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STRONGER TOGETHER: A CASE-STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
A SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING PROGRAM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Tiffany Young-Norris

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Abstract

Mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on student outcomes such as attendance, behavior, and overall connectedness to school. Through strengthening relationships with a non-familial adult, mentoring has also been shown to have a positive impact on student interactions with other adults within the school environment. However, there are many logistical considerations that can adversely impact the implementation of a school-based mentoring program. This study began as a mixed methods study intended to examine the impact of a community-based mentoring program on student discipline referrals and absences. During the course of the study, the scope and methods shifted to become a qualitative study that focused on the implementation of an after-school mentoring program for middle school students. The authors employed a case-study methodology using a variety of data collection methods including interviews with mentors and administrators, a focus group with the mentees, and repeated observations of the mentoring sessions. Thematic content analysis revealed six themes: goals, experiences, perceptions, relationships, challenges to implementation, and sustainability and improvement. Findings suggest that the faculty and staff had a high level of confidence in their leadership which was likely to positively impact the mentoring program, as they were more likely to trust his decisions and work diligently to ensure that his goals for the program were met. Should a mentoring program be implemented, our findings indicated that time and prioritization are imperative to its success.

Keywords: mentoring, relationships, leadership, school-based, improvement

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2014, the National Mentoring Partnership published the results of a survey in which they discovered that one in three young people grow up without a mentor. They estimated that approximately 16 million youth, including nine million who are considered at-risk, will reach adulthood without connecting with any type of mentor. Mentoring has been shown to have significant positive effects on two early warning indicators that a student may be falling behind: high levels of absenteeism and recurring behavior problems (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002). According to the National Mentoring Partnership (2014), students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class. Additionally, youth who are faced with an opportunity gap but have a mentor are more likely to be enrolled in college than those who do not (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). In addition to better school attendance and a better chance of going on to higher education, mentored youth also maintain an overall better attitude towards school (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The middle school studied in this research has been given the pseudonym Summerville Middle School. During the 2016-2017 school year, there were 600 days of suspension assigned to students by the end of the first semester; this number was the combined days of in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension (OSS). Furthermore, the number of students with chronic truancy, defined as a student who missed more than 20 days, was 500. There were only 1000 students enrolled at Summerville Middle School at that time. Summerville Middle School hired a new principal, Mr. Gregg (pseudonym), at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year.

Mr. Gregg set a goal to improve the school climate by strengthening relationships with students and decreasing student absenteeism and office discipline referrals. He planned to do this by strengthening relationships- as an individual first, then through other adults: specifically, through the implementation of a school-based community mentoring program. By the end of his first semester at Summerville Middle School, the number of days of suspension had decreased from 600 to 250, a 58% decrease, and the number of students with chronic truancy dropped to 155, a 70% decrease. Mr. Gregg attributed this decrease to building relationships with students and parents. In his efforts to build positive relationships, he visited over 60% of student homes, he was a passenger on all school buses, and he ensured that he was present and visible daily within the school setting. Although these changes may have been helpful, Mr. Gregg is only one person in the building; a mentoring program would allow for students to connect to more adults in the building who may also be more accessible than the principal.

Rationale

Rhodes (2002, 2005) stated that mentoring relationships affect adolescents through three interrelated processes. Rhodes suggested that mentoring relationships enhance adolescents' social relationships and emotional well-being, improve their cognitive skills through instruction and conversation, and promote positive identity development.

A school-based community mentoring program was implemented at Summerville Middle School during the fall semester of the 2018-2019 school year as one of many school-level and county-level initiatives designed to improve students' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. In addition to these improvements, two other specific goals of this mentoring program were to decrease student absences and decrease the number of discipline referrals.

A qualitative case-study analysis design was used in this study which included interviews with mentors, school administrators, and active community members; observations of program participants; and a focus group with the mentees.

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of an emerging school-based mentoring program at Summerville Middle School, focusing on the logistical side of implementing an emerging mentoring program in a school at which there are many initiatives already being implemented. There was a high level of passion at the school in this study; unfortunately, there was also a shortage of time and an excess of overworked administrators at the school. This study examined the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the emerging mentoring program during its development. This was done in an attempt to better understand how to implement a mentoring program within an environment where there are many initiatives competing for resources.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1971) social learning theory and the ecological theory proposed by a number of researchers (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Little et al., 2006) are tied together in Finn's (1989) school membership theory.

