional information. I did not receive an approved member checking from one out of the 12 participants.

### ***Researcher's Role***

As the researcher for this study, I have 14 years' experience in education. Within my 14 years as an educator, I have been a secondary teacher for eight years, secondary assistant principal for three years, and three and a half years as an Instructional Coach and Campus Support Specialist at an education service center. I am currently employed in the same specialist role for the Project *RISE* grant at an education service center. My role as a specialist is to provide coaching and support to master teachers. Along with on-site campus support, I also provide professional development to master teachers in the areas of learning goals, learning environment,

pedagogy and differentiated instruction, student engagement, assessment for learning, coaching and observational feedback, reflective practices, professional learning communities, and student learning objectives.

As the researcher for this study, my role in this phenomenological research was as the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). The phenomenological study was conducted from an emic perspective also known as the insider’s perspective, meaning the researcher is “capturing and being true to the perspective of those studied” (Patton, 2015, p. 101). As the researcher, I was able to have direct involvement, collaboration, and interactions with the participants as I conducted the interviews for this phenomenological study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This phenomenological study received approval from ACU’s Institutional Review Board after the approval of the dissertation proposal. This study was based on the perceptions of human subjects; therefore, confidentiality and anonymity was maintained by using pseudonyms for the participants. The interview audio recordings and transcriptions were collected as data sources and are stored in a locked file cabinet. The researcher recruited participants for the study by sending them a master teacher recruitment letter that outlined the purpose of the phenomenological research and the role they would play in the study. I also provided a permission to conduct letter (see Appendix F) to the project director and principals to obtain site permission to conduct the study. Although I received site permission, interviews were not scheduled on campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews were done virtually via Zoom. The Belmont Report (1979) indicated that informed consent by the participants needs to be established before conducting the study. The informed consent had the information regarding

the study in a professional context that is comprehensible by educators. The researcher protected the participants' identity by using a pseudonym for each participant. In-order-for the participant to participate in the research, they provided consent to the researcher. All participants did not feel coerced or forced to participate in study (Belmont Report, 1979). I was able to begin the study after I received approval from the IRB.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in research is something difficult for the researcher to control. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), they explained that assumptions in qualitative research refer as "reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed or measured as in quantitative research" (p. 242). Since this phenomenological study focused on the master teachers' perceptions of the impact mentoring programs have on teacher retention, there might be some assumptions that participants' responses may not be completely truthful. This assumption can be addressed with the participants before conducting the interviews. I informed the participants to answer the interview questions as accurate as possible to make sure that the phenomenological study was done with fidelity.

### **Limitations**

The phenomenological study had some limitations that took place depending on internal and external factors. Limitations are influences that I as the researcher was not able to control for the study. One internal limitation of the phenomenological study was the misrepresentation of males. There were only four male master teachers out of the 12 master teachers that fit the criteria to participate in the study. An external limitation occurred due to COVID-19; all interviews needed to be conducted virtually instead of at their respective campus. This created a

time constraint external limitation because the researcher and the participant(s) had to schedule an appropriate date and time to meet virtually not conflicting with work schedules.

### **Delimitations**

The phenomenological study had delimitations that I was able to include in order to control the boundaries of the study. This phenomenological study only focused on the perceptions that master teachers have of the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program at their campus. The delimitation was to conduct a phenomenological study with only 12 master teachers from two high schools in the RGV school district as opposed to 60 master teachers that are within the other 31 campuses also taking part in the grant. Another delimitation is only master teachers were a part of the phenomenological study; mentor teachers and beginning teachers were not included in the study.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the master teachers' perceptions of the impact that the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. The phenomenological methodology used in this study was beneficial in gathering the appropriate information that provided insight and understanding to the impact that mentoring programs can have on teacher attrition. The interview protocol created to conduct interviews with participants established trust and rapport that assisted during the interview process. The interviews conducted provided the researcher with an accurate overview of the master teachers' lived experiences and self-determination as they provided continuous support to beginning teachers throughout the school year.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand master teachers' perceptions of the impact the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. A qualitative research method, phenomenology, was the appropriate method to use to best understand the experiences of master teachers as they mentor beginning teachers. Through this study, I sought to examine the lived experiences of master teachers assisting in the retention of beginning teachers through mentoring. My goal was to gain insight into the master teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that motivated them to support beginning teachers and promote teacher retention at their campus. I used the following research questions to guide my study:

RQ1: How do master teachers perceive their impact on teacher retention at their campus?

RQ2: How do master teachers describe their mentoring experiences with beginning teachers?

RQ3: How do master teachers perceive the impact of the mentoring practices that have been implemented by Project *RISE*?

A phenomenological research design was used to conduct this study. Phenomenology provided me with the insight to understand the lived experiences of master teachers in their role to mentor and retain beginning teachers at their campus. Van Manen (2014) explained that phenomenology is a way of access to the world as we experience it prereflectively and in that reflective experience is the ordinary experience that we live in and that we live through for most, if not all, of our day-to-day existence. Phenomenology was the appropriate research design to use in this study because it “describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon and it culminates the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the

phenomenon” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14) being the master teachers in this study. The organization of this chapter is as follows: (a) participant descriptions (b) analysis of the data, (c) themes, and (d) summary.

### **Participant Descriptions**

I have included a description of the 12 master teachers that participated in the study. Each participant was given a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality in this study. Table 1 provides the participant profiles of each participant. The participants are described thoroughly in this phenomenological study.

**Table 1**

#### *Participant Profiles*

Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Master Teacher Experience	Highest Level of Education
1	Camilla	F	10	3	Master’s
2	Rosie	F	6	2	Master’s
3	Priscilla	F	8	3	Master’s
4	Gabriela	F	14	2	Master’s
5	Cindy	F	12	2	Master’s
6	Gerardo	M	7	3	Master’s
7	Katelyn	F	23	3	Master’s
8	Ryan	M	9	3	Master’s
9	Penelope	F	26	3	Master’s
10	Elise	F	17	3	Master’s
11	Ricardo	M	19	3	Master’s
12	EJ	M	6	2	Master’s

#### *Participant 1 – Camilla*

Camilla has been teaching in a high school setting for 10 years and she has been a teacher at her current campus for nine years. Camilla has a bachelor’s degree in Political Science with a minor in History and Spanish. She recently obtained her Master of Education in Teacher Leadership. She has a Texas Teacher Certification in Social Studies 7-12 and she currently



teaches 12<sup>th</sup> grade students taking Government, Economics, and Compass Learning Credit Recovery. Now that Camilla has obtained her master's degree, she would like to begin a principal certification program. Camilla aspires to be a campus administrator one day. She has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years. Camilla did not have mentoring experience previous to this.

### ***Participant 2 – Rosie***

Rosie has been teaching in a high school setting for six years at the same campus. She has a bachelor's degree in Computer Informatic Systems and she also has a master's in Business Administration. Rosie holds a Texas Teacher Certification in Business Education 6-12, Generalist EC-6, and Bilingual Education Supplemental-Spanish EC-12. Rosie is a Career and Technology Teacher and she teaches 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in Business Management and she also teaches a dual enrollment course in Information Technology at her campus. She has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for two years and she also served in a mentor role position for one year.

### ***Participant 3 – Priscilla***

Priscilla has been teaching in a high school setting for eight years at the same campus. She has a bachelor's degree in Biology and Spanish and she recently obtained her Master of Science in Biological Science. Priscilla holds a Texas Teacher Certification in Life Science 7-12 and she wants to seek certification in Science Composite. She wants to be able to teach additional Science classes not only Biology. Priscilla is currently the Science department head and she teaches ninth grade Biology. She has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and she also had previous mentoring experience through her district's mentoring program. Since

she has completed her graduate degree, Priscilla would like to teach dual enrollment Biology at her campus.

***Participant 4 – Gabriela***

Gabriela has been teaching for 14 years and she has been teaching in a high school setting for 13 years. She has a bachelor's degree in English and she recently obtained her master's degree in Literature and Cultural Studies. Gabriela holds a Texas Teacher Certification in English Language Arts 8-12 and an English as a Second Language Supplemental 8-12. She currently teaches 12<sup>th</sup> graders in English IV and English IV Advanced Placement. Now that Gabriela has her graduate degree, she would like to teach a literature dual enrollment class at her campus. Gabriela has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for two years and she previously had five years of mentoring experience.

***Participant 5 – Cindy***

Cindy has been teaching for 12 years and she has been at her current high school campus for seven years. She has a Bachelor of Art in Social Studies and a master's degree in Library Science. Cindy holds a Texas Teachers Certification in Social Studies 8-12 and School Librarian EC-12. Cindy currently teaches 9-12 grade students in Government, Economics, and World Geography. Cindy has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for two years and she had half a year of mentoring experience before her master teacher role. She would like to be a school librarian one day.

***Participant 6 – Gerardo***

Gerardo has been teaching in a high school setting for seven years at the same campus. He has a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in Philosophy and he recently obtained a Master of Education in Teacher Leadership. Gerardo holds a Texas Teacher Certification in

English Language Arts (ELA) 8-12 and in English as a Second Language Supplemental 8-12. He is currently the ELA department head and he teaches English II. Gerardo has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and he had one year of mentoring experience through his district mentoring program.

***Participant 7 – Katelyn***

Katelyn has been teaching in a high school setting for 23 years at the same campus. She has her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish with a minor in English and she has two graduate degrees. Katelyn's first Master of Education in English as a Second Language and she recently completed the Master of Education in Teacher Leadership. Katelyn is currently teaching College Prep II, English III, and English III dual enrollment which consists of rhetoric and composition entry level college courses. She has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and she has over 10 years of mentoring experience. Katelyn has continuously been a mentor for teachers at her campus.

***Participant 8 – Ryan***

Ryan has been teaching for nine years and has been teaching at his current high school for six years. He has a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in Chemistry, and he has obtained one graduate degree and is working on another one. Ryan's first master's degree is in Social and Behavioral Public Health concentration in Border Health and he is currently pursuing a master's degree in Biology in which he is pending his thesis. He holds a Texas Teacher Certification in Science Composite 6-12 and Physical Education. Ryan is the Science department head at his campus and he teaches ninth grade Biology, Advanced Placement Biology, and he coaches swimming. He has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and he has two years of previous mentoring experience through his district and an alternative certification

program. Upon completion of his graduate degree, Ryan would like to teach dual enrollment Biology at his high school.

***Participant 9 – Penelope***

Penelope has 26 years of teaching experience and 18 years teaching in a high school setting. She is originally from the Philippines and taught Microbiology at a university for eight years in the Philippines. She has a Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology which is equivalent to a Clinical Laboratory Degree in the United States. Penelope has a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and holds a Texas Teacher Certification in Science Composite 6-12 and in English as a Second Language 6-12. She currently teaches Physics, Advanced Placement Physics, and she taught three years dual enrollment at her campus. Penelope has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and she has seven years of previous mentoring experience with her district. She does not desire to be a campus administrator; she enjoys teaching her students and mentoring beginning teachers.

***Participant 10 – Elise***

Elise has been teaching for 17 years and has been in a high school setting for 14 years. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with a minor in Spanish and a master's degree in Spanish Literature. Elise holds a Texas Teacher Certification in Bilingual Generalist-Spanish EC-4 and Secondary Spanish 6-12. She is currently the Foreign Language department head and she teaches Spanish Advanced Placement in Language and Culture and Dual Enrollment Spanish. Elise has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and she has one year of previous mentoring experience through an alternative teacher certification program.

### ***Participant 11 – Ricardo***

Ricardo has been teaching for 19 years and has been in an elementary setting for six years and 13 years at his current high school. He has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and double majored in Political Science. Ricardo has a Master of Education degree in Education Administration and holds Texas Teacher Certification in several areas such as Social Studies 8-12, Special Education Supplemental EC-12, Physical Education EC-12, Elementary Self-Contained 1-6, and English as a Second Language Supplemental EC-12. Since he has multiple teaching certifications, Ricardo has been able to teach a diverse population of students throughout his teaching career; he is currently the Special Education department head and he teaches Special Education Inclusion, Economics, Government, World History and he coaches multiple sports at his campus. Ricardo has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for three years and has three years mentoring experience through his district. Although he has multiple areas of concentration and a graduate degree in Education Administration, Ricardo does not seek an administrative position. He enjoys working in different areas of education, and he would rather teach and mentor his colleagues.

### ***Participant 12 – EJ***

EJ has been teaching in a high school setting for six years. He was recruited to the Rio Grande Valley by Teach for America and began his teaching career at his current campus. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in History and a Master of Education in Secondary Education. Although he has a History degree, he holds a Texas Teacher Certification in Mathematics 7-12, reason being that he has always enjoyed math that he took enough class during his undergraduate degree qualifying him to teach mathematics. EJ currently teaches ninth grade students in his Algebra I class. He has been a Project *RISE* master teacher for two years and he previously was a

mentor teacher for one year through Project *RISE*. EJ enjoys teaching his students and mentoring his colleagues. He does not aspire to be a campus administrator.

### **Analysis of the Data**

In collecting the data for this study, the ultimate goal was to examine the master teachers' perceptions on the mentoring program, Project *RISE*, and the impact it has on teacher retention at their campus. Detailed data collection procedures are outlined in-depth in Chapter 3. The focus of the data analysis was to find the themes that emerged from the participants' interviews and to correlate their perceptions of their mentoring experiences and the impact they have on teacher retention.

The study involved 12 high school master teachers from two RGV high schools in the same RGV school district. There were seven master teachers that were from RGV high school-A and five master teachers from RGV high school-B. The 12 master teachers were selected to participate in the study because they fit the following criteria: (a) hold a valid Texas Teacher Certification; (b) hold a master's degree; currently enrolled in a master's program, or enrolled in the Teacher Leadership Master's Program that the grant was funding; and (c) have two years of serving as a Project *RISE* master teacher at their current campus.

All participants were willing to participate in my study and I was able to schedule interviews with them in a timely manner. Before conducting the interviews, I emailed the Informed Consent form to participants which explained the purpose of this study with the details pertaining to the interview process. Participants then emailed me back their signed informed consent form agreeing to participate in the study. Due to the unprecedented time of COVID-19, I scheduled virtual interviews using Zoom video communications. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that one can conduct online interviews synchronously (in real time) through various

computer mediated communication tools; these are typically verbal interviews with a video component that are more like face-to-face interviews (p. 115). I conducted 12 Zoom interviews and they each lasted between 30 minutes and 45 minutes. I used an audio recorder to record the interviews. Zoom also has a built-in recorder and I was able to save the audio file. I used the Zoom audio file as a back-up plan incase the audio recorder did not project good sound quality for transcription purposes.

I found that having two recordings was beneficial because I was able to toggle from both audio recordings from time to time for the best sound quality during transcription. I transcribed all interviews myself and I found that transcribing is a tedious task, but I found value in listening to all the interviews numerous times because I was able to internalize the master teachers' perceptions. As I transcribed, I used the built-in dictate feature on Microsoft Word so that I could save time from pausing the audio recorder to type. I tried different methods of doing this; first I would play the audio recorder close to the laptop microphone but then I noticed that the words were not being recognized by the dictation feature. When this happened, I started to dictate simultaneously as I was hearing the recording and it made a difference with word recognition. Even after I had dictated into Word, I still needed to go through the interview again to correct word recognition errors. Each transcription took me five to eight hours to complete. I provided each participant their transcribed interview to establish member checking of the authenticity of their interviews. Eleven out of the 12 participants responded, and two master teachers provided additional insight toward their interview.

## **Themes**

Through the analysis of the data, 11 themes emerged more than one time by the participants. I decided to use themes for the data in my study because “qualitative

methodologists recommend labeling and thus analyzing portions of data with an extended thematic statement rather than a shorter code” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 198). Themes are appropriate to use in qualitative studies such as phenomenology because it explores the participants’ “world of beliefs, constructs, identity development, and emotional experiences” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 298).

The overarching themes that I discovered within the participants’ responses were identified at the manifest level which means they were directly observed within the information of the interviews.

Table 2 provides the 11 themes that emerged from the participants’ responses during the interviews and it also includes the frequency of themes mentioned throughout the responses.

**Table 2**

*Summary of Themes and Frequency*

Themes	Frequency
Theme 1: Effective Skill Sets Used to Build Relationships	18
Theme 2: Professional Development Opportunities for Master Teachers	15
Theme 3: Supporting Beginning Teachers	14
Theme 4: Motivational Factors for Being a Master Teacher	12
Theme 5: Master Teachers’ Impact on Teacher Retention	9
Theme 6: Perceptions of Project <i>RISE</i> Mentoring Program	9
Theme 7: Mentoring Using a Coaching Cycle of Reflection	9
Theme 8: Positive Outcomes of Mentoring	8
Theme 9: Master Teachers’ Relatability With Mentees	7
Theme 10: Importance of Mentoring Beginning Teachers	5
Theme 11: Release Time for Mentoring Support	3

The 11 themes presented in this study are categorized based on the level of frequency they were mentioned by master teachers.

***Theme 1: Effective Skill Sets Used to Build Relationships***

The theme, Effective Skill Sets Used to Build Relationships, was most mentioned throughout the interviews conducted in this study. The master teachers provided insight to the skill sets that they have acquired as master teachers in order to build relationships with their mentees and their colleagues. The skill sets that master teachers found most valuable for building



relationships are the following: authenticity, open channels of communication, establishing rapport and trust, and comfortableness in the mentor and mentee relationship. As in most relationships, building relationships in a work environment can take time to establish. Using effective mentoring skill sets can enhance the master teacher and mentee relationship.

**Authentic and Holistic Relationship Skills.** Master teachers mentioned through their responses that having authentic and genuine attributes when communicating with their mentees makes them feel more connected with them as an individual. Showing qualities such as being authentic, caring, and humble creates a holistic approach in building relationships. EJ explained this well in this following statement:

I think people like authenticity, and I think that's my number one thing that I try to bring to the table when I approach a mentee. I always try to remind them that I'm here as a colleague, I'm not here as a supervisor, I'm not here as somebody who's here to monitor or spy or in that sense. I can help by monitoring if you think that would be helpful. I can help by brainstorming with you if you think that would be helpful, I can but really the control aspect of it is really in their hands you know. I think that more for us it's a sense of being comfortable. So, I think that when I first approach people that's kind of my attitude I try to ascertain... Where is this person? Where are they at? What is it that they need? What kind of person do they need me to be in order to bring out the best teacher in them?

Katelyn's perspective of building relationships resonated very much along the lines of having an authentic and genuine approach as she stated, "I think the best way the best skill that we can have in order to build those relationships is you know, focusing on the human side like the human aspect."

Priscilla also explained that her friendly personality keeps her grounded into having authentic conversations with her mentees. In doing so, she is aware she is humble when building relationships with others:

The skill set that I use at the beginning, I make sure I humble myself more than anything and I've always been a big believer like you know what as a teacher leader you can't be all hyped up, you have to humble yourself to them because once you do that they kind of get into like you know what, she is very nice that's one thing I do. I am very understanding and I'm very friendly.

Cindy also had the same idea about building relationships with her mentees. Since Cindy usually comes across as shy, she has found it somewhat challenging to build relationships with mentees that are not within her own department. She has noticed when she uses her skill set of being genuine with her mentees, it has helped her establish those relationships. Cindy explained her response as such:

Well I just try to be relatable and genuine. I know that I'm not an extrovert type of person and so I mean I'm not gonna try and like do things I wouldn't normally do because then I just feel like it becomes disingenuous you know so that to me is the biggest thing.

**Open Channels of Communication.** I noticed as I interviewed the participants that many of them had the same point of view when it came to the importance of communication skills as a master teacher because it was essential in building relationships with their mentees. They also mentioned that communication occurs in different modalities such as being active listeners, understanding the dialogue, honing on specifics, verbal and nonverbal cues, and not being bias or judgmental. Although these communication skills may not seem difficult to do, they do develop overtime through practice and awareness. As I conducted these interviews, I

noticed that some master teachers are more confident with their communication skills than others.

Camilla is a master teacher that is for the most part very confident with her communication skills. She is often asked by her campus principals and district administrators to present during campus in-services, regional conferences, and through media sources throughout her district. Since she is quite experienced with speaking in front of an audience, her communication skills have assisted her in engaging in conversations with her mentees and colleagues. Camilla explained her take of communication in the following statement:

I'm very easy going with people so I think a lot of people are drawn to me sometimes.

The way I express myself with them or I'm very light about things but when it comes to business, I'm very serious about it. I take things too seriously, so I think I take the switch off and on as needed that best works for me when communicating. I think that's the most important thing to be able to communicate with your mentees. I think that the first year we had all these trainings and I was like at first I was like why do I need all these trainings, I know how to talk to people, but it is so much different to teach an adult than teach a kid. To be able to communicate and listen to other people is important.

Rosie's response also resonates well with Camilla's response as far as developing the communication skills needed to have effective dialogues among the master teacher and the mentees. Rosie stated, "The one that really helped me too was how to communicate with our mentees at first because I didn't know how to approach them and that training really helped me."

Gabriela, although very experienced, also found that developing communication skills was something new that she was learning and experiencing as a master teacher. She shared her perspective of developing her communication skills throughout her role as a master teacher:

I like how in the beginning years they were very intentional with teaching us how to like conduct conversations with them and how to be good listeners because I think that's like a big one. I tend to want to give everybody like my experience but I'm not like hearing them out. So, for example one of the ones that comes to mind right away was like okay wait for them to speak and then you rephrase it and then you speak. Okay am I understanding you right? So that I'm not like hearing what I want to hear but I'm actually hearing them out so things like that have been very beneficial.

Katelyn also believes that communication is key in building the master teacher and mentee relationship:

Well like I said before, building those relationships is important because that kind of helps ease when it comes to communicating. So, it makes it easier, it opens up channels of communication once you have built that bridge and once they know that you actually care about them. You want them to stay at that school I think that that's been very beneficial knowing and making them feel like they could come to you and tell you anything building that trust because has been kind of successful.

Penelope shared that she has open communication often with her mentees. She suggested continuous communication throughout the week ensured them that she is there to support them in any way possible, which has really enhanced the conversations she has had with her mentees.

Penelope reflected on the current practices she uses to communicate with her mentees:

Open communication like for example this past year during COVID-19, I just sent them a simple message like, 'how is your weekend something like that.' So open communication and also try to listen to them, just pass go to their classes and just ask do you have any... Do you have some need like any resources I can provide you? Anything you know basic

supplies or maybe other instructional strategies that you may have some questions when you deliver a certain lesson for the following week? So, simple as that like continuous check-ups or continuous follow-up with them and casual conversations.

**Establishing Trust and Rapport.** Master teachers expressed that establishing trust and rapport is also an essential skill set used to build relationships with their mentees. They expressed that without either one of these skills, it would be pointless of going through the mentoring process. Camilla explained:

If we don't have trust within my mentee and I there's nothing going to be there. In order for me to have a relationship with my mentee, in order for me to teach them, they need to be able to trust me and have that rapport that I'm capable of trusting them and helping you become a better person, or a better teacher, or whatever it might be. I believe having that rapport with your teachers, or your student teachers, or your mentees, it's a big deal. A lot of times they don't trust you or they don't trust your credentials because they've never been in your classroom but when you start talking to them and letting them know that you know what you're doing and you're there for them most importantly and it's confidential, it opens up a lot of doors like you get to meet with them in a different level.

Ricardo also acknowledged having rapport with his mentees is important to him in building a relationship with them:

The skill set I mean we have in the past but the first trainings we went to for Project *RISE* and how to sit and listen and talk to people and you know creating a rapport and making sure that they know like hey I'm here there's nothing else going on, my phone is away, basic etiquette and those skills that you don't have to be, just we are doing right now we're having an interview, we're discussing things, we're writing things down and they

know that hey this guy is here to listen and help not just fill out some forms and be on his way.

Priscilla also noted in her interview that building relationships with her mentees is developed through trust. She remarked the following in this statement:

Yes exactly, when they begin to trust me and then you know what, once they know me throughout the year, they know...you know what this is Mrs. P. this is who she is. So, they kind of are able to know exactly who I am. It's not something that I'm just here in the beginning and then I change all of a sudden. It's my personality I think more than anything I've always been a people person, so I think it's also the communication I have with them in the beginning. I'm open to help them, for not only them, anybody in general and they see that.

Penelope shared her insight and perspective of establishing trust and rapport with her mentees. She also indicated these skill sets have given her the ability to reflect on her practices and the importance of continuous follow-up with them as well. Penelope suggested foundational skills in building a relationship through trust and rapport:

First and foremost, with the beginning teachers we to set like a ground of trust and respect so when that is set and they are like willing to open up and they are willing to like follow maybe the suggestions that are given to them. So I've had the opportunity to be working with beginning teachers and that is the main thing that I need to consider, once the respect and trust has been set and then we start working on the areas that we need to target. So that's how I always like do things with them and after a few weeks after, after a few months they are more open to me like I could feel that they're the ones that approach me first.

**Creating a Comfortable and Friendship-Like Environment.** The last effective skill set that was mentioned throughout the interviews in building relationships is creating a comfortable and friendship-like environment so that beginning teachers can feel supported by their master teachers as they embark in their teaching career. Several master teachers emphasized that making their mentees feel comfortable in their professional relationship was to approach them as if they were speaking with a friend. Using a friendship approach assisted the master teachers to provide positive feedback or to target areas of improvement so the beginning teacher could be more effective in the classroom. According to Elise she used informal conversations instead of formal conversations to make her mentees feel at ease:

I will say that it would be more like... I work like this year I have a lot of the electives and fine arts so it's more like an informal kind of talk the one that I have like after the observations is not like that formal so they could feel comfortable and they don't feel like, oh she's here just to get me on the spot and then go and tell to the administrators. So, it's more like a like a coworker friend not anything formal I mean just like a like a regular talk. I don't like to have it that formal because they don't feel comfortable so it would be more like a like we just have like a talk informally. So, it's more like informal conversations that's what I use.

Rosie also remarked that she maintains a friendly approach when getting to know her mentees. She mentioned she also wants to ensure her mentees are comfortable and welcomed into the school and in their department. Rosie said it best when she stated the following in our interview:

So, I think when they have that relationship with someone else that is not like their friend or their administrator they start building up on that trust and just being comfortable

coming to you so you could help them. I just try to approach each mentee as uh having just a friendly conversation at first, like hey how are you doing um how are you doing in class, stuff like that, just very basic and then try to build on that trust first and then once they feel comfortable with me; they don't feel threatened and then I can start going more into detail about their classes and what they're missing or what's good that they're using in the classroom.

Priscilla has similar experiences as well. She has mentioned she also builds relationships by making sure her mentees are comfortable with her approach. Priscilla stated:

Well first of all, I start by building the relationship with them in the beginning of the year making sure that they're comfortable within the science team since I'm the Science department head. I make sure they're comfortable, that they feel welcome most than anything. I want them to feel that unity with the team like that they if they ever need something, they are able to speak up with us with no you know what I am scared of saying something. I think that's one thing make them feel comfortable with you like I guess like a friend first and once you treat them more like a friend relationship, one on one later on, it's an automatic they come in and just look for you and seek for you for help. So, it's something that's ongoing.

Gabriela has also taken on the approach of maintaining a comfortable environment with her mentees. She constantly assures them she is there to provide support and guidance so her mentees do not feel threatened or unwilling to contribute to their conversation. Gabriela stated, "I guess just by letting them feel comfortable and letting them feel at ease so that they could actually share their own concerns. I'm not here to get you or anything, but to help you love what you do."



Ryan had a similar response on his approach of building relationships with his mentees. He also believes his personality plays a big role on making his mentees feel comfortable with his approach. Ryan expressed his experience in building relationships using this modality:

I guess my personality, I guess I make them feel comfortable once I start talking to them and then once they understand that I am being sincere and that I won't ever tell them something that's not true just to try to make them feel better. Like for instance, I would never tell anybody that I'm going to do something for them if I know I can't or if I know I won't.

### ***Theme 2: Professional Development Opportunities for Master Teachers***

All 12 master teachers expressed during their interviews they were provided with professional development opportunities throughout the school year. Some master teachers shared this was the first time they had been exposed to so many professional development opportunities and they learned so much from each training session they attended. Other master teachers mentioned the professional development opportunities helped them acknowledge best practices they can use and also model for their mentees. Master teachers also shared they developed competence through professional development, they also developed professional growth, and they became more reflective when they learned about the reflective cycle. Professional development was a hot topic in these interviews because it was brought up very often throughout the master teachers' responses.

Elise shared her experiences with the professional development that she has attended throughout her years as a Project *RISE* master teacher:

All the trainings for the most part have been super good. I mean not even with the teacher builders' program I got this. Much of the PD I've got with Project *RISE*. Well even the

book study that was super good some of the parts were already repeated because of the trainings that we had with um what was his name, Mr. H., with him I mean it was a lot of repetition but I mean it's always good to remind ourselves. So, I think Project *RISE* has really helped a lot with all the trainings. I mean cause for me that's what helped me.

Ricardo, another master teacher, shared the professional development he has attended has been more in-depth than the master's degree courses he had taken during his time as a graduate student. He explained the trainings have given him real world experiences that has helped him grow to turnaround professional development to his colleagues at his campus. Ricardo explained his view of the professional development he has received:

I think more than anything with trainings that we've gotten um I mean I had a Masters before but it had been awhile since I had done it but these trainings have been very complete, they've been in depth, they've helped us work on our listening skills, our interviewing skills, and they've helped us create frameworks. The majority of the time with Project *RISE* we were presenting on items that were new to us and to them and then we had to really get to know the materials we were going to present. I think that's been the best take-away because I didn't have the challenge really to present like that in the past.

Rosie is a career and technology teacher and teaches dual enrollment Business Management. She has mentioned before that she has found it difficult to find professional development in her content area, but since she has been a master teacher she has attended training sessions that assist her in her mentoring techniques and she also uses these strategies with the students in her classroom. Rosie also had a similar response of her takeaways from the professional development she has attended:

Okay like I was saying right now like we never stop learning so those trainings and all those books that I have and all the videos that I go back to; I think they have really helped me share those things that I've learned to the mentees and not only to the mentees but I use some of them that I didn't know before. So, I think that it's really helped me like on the trainings that we go to and they treat us like students and share with us those strategies that we can use in the classroom. I think those have been really helpful in my classroom and sharing those strategies with my mentees.

Camilla a 10 year veteran teacher expressed, "I really appreciated one of the first trainings that they were um it was different roles, role playing, and we were talking about just communicating and I think to me that was probably the most valuable lessons." Cindy a 12-year veteran teacher also had the same comment on the professional development regarding the role-playing aspect of their own role as a master teacher:

I feel that a lot of the summer institutes and the PDs that we have done like it's really good and we're like, oh wow this is great, and this is um I could take this back. Especially something like the listening part where we role play and do the now you talk and take turns.

Gerardo, another master teacher that teaches English Language Arts conveyed the professional development opportunities have given him new insights and perspectives on how professional development enhances teachers' best practices. Gerardo explained:

Through lots of ways right, it's through an actual staff development where we go, it's been through the book studies, it's been through the micro-credential and just really opening up a lot of avenues of information that otherwise we wouldn't really have access to. One in particular off the top of my head, had to do with the T-TESS evaluation. So

that really opened up my perception of administrators, and the things that they have to look for, and the things that they have to master to really help teachers, and it was a lot. As a teacher it just opened up a bigger perspective of what it takes also to be a distinguished teacher to aim for the high score.

Penelope is a veteran teacher with 26 years of experience making her the most experienced master teacher of the 12 participants. Her response was much like Gerardo's response regarding the professional development training on T-TESS and also additional professional development sessions have assisted her to be more reflective with her mentees. Penelope best describes her professional development experiences in the following statement:

I guess the T-TESS was the number one and then number two was the Reflective Teaching by Mrs. S. The reason that I mention the T-TESS is because the T-TESS is a great tool for us to see how we can improve. The reason why I'm saying that because some teachers just don't like they take for granted. Yes, I know we do our work but there is a tool to be able to say if we are at what level we are doing our work. So before my knowledge about T-TESS was just surface but after the training for me as a teacher, I have to do a lot of things for myself actually; I felt that I did not do what I'm supposed to do with a new system. So, this is a great tool and the reflective teachers; the reflective training with Mrs. S was also very helpful. I mean it's just giving me more opportunity to really assess myself and help other teachers assess themselves and reflect on how to improve our practices.

Another master teacher, Katelyn, also conveyed the professional development she has taken throughout her mentoring experience had never been continuous and reflective. She also felt the

professional development she had been exposed to through Project *RISE* is not comparable to previous mentoring training. Katelyn went on to comment the following:

It's basically providing the professional development, providing the skills, providing the literature, the books, as far as what to expect. Not just throwing us in there and saying go mentor someone but rather giving us that previous training, um you know, equipping us with the skills in order to better help the other teachers how to build; from building relationships to everything that is needed in order to be a good mentor. So, they provided not only the professional development but also the materials, resources that we need in order to be successful when mentoring.

Ryan is a 9-year veteran teacher shared his prospective he has on the professional development he has attended and his outlook he has on the knowledge he has acquired from the professional development:

Well it's given us a lot of resources for the beginning teachers like I kind of said. It's really good at exposing them to what is out there um it also exposes them to a new way of thinking. So it helps me you know they provide a very, very broad tool box that I can actually make more focused or tailored to an actual specific teacher a first year teacher just depending on what I see they need more work on because sometimes the first year teachers don't know what they need work on. By exposing that to the master teachers, we're able to find a tailored fit for them and then it's almost like leaving breadcrumbs to the goal in mind at the end for them.

**Professional Growth Impacted by Professional Development.** During the interviews master teachers mentioned on multiple occasions that the professional development that they had attended throughout the course of these last three years have impacted their professional growth.

Professional growth in this context does not mean in a career advancement position, rather in building capacity through professional learning opportunities that have enhanced their instructional practices needed to support beginning teachers. Elise a 17-year veteran teacher shared her insight on the way professional development has impacted her professional growth after many years as an educator:

Well a lot, oh yes, because like every training like I told you every training that I go I come and it's a full learning experience. I have grown a lot 'no te puedo decir' I mean you cannot even imagine with all this training like this year we haven't had that many trainings on Saturdays but when we would last year we used to go like every six weeks to one Saturday training, I came home and I would say oh my goodness I want Monday to be here so I can implement this in my classroom because I know my students are going to like this. So, I mean like from four years when we started this up to now, I can tell you that I have grown I don't know like maybe three hundred percent, four hundred percent, I don't know.

As mentioned before, master teachers have attended a variety of professional development sessions that have given them new knowledge to learn and grow professionally. Through these professional development opportunities, master teachers have also had to provide turnaround professional development to their colleagues. In doing so, Ricardo shared his perspective on the impact professional development has had on his own professional growth as a master teacher:

So, I think that those things that we've gone through with Project *RISE* has helped us all professionally. I think we sat down and discussed it, I want to say February we were talking a couple of weeks before Spring Break before all this happened, we were going to

have an in-service and we were going to talk about like hey what are we going to present or try to do, and I said hey you know what, I think it was another master teacher that mentioned it; like we've gotten a lot of trainings over the years and we should be able to come up with something to present; I said you're right there's a lot of stuff that's been given to us to help us grow professionally. It's been a good thing in the last two years. It's been better than my master's; it's been better than anything that I've done thus far.