Social Cognitive/Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1971) theorized that individuals learn a great deal about how to behave through observation, and that one's experiences have a vital impact on his or her behavior. According to social learning theory, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experiences or by observing the behavior of others. The focus of social learning theory is not mimicry or imitation, but is instead the generation of new patterns of behavior through direct experiences with and observations of others. In a mentoring relationship, students are given the opportunity to work

closely with and observe an adult mentor. According to Bandura's theory of social learning, if a mentor exhibits productive and socially advantageous behaviors and interactions with a mentee, the mentee should begin to demonstrate these same behaviors. Examples of behaviors that could possibly be demonstrated by a mentor include being present and prompt for meetings, dressing professionally, talking problems out instead of fighting, and showing respect towards mentee and school personnel. If a student begins to exhibit some of these same behaviors, this may improve school discipline by reducing the number of physical altercations and the number of absences and occurrences of tardiness. Additionally, there may be an increase in student respect toward teachers and other school personnel because of the relationships built between mentors and mentees. Social learning theory supports the hypothesis that a mentoring program will improve student discipline by decreasing the number of behavior infractions.

Ecological Theory

Although ecological theory may not be explicitly stated by all social theorists, the idea that individuals are impacted by their environment is often present (Little et al., 2006). Not only are people impacted by their environment, but aspects of a person's environment have the potential to mediate that person's experiences of any or all other aspects of his or her environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Little et al., 2006). In their discussion of hope as a predictor of success, Little et al. (2006) noted that a person's hope can be significantly increased by the supports of contextual influences, which, in this instance, will hopefully be the support of a mentor in the life a student. This increase in hope because of a positive influence is transferred to increased likelihood of success in other areas of a person's life, in this case, school-related outcomes.

School Membership Theory

School membership theory (Finn, 1989) supports the idea that establishing strong relationships with adults, whether in school or outside of school, impacts students' feelings of connectedness toward the school as well as increases positive behavior and student engagement. This means that students who are supported by mentors and with whom their mentors successfully develop relationships should be less likely to miss school for non-medical reasons. Furthermore, students who identify with school feel that they belong within the school community and that school plays an important role in their lives. Because these students value school and school-related goals, they are less likely to display behavior that their teachers may consider negative and are therefore also less likely to be suspended.

School membership theory focuses on the reciprocal behavior of adults and students in schools and suggests that when adults, such as community mentors, show care and concern for students as individuals and learners, students will respond with positive behavior toward others and a commitment to and engagement with academics (Finn, 1989).

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

Research Question 1:

What were the experiences of the participants in the mentoring program?

Research Question 2:

What were the goals of the participants in the mentoring program?

Research Question 3:

What were the perceptions of the program participants regarding the mentoring program?

Research Question 4:

What were the perceived barriers to the implementation of a school-based mentoring program?

Research Question 5:

How could the mentoring program be improved going forward to better meet the needs of the students?

Positionality Statements

I (J. Jeff Crouch) have years of experience working with children who are middle school age and who have been identified as having an emotional behavior disorder. During this study, I had to be aware that I tend to expect cases in which students have been identified as displaying negative behaviors or as being exposed to negative circumstances or situations prior to intervention. This could have influenced me to want to intervene in some situations, when in a regular middle school setting these situations may resolve appropriately without adult intervention. In addition, I may have been influenced to assume that mentoring will prove to be beneficial to negative behaviors. On the other hand, in my own experience as a middle school student, I was not exposed to many extreme behaviors or situations. There was not identified a great need for interventions or mentoring programs in my experience as a middle school student. The situation appeared to be quite different at the time of this study. There seemed to be a greater need for intervention/mentoring strategies. I had experience as a classroom teacher and as an educational building leader. Prior to this, I had had experiences as an executive manager in a Fortune 500 company. I was vulnerable to see situations as problems to be diagnosed and solved. Therefore, I needed to remind myself not to prescribe an intervention before the data collection was complete and to focus on the positive as well as the negative aspects of mentoring as an intervention.

I (Andrew Mays) am a white, male teacher. As a white man, I had the potential to not notice sources of bias in the data (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014; Dee, 2005; Godsil, Tropp, Goff, & Powell, 2014). As a teacher, I was in a position of authority in relation to the participants of this study and had to be careful not to allow this authority to impact my interpretation of the data. I was also a teacher at another school in the county in which this study was conducted and could therefore have made assumptions about the school and its policies without having had supporting data collected during this study. As I had only ever taught in this county in Georgia, I was likely less likely to notice shortcomings in terms of the treatment of students and behavior of teachers and administrators towards students if these shortcomings were consistent across the county. Given that I intended to apply for a leadership position in this district upon completing my doctorate, I was also less likely to speak critically of school and district administration. Additionally, I had a nontraditional middle school experience, so there may be aspects of a traditional middle school with which I am unfamiliar.