The professional development that has been provided to master teachers has entailed many types of trainings that encompass areas of pedagogy, reflective coaching, cognitive coaching, building relationships, five focus areas, student learning objectives, professional learning communities, differentiated instruction, assessment for learning, and stages of awareness. Since master teachers have acquired an array of skills and resources to fill their toolbox, they are equipped to share their knowledge with not only their mentees, but with all teachers at their respective campus. EJ shared the following during his interview:

I feel like yeah in any role but particularly in this role what I've really appreciated is the fact that you get exposure to those best practices, right and then when you get in there and you have that exposure the fact that you're able to digest it you know it's great because it gives you the opportunity to see things through different lenses that you might not otherwise be considering. I think it terms to the professional growth that it's made me a lot more of a believer in the capacity for us two share our best practices, our own individual best practices and our experience um our experiential gains. So, I think that that has presented me with an unexpected dimension of professional growth.

Priscilla, a Science department head, shared that professional development has enhanced her knowledge and she has been able to apply best practices with her teachers. She explained the following:

It has increased my awareness of how to mentor my teachers exactly. I think it's uh in the beginning we were a little bit, okay how do we start, but now that I'm more experienced now that I know a lot more than what I used to before through the experiences and the professional development that I've gone through with my mentees. I'm more aware of what exactly things to do and how to assist them. What they need the first semester it might be classroom management; when the second semester might be more of uh you know, assessment, formative assessments, it might be different things because they grew from one thing in the beginning and the second semester they need another type of resource or type of help. I think the grant in general has helped me grow as a teacher leader and as a mentor.

Gabriela has also described the professional development to be helpful and it has challenged her to practice the strategies she has learned throughout the professional development sessions. Her insight on implementing professional development is not about staying in the status quo, it is about enrichment and walking the talk when she provides best practices with colleagues. Gabriela's response was insightful to her own self-efficacy as an educator:

The beginning years were very intentional with teaching us how to conduct conversations with them and to be good listeners because I think that's like a big one. For example, one of the ones that comes to mind right away was to wait for them to speak and then you rephrase it. So that I'm not hearing what I want to hear but I'm actually hearing them out so things like that have been very beneficial. The staff development has prepared me with



my role as a mentor. It's helped me to also be on top of my own game. So, it's really opened up different ideas or avenues that I can use for my own teaching.

Another master teacher responded the professional development has given her the ability to communicate more with her colleagues because she was usually very timid. Cindy mentioned the professional development has assisted her in becoming more comfortable speaking to a larger audience unlike her usual class size of students. In our interview, Cindy reflected and spoke of her experience with her professional growth:

For my own professional growth um I guess the biggest thing that has helped me um the biggest thing that has helped me personally grow um I think is being able to um grow my ability to talk in front of people. I haven't done it as much I think as I had thought I was going to have to, but it has helped me be able to present to larger groups of people and that has been the biggest thing that I have gained in my own professional learning.

Katelyn's perspective of the impact the professional development has had on her professional growth as a teacher and master teacher is best described through her response:

I've grown immensely since I first started doing these professional development trainings especially because those are kind of like set up on how to get those skills needed in order to be a good mentor. Like I said before, starting with building those relationships which should be the framework for having a successful experience with the mentees. Then of course the continuous professional development because it's not a one-shot kind of deal it's being continuous and then the checkpoints and all of that. So, now I feel that I have the competence in order to provide the services and support to the new teachers.

Penelope's response also resonates the other master teachers' responses towards the impact professional development has played for the betterment of their professional growth. She

explains in her response how she utilizes strategies she has acquired through the professional development she has attended and implements it continuously in her role as a master teacher.

Penelope shared her insight in the following statement:

Well it has a great effect because I became more reflective as a teacher. I am more diverse and in-depth with the professional development. So, unlike before like this is just that one angle that I'm seeing but I see different angles to address them, by helping other teachers and also helping their students. They're getting better practices from the trainings I attend, and I share those trainings to them during our in-service or during our role modeling or teacher-teacher observations. All those PDs have widened my knowledge and experience and were very helpful.

Although Ryan has found his role as a master teacher to be positive. He believes the professional development opportunities he has attended has assisted him in connecting with teachers throughout his campus, not just those within his department. Ryan noted in his response:

I mean it's affected me in a positive way because it gives me the opportunity to connect with a lot of teachers. I know I would be able to connect with them either way, but it almost gives me a set timer, okay you need to meet with this teacher, so it has increased my network per se.

### ***Theme 3: Supporting Beginning Teachers***

The premise to mentoring is to support beginning teachers or other identified teachers with support and guidance that encompasses systemic and intense mentoring throughout the school year. There are multiple ways that master teachers can provide mentoring support to their mentees, such areas of support can include, but are not limited to the following: sharing of expertise, assisting in organization, arranging and decorating classroom, pedagogical support in

lesson planning, classroom management, and instructional delivery. As mentioned before, there are a variety of methods in assisting beginning teachers adjust in their first year as a teacher.

Camilla has been supporting her mentees as they have entered into the teaching profession and she believes it is crucial for beginning teachers to be mentored throughout the year. There are different forms of supporting beginning teachers and Camilla stated during our interview:

So the support that we give to initial teachers, I think it's crucial like from year zero to four having a support, having somebody to just talk to listen to and cover the little things that sometimes it gets lost with the assistant principals, it's crucial for the teachers and have a better experience than the first year.

Ricardo's response to support beginning teachers reminded me very much of the anticipation stage that beginning teachers experience when they are starting their teaching career. In the anticipation stage, beginning teachers are excited to take on this new leaf in their career and they are unaware of rules and procedures, so they may also come across as being stressed at the beginning of the year. Ricardo noted in his response:

Well the beginning teachers, I think that when they come into the high school they had an idea of what they were going to do or how it was going to be and they get there on their first day and they're like overwhelmed and a little bit stressed about things. I let them know that I'm here to help you. I guess they feel like, hey I can go to him or I could go to any of the other master teachers and I could get help from them instead of our administrators because we are more readily available. So it's easier and a little bit more comfortable for them to come and ask us for help.

EJ's experience mentoring a beginning teacher was quite unique because he mentored a JROTC instructor that was beginning a new career as a teacher. According to EJ, he felt this gave him the opportunity to really assist this instructor to become more acquainted with being a teacher. EJ mentioned he had felt this experience provided the opportunity to use his resources and additional skill sets to assist the JROTC instructor. EJ stated in his interview:

I think probably again the best example would be Ms. G. because it really gave her the opportunity to have someone to share the feeling of being able to be that teacher for certain kids. When you feel like somebody has gone through it with you, you feel like you're more able to kind of not only share the struggles but also appreciate the successes. You think you're only there for the support, but then when it comes time for them to share about a certain student or someone they helped or something that made them feel like, hey I'm not.. I'm not too bad at this, that's also really nice.

Rosie shared that supporting beginning teachers is not merely in pedagogical support but in the mentoring of best practices used to teach in the content area. Rosie mentioned her mentee taught a math content area which was opposite to her as a Career and Technology Education (CTE) teacher specializing in Business Management. Rosie felt her lack of knowledge in the Math content area was going to hinder her from providing effective mentorship to her mentee. Rosie strategized how she could further assist her mentee, so she teamed up with the math department head to assist in providing content area support to her mentee. Rosie noted the support provided to her mentee:

When I was working with the math teacher, Ms. P, like every time I would go in, I would see her frustration and the last time that I went with her, she was like, oh I tried this and it's working like I'm not having those discipline problems as much as I used to have. I

think what helped me the most as far as mentoring her was working together with Mr. M too because I didn't feel that I was a strong mentor in providing her the support because math is not my subject. So, we had to team up so that we could help her and I think that's when we started to see more of the benefits of the strategies that she's been using because it's more geared towards math and not only broad strategies like class management and stuff like that, but now it's more strategies that could be used in a math class.

Priscilla shared her experience in providing support to beginning teachers and how she is more aware of the mentoring practices she uses throughout the school year:

In the beginning we were a little bit, okay how do we start, but now that I'm more experienced and know a lot more than before and through professional development that I've gone through and experiences with my mentees; I'm more aware of what exact things to do and how to assist them. What kind of help do they need in the beginning? Let's say, the first semester it might be classroom management when the second semester might be more of you know, assessment, formative assessments, it might be different things because they grew from one thing in the beginning and the second semester they need another type of resource or type of help.

Penelope described her experience mentoring both beginning and other identified teachers that need assistance. She explained that her previous mentoring experiences and the training she has received from Project *RISE* equipped her with the appropriate resources and tools needed to provide support to her mentees. Penelope shared a recent experience she had this past school year with one of her mentees:

So, one recently is with a new physics teacher this year, so I was guiding the teacher about some specific topics because our curriculum is kind of very fast pace and he is a

very new teacher. So, I mentioned some areas that he can go like some type of professional development or resources, some basic resources first and some strategies that are aligned to start with. I check on him every week or once in two weeks if I could visit him and see how he delivers the lesson and then after that we have a post observation conference. I ask him about, How do you think the lesson went through? Did you execute the plan of actions that you made? What are the strengths and weaknesses or areas to improve that you think is possible there that we can improve? So, doing that with this teacher for about one semester, I mean he feels that he has better grasp of the content as well as the strategies and the management and he is more comfortable.

**Classroom Management Support.** Some beginning teachers tend to struggle with classroom management their first year of teaching. This may be the case because they have not had experience being an authoritative figure in a classroom setting or they are uncertain of how to address classroom management issues with students and with their colleagues. Gabriela's experience with mentoring beginning teachers has brought to light that beginning teachers do need a lot of assistance in classroom management. Although not all of her mentees share the same content area as herself, she always tries to engage pedagogical support such as classroom management in assisting beginning teachers. Gabriela also engages her mentees in reflective questioning so they are also held accountable for creating a plan of action when addressing classroom management in her classroom:

Another one that's like a big one for the new teachers is discipline and getting a handle on that. One of the things that we worked with new teachers is how cell phones can be a problem, and how you they can really be a distraction for them. So, from the very beginning we try to give them pointers but sometimes it doesn't get better. So, we have to

go back, and be reflective and ask them, Did you do what I asked you to do? Did you have a plan to collect them? Did you follow through? Did you redirect? Did you call parents? So, it's more like okay let's review if it worked. If it didn't work... How can we like fix it? Once they get a handle on that it's like they see, how the class dynamics change so much because now I have their attention and it's not a distraction anymore.

**Instructional Delivery Support.** During the interviews master teachers mentioned they have noticed beginning teachers need support in their instructional delivery. One of the roles and responsibilities of the master teacher is to provide instructional delivery support that is not only limited to specific content areas, but rather to providing strategies that will enhance the student learning in the classroom. Instructional delivery support focuses on areas such as achieving expectations, content knowledge and expertise, communication, differentiation, and monitor and adjust. The master teachers were able to observe their mentees and they discovered some of the practices they used for instructional delivery needed improvement in order to make the learning more effective in the classroom.

Gerardo's mentee had a prepared lesson that needed to be tweaked in order to provide clarity to his students. Although the mentee had a well-prepared lesson, it lacked differentiated instruction so the lesson could be rolled out effectively. Gerardo provided support by using differentiated instruction strategies that made a difference in the instructional delivery of the lesson:

So, really amazing lesson, the thing was the instructions weren't clear so once they were doing it there was a lot of confusion. He had to address the same question multiple times. So, one of the things that we kind of discussed was planning is obviously important, but things happen in his classroom that you weren't expecting. My recommendation was to

provide the instructions in multiple ways to make sure everybody should have a copy of the instructions, in this case only one group, only one person in the group had the actual instructions, so like make a copy for everybody or write the instructions for project on the board so everybody could see them. Have students maybe tell you back the instructions that way you know if there is any areas of confusion.

**Lesson Planning Support.** Master teachers identified lesson planning as being an area of concern for beginning teachers. They reflected on some of the instances they had assisted their mentees in understanding the lesson cycle and how to incorporate these areas within the lesson plan. Some master teachers mentioned their mentees would frequently work on lesson plans without direction as to how everything was supposed to flow during their instructional delivery. Master teachers also noticed their mentees did not necessarily know how to tailor departmental lesson plans to best fit their needs in the classroom. Camilla shared the following experience she had with her mentee during one of their meetings:

My lessons I don't know what to do with this and that and I'm like, well you know that we already have lessons made for you like you don't have to reinvent the wheel just give it your own spice. So, we went through it step by step and he stopped staying till 7:00 o'clock planning. I mean everything he was building from scratch. So, he was stressed he was obviously very stressed about everything and then you had an admin telling him like well no you're doing everything wrong but never showed him how to do things right. So, he was trying all these different things, but he never knew if it was right or not.

Elise is the Spanish department head and she explained during her interview that she creates her lesson plans and shares them with her teachers in her department. She recognizes that sometimes her lesson plans do not go as planned so she tweaks and modifies for class periods. Because she



shares her lesson plans with her department, she has noticed teachers want to do exactly what is on the lesson plans and they do not monitor and adjust for their students as needed. Elise stated during her interview the following:

That's what I tell them this is a working lesson plan and every morning when I'm thinking I'm going to do this and all those mentees and things I do in the classroom are not in the lesson plan because every morning you're constantly changing. So that's something that they need to understand especially for the new teachers. Not all students are the same; some are visual learners, some are listeners, so you have to change the lesson plan.

Gabriela explained her experience with her mentee, and it was an eye opener for her because she went through the purpose of the lesson cycle and the implementation of having a lesson plan to refer to when conducting his lesson. In her explanation, she mentioned her mentee pretty much bundled multiple activities to fill the lesson plan, but it really did not target a specific objective that should have been addressed in the lesson. Gabriela worked diligently with her mentee as she discussed:

This particular teacher, he liked to implement a lot of different applications and different strategies but didn't have a good lesson plan. So, everything was just really all over the place, sporadic, trying everything that was available, trying different programs and different technology that was available; not a particular skill or TEK that he was trying to target at that day. So, I was basically able to go in and talk to him about the lesson cycle and explain the importance, and he felt that it was kind of like a revelation; like okay so everything that we do, every program that we implement is geared toward that TEK, toward that like idea and at the end of the day you've done the lesson cycle.

Cindy has also had some ah-huh moments with her mentees and their implementation of lesson plans. She stated:

When I talk about lesson planning and different activities that my mentees are working on in the classroom and I make a suggestion, and it happened a couple of times this year with a couple of different mentees, and they're like, oh my gosh I never thought of that before.

Right then and there, Cindy realized she needed to assist her mentees with lesson plan design to make their lessons more valuable for the students.

Ryan went through the whole process in creating a lesson plan from beginning to end. He mentioned his mentee did not know how to and where to find the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for his content area. Ryan also went on to explain that he went over the academic language that the TEKS were referring to so his mentee had a better understanding of the process of his lesson plan design:

I was teaching one of my mentees how to actually lesson plan, so I took him through the whole steps of lesson planning, and we created one together. I showed him where to find the TEKS, what the TEKS meant, how to analyze the TEK and evaluate and then shape it into a lesson that actually wasn't straying away from the objective because what a lot of teachers like to do is they like to add more information to the content, but then it just goes above and beyond the actual objective that's being required by the state. So, I've been able to get those teachers to understand actually how to create a lesson from start to end and then they start to realize once they do that. They start to reflect on it and they learn the lesson planning process.

Penelope mentored a beginning teacher that entered the teaching profession with the mindset to teach for a year and then leave to pursue a graduate degree and go into another profession. At first her mentee resisted the support that Penelope was offering her, but as the school year progressed, her mentee began to take her advice and welcomed her mentoring. One of the areas Penelope provided her support on was the lesson planning and introduced the 5 E Lesson Plan Model. The 5 E Lesson Plan Model consists of the following components: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. Penelope shared her experience with her mentee during the mentoring process:

So, I really walked with her especially like when doing the lesson plans. So, these are the 5 E Models and I explain to her about the 5 E Models and then what do you think is the best strategy for that particular lesson with the type of students that they have. So, she writes it down, so after that I gave her some time to think about it. I'm going to give you feedback to enrich and then give it back me. Once I approve it then that's the one, you're going to submit to your administrator.

#### ***Theme 4: Motivational Factors for Being a Master Teacher***

Since master teachers receive a salary augmentation of \$7,000 for their role as a Project *RISE* master teacher, I wanted to know what motivated them to be master teachers. All 12 master teachers shared different reasons as to why they were master teachers. Eight master teachers were motivated by intrinsic factors that gave them interpersonal satisfaction of supporting beginning teachers and their colleagues at their campus. Their intrinsic motivation of being a master teacher also gave them autonomy to be a part of decision-making for the betterment of teacher retention through mentoring. The intrinsically motivated master teachers also mentioned

they enjoy assisting others through mentoring and it also made them feel more competent in the work they were doing inside and outside of their classroom.

There were four master teachers that were extrinsically motivated in being a master teacher. They expressed the salary augmentation does play a big role as to why they have continued being a master teacher. Some master teachers mentioned they used their salary augmentation for the following reasons: fund their graduate degrees, not seek employment elsewhere until the grant is over, to compensate their time for mentoring and additional roles and responsibilities, and people like gaining more money towards their salary.

**Intrinsic Motivation for Being a Master Teacher.** Eight of the 12 master teachers in this study claimed they were intrinsically motivated to be master teachers. To be intrinsically motivated is to take an action for one self's own interpersonal satisfaction. These master teachers find mentoring to be self-rewarding without nontangible rewards. Master teacher Elise explained she enjoys mentoring whether she gets paid for it or not. Elise went on to explain she volunteers for different initiatives at her campus and she feels she already gets paid for being a teacher that she does not expect more in return. Elise shared her perspective in the following:

I mean for me it wasn't like oh they're going to pay me, there are going to give me an extra stipend and I'm going to do this because of the stipend. No, I never thought about the stipend because I do so many things extra for free, I mean like all the sponsoring and all of that. I was not driven by the salary. Helping the teachers, giving them my experience, having them talk to me so the salary was not something that I mean I can even I can do it for free.

Ricardo is the Special Education department head and he coaches multiple sports at his campus; therefore, he already receives multiple stipends for his extra duties. Despite his extra stipends and salary augmentation, he claimed he is not in the master teacher role for the additional pay:

So, you have to approach from a fulfillment point like I want to be fulfilled as a person professionally not fulfilled monetarily. I mean in reality at the end of the day I mean it's secondary, like I said, the growth that we've had professionally, and the growth that we've had on campus with teachers and retention, and having our campus that works together is worth more than the money.

Rosie also felt the salary augmentation did not play a driving force for her to be a master teacher. She did acknowledge that although the additional money does assist in her personal life, she finds mentoring very rewarding as a master teacher. Rosie relayed this to me:

I think that a lot of the things that I do in this program I used to do them already. So, of course having that stipend it helps a lot as far as my personal life, right, but I don't think it affects. Even if I didn't have it I think I would still be doing some of those things because I used to do them before that's why when I first started in this program it was because of that because my principal said you're already do a lot of those things why not join this program and that's when I started as a mentor. It's been a rewarding experience I want to say, I mean I always like helping others and seeing the difference that it has made on them like it really, it's very satisfying for me.

Priscilla recalled as a young adult she always wanted to help people and she believed through her role as a master teacher providing support and guidance to beginning teachers and her colleagues was her way of fulfilling her childhood aspiration. She described her perspective of her intrinsic motivation to mentor others:

Again, I said that at the beginning, the augmentation is not everything for me. I remember since I was small, I always said I wanted to be a person to help out people one way or another. In this case since I'm a teacher, I'm able to assist students, but I want to do more, besides helping students I wanted to grow as a teacher. I wanted to be able provide my expertise and let teachers know what I do, how to help them. I guess, I'm not here for the money kind of thing. I'm here because I wanted the experience, I wanted to help teachers, and that's something I like to do; that's something I've always wanted to do and now that I'm doing it I mean I really enjoy it helping teachers.

Gerardo explained although he is currently getting paid to be a master teacher, he was already previously doing the same mentoring activities without payment. Since this was the case, he did not feel the salary augmentation played as a driving force to continue as a master teacher. He has been very compelled by the work that he does as a master teacher that he does not see it as an opportunity for payment but rather a satisfying experience to mentor others:

Like I mentioned in the previous question, a lot of the master and mentor teachers that signed up for this; we were already kind of doing this for free. I feel that the master teachers again like I said, already had that mindset that they're here for the campus, they are the most experienced or the ones with the heart and the mind in the right place. So, they're going to do it because they want to help out their fellow teachers, they want to help out their department, they want to really get their wheels going and put the campus in a better place. I also want to add that the salary augmentation validated our efforts and highlighted the teachers leading and helping others. In a way, it also further motivated us and others to continue doing what we are doing but in a more structured and defined way.

Katelyn's response resonated much like Gerardo's because she mentioned that after being in the teaching profession for 26 years, she has mentored many times without receiving additional pay, therefore, stating the salary augmentation is not the reason she has continued to serve as a master teacher. She humbly stated:

Well the salary augmentation is a nice thing. However I mean, I've been at my campus for 26 years now and have a lot of love for my campus and I used to mentor even when I wasn't mentoring through TxBESS or through Project *RISE*; it's nice now to get paid for it. I mean it's greatly appreciated, but that's not the main thing that drives me and other teachers at our school because we were doing it without the pay but so it's a nice reward for the hard work.

According to Ryan, he also felt the salary augmentation was not a motivation to be a master teacher. Ryan recollected that as a child he liked to help people and it was something he did within himself. He described his motivation to be intrinsic and money was not the determining factor to mentor others:

Honestly, I was already doing it without the pay. It comes from me there's really no external motivation for it, it's all intrinsic, that's just me as a person and that's how I've been since I was small. If I wanted to do something, I would do it, if I didn't want to, you couldn't pay me a hundred bucks or a million dollars.

Although Penelope did not at first directly mention the salary augmentation was not a driving force for her being a master teacher, she does value the mentoring process she upholds with her mentees and she did later state she would still mentor others even if there was no additional pay offered. Penelope addressed the financial aspect of taking on this role of a master teacher, but later reflected the money was not the reason she continues doing this work. She emphasized that

being a master teacher has not only benefited her financially, but as a professional too because she has learned so much through the professional development she has attended and she is able to share her knowledge by mentoring teachers at her campus:

Well it was a good salary raise with that because of the stipend and because of the you know professional development, it's a very good like increase. I just don't look at the financial aspect of it. The trainings itself for me I know every person is different but for me the trainings that I got were just so much to help me become a better teacher like you know because to become a better teacher if you want to have best practices you need to have this support and resources to make your life more meaningful as a teacher because even if you have this money but you don't have the support, I don't think that is going to retain someone in the position because different aspects but just for me it's not just the monetary.

**Extrinsic Motivation for Being a Master Teacher.** Four of the 12 participants acknowledged they were extrinsically motivated in being master teacher at their campus because of the salary augmentation. Being extrinsically motivated is to be motivated by doing something for an external reward such as the incentive pay received through the salary augmentation. This does not necessarily mean that master teachers that are extrinsically motivated only care about the monetary factor and not about the actual mentoring component, on the contrary, they still comply and complete their role and responsibilities with the driving force of continuing as a master teacher for the salary augmentation.

According to Camilla, she was already mentoring before without pay but she really likes receiving the salary augmentation. Although she thinks that not everyone that is a master teacher should continue in that role, she understands that they continue in that role because of the salary



augmentation they receive. Camilla makes it very clear in her interview that she has continued as a master teacher for the monetary compensation, but at the same time she is completing her responsibilities as a master teacher. Camilla remarked:

The salary augmentation is nice, but I think a lot of times like I was already doing it and just having that support well and of course the monetary like recognition was good. I like it, it's money, everybody likes money but that's my takeaway that there's some people that are just there for the money might not be as faithful to the program as they should be.

EJ is also extrinsically motivated in being a master teacher because he explained the time he spends mentoring and completing documentation is additional to his teaching role. He does enjoy teaching and understands his role as a master teacher also comes with great responsibility, so he wanted to make sure what he puts into the mentoring component is being compensated and it plays a big factor in his decision of continuing on as a master teacher. EJ relayed his response as such:

Okay, I'll be realistic about it, I think that when it comes down to prioritizing your time, yeah, the financial component of it is a factor. I mean you don't just walk into this role and think that it's not going to take time and commitment to carry responsibility with it. So yes, of course the financial component of it to me is very, it is real, it is part of the consideration because yeah, I mean if you're going to work you do want to be compensated sure.

Gabriela shared her perspective on the way the salary augmentation affects her as a master teacher. Her response resonates much like the other master teachers because she did continue as a master teacher because she was extrinsically motivated with the salary augmentation. Gabriela

decide to remain in the role because the additional money was being used toward her master's degree:

To be honest it was a big part, it played a big role because I have not been able to enjoy the money, the stipend at all, because I've used it 100% for my Masters. So, if it weren't for that I would be in debt getting my master's or I would not be getting it at all. So, I think its money very well spent, like I didn't have it before so it's something that is only benefiting me.

Lastly, Cindy has been wanting to pursue a new job as a librarian, but she decided not to apply for a librarian position because of the salary augmentation she is currently receiving as a master teacher. She did claim she would eventually like to be a school librarian, but the extra pay from being a master teacher along with her regular teacher salary is more than she would make as a librarian. Cindy stated:

It plays a big role; I know that last year I didn't really try to apply anywhere else or for another position I've been looking for because I knew I was going to get that salary augmentation. There are different things that have surfaced this year that I feel like I don't know how it's going to work for next year but I wasn't going to apply for next year because regardless of that I wasn't satisfied.

### ***Theme 5: Master Teachers' Impact on Teacher Retention***

One of the main initiatives of Project *RISE* was to improve teacher retention of 0-3 year beginning teachers by master teachers mentoring them during the first transitional years of entering the teaching profession. Master teachers' roles and responsibilities focused on providing pedagogical support and professional development opportunities to offer continuous guidance and mentoring to their beginning teachers and other identified teachers that need additional

support. The master teachers' goal in mentoring beginning teachers was to improve educator effectiveness by ensuring that beginning teachers are retained at their campus to minimize teacher attrition. Several of the master teachers shared during their interviews they do believe they have made an impact on teacher retention at their respective campus. Camilla, for instance, stated:

I think that the support that we provide as master teachers has helped with the teacher retention and haven't seen it from throughout the first year that before Project *RISE* was on board. That summer we had a turnover of 30 teachers and then we had after that and we had like less and less and less. I think that this past year I think we only had five and some of them were moving on to different states and it was not because of what was going on in the school. So the support that we give to initial teachers, I think it's crucial like from year zero to four having a support, having somebody to just talk to, listen to and cover the little things that sometimes it gets lost in the assistant principals, it's crucial for the teachers and have a better experience than the first year.

Elise also felt her role as a master teacher has impacted teacher retention at her campus as well. She shared the following:

Since we started Project *RISE*, I think teachers are doing a lot better. At the beginning it was kind of hard because they were not used for other teachers to go and observe. I mean it was one of the principals or assistant principals but after that they got used to it and I think I mean they have been for the past two years we have had minimal teachers leaving, they stay. So, I mean I think it's helping a lot, a lot.

Master teachers also expressed that some of teachers teach multiple preps at their campus and therefore may have more on their daily agenda than others. Ricardo mentioned how he has

supported teachers navigate through the multiple preps they teach on a daily basis. He relayed how he is able to relate to this similar situation with his own hectic schedule, but also emphasizing although teachers might be faced with teaching multiple preps at his campus, they have been able to retain teachers:

I think overall the impact that we've had less teachers leave us. I think that with the support they've gotten from us that we've helped with those other little responsibilities that they have it helps them prepare for the classroom and it helps them feel that they have somebody they could go to and get help. We haven't had that much turnover, there was a point in time before Project *RISE* where we had a lot of turnover and since Project *RISE*, I think that we've had very few teachers leave us.

EJ works at the same campus as Ricardo and his experience is similar because not many teachers have decided to leave their campus. He expressed he too believes they are making an impact in retaining teachers at their campus because they do not have a large number of beginning teachers because they have already passed the 0-3-year threshold. Ricardo remarked teachers being mentored are staying within the teaching profession because they have had less teacher turnover throughout the year:

Well as far as the retention I feel like our campus is in a really unique position because we don't have too many that are classified as brand-new teachers. I mean it feels to me like if you feel like you're getting the support that you need that you would want to stay in I guess I'm just trying to be a part of that. I haven't directly asked anybody or faced any situations where anybody was thinking of leaving but in my opinion the support must lend itself to retain teachers.

Rosie shared her perspective on how her role as a master teacher has impacted teacher retention for beginning teachers. She mentioned her experiences with her mentees and related her own personal experience as a first-year teacher and how it helped her facilitate her mentoring of beginning teachers and other colleagues at her campus. Rosie highlighted several viewpoints in her statement indicating her role in teacher retention:

I think as far as new teachers come into their new role; I think that the first years are the most difficult ones for them. So, I think when they have that relationship with someone else that is not like their friend or their administrator they start building up on that trust and just being comfortable coming to you so you could help them. The very first one is very stressful because it's very different when you're learning the theory and actually coming into the classroom putting those practices into effect it's very different what you learn and then trying to put those practices into your classroom. I try to help those teachers not go through the same thing and just being there for them.

Master teacher Priscilla is from a campus that had a history of high levels of teacher attrition within a three to four-year period. Throughout these last three years that Project *RISE* has been in place, Priscilla has noticed the number of teachers leaving the campus has decreased and the teachers are being retained at the campus. She provides multiple possible reasons why teachers are more willing to stay in the teaching profession at their campus:

Well since Project *RISE* started three years ago I did see that before there was a lot of teachers that would leave by the end of the year use to be 30, 40 teachers at a time and that was where probably the next year we had a lot of brand new teachers but because a lot of teachers had left. So, since Project *RISE* started, I see that not a lot of teachers are

leaving anymore, I may be counted three or four a year, but basically a lot of teachers are staying now.

Cindy explained that during her time as a master teacher, none of her mentees have left her campus. She mentioned not all teachers may be receptive to the support and guidance provided to them. She remarked, “I think overall it helps retention because they know that even if they don't really want to come to a master teacher, just having them there makes them feel like there's other people on the campus willing to help them.”

Gerardo experienced a breakthrough moment with one of his mentees that was on the brink of resigning his teaching position. He explained that one of his mentees did not feel supported by the administrator in charge of his department and therefore it made Gerardo's mentee want to leave the teaching profession. Gerardo described his encounter with his mentee during the time that he wanted to resign from teaching:

So with this teacher in particular because he was having issues with an administrator; he was kind of losing sight of what he was good at, and what was needed, why he was needed, and I think towards the end I think he just... I don't know, there's a spark of like confidence and I guess he was able to work it out but he was one of those mentees that really because he's young, he has a lot of creative ideas, so I was able to kind of also remind him like, hey you have a lot of great ideas and really good with technology; a lot of kids would be missing out on that, missing out on a great activity. I was glad that towards the end, he kind of like you know what like you're right, I am good, you're right, I'm going to stay, like this is mine, my school.

Ryan went on to describe the different modalities he used when he mentors tiered groups of teachers. He explained his mentees fall under three tiers: first year teachers, veteran teachers, and

with teachers that have 3-5 years of experience. Ryan described how each tier is impacted by his mentoring approach for each group:

With a first year teacher I was able to help her understand that because she was having some issues within the classroom and a lot of people were saying that it was a classroom management problem. It was almost like a campus management issue that was created because these students thought that they could get away with anything. Now with veteran teachers they've been able to become more comfortable within the campus. I didn't necessarily give them impact with their pedagogy, but it was more of contributing to the culture of being positive in an environment where ideas can be shared and they were more comfortable knowing that their getting their ideas out that they would be recognized as well. Now with the teachers from three to five years they are able to create their own lesson so usually what we do is we would model a lesson to them and by the end of the mentorship, they were able to create their own ideas and they were able to reflect on how they delivered their lesson.

***Theme 6: Perceptions of Project RISE Mentoring Program***

Since Project *RISE* is a Teacher Incentive Federal Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, it was really important to gather the master teachers' perceptions about the mentoring program which the grant entailed. The premise of Project *RISE* is to “create a K-12<sup>th</sup> pipeline of highly effective teachers” (Region One ESC, 2016, p. 2). One of the grants main objectives is to “ensure that highly effective educators are apparent and retained” (Region One ESC, 2016, p. 2); so in that respect, retention was remedied by developing a mentoring program led by master teachers to provide support and guidance for beginning teachers and other identified teachers that needed assistance. I felt it was essential to ask master teachers of their perception of the Project

*RISE* Mentoring Program in order to better understand their experiences and to see the advantages or disadvantages of this program.

**Positive Perceptions of the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program.** Ricardo explained his principal had recruited him in being a Project *RISE* master teacher because he was already doing a lot of the roles and responsibilities because he was the Special Education department head. So, at the beginning he did not really know about the grant and what the master teacher position would require of him. Ricardo reflected on his perception of the mentoring program and he remarked, “I really feel that Project *RISE* has helped us do better by our colleagues, better by the campus and become more of a pillar that holds up the campus.”

EJ shared his perception of the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program as being positive. He referred to the mentoring program having a teacher-centered approach much like teachers have a student-centered approach for their students. He also mentioned the mentoring process brought about more collaboration and less teacher isolation at his campus:

I think the perception for me overall would be positive. I think it's so important that we have a sense that there is a big picture program taking place to help support and maintain new teachers in the field and even veteran teachers in the field, just to sort of sustain the educator. One thing I like about Project *RISE* is that it's very educator centered and we all try to create classrooms that are student centered and I think that sometimes when we go to trainings they want the trainings to also be student centered and we're the students.

If you take care of teachers, you're taking care of students by extension.

Priscilla also had a positive perception of the mentoring program. She acknowledged that as a master teacher she has seen teachers become more receptive receiving her support. Priscilla



shared she provides professional development opportunities to her mentees as well so she can build capacity within the teaching staff:

I mean they're great, I mean I actually never knew about instructional coaching in the past. I mean, it's something that has improved teachers' confidence maybe a lot of teachers don't see it, but I see it in teachers. I see the teachers growing and doing a lot more things when we go and make some professional development turnarounds here at campus and then you go to their classroom; they're actually utilizing those applications that we're teaching them and it's something that I mean for me it's amazing because not a lot of teachers would do it in the beginning but now they're doing it. So, I mean the grant is working the grant is retaining teachers and it's improving them every year.

Gabriela shared a similar response to Priscilla's by acknowledging the mentoring program has had a positive effect on her mentees and even herself. She indicated the mentoring program has made her be a better teacher leader as she is coaching and mentoring her mentees:

I think it's a really good program. Well in two ways, one it's like helping the teacher get better, like the requirement is the Masters, right. So, like if you don't have it yet, you're asked to get it. So that's like me, I'm just so glad that like I got the opportunity to do the master's because I've learned so much and like, I don't know, I see like teaching in a different way now. So obviously in a way I'm not only helping teachers, but I think it's helping me also. It's like I need to be the example so I'm like okay, like some more pressure on me. I have had a very good experience with the brand new teachers that I have that I'm mentoring right now and they're very receptive and they're open to suggestions and help but like I said it's helping me a lot be to be like on top of my game as well.

Another master teacher expressed being a master teacher and taking part in implementing the mentoring program has given her insight in mentoring resources she did not know about before. Katelyn mentioned she now felt equipped to provide mentoring support to her mentees relevant to their work:

It's been great learning a lot about mentoring like I said before I would have never thought before that there were actually resources to help us; mentors become better mentors. So, basically Project *RISE* going in looking for those resources and providing them to us has greatly impacted my mentoring experience. I mean I have a lot of training under my belt that helps me become a better mentor.