Having attended middle school in Georgia, I (Tiffany Young) am aware of the challenges that were associated with adolescence at that time. However, I lack an understanding of the challenges that middle school students are faced with now, as I am well removed from that position. I am an African American, female, elementary teacher, with minimal knowledge about middle school students aside from what I have observed when visiting middle schools and working with middle school students at The Boys & Girls Club. I had several preconceived notions about the behavior of middle school students, as it had been my observation that they are often loud, unruly, and disrespectful. As a teacher, I was aware of the importance of relationship building as this was something that I worked to achieve with my own students. Because of this I already had my own ideas about the benefits of strengthening relationships and providing

additional adults as supports for young people. It was important that I did not allow my own ideas and opinions to come forth, but instead interpreted the data with an open mind and unbiased attitude.

The mentoring programs that I encountered throughout my school experience targeted those students who were either behavior problems or struggled with academics. I had never been the student selected for mentoring programs, because throughout my schooling I was generally well-behaved and maintained good grades. I served in a mentoring capacity with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in Atlanta, GA as well as with Boys & Girls Clubs of the CSRA and also as a freshman mentor at Georgia State University. I could recall the relationships that I had with my mentees and the impact that the mentoring programs had on the student's lives both in and outside of school. However, I had to be careful not to assume that the participants in this study would have similar experiences, as each experience was different. Because of my experiences with various mentoring programs, I had my own ideas of what a mentoring program should look like and how it should be implemented. It was important that I was not quick to judge or assume that I knew what improvements should be made to the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School. I also did not want to jump to conclusions on what challenges may have impeded implementation of the program, but to instead see what was revealed through the responses of the participants.

I (Tamara Moody) am an African American woman with 15 years of teaching experience in school districts in the state of Georgia. I have had the privilege of teaching on both high school and middle school grade levels at low performing schools. In addition, I had taught in the alternative setting and on the post-secondary level. I had taught students of various ages, of various backgrounds with diverse strengths and weaknesses. Some of them came from positive

and productive environments while others struggled to earn an education as they dealt with extreme issues and challenges. I strongly believed that the development of positive relationships between students and members of the school community can be influential to student achievement and engagement socially, emotionally, and behaviorally. They provided a sense of connectedness and can be a source of motivation in the educational setting. As a former mentor in various school mentoring programs, I had witnessed both successes and failures as a result of various aspects of the implementation and processes that occur in mentoring programs. Although the goals of school implemented mentoring programs were to improve student outcomes, I believed that ideal outcomes were a result of the relationships the mentors established with mentees that were capable of being relevant and meaningful in the student's life both in and out of school. From my experiences as an educator, I had witnessed how the behaviors and attitudes toward school among middle school students could serve as predictors for future school outcomes. Although I never participated in a mentoring program as a youth, I witnessed the impact that positive relationships have on student achievement.

I believed that improving the relationships among students and members of the school community could establish a sense of belonging among students. I also believed that if students felt that educators genuinely cared about their well-being both in and out of the classroom, negative behaviors would decrease, and that students would become more engaged in their learning process. Students would take chances and be willing to make mistakes. I lacked knowledge of the ways in which structured school-based mentoring programs ensured effectiveness and sustainability. As this study was conducted, I allowed research to shape my understandings of what it takes to implement and run an effective school-based mentoring program with long lasting and positive results.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

As the goal of this study was to investigate the implementation of an emerging mentoring program that would improve student outcomes by establishing positive relationships between students and non-familial adults, it is necessary to provide some background to support these connections. In an effort to explain these ideas, a review of best practices in mentoring and how mentoring can improve a variety of outcomes for the mentee is presented. This is followed by a discussion of how mentoring programs have been successfully established in the past, and what elements are crucial to the success of a program. We then examined the types of relationships that can exist in a school and give reasons for choosing mentor relationships. Following this is a brief explanation to give insight into the importance of the role of school leadership in directing new initiatives. Finally, we describe how our research may be understood through a blending of ecological theory with social cognitive and social learning theories, which are joined together using school membership theory.