According to Gerardo, he has had some extraordinary gains as a master teacher. He expressed he has learned an array of mentor skills that have assisted him as he has mentored beginning teachers at his campus:

I've enjoyed it, again I feel that my mentees and people that I work with have gained from it. I've gained from it both through the development of my skill set as a mentor also the learning just about pedagogy, instruction leadership, and power structures. So, I feel like really get through the masters through training from a better understanding that otherwise I would have just been ignorant of. Even for our zero to three-year teachers, they've gained so much too because now they have a set person that they can go to especially if they trust them and they have those relationships with them. So, it just gives people a lane, a path, to kind of follow if they ever need help or guidance or if they're struggling, which was ultimately at the purpose behind this and of course you have the incentives tied to it which again help also because it is an incredibly underpaid profession.

Penelope's perception on the mentoring program was positive. She mentioned that teachers from her campus have also commented they like the benefits that Project *RISE* offers. She shared the following statement:

Well overall it's very good, it is like it helps teachers based on the mission. It is helping teachers to become more effective, highly effective to support all the students and because of all the professional development during summer and during the school year plus more. Teachers are more equipped on the pedagogical extraction of skills and classroom management, aside from that the rewards, the payout, the SLOs that they created and the results of this were also like benefiting the teacher because they feel like they are rewarded for all the hardships. So overall, I liked the idea and I think talking to fellow teachers they also like, they are happy with this program.

**Suggestions for Refinement of the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program.** Camilla felt the mentoring program had some gaps and needed to be refined to make the coaching process more structured. She gave some suggestions that would work better when rolling out the mentoring process for teachers that work at an elementary level to secondary level. Since Camilla has been a master teacher for the past three years, she has seen the mentoring program evolve through years. Therefore she stated:

I think that there is some structure but there is a lot of things to work with and I don't think that five years was enough. I think that it's an ongoing process at all times and I also think that it should be separated from elementary to high school or secondary or elementary because they don't deal with the things that I deal with at my campus. There's little glitches that could be better and I honestly think that five years was not enough. The

execution of different things was a little sketchy or not as strong as the foundation because I guess we were learning as we went and tackling different situations.

Ryan much like Camilla had insight on possible ways to refine the mentoring program. Since Ryan works at a fairly large campus with approximately 140 teachers, the conundrum he encounters in this setting is the teachers all exemplify different levels of experience. For the most part he noticed many teachers that do not fall under the beginning teacher or veteran teacher status, do not have a support system that will assist in refining their practice:

It has the right idea for an ideal situation, like it's great for smaller campuses maybe like 4A, 3A, and 2A campuses but when it comes to campuses that are large like my campus; it kind of misses out on how to help those teachers that are already at almost at the action area of refinement stage in their teaching career. So, that's where I feel like it's dropped the ball, it focuses more on the conscious and unaware teacher. Now, with the refinement the way that Project *RISE* has been able touch up on those teachers is by giving them opportunities to become leaders or teacher leaders but you see not a lot of these teachers want to become leaders and that is where we're dropping the ball with the refinement teachers.

### ***Theme 7: Mentoring Using a Coaching Cycle of Reflection***

The Project *RISE* master teachers have attended numerous professional development sessions focused on using the reflective cycle to coach and mentor beginning teachers and additional colleagues that may need assistance. The coaching cycle of reflection focuses on continuous improvement for all teachers. The coaching process set in place for master teachers to practice consists of the following: walkthroughs and observations, reflective feedback conversations, and action planning for refinement. Throughout this coaching process, master

teachers are encouraged to progress monitor their mentees' improvement to ensure their mentees are being supported. Several master teachers commented on the coaching process and how it has improved their coaching focus and feedback conversations they have with their mentees.

**Walkthroughs and Observations.** Gabriela shared her insight on the observations she conducts on her mentees. She explained the observations she conducts is one of the primary responsibilities she has as a master teacher. Through the observations she was able to assess what her mentees needed assistance with and then she was able to provide the support and resources needed as she continued with the coaching cycle. Gabriela conveyed the following:

As a master teacher, I think one of our main jobs is to go and make observations to our mentees so that we can uh not so much I guess judge but just evaluate you know what their strengths and weaknesses are, so that we can enhance those areas um because I think that by us going in and helping them, like I said enhance those areas of need; they can be more effective as teachers and they can be more successful in their teaching experience. Their success will help them to want to come and continue with the profession. I think it's more like going in and helping them in those areas where they need a little bit more support.

Gerardo mentioned, "once the initiatives started going, and the mentoring started happening, the organization of the walkthroughs and whatnot, it just became a lot easier" to provide mentoring support to his mentees.

Ryan used observations of veteran teachers to establish peer observations with his mentees. He developed a rubric with reflective questions for his mentees to complete while conducting the observations. Through that tool they were to discuss the areas of focus the mentee wanted to concentrate on within their own teaching practice:

Yes they have reflected on that tool it's with my first year teachers; they were able to just zone in or hone in on one actual thing that they wanted to focus on as opposed to me you know telling them, no I think you should focus on you know your initial teach or your summary at the end. So, I know that with one of my mentees she wanted to focus on grouping so we went and we did the observations together she used that tool and then she realized you know maybe grouping isn't something I want to focus on right now. So, she decided she wanted to focus on more of scaffolding when it comes to the pair writing part of the EOC.

Penelope, much like Ryan, conducted peer observations with her mentees to be able to identify the focus areas that needed attention. Penelope stated:

They're getting better like practices from the trainings we get from Project *RISE*, and sharing those trainings to them during our in-service or during our role modeling or teacher-teacher observation or the one that I did, like getting the identified teachers and we work as a team. We go in the classrooms and we observe other teachers and see how the strategies work and they can tweak it in their classroom.

**Reflective Feedback Through Postobservation Conversations.** Cindy had a reflective feedback conversation with one of her mentees and she felt comfortable speaking to him about some areas to focus on. She mentioned that having in-depth feedback conversations can sometimes be difficult to have with mentees, because as a master teacher you need to probe reflective questions so that mentees are able to reflect on their practice. Cindy relayed:

Yeah, so I mean in that conversation it was a post conference of an observation. He and I were able to reflect on the lesson and things that he was doing, and you know I kind of pushed him in that direction to be able to make that realization on his own without like

writing it out on the board for him. I think that um those reflective things that those are hard because sometimes not everybody can, as much as you want, you can't always get them to reflect on their own thing.

Gerardo described his experience going through the coaching cycle and providing feedback to his mentees:

We're taught how to give feedback which was reinforcing what they did well right and talking about their area of strength and then from there kind of slipping and then for growth you know we're to do this. So, learning that right from the get go, it was important because it kind of just puts everything in perspective because even as me as a teacher; hey I'm really bad at taking feedback but learn that when it comes from a positive place. If you lace it with just what they're doing well with that positive reinforcement and then with the constructive reinforcement or feed-back then it just settles the whole point a lot better. Obviously having conversations with them is important and listening is a skill that we've gained a lot through with some of the trainings.

Penelope provided insight in her reflective feedback practice that she is using when coaching her mentees. She uses reflective questioning to engage her mentee in reflective conversations that will hold the mentee accountable for their best practices to be implemented after their postobservation conversation. Penelope described her postobservation conference as such:

So whenever we have like a postobservation conference with my mentee and talk about the evidences we always focus on asking, the mentee based on what you have seen from the lesson based on your experience; how do you in your own way improve? What you think could be the best way to make this lesson or this experience more enriching if you

have the chance. So as far as reflection time is more because of all this information that I receive because that is the only way where we could find opportunity to improve our classroom practices in order to provide best instructions for the students. I give them time to write their own reflection on a paper and I give them a copy and they already know that when we have a postobservation meeting with them; they are expecting like the reflective part. It's more of them talking and assessing their lessons or their future lessons on how they can make it a better experience and quality experience for the students.

**Action Plan for Refinement.** Since Priscilla is the Science department head at her campus, she uses the coaching cycle of reflection to gage her teachers to take part in action plans that will refine their practice. Priscilla conveyed the following:

They're able to have the comfort and the safe zone where they tell me, this is what I feel I need help on, I think this is how I did, how can I improve it and we just throw out different suggestions and different action plans that we could implement and we decide on one and how we could help us. If it doesn't work, you know what, let's just try option B now and if it doesn't work well, we'll try option C. I mean it's part of growing um if one thing doesn't work; I know that reflecting on it and going back to another option it's something that I've done with them as well.

Since action plans are developed by the mentee, the master teacher is there to facilitate the action plan is adhered to by both parties. Penelope stated, "So, whenever they do change, and you know they're part of the action plan. Their main action plan is them you know it's not me I'm just a guide." With this statement, Penelope explained the action plan is to guide the work the mentee agreed upon to refine their practice, and in doing so, she would be there to provide support and guidance during the coaching process.



### ***Theme 8: Positive Outcomes of Mentoring***

The participants mentioned many positive outcomes they have experienced as they mentored their mentees and other teachers at their campus. Some of the positive outcomes relayed during the interviews was the confidence level of the beginning teacher had increased from when they had first started, working with resistant teachers that became receptive to the master teacher's coaching process, and building strong relationships on trust and communication. Elise described her positive outcome in mentoring as being the relationship she has built with her mentees:

Okay the positive outcome would be the relationships we have built so much relationships not only among us but with the whole staff. Since we have to present, or we have to go and make the observations and all of that, I mean teachers are used to us already. So, I think it's the relationships are really good so the main thing would be relationships. We have better relationships and it's more... They have more trust in us.

Ricardo shared his positive experiences in mentoring beginning and veteran teachers at his campus. Because he has many roles and responsibilities, he mentioned many outcomes that pertained to the various levels of support he provided to his mentees. Ricardo recollected his positive outcomes and experiences from this past school year:

The positive outcomes is that I think I've gotten to work with the coaches I had them the first year, so I still have some of them, but I think this has been the best year where I have a mix. I have a couple of people in my department, I have the CTE people, I have some people in Fine Arts. I had never done walkthroughs or seen what the Fine Arts do; I noticed that they were doing a lot of the things that we do in a regular classroom but they

were having to do it in a bigger venue because of the dance hall or the band hall, or whatever, or out on the field and those were all positive outcomes.

EJ reflected on his own positive experiences and he explained that at times he encountered teacher resistance, but then he saw progress as he continued to provide support to his mentees. He acknowledged not all teachers show resistance to mentoring, but the reflective conversations he has with them are effective and contribute to better understanding of what his role of a master teacher entails. EJ explained the following in his interview:

I think another positive experience of the master teacher role is the fact that we do come up against resistance sometimes I mean it's just the nature of the beast. Like I said you have people who've had all sorts of different experiences, so you're not just operating in a vacuum you know. I think that the positive portion of that experience has been that number one the ability to address whatever wrongs are still over hanging from the past you know and also the point where sometimes you go into a room and the person is like great you're here, I've been waiting for someone. So, it's not all resistance, it's not all an uphill battle.

According to Rosie, one of the positive outcomes she has gained from mentoring is her mentees have been receptive to her mentoring. Rosie and her master teacher colleagues are often sought out for assistance before teachers ask for assistance from administrators:

I think one of the positive outcomes I want to say as far as our school is that all the teachers come to us first when they need help even before approaching the administrators. I want to say they feel more comfortable approaching us and they look up to us as leaders first and just if they need help or any problems with the SLOs or with any trainings that they're needing they come to us first. That to me is a positive outcome

because it's breaking the barrier that they have with their administrators, so I think that's one of the positive outcomes.

Gabriela expressed that mentoring has made her be more aware of her own coaching practices and how it affects her mentees. She realized being a master teacher is important to facilitate growth for her mentees:

Well like as a master teacher I think that in a way kind of like my mentees kind of expect a little bit more. So, again that pushes me a little bit more like to research and to be more active in conversations and understanding the good things that are going on in campus, so I could come back and assist them with any of the things that have to be done. So it's like helping like making me be more aware, because I could easily be in my classroom take care of my own class you know just like it's me in my own world in my own little island right like they say, but as a master teacher I'm not here for me, I'm here for them. So, I have to be aware what's going on, kind of try things before so that I can be able to help.

Gerardo's response resonates with the other master teachers when it comes to building teachers into effective educators. He mentioned he has been able to recognize areas of growth of his mentees and continues to build on this strength to ensure collaboration with his mentees and with other colleagues. Gerardo also shared another positive outcome of mentoring, which was the teacher attrition has dropped and his teachers' performance score has improved:

Well the first in terms of positive outcomes, you do see teachers a lot more comfortable with themselves and obviously the bigger goal is to get them to stay right. So for the course of the last three years we've seen minor turnover rate; which is again exciting because you don't have to worry about building up a new teacher and getting them where they're supposed to be at; you can build upon the ones that stay behind which is

awesome. So, I've seen teachers even terms of evaluation score higher where the administrator in our conversations where we discuss back and forth, hey this teacher was here now they're doing this, or this teacher is having issues, but again that collaboration, working together we've both been able to see the gains and growth.

Katelyn explained her experience as a master teacher has given her the opportunity to be open-minded and to be able to listen to different perspectives. She mentioned this was a positive outcome of mentoring for her and she explained the differences she had within another mentoring program:

Well getting to know other people and actually working with other people is something that I hadn't experienced as much before um looking at different perspectives and trying to see and trying to see things from a different perspective and trying to be open-minded um I think has helped my mentoring um experience a lot because sometimes we tend to just you know kind of like isolate ourselves and I not see other people's ideas and things like that so I think that this is mainly has mainly helped me in that way. Becoming more open minded and looking at other peoples' perspectives and also accepting other peoples' perspectives.

Lastly, Penelope had positive outcomes that she experienced as a master teacher. She went on to explain not only has this been an opportunity of learning and growing for herself, but she has been able to instill best practices with her mentees and colleagues. Penelope also expressed her experience as a master teacher has increased her patience and understanding with her colleagues and the beginning teachers she mentors:

Well, being a master teacher as I shared earlier it is like a great opportunity to be able to share and it has also like challenges but overall it has a positive impact because I had the

opportunity to meet several types of people not just the people in my department. At the same time, we had opportunity during professional development to meet different people from the region. So that widened my understanding and perception and I got several insights from them the different insights. As a master teacher we play an active role campus wide, so we are actually supporting the administration. So those are for me great opportunities.

***Theme 9: Master Teachers' Relatability With Mentees***

Being a master teacher takes certain skill sets and characteristics needed to mentor their mentees. In this case, master teachers need to be able to relate to their mentees in order to make connections and understand the experiences mentees may encounter. Several master teachers shared they were able to relate to their mentees by reflecting on the mentor support they received or did not receive during their beginning years as a teacher. Master teachers also acknowledged the practices they acquired early as a teacher and it is something they try to transfer to their current mentees. Acknowledging that every teacher has different personalities, teaching styles, and experiences is key when master teachers mentor their mentees.

Rosie shared her experience with relating with her mentees. Her teaching position was not the same as her mentees this past school, so it was difficult finding common ground to begin discussion at first. After meeting with her mentees more often throughout the school year, she felt more comfortable with them and them with her. They were able to establish a mentor mentee relationship and therefore it made it easier to relate with one another. Rosie stated the following:

This year it was a little challenging at first because I couldn't relate to them, none of my mentees share the same subject as me or they're not even in the same department. So, I guess when I first met with them, they were like who are you, so it was a little

challenging at first but I think once we started building that relationship and just started with basic stuff like I said before just building the relationship first and then just coming into see how they're doing throughout the day and then build from that. I think that's when it started to get easier relating to them like just start talking to them. I went through this like it's not, don't feel pressure when I come in, I'm just here to motivate you, to support you, to help you in any way I can.

Gerardo reflected on his own personal experiences as a beginning teacher and made connections to what his mentees were experiencing during their first years of teaching:

I guess for me since I only like have seven years to my career, I remember my first second year going through just hard times if minor issues things that you look back now and think why did I do that why would I say that why didn't I teach it this way just kind of minor things that could have been addressed right so coming from that place coming from again not too long ago being what a third year teacher myself seeing those pitfalls and kind of like I guess also sharing those with them makes it so much easier to connect with them and to really just build

Katelyn mentioned her experience as a first-year teacher she had a mentor that provided her support. As a master teacher she wants to be able to teach her mentees to appreciate their jobs, so she assists as much as possible to make sure she instills that ideology in them:

I remember when I first started teaching I had a great mentor and I think that I go back to that how that person helped me to become the teacher that I am now and I feel that I have to be able to do the same for other teachers and make a difference and help them be successful but above all I feel that I think um letting them know about how rewarding the teaching profession is.

Ryan has also had similar experiences as his colleagues have already mentioned. He conveyed he relates best with his mentees when he recognizes similarities they are both experiencing within their classrooms. Through these common experiences, Ryan thinks about his relationship with his mentees as a partnership in which they can overcome certain issues together for the betterment of their classroom environment:

I'm more sympathetic towards first year teachers and well other teachers in general as well because teaching is hard, delivering instruction is hard and then trying to get or entertain students is even harder. So, when I hear other teachers discuss and explain what's happening in their classroom and the issues, I'm able to not only understand them better but then I start to realize, wow I've been dealing with that as well too. So, then we create this common ground where; I know that you're going through the same issues that I have you've been able to overcome those challenges so maybe we can overcome them together.

Penelope stated, "So relating to them of course you need to know the background of this person and I have to exercise some kind of like different ways of approaching each one because every person is unique."

Elise is a 17-year-veteran teacher and she shared that during her observations with her mentees she has been able to reflect on her own beginning years as a teacher and she is able to relate to what her mentees go through as new teachers:

I have been doing this like for seventeen years but sometimes you forget. Sometimes you forget like how was it at the beginning, how it was when you didn't have any experience but like going from classroom to classroom making observations it really brings you like okay this happened to me also at the beginning. I was also one time a beginner teacher

and I mean you can easily relate to them. Sometimes we used to forget how it was before but doing this mentoring doing these observations it really helps you go back and reflect.

Lastly, Ricardo also shared similarities as his colleagues when he is relating with his mentees. He mentioned the importance of understanding everyone is different and to keep open-minded when mentoring beginning teachers and colleagues:

I think that the most important thing on how to relate to our mentees is you know everybody's different, everybody has different style, everybody has their own little quirks you know, everybody has a lot of stuff going on in the background that we don't see.

### ***Theme 10: Importance of Mentoring Beginning Teachers***

Since Project *RISE* is a grant for these two campuses in the same district, it is crucial that administrators and master teachers work closely together to introduce and implement the mentoring program at their campus. Several master teachers mentioned during their interviews that communication is a key factor to ensure buy-in from teachers. Administrators take part in communicating with their teachers the initiatives set forth to retain teachers and they explain the benefits and importance of mentoring beginning teachers within their first years into the teaching profession.

Rosie explained administrators play a factor informing teachers at her campus about the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program that will be set forth by master teachers. She mentioned this type of transparency sets the stage for master teachers to be able to observe teachers in their classroom and it also informs teachers about the support that will be provided by master teachers. Rosie stated the following:

I think it helps when it comes from the administrators the side when it starts with them and they start sharing that vision that we need to work together and that those new



teachers are not alone in their first year, second year, or third year that they have the support there from the mentor teachers and master teachers the administrators all working together. I think that has helped tremendously.

According to Cindy, “for the most part I think administrators have understanding the importance of mentoring uh in order to help new teachers.” Gerado also shared the same response as other master teachers when he stated:

Many of the messages come from the top have been all very positive about you know being the best that you can, building the capacity, making yourself just the best that you can. It's nice, that support system that really lends itself to just creating that message that we're here for you through mentoring, through the master teachers, through the incentives of your performance, all kind of work together to build a message of unity and progress and being there for the teachers.

Katelyn's response resonates with her colleagues by emphasizing the importance of administrators communicating to the campus staff the initiatives set forth for mentoring and also explaining the role master teachers will play in the mentoring program. Katelyn shared:

We are very lucky that our administration kind of gives us that space and time to talk to the teachers especially at the beginning of the school year so that's when we address the need to not only to mentors or master teachers but to support the new teachers but also everyone else in the staff I mean. I think that at our school they have been very good about it as far as helping them out planning with them stuff like that, but yeah, we have been able to address that through meetings and you know things like that.

Ryan conveyed he takes on a different approach of emphasizing the importance of mentoring beginning teachers. He expressed he personally meets with campus administrators to have honest

conversations about certain issues that are taking place and he provides suggestions to them on how to approach these situations:

Well I have a... I'd say a close relationship with administration and when I speak to them, I'm able to speak to them honestly without any sort of repercussion. So, when it comes to these first year teachers and the mentorship, I really tell admin that if we want to retain these first year teachers and teachers that have talent, we just cannot be telling them that issues arise in the classroom because of a classroom management problem. So, I recommend that we would use a different type of approach, so we know that there is some type of issue let's see what she/he can fix as a teacher; maybe it's the lesson delivery, maybe it's trying to engage students by creating something that is relatable to them or maybe it's just the student. That's when administration needs to get involved and that's a crucial relationship between a first-year teacher and with the administration.

### ***Theme 11: Release Time for Mentoring Support***

Master teachers working at the capacity of mentoring beginning teachers and other identified teachers are to be given release time to perform these duties. Providing master teachers release time means that administration should create this protected time during the week for master teachers to establish a relationship with their mentees and to support educator effectiveness efforts. During this release times master teachers are to conduct the processes with the coaching cycle of reflection and they should maximize the time they have with their mentee to provide optimal support that will impact best practices and student success. There were three master teachers that commented their use of release time and how it impacts their work.

Elise shared her experience with the release she is provided for being a master teacher. She shared that an administrator gives her the opportunity to visit with her mentees as needed as well. Elise explained the following:

It's release time, well I have only two hours of the day, my conference and then an extra one but if then like it I want... I don't even have to tell Mr. G., I want to get a sub for tomorrow. Now when I say I want to get a sub for me and one for Mr. O. because we're going to go and observe some classes like you did with Mrs. A. I mean I tell Mr. G. of course but he won't say no, I mean it's just so that he can know that I'm going to do that.

We're open to whatever we want with our mentees. We have the freedom. We usually get release time twice a month, but we can get more than that if we need it.

Ricardo approached his release time by setting priority time slots for feedback conversations. He also mentioned staying consistent to his schedule helped him make sure he gave each mentee ample time for feedback conversations. Ricardo explained:

It was the release time. We had a release time but since the group that I had the CTE group they had third period all of them pretty much the one's that I was working with had third period conference and I was able to say okay look so this hour I mean I have observations and walkthroughs. I set aside 45 to 50 minutes for my mentees; it's more of an okay like you know, hey he set aside a time, I have to be there. We would both schedule our day around that.

Gabriela's response resonates with her colleagues as well as she shared her experience with having release time. She conveyed the following:

Well with the program we were able to get one day out of the week that we were able to go in and visit with our mentees and it kind of did get restricted to one day and it was set

for us you know, like every Monday or Wednesday. I really appreciate the time that we were given because it does help out; however it kind of feels like I'm always visiting them at a particular time, like the same class all the time and it's usually because when my substitute needs to be in my class a certain time is only during my conference that I am able to use her to pull my mentee out of class.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand master teachers' perceptions of the impact the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. In doing so, I used the three research questions to drive this phenomenological study. I created and utilized a 10-question interview protocol to collect my data from 12 master teacher participants. The interview questions focused on the experiences and perspectives of master teachers as they provided mentoring support to retain beginning teachers at their campus. The participants were all from the same Rio Grande Valley school district: seven participants were from RGV high school-A and five participants were from RGV high school-B. All the participants have served as a Project *RISE* master teacher for two-three years. The participants were also thoroughly described within this chapter.

Chapter 4 provided me great insight into master teachers' lived experiences and perspectives they had on their impact on teacher retention for beginning teachers. An in-depth analysis of the data was completed which allowed me to code and identify the 11 emerging themes for this phenomenological study which were the following: (1) Effective Skill Sets Used to Build Relationships, (2) Professional Development Opportunities for Master Teachers, (3) Supporting Beginning Teachers, (4) Motivational Factors for Being a Master Teacher, (5) Master Teachers' Impact on Teacher Retention, (6) Perceptions of Project *RISE* Mentoring Program, (7)

Mentoring Using a Coaching Cycle of Reflection, (8) Positive Outcomes of Mentoring, (9) Master Teachers' Relatability with Mentees, (10) Importance of Mentoring Beginning Teachers, and (11) Release Time for Mentoring Support. Each theme was supported by similar responses that reflected master teachers' experiences and perspectives as they have served in their role. Master teachers shared great perception and knowledge in mentoring beginning teachers and they had an incredible understanding of processes they undergo with their mentees to make an impact on retaining beginning teachers at their respective campus. Chapter 5 will now provide the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations towards my phenomenological study.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter provides a summary of the phenomenological study conducted, problem statement, purpose of the study with the research questions that guided the study, methodology and limitations of the study. Chapter 5 also provides a discussion of the interpretation of the findings of the research and recommendations for future research on the correlation of master teachers providing support to beginning teachers through mentoring programs and their relation to teacher retention.

### **Overview of the Study**

This phenomenological study described the master teachers' lived experiences they encountered when mentoring beginning teachers and the impact they had on teacher retention at their campuses. Teacher attrition has been a cause of concern in the United States across K-12 public schools (Hallum et al., 12). Due to teachers leaving the teaching profession early on in their teaching careers, usually within the first three to five years, the U.S. Department of Education has made it a priority for states to use Title II funds to sustain mentoring programs that will provide support and guidance to beginning teachers (U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). For this reason, states have embarked on creating equity plans that include mentoring and induction programs for beginning teachers (Coggshall et al., 2019). Teacher retention pathways that include mentoring programs can benefit teacher attrition and retain beginning teachers in the teaching profession. Mentoring programs are used as a retention strategy to entice experienced teachers to mentor beginning teachers for additional compensation.

The nature of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions that master teachers experienced as they mentored beginning teachers. This study

also investigated the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that influenced master teachers to be mentors at their campus. As mentioned in Chapter 1, master teachers receive a \$7,000 salary augmentation to conduct mentoring duties throughout the school year. The participants' responses also provided insight into the three psychological needs of humans, and it was evident the master teachers experienced autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the activities they conducted when they mentored their mentees. It is notable that research questions for this study and the master teachers' responses have a significant correlation with the past literature and the theoretical framework.

The lived experiences of 12 master teachers from two different campuses from the same RGV district participated in this phenomenological study. Through this study, the master teachers' perceptions were captured through virtual Zoom interviews. Utilizing a semistructured interview protocol, I was able to engage the master teachers to reflect on their lived experiences and the perceptions they had on mentoring their mentees. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed, and 11 themes emerged from the data collected.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand master teachers' perceptions of the impact the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. Through this study, I sought to examine the lived experiences of master teachers assisting in the retention of beginning teachers through mentoring. The research questions that guided this study were the following:

RQ1: How do master teachers perceive their impact on teacher retention at their campus?

RQ2: How do master teachers describe their mentoring experiences with beginning teachers?

RQ3: How do master teachers perceive the impact of the mentoring practices that have been implemented by Project *RISE*?

### ***Methodology***

Phenomenology was the research method design utilized in this study. Phenomenology was used to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants in the study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that phenomenology focuses on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. Van Manen (2014) explained that the purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to describe the universal essence of peoples' experience. The primary method of data collection is the phenomenological interview which is used to get to the "essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27). For the purpose of this study, 12 master teachers participated in this study and data collection was gathered through semistructured interviews. The interview protocol consisted of questions that pertained to master teachers' lived experiences as mentors for beginning teachers. From the analysis, the data were organized and analyzed using NVivo, a Qualitative Data Analysis Software.

### **Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature**

Through this phenomenological study, 11 themes emerged from the participants' interviews in Chapter 4. The key findings in this study provided a better understanding of the master teachers' impact on teacher retention through mentoring programs. With the master teachers' lived experiences and their own perceptions on their role as a master teacher, this study informs the importance of mentoring beginning teachers with continuous support to encourage them to stay in the teaching profession. According to Sparks et al. (2017), mentoring programs



can develop mentor teachers and beginning teachers with the appropriate tools and resources that will positively influence teachers from leaving the teaching profession. Research also shows well designed mentoring programs can improve retention rates of beginning teachers, as well as their attitudes, self-efficacy, and instructional skills (Sutcher et al., 2016). It was determined that the findings in this phenomenological study support the research questions in relation to the past literature and the theoretical framework. The 11 themes that emerged from the interview data analysis are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Summary of Themes for Research Questions 1-3*

Themes that Emerged From Interview Data Analysis		
Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
Master teachers' impact on teacher retention	Supporting beginning teachers	Effective skill sets used to build relationships
Importance of mentoring beginning teachers	Positive outcomes of mentoring	Professional development opportunities for master teachers
	Master teachers' relatability with mentees	Motivational factors for being a master teacher
	Release time for mentoring support	Perceptions of Project <i>RISE</i> mentoring program
		Mentoring using a coaching cycle of reflection

The data collected from the semistructured interview responses were aligned to the three research questions in this phenomenological study. The past literature and the participants'

responses correlated to the self-determination theory that was utilized as the theoretical framework in this study.

### **Research Question 1**

RQ1: How do master teachers perceive their impact on teacher retention at their campus?

When conducting the data analysis, there were two themes that emerged from the participants' responses correlated to research question one. The two themes related to this research question are the following: (a) master teachers' impact on teacher retention, and (b) importance of mentoring beginning teachers.

#### ***Master Teachers' Impact on Teacher Retention***

Project *RISE* master teachers are tasked with specific roles and responsibilities that focus on creating a pipeline of effective educators by providing mentoring support to beginning teachers to assist in teacher retention at their campus. Through their efforts of impacting teacher retention, master teachers provide pedagogical support, content knowledge, and professional development opportunities to their mentees. Approximately 50% of teachers that leave the teaching profession are beginning teachers within the first five years of teaching (Bennett et al., 2013). According to Vagi and Pivovarova (2016), teacher attrition continues to be a problem throughout the teaching profession and not all situations are the same for all systems in place, instead, it is a dilemma throughout many schools across the United States and different approaches need to be considered when making a plan of action that can assist in teacher retention. For this reason, master teachers take the lead in providing support and guidance to help retain beginning teachers.

Participants shared the experiences they encountered as they mentored their mentees throughout the school year. The participants were very candid in speaking about the impact they

had on teacher retention at their campus. All of the participants shared common experiences in providing mentoring to their mentees and ensured that they felt supported enough to continue in the teaching profession. Cindy, a master teacher that participated in this study explained that during the time that she has served in this role, none of her mentees have left the campus. She shared that many of the teachers she has mentored have been receptive to the support and guidance she has provided to them. Cindy stated, “I think overall it helps retention because they know that even if they don't really want to come to a master teacher, just having them there makes them feel like there's other people on the campus willing to help them.” Elise also felt her role as a master teacher has impacted teacher retention at her campus:

Since we started Project *RISE*, I think teachers are doing a lot better. At the beginning it was kind of hard because they were not used for other teachers to go and observe. I mean it was one of the principals or assistant principals but after that they got used to it and I think I mean they have been for the past two years we have had minimal teachers leaving, they stay. So, I mean I think it's helping a lot, a lot.

It was evident the master teachers' efforts impacted teacher retention at their respective campus. Master teachers paved a foundation for beginning teachers by providing different modalities of support to ensure they stay in the teaching profession.

### ***Importance of Mentoring Beginning Teachers***

Master teachers expressed it is essential for administrators to take part in communicating to teachers the importance of mentoring beginning teachers. Project *RISE* has made it a priority to also provide administrators with professional development opportunities on the mentoring program initiatives that master teachers undertake as they continue in their role as a mentor. According to DeFeo and Tran (2019), campus and district administrators primarily lead teacher

retention processes such as induction and mentoring programs to emphasize the importance of teacher retention initiatives. When bringing awareness of the importance of mentoring it is essential for administrators to define the “mentor’s role clearly from the start, making sure they understand precisely what they will and will not be expected to do” (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018, p. 65). By having administrators exhibit buy-in to mentoring programs, teachers will feel more compelled to buy-in to the process as well. Participants shared their insights in establishing teacher buy-in at their campuses. All master teachers explained that having their administrators take part in leading these crucial conversations with all the teachers has assisted in relaying what their role is as a master teacher.

Gerado explained:

Many of the messages come from the top have been all very positive about you know being the best that you can, building the capacity, making yourself just the best that you can. It's nice, that support system that really lends itself to just creating that message that we're here for you through mentoring, through the master teachers, through the incentives of your performance, all kind of work together to build a message of unity and progress and being there for the teachers.

Katelyn’s response was similar to Gerardo’s as she explained the trust her campus administrators have instilled in her as she mentors beginning teachers. Her response was much connected with Weisling and Gardiner’s (2018) ideology when they emphasized the importance of administrators acknowledging there is not one best way to support new teachers rather it was important to encourage and support the mentors’ use of best practices and inside knowledge they have of their mentees. Katelyn expressed:

We are very lucky that our administration kind of gives us that space and time to talk to the teachers especially at the beginning of the school year so that's when we address the need to not only to mentors or master teachers but to support the new teachers but also everyone else in the staff I mean. I think that at our school they have been very good about it as far as helping them out planning with them stuff like that, but yeah, we have been able to address that through meetings and you know things like that.

## **Research Question 2**

RQ2: How do master teachers describe their mentoring experiences with beginning teachers? When addressing Research Question 2 in this phenomenological study, it was evident that four themes were the contributing factor for this question. The four themes that emerged for question two are the following: (a) supporting beginning teachers, (b) positive outcomes of mentoring, (c) master teachers' relatability with mentees, and (d) release time for mentoring support.

### ***Supporting Beginning Teachers***

Mentoring programs are essential to build capacity with experienced teachers and beginning teachers. Such is true in the case of Project *RISE* master teachers in that they play an intricate role in supporting beginning teachers through different modalities. Mentoring is a skill that experienced teachers acquire through their job-embedded experiences such as lesson planning, establishing learning goals, behavior management, and pedagogy. The American Institutes for Research (2015) explained that mentor teachers play a primary role in establishing a strong foundation of evidence-based instruction that guides the instructional practices of beginning teachers. The master teachers in this study, described different experiences as they

supported their mentees throughout the school year. They mentioned the areas they assisted in the most was in classroom management, instructional delivery, and lesson planning support.

Camilla stated during the interview:

So the support that we give to initial teachers, I think it's crucial like from year zero to four having a support, having somebody to just talk to listen to and cover the little things that sometimes it gets lost with the assistant principals, it's crucial for the teachers and have a better experience than the first year.

The master teachers recognized many beginning teachers need support and guidance that encompasses both pedagogical and content support.

Master teachers are instrumental in mentoring beginning teachers during their initial years of teaching because they can develop beginning teachers' skill levels in classroom instruction and classroom environment. It is the case for many beginning teachers to have classroom management problems within their first years of teaching. Master teachers explained within their interviews that a few of their first-year teachers needed assistance in addressing classroom behavior with their mentees. According to Hallam et al. (2012), beginning teachers benefit from mentoring programs because mentors focus on processes such as modeling and support for the beginning teacher.

It is in the best interest for beginning teachers to have the opportunity to observe other experienced teachers so they can learn new strategies that will improve classroom management and instructional delivery (Tucker, 2015). Master teachers also identified that instructional delivery was an issue with beginning teachers because this is the first time they have led a classroom by themselves. Instructional delivery focuses on areas that emphasize content knowledge and expertise, differentiation strategies, and monitor and adjusting to the areas of

need for student achievement. Master teachers observed their mentees and they were able to identify the practices being used in their classroom that needed refinement. Rosie described her experience in providing instructional delivery when she said:

When I was working with the math teacher, Ms. P, like every time I would go in, I would see her frustration and the last time that I went with her, she was like, oh I tried this and it's working like I'm not having those discipline problems as much as I used to have. I think what helped me the most as far as mentoring her was working together with Mr. M too because I didn't feel that I was a strong mentor in providing her the support because math is not my subject. So, we had to team up so that we could help her and I think that's when we started to see more of the benefits of the strategies that she's been using because it's more geared towards math and not only broad strategies like class management and stuff like that, but now it's more strategies that could be used in a math class.

Another area that beginning teachers struggle within their first years is lesson planning. According to Stanulis et al. (2018), planning is an essential component of effective instruction because it is the basic level that identifies what will be taught and how it will be taught. Lesson planning focuses primarily on teacher performance when they conduct their lesson. Reeves (2011) also recognized that lesson planning is a complex process that focuses on what students are learning, how they learn it, and how they will demonstrate their learning. Co-planning is highly encouraged activity that is done with the master teacher and their mentee. During co-planning, master teachers are to have planning conversations that focuses on scheduling planning days, lesson preparation, and strategizing on activities to conduct for the lesson (Stanulis et al., 2018). Such is the case for some of the master teachers' lived experiences that were shared

during their interviews. One example to lesson planning support is from Cindy. She shared one of her insightful mentoring experiences when she stated:

When I talk about lesson planning and different activities that my mentees are working on in the classroom and I make a suggestion, and it happened a couple of times this year with a couple of different mentees, and they're like, oh my gosh I never thought of that before.

At that moment Cindy decided that her mentee needed more assistance with her lesson plan design.

### ***Positive Outcomes of Mentoring***

Mentoring has overall benefits in creating a collaborative culture between the master teacher and their mentee. In doing so, master teachers also developed competence within themselves and that assisted them in expanding their influence to strengthen their own identity as teacher leaders as they continue to mentor beginning teachers. At the same time beginning teachers were becoming more competent in their new role as a teacher. According to Weisling and Gardiner (2018), effective mentors can pave the way for novices to make a successful transition into teaching, weather the emotional turbulence of their first years, and make sense of the culture, context, policies, and instructional priorities of their new workplace. It is also suggested that mentoring has positive effects on the job satisfaction, professional development, and retention of beginning teachers (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018).

In this phenomenological study master teachers relayed the positive outcomes they had experienced in mentoring beginning teachers. Master teachers shared their positive outcomes of mentoring that range from teacher receptiveness to mentoring, teacher retention, building



relationships, and building rapport. I have included two examples of master teachers' experiences in which they have encountered positive outcomes in their mentoring practice.

Elise stated:

Okay the positive outcome would be the relationships we have built so much relationships not only among us but with the whole staff. Since we have to present, or we have to go and make the observations and all of that, I mean teachers are used to us already. So, I think it's the relationships are really good so the main thing would be relationships. We have better relationships and it's more... They have more trust in us.

Rosie also noted:

I think one of the positive outcomes I want to say as far as our school is that all the teachers come to us first when they need help even before approaching the administrators. I want to say they feel more comfortable approaching us and they look up to us as leaders first and just if they need help or any problems with the SLOs or with any trainings that they're needing they come to us first. That to me is a positive outcome because it's breaking the barrier that they have with their administrators, so I think that's one of the positive outcomes.

It is essential to point out that mentors should be effective teachers who are capable to provide professional support and guidance to help beginning teachers identify and analyze areas of need within their current practice (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018). In doing so, master teachers will experience positive outcomes with their mentees.

### ***Master Teachers' Relatability With Mentees***

Master teachers' ability to relate with their mentees was also a factor expressed within this study. As mentioned in the SDT, relatedness is the need in having meaningful relationships

and interactions with people and a sense of belonging (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It is common for teachers to feel an essence of relatedness by belonging to a group of colleagues that collaborate together and have similar interests within the work contexts. Such is the case with master teachers and their mentees. Janssen et al. (2014) explained that mentoring relationships are established by relatedness between the mentor and mentee.

Master teachers in this study reflected on their experiences of being a first-year teacher and through those recollections they were able to relate to their mentees' experiences as beginning teachers. Master teachers had common responses in relating to their mentees. They expressed it is important to make connections with the experiences they had as beginning teachers and relate it to what their mentees are experiencing in the teaching profession. An example of master teachers' relatability with their mentees is from Katelyn when she described:

I remember when I first started teaching I had a great mentor and I think that I go back to that how that person helped me to become the teacher that I am now and I feel that I have to be able to do the same for other teachers and make a difference and help them be successful but above all I feel that I think um letting them know about how rewarding the teaching profession is.

Another example was expressed by Ricardo when he mentioned:

I think that the most important thing on how to relate to our mentees is you know everybody's different, everybody has different style, everybody has their own little quirks you know, everybody has a lot of stuff going on in the background that we don't see.

Finding ways to relate to mentees is essential in building relationships with them. Master teachers need to be cognizant to their mentees' lack of teaching experiences in order to assist them in being effective beginning teachers. According to Espinoza et al. (2018), there are several

ways to ensure a successful match of mentor and mentees by certain relatable indicators such as the following: same field, common planning time, regular scheduled collaboration time, and taking part in an external network of teachers. Ensuring relatedness within mentoring programs is key in building relationships that are professional and trustworthy.

### ***Release Time for Mentoring Support***

Release time for mentoring support is an essential component in mentoring programs because it is intended to provide master teachers substantial time “to build trust and long-term relationships that enable success” (NIET, 2018, p. 5) with their mentees. According to American Institutes for Research (2015), release time should be set aside so that mentors and beginning teachers are able to communicate effectively and develop a supportive and trusting relationship. According to NIET (2018), release time will ensure that specific job responsibilities are completed daily and on a weekly manner. Release time also allows the master teacher the autonomy needed to meet with their mentees to establish a professional relationship. Rigby and Ryan (2018) defined autonomy in SDT as the need for people to have a sense of choice and self-endorsement of their own actions. Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that autonomy is self-endorsed or congruent with one’s authentic interests and values. The practice of release time is prevalent in the past literature and the current practices that are being conducted in the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program.

Such is the case with the master teachers in this phenomenological study. Master teachers shared their lived experiences and perceptions of the release time they had for mentoring support. They had similar responses explaining the release time they have and also the autonomy of meeting with their mentees more times if need from their initial schedule. The release time for master teachers is intended to conduct the coaching cycle with their mentees in which they

conduct walkthroughs and observations, feedback, and an action plan for refinement. These activities ensure that there is intentional support provided to beginning teachers. In the following example, Elise described her release time and the flexibility she has to providing support to her mentee:

It's release time, well I have only two hours of the day, my conference and then an extra one but if then like it I want... I don't even have to tell Mr. G, I want to get a sub for tomorrow. Now when I say I want to get a sub for me and one for Mr. O. because we're going to go and observe some classes like you did with Mrs. A. I mean I tell Mr. G. of course but he won't say no, I mean it's just so that he can know that I'm going to do that.

We're open to whatever we want with our mentees. We have the freedom. We usually get release time twice a month, but we can get more than that if we need it.

Release time is a strategy that should be implemented in mentoring programs to make sure the fidelity of the support provided to mentees is beneficial.

### **Research Question 3**

RQ3: How do master teachers perceive the impact of the mentoring practices that have been implemented by Project *RISE*? When addressing Research Question 3 in this phenomenological study, it was evident that five themes were the contributing factors for this question. The five themes that emerged for question three are the following: (a) effective skill sets used to build relationships, (b) professional development opportunities for master teachers, (c) motivational factors for being a master teacher, (d) perceptions of Project *RISE* Mentoring Program, and (e) mentoring using a coaching cycle of reflection.

### ***Effective Skill Sets Used to Build Relationships***

Building relationships is not an easy task to accomplish; it usually takes time and patience to develop a trustworthy relationship. Master teachers are tasked to build relationships when mentoring beginning teachers and additional teachers that need assistance. Tucker (2015) identified mentor characteristics that would impact building relationships with mentees such as passion for teaching, continuous learner, trusted listener, supportive and challenging, and a positive mindset. These types of characteristics in master teachers develop skill sets used in building quality relationships with their mentees. Through the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program, master teachers attend extensive training provides them effective skill sets that can be used as they build relationships with their mentees. Janssen et al. (2014) explained that mentoring relationships are essential in organizations because they provide them with a sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness in their role as a teacher. Master teachers' responses correlated with the past literature on building relationships. The skills sets they found most valuable in building relationships are authenticity, communication skills, rapport and trust, and being comfortable mentoring others. The American Institutes for Research (2015) explained the importance of mentors having strong interpersonal skills, build trust and rapport, and have the ability to respond to challenging tasks. Many of the master teachers expressed that having authentic and holistic relationships skills induced a professional relationship with their mentees. Being able to relate with another human being is essential in the teaching profession because it is highly encouraged to collaborate with others to reach a common goal. According to Janssen et al. (2014), SDT relatedness is needed to establish mentoring relationships. Katelyn described her perspective of building relationships when she stated, "I think the best way the best skill that we

can have in order to build those relationships is you know, focusing on the human side like the human aspect.” Another example was presented by master teacher Cindy when she stated:

Well I just try to be relatable and genuine. I know that I’m not an extrovert type of person and so I mean I’m not gonna try and like do things I wouldn’t normally do because then I just feel like it becomes disingenuous you know so that to me is the biggest thing.

Effective mentoring programs also attribute their success with having mentors that have robust communication skills that assist them when mentoring their mentees. Master teachers must attribute a wide range of communication styles that are adept in problem solving, self-reflection, and an active listener (American Institutes of Research, 2015). Throughout the interviews with the master teachers they were very willing to share their communication skills they use to entice their mentees to gage in conversation and also to trust in the relationship. Martin et al. (2016) explained the most important aspect of quality mentoring is the ability to develop relationships. Learning how to communicate with others is a skill that builds overtime. Rosie stated, “The one that really helped me was how to communicate with our mentees at first because I didn’t know how to approach them and that training really helped me.” At the same time master teachers are acquiring that skill, other master teachers are more confident in communicating regularly with their mentee.

Another example is from master teacher Penelope:

Open communication like example this past during the COVID, I just sent them simple message like, how is your weekend something like that. So open communication and also try to listen to them, just pass go to their classes and just ask do you have any... Do you have some need like any resources I can provide you? Anything you know basic supplies or maybe other instructional strategies that you may have some questions when you

deliver a certain lesson for the following week? So, simple as that like continuous check-ups or continuous follow-up with them and casual conversations.

Research shows mentors that develop trust with their mentees and maintain open two-way communication by sharing their own challenges enables beginning teachers to discuss their teaching challenges and it becomes a collaboration of sharing and problem-solving (American Institutes of Research, 2015). Communication skills are key in sustaining a good mentor and mentee relationship because it allows them to establish trust and rapport with each other

### ***Professional Development Opportunities for Master Teachers***

One of the main initiatives of the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program is providing professional development opportunities for both the master teachers and beginning teachers. There has been an array of professional development opportunities that focus on educator effectiveness through pedagogy, content areas, technology, observation and feedback, and reflective cycle of awareness. Professional development provides master teachers with the competency needed to mentor their mentees effectively and it also plays an intricate role in teacher retention. The past literature also exhibits the importance of professional development mentoring programs such as in this study. Firestone (2014) suggested that competence promotes intrinsic motivation by building capacity with teachers through professional development. According to Weisling and Gardiner (2018), mentors are provided professional development opportunities that will give them resources and tools in the following areas: (a) high-yield strategies in content areas to promote student engagement, (b) coaching and feedback protocols, and (c) metacognitive mentoring, which is role playing conversations between master teacher and mentee.

Such is the case with the master teachers in this phenomenological study. The master teachers had many commonalities in their responses about the professional development they have attended and how they transfer their knowledge with the mentees. Master teachers also shared the professional growth they have acquired from attending professional development. Camilla expressed, “I really appreciated one of the first trainings that they were um it was different roles, role playing, and we were talking about just communicating and I think to me that was probably the most valuable lessons.” Another example response is from Katelyn when she described her professional development experiences when she mentioned:

It's basically providing the professional development, providing the skills, providing the literature, the books, as far as what to expect. Not just throwing us in there and saying go mentor someone but rather giving us that previous training, um you know, equipping us with the skills in order to better help the other teachers how to build; from building relationships to everything that is needed in order to be a good mentor. So, they provided not only the professional development but also the materials, resources that we need in order to be successful when mentoring.

According to LoCascio et al. (2016), professional development should be continuous throughout the school year so master teachers are prepared with current practices and are able to provide ongoing support to their beginning teachers. Professional development ensures that master teachers receive optimal training in targeted areas to be better equipped to facilitate their mentees and ensure teacher retention.

### ***Motivational Factors for Being a Master Teacher***

The self-determination theory was the appropriate theoretical framework for this phenomenological study because it “provides a strong framework for building motivational



quality” (Rigby & Ryan, 2018, p. 138). SDT covers two types of motivational factors: intrinsic and extrinsic. In this study, master teachers are given a salary augmentation of \$7,000 dollars for mentoring beginning teachers throughout the school year. Since they receive a salary augmentation, I wanted to discover if their motivation factors for being a master teacher were intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. As mentioned in past literature, intrinsic motivation consists of nontangible rewards, interpersonal controls and the person’s ego involvement impacts this kind of motivation (Center for Self-Determination Theory, 2019). Autonomy and competence influence the impact of intrinsic motivation. This is true in this study. Eight master teachers shared they were intrinsically motivated to be master teachers. Some mentioned they have always been servant leaders since they were children by always wanting to help others that need assistance and support. They also shared they have been called upon as unofficial mentors before taking on their role as master teachers. Many times they mentored others without receiving additional pay. An example of intrinsic motivation is master teacher Priscilla. She explained her drive for being a master teacher:

Again I said that at the beginning, the augmentation is not everything for me; it was mainly me, I remember since I was small I always said I wanted to be a person to help out people one way or another. In this case since I’m a teacher, I’m able to assist students, but I want to do more, besides helping students I wanted to grow as a teacher. I wanted to be able put out myself and my expertise and let teachers know what I do, how to help them. So, I think it's mainly the augmentation is not something that is actually something very different in my life. I guess, I'm not here for the money kind of thing. I'm here because I wanted the experience, I wanted to help teachers, and that's something I like to

do; that's something I've always wanted to do and now that I'm doing it I mean I really enjoy it with my teachers.

Being intrinsically motivated comes from within and not from tangible rewards (e.g., salary augmentation) was a common response from the eight master teachers that exhibited intrinsic motivation.

In turn, there were four master teachers that were extrinsically motivated in being a master teacher. Past literature of SDT has explained that extrinsic motivation is represented in external and tangible rewards such as incentives and it also consists of social approval (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Firestone (2014) explained different forms of extrinsic incentives that are based on teacher's degrees, years of service, career advancement opportunities, and additional roles of being a teacher leader on campus. Although the master teachers were extrinsically motivated, they also shared they do like being in this role, but the salary augmentation really plays a driving force in their decision to continue as a master teacher. Master teachers shared the additional money they receive has helped them pay for a graduate degree and not seek another position. An example of extrinsic motivation is from Cindy as she stated:

It plays a big role; I know that last year I didn't really try to apply anywhere else or for another position I've been looking for cause of that because I knew I was going to get that salary augmentation. There are different things that have surfaced this year that I feel like I don't know how it's going to work for next year but I wasn't going to apply for next year because regardless of that I wasn't satisfied.

Since there has not been much research on mentors' motivations in engaging in mentoring programs, SDT has shown to be a theoretical framework that can elicit different forms of motivational factors that influence master teachers to be in this role (Janssen et al., 2014).

Despite the motivational factors these master teachers exhibit, they have all contributed to mentoring their mentees.

### ***Perceptions of Project RISE Mentoring Program***

When conducting the interviews for this phenomenological study, I asked a question seeking the master teachers' perception on the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program. I felt it was essential to really understand the master teachers' insights and experiences they have encountered as a master teacher leading the mentoring program at their respective campus. As previously discussed in Chapter 4, the main goal for Project *RISE* is to improve educator effectiveness throughout each campus system within the grant. Although there are different modalities in improving educator effectiveness, the one that I chose to incorporate in this study was a mentoring program to provide support and guidance to beginning teachers and to other identified teachers that may need assistance. Master teachers' perceptions shared equitable responses and provided the positive perceptions of the mentoring program and some suggested some areas of refinement for the program. Seven master teachers expressed their perception of Project *RISE* Mentoring Program as being positive. The commonalities they shared reflected their thoughts on the professional development they had received, which included teacher receptiveness from their mentees, established rapport, and trust with their mentees. An example comes from Ricardo when he stated, "I really feel that Project *RISE* has helped us do better by our colleagues, better by the campus and become more of a pillar that holds up the campus."

Katelyn also mentioned:

It's been great learning a lot about mentoring like I said before I would have never thought before that there were actually resources to help us; mentors become better mentors. So, basically Project *RISE* going in looking for those resources and providing

them to us has greatly impacted my mentoring experience. I mean I have a lot of training under my belt that helps me become a better mentor.

These two examples from master teachers describing their positive perceptions of the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program exemplifies the good mentoring practices taking place with their mentees.

There were two master teachers that had suggestions for refinement of the mentoring program. The master teachers thought the five-year grant did not provide sufficient time to completely build capacity with all teachers. They also believed the mentoring program training sessions should be divided into different levels such as elementary, middle school, and high school. The reason they proposed this as an area of refinement is because they recognized the levels of support differ from grade levels. Another area of refinement shared was the mentoring program focus only on beginning teachers, and it misses the veteran teachers who need to refine their practices. It was suggested to provide training session that would target these teachers as well.

### ***Mentoring Using a Coaching Cycle of Reflection***

One of the activities that was to be conducted through the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program is the coaching cycle of reflection. The process includes walkthroughs and observations, timely feedback, and the creation of action plans for refinement. The past literature directly aligns with the mentoring expectations for Project *RISE*. The U.S. Department of Education (2016) recommends that mentor teachers are required to conduct regular observations on their mentees and also have beginning teachers observe other classrooms as well. The American Institutes for Research (2015) also recommended that observations should be conducted regularly, and master teachers should provide timely feedback to assist their mentees.

The feedback assists both the master teacher and mentee to share insight on the instructional delivery and pedagogical areas that may need to be adjusted for future instruction. According to Tucker (2015), beginning teachers that observe other experienced teachers can learn new strategies in content delivery and classroom management. Providing effective feedback to beginning teachers is a complex task for master teachers because they need to be able to provide supporting evidence that was seen in the observation (Stanulis et al., 2018). The past literature correlates with the practices conducted through the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program. An example that describes the coaching cycle is from Gabriela when she stated:

As a master teacher, I think one of our main jobs is to go and make observations to our mentees so that we can uh not so much I guess judge but just evaluate you know what their strengths and weaknesses are, so that we can enhance those areas um because I think that by us going in and helping them, like I said enhance those areas of need; they can be more effective as teachers and they can be more successful in their teaching experience. Their success will help them to want to come and continue with the profession. I think it's more like going in and helping them in those areas where they need a little bit more support.

Cindy described her experience with the feedback phase of the coaching cycle:

Yeah, so I mean in that conversation it was a post conference of an observation. He and I were able to reflect on the lesson and things that he was doing, and you know I kind of pushed him in that direction to be able to make that realization on his own without like writing it out on the board for him. I think that um those reflective things that those are hard because sometimes not everybody can, as much as you want, you can't always get them to reflect on their own thing.

Both of these examples provided by master teachers exhibit the alignment they have to the past literature of observation and feedback best practices.

### **Limitations**

The analysis of this phenomenological study was comprised of the data gathered from the master teachers' interview responses. Although the data gathered was reliable, there were two limitations identified in this study: (a) participant misrepresentation and (b) unforeseen conditions. These limitations did not hinder the study in any way and adjustments were made to conduct the study.

#### ***Participant Misrepresentation***

There were a total of 12 master teacher participants that met the criteria and agreed to participate in study. Only four out of the 12 participants were male with only one male master teacher belonging to RGV high school-A and three male participants from RGV high school-B. Nonetheless, the four male participants were able to participate because they met all the master teacher criteria. I see this as a limitation because I would have liked to have equitable representation from female and male master teachers' responses. Although there was a misrepresentation of male master teachers, the interview process and data analysis were conducted with fidelity and without bias.

#### ***Unforeseen Conditions***

One unforeseen condition that occurred was the COVID-19 pandemic shelter-in-place and the closing of schools throughout the United States. The campuses where I was initially going to conduct the interviews remained closed from the middle of March until the end of the school year in May. Due to the pandemic, I had to conduct all interviews virtually via Zoom. The scheduling of interviews caused a time constraint since everyone was working remotely. I

needed to be cognizant of their availability and schedule the interviews appropriately so it would not conflict with their work schedules or mine. Although this caused minimal inconvenience, all participants were cooperative with the change and interviews were scheduled accordingly.

## **Recommendations**

Through this phenomenological study, personal experiences, and the analysis of master teachers' responses from their interviews, considerable recommendations have been made to implement a mentoring program in K-12 educational systems as a retention strategy for beginning teachers. The recommendations made are to ensure an effective mentoring program is developed to engage master teachers in providing support to beginning teachers and impact their decision to remain in the teaching profession.

### ***Provide Professional Development Opportunities to Develop Master Teachers' Competencies***

A recommendation that I propose is to provide professional development opportunities that will develop master teachers' competencies. Master teacher competencies should be embedded in the support provided to their mentees. The competencies that master teachers should be able to engage in are leadership, collaboration, communication, and reflection. These competencies are cultivated through the professional development they attend throughout the school year. According to Firestone (2014), professional development develops master teachers' competence by building their capacity by mentoring beginning teachers, leading curriculum instruction development, providing pedagogical strategies, and facilitating additional district/campus professional development initiatives.

Master teachers should engage in professional development opportunities to be able to provide beginning teachers with the content, best practices, and school/district policies (American Institutes for Research, 2015). Effective mentoring is supported through professional

development that will enable the master teacher to make connections from what is learned through the professional development activities and the beginning teachers' new teaching experiences. Mentoring should also practice a coaching cycle of reflection by incorporating an observation and feedback cycle to implement a plan of action to refine teaching practices. The American Institutes for Research (2015) suggested potential topics for professional development should include understanding the role of a mentor, honing classroom observation skills, engaging in reflective practice, using student work to evaluate and inform practice, addressing diverse learning needs, and providing effective feedback. Mentoring programs should have continuous professional development for master teachers to attend throughout the school year so they are current and prepared to provide ongoing support to their mentees.

#### ***Develop Master Teachers' Skill Sets in Building Relationships***

It was evident through the master teachers' responses that the skill sets needed to mentor beginning teachers is extremely important in the mentoring process. The skill sets most noted by the master teachers included the importance of building relationships with their mentees. The following skill sets master teachers should develop is the ability to have open communication with their mentees by being active listeners and recognize their mentees have different communication styles. Developing a skill set of having authentic conversations with mentees is essential for dialogue among the master teacher and their mentee. Authentic conversations enable open feedback to occur and it makes it easier to adapt to given situations. The key in having a well-established relationship between a master teacher and their mentees is to establish trust and rapport with one another. Trust and rapport skill set develop with time and it is a willingness from both the master teacher and mentee to have mutual respect for each other. By establishing skill sets in building relationships, master teachers and beginning teachers will



benefit greatly by sharing their own teaching challenges and discussing possible solutions that can result to a positive outcome.

### ***Provide Release Time for Mentoring Support***

Lastly, providing release time to support beginning teachers is significant because it gives the master teacher and mentee time to collaborate through a common planning time. Mentoring programs should embed release time for master teachers so they can develop a supportive and trusting relationship with their mentees. During this release time, master teachers are also able to conduct their observations and provide timely feedback to their mentees. According to Stanulis et al. (2018), an essential component to mentoring is planning and co-planning. Through release time the master teacher is able to engage in these activities by having planning conversations that focus on scheduling logistics and strategize the types of activities that can be utilized for lessons (Stanulis et al., 2018). Release time for master teachers ensures they are focusing on mentoring their mentees by providing them the support and resources they need to be successful within their classroom. According to Goldrick (2016), master teachers that perform mentoring activities should have release time so they can dedicate their time interacting and observing beginning teachers during the school day.

Although it is highly encouraged to have master teachers take on a full-time role released from all classroom duties, it is also recommended to balance their teaching duties with a flexible schedule “to meet with, observe and provide feedback for beginning teachers” (Goldrick, 2016, p. 18). This protected time is essential in a mentoring program because it impacts the teaching effectiveness of the beginning teacher and the student learning happening in the classroom. The master teacher contact time with their mentee usually recommends a frequency and duration of “one to two hours per week of protected time for interactions” (Goldrick, 2016, p. 18) between

the master teacher and mentee. As previously mentioned, release time is crucial in mentoring programs because it provides the master teacher and mentee to establish an ongoing mentoring schedule that will improve teacher practices and student outcomes.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings and limitations of this phenomenological study, I have several recommendations for future research in the area of master teachers' impact on teacher retention through mentoring programs. This study focused on retaining beginning teachers. My first recommendation would be to develop a long-term study that will monitor the retention of beginning teachers that participate in a mentoring program at their campus or district. Beginning teachers can provide insight on their reasons for staying in the teaching profession. They can also share the support that was most valuable to them throughout their first years as a teacher.

The second recommendation for researchers to engage in for future study is to have a case study that will examine the interactions between the master teachers and beginning teacher pairings. A case study approach will examine the interactions and level of engagement in the mentoring process from both the master teacher and beginning teacher perspective through interviews and observational field notes can provide substantial evidence of the challenges and successes they endured while in this partnership. Case studies are done within one bounded system so this approach can assist in understanding mentoring programs and how they differ in different systems.

The third and final recommendation is to study the administrators' perceptions of the mentoring program at their campus/district. Engaging administrators to weigh in on their perspectives of the master teacher and beginning teacher mentoring processes can provide additional understanding how administrators perceive the mentoring program at their

campus/district. This type of study can provide an insight on the role administrator's play within the mentoring process. Having administrator engagement and understanding of how mentoring programs benefit teacher retention can promote a culture of collaboration.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand master teachers' perceptions of the impact that the Project *RISE* Mentoring Program has on retaining beginning teachers. As I delved into the literature and conducted this research, it was evident the components of the study were aligned to the past literature on the focus areas pertaining to the importance mentoring programs have on teacher retention. My goal for this study was to discover the master teachers' perceptions and lived experiences in their role as a mentor for beginning teachers and to also examine the support provided to them that helped retain them at their campus.

Twelve master teachers from two RGV high schools in the same district had similar commonalities within their responses that has led me to believe they have been implementing the best practices Project *RISE* has provided to them through multiple professional development opportunities. Eleven themes emerged from the semistructured interview responses, which revealed the following: (1) effective skill sets used to build relationships, (2) professional development opportunities for master teachers, (3) supporting beginning teachers, (4) motivational factors for being master teachers, (5) master teachers' impact on teacher retention, (6) perceptions of Project *RISE* Mentoring Program, (7) mentoring using a coaching cycle of reflection, (8) positive outcomes of mentoring, (9) master teachers' relatability with mentees, (10) importance of mentoring beginning teachers, and (11) release time for mentoring support.

This phenomenological study consisted of the lived experiences that master teachers encountered as they mentored beginning teachers at their respective campus. Master teachers from both campuses provided me with first-hand knowledge of their experiences and the optimal skill sets and characteristics mentors need to provide support to their mentees. The self-determination theory was also an important factor in this study because it contributed the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors that entice master teachers to mentor beginning teachers. SDT also allowed me to hone into the human basic needs attributed in the mentoring process. The three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatability, are key in analyzing the master teachers' approach in mentoring their mentees and other teachers.

Through this research I was able to identify the importance mentoring programs have on teacher retention. Both campuses showed significant progress in teacher retention for the 2020-2021 school year. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, RGV high school-A had a total of 155 teachers and by the end of the school year seven teachers are not returning for the 2020-2021 school year. It was reported that five teachers left the district and two teachers were transferred to another school within the district. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, RGV-high school-B had a total of 143 teachers and at the end of the school year only two teachers were not returning for the 2020-2021 school year. It was reported that one teacher left the district and one teacher transferred to another school within the district. Based on the teacher retention at both campuses, it is evident the master teachers' mentoring attributed to retaining teachers at their campuses.

Master teachers play an intricate role in mentoring programs and have specific responsibilities they must fulfill with their mentees to promote educator effectiveness and student growth throughout the school year. Mentoring programs can be effective in teacher retention by

providing ongoing support and resources to master teachers and beginning teachers. Sustaining master teachers for mentoring programs will definitely improve the teacher attrition rate that occurs in K-12 public schools throughout the United States.

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### **Appendix A: Master Teacher Profile**

Information obtained before interview:

1. Participant: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Teaching Experience: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Project *RISE* Master Teacher Experience: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mentoring Experience: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Educational Background (Degrees/Certifications attained): \_\_\_\_\_
7. Current Teaching Position: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Years at Campus: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Master Teacher Interview Protocol**

### **Script prior to interview:**

Hello, my name is Michelle Zuniga and I am currently a doctoral candidate with Abilene Christian University. I want to thank you for being willing to participate in the interview phase of my study. As previously mentioned, my phenomenological study seeks to understand the master teachers' perceptions of the impact that the Project RISE Mentoring Program has on teacher retention. Our interview today will last approximately one hour and I will be asking you questions related to your experiences that you have encountered as a master teacher at your campus, the impact you have on retaining teachers at your campus, and the perception you have on the impact you are making by implementing Project RISE best practices.

To best document this interview, I would like to audio record this interview. Please indicate below if you are fine with me audio recording this interview.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I am fine with having our interview audio recorded.  
If yes: Thank you for allowing me to audio record our conversation.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I am not fine with having our interview audio recorded.  
If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of the conversation today.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? If you have questions that arise during the interview, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

### **Interview Questions**

1. Describe the impact that your role as a master teacher has on teacher retention at your campus.
2. How have you been able to address the importance of mentoring beginning teachers in order to retain them at your school?
3. Tell me about an experience you have had with a beginning teacher that makes you feel that you have impacted their decision to stay at your school.
4. How much control do you have in building a relationship with your mentees? What skill set do you use best in building these relationships?

5. Describe an experience(s) where you have provided mentoring support and guidance to your mentee. How do you know that your mentoring has been beneficial to your mentee(s)?
6. How has your mentoring experiences provided you the ability to relate to your mentees?
7. How has the Project RISE Mentoring Program provided you the skill set needed to mentor beginning teachers? What are your perceptions of the Project RISE Mentoring Program?
8. How has the Project RISE professional development given you the competence that you need to provide mentoring support to beginning teachers? How has this professional development affected your own professional growth?
9. Describe the positive outcomes that you have experienced as a master teacher and how have these experiences impacted meaningful reflection conversations with your mentees?
10. How much does your salary augmentation play as a driving force in being a master teacher at your campus?

**Script after interview:**

Thank you for meeting with me via Zoom and discussing your experience as a master teacher. I greatly appreciate you for participating in my study.

## Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**  
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
325-674-2885



April 2, 2020

Rose Michelle Zuniga  
Department of Organizational Leadership  
Abilene Christian University

Dear Michelle,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Master Teacher Perceptions on the Impact Mentoring Programs have on Teacher Retention: A Case Study",

(IRB# 20-027 )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

### **Appendix D: Master Teacher Recruitment Letter**

Dear Educator,

My name is Rose Michelle Zuniga and I am currently a doctoral candidate with Abilene Christian University, conducting a qualitative research case study. You have been selected to participate in the research because you have been a Project *RISE* master teacher for over two years. My research focuses on the perceptions that master teachers have on the impact you have on the retention of beginning teachers at your campus.

Your participation in the study will include one auto-recorded interview that will approximately take 45 min to an hour to complete. Your participation will be anonymous, in that your real name will not be used. As the researcher of this study, I am obligated to keep all data collection in a secure place.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any given time. If you have questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Michelle Zuniga (XXX) XXX-XXXX or via email XXXXX@XXXXX.

Sincerely,  
Rose Michelle Zuniga

## Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

### Introduction: Master Teacher Perceptions on the Impact Mentoring Programs have on Teacher Retention: A Case Study

This case study is being conducted by Rose Michelle Zuniga, doctoral student from Abilene Christian University. I am conducting this research about master teacher perceptions on the impact mentoring has on beginning teachers and teacher retention at their campus. I will be conducting interviews that should take approximately one hour. I will also be conducting two observations per participant, and they should take about 30 minutes each to complete.

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your colleagues.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

#### **PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:**

The purpose of this research is to understand the master teachers' insights of the important role they play in supporting and mentoring beginning teachers. This research is also important because it will provide me with information as to how the Project *RISE* Mentor Academy has assisted with the teacher retention at this campus. This academy provides master teachers with professional development training that assists in mentoring beginning teachers with teaching strategies that can improve teacher and student performance. This research will also assist me in understanding the master teachers' motivation to mentor beginning teachers at their campus.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to participate in the following procedures: one interview and two observations of your mentoring practices. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded. The observations will not be recorded; they will simply be noted on the observation protocol.

**RISKS & BENEFITS:** There are risks to taking part in this research study. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur:

The interviews that will be conducted are of minimal risks. The identification of master teachers will not be revealed; only by pseudonym or participant #, but if there was a breach of confidentiality due to the audio recording, it can be considered serious but rare. The observations that will be conducted are also of minimal risks. These observations will not be audio or video recorded so there will not be any identification of participant in a recording. They will be marked by their pseudonym or participant number on the observation sheet so that the information can be identified by me. If there was a breach of confidentiality as to who was observed, it would be serious but rare.

There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include: 1) expressing your views and insights in the role as a master teacher and how you impact the retention of beginning teachers at their campus, 2) reflect on the mentoring experiences they have encountered for the past two in a half years as a master teacher and how those experiences can refine your craft in mentoring beginning teachers, 3) you will provide insight in the implementation of Project *RISE* mentoring practices.

**PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY:** Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be protected by the following:

I will protect the participants identity by using a pseudonym or participant number so that their name is confidential. In addition to the data being confidential and the use of pseudonyms in place, I will be the only one with access to the data. The interviews and observations that will be collected as data sources will be stored in a locked file cabinet at my home office. Participant consent forms will be stored in the locked file cabinet as well. The audio recording of interviews will be stored in my password protected laptop and downloaded to my google drive which requires password to access. I will maintain study data for the required time of three years after completion of the study.

**CONTACTS:** If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Rose Michelle Zuniga, M.Ed. and may be contacted at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, XXXXX@XXXXX, or XXXX XXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher, or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dr. Christopher Jenkins, Ph.D., XXXXXXX@XXXXX. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at

(XXX) XXX-XXXX  
XXXXXX@XXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXX

## Additional Information

This case study will emphasize on your perspectives of the impact that you have experienced as a master teacher at your campus. The research will answer three critical questions of the study which include the following:

- Q1. How do master teachers perceive their impact on teacher retention at their campus?
- Q2. How do master teachers describe their mentoring experiences with beginning teachers?
- Q3. How do master teachers perceive the impact of the mentoring practices that have been implemented by Project RISE?

The research questions in this study will drive the conversation that will take place in the interviews that I will conduct with you as a participant. I am expecting to have seven master teachers take part as participants in my study.

# Consent Signature Section

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark of Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining  
Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark of Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Appendix F: Project Director's Letter of Permission to Conduct Study**

## PROJECT DIRECTOR'S LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

March 2, 2020

Mrs. Rose Michelle Zuniga  
[REDACTED]

Dear Mrs. Zuniga,

This letter grants you permission to conduct your research at [REDACTED] and to interview the master teachers participating in Project *RISE* for your doctoral dissertation entitled, *Master Teacher Perceptions on the Impact Mentoring Programs have on Teacher Retention: A Case Study*.

To coordinate the collection of data and the protocols for the interview and observation, I recommend that you contact the Principal directly.

Once your research is finalized, I would appreciate a summary report of your findings. I wish you well.

Respectfully,

  
[REDACTED]

Educator Effectiveness and Performance Director