Mentoring

According to a survey conducted by the National Mentoring Partnership (2014), one in three young people grow up without a mentor. This means that approximately 16 million youth, including nine million who are considered at-risk, will reach adulthood without connecting with any type of mentor. Caring and consistent relationships with adults are necessary in order for youth to be successful both in and out of school (Tschannen-Moran, Bankole, Mitchell, & Moore, 2013). However, many adolescents lack an available adult with whom to establish these types of relationships. Parents, teachers, school leaders, and communities are constantly in search of new and innovative ways to support learning, achievement, and the success of children. One

approach to provide aid and support to all students has been the development of mentoring programs (Karcher & Herrera, 2007). Mentoring, as it relates to our study, involves a caring and supportive relationship between a youth and a non-parental adult. The process of mentoring is thought of as “strengthening an individual at risk through a personal relationship with an experienced and caring person. Through shared activities, guidance, information, and encouragement, the individual gains in character and competence and begins setting positive life goals” (Barron-McKeagney, Woody, & D’Souza, 2000, p. 40).

There are a variety of forms that a mentoring relationship can take. Mentor-mentee relationships can develop naturally (informal) or within more structured parameters (formal) through activities that are designed to arrange, sustain, and monitor matches (McPartland & Nettles, 1991). Formal mentoring programs are designed to pair adults with youths in a community, work, or school setting to enhance positive youth development through a supportive relationship (Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Formal school-based mentoring programs came about from the recognition in the 1980s that some children required additional support in order to be successful in school (Portwood & Ayers, 2005). In school-based mentoring programs, mentors meet with children on school grounds to provide attention and sometimes academic tutoring. Students are usually selected and referred for these types of mentoring programs by their teachers because of discipline problems or difficulties with schoolwork. It is estimated that school-based mentoring programs make up about 70% of the formal mentoring programs in the United States (Rhodes, 2002). Additional types of mentoring relationships include peer-to-peer mentoring, teacher-to-student mentoring, and guidance counselor-to-student mentoring.

There are many benefits associated with mentoring programs. Mentoring has been shown to have significant positive effects on two early warning indicators that a student may be falling

behind: high levels of absenteeism and recurring behavior problems (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002). According to the National Mentoring Partnership (2014), students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class. Additionally, youth who are faced with an opportunity gap but have a mentor are more likely to be enrolled in college than those who do not (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). In addition to better school attendance and a better chance of going on to higher education, mentored youth also maintain an overall better attitude towards school (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013).

Multiple researchers (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013; Portwood & Ayers, 2005; Rhodes, 2002) indicated that there are social and emotional benefits that middle school students receive through mentoring programs, especially those students who may be at risk of not completing high school due to absenteeism, poor academic performance, or discipline infractions. Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, and Noam (2006) suggested that youth mentoring has the potential to promote the positive development of young people. Generally, the positive effects of mentoring are attributed to the support and role modeling that these types of relationships have to offer (Rhodes et al., 2006). Mentoring relationships may provide youth with opportunities for fun and escape from daily stress, corrective emotional experiences that may generalize to and improve youths' other social relationships, and assistance with the regulation of emotions (Rhodes, 2002, 2005). Rhodes (2002, 2005) also proposed that mentoring affects youth through three interrelated processes: (1) by enhancing youth's social relationships and emotional well-being, (2) by improving their cognitive skills through instruction and conversation, and (3) by promoting positive identity development by providing adult mentors as role models and advocates. Mentoring relationships allow youth the opportunity to engage in a variety of social

and recreational interactions with adults. These types of interactions provide enjoyable experiences for youth who typically are faced with disadvantages and difficult circumstances.

Multiple researchers provided support for the idea that positive mentoring relationships have the potential to strengthen or modify youths' other relationships. Mentoring relationships help adolescents to build positive relationships with one adult, which in turn allows them to build positive relationships with other adults in their lives (Rhodes, 2002, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). When youth develop strong and engaging connections with their mentors, their ability to positively relate well to others also improves (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Mentors can challenge negative views that students may hold of themselves or of relationships with adults by offering them genuine care and support. Mentors play a vital role in demonstrating that positive relationships with adults are possible. Mentoring relationships also help build self-esteem and students' sense of identity. By serving as role models and advocates, mentors may contribute to youths' positive identity development. That is, mentors may help shift youths' perceptions of both their current and future identities (Rhodes et al., 2006). It has also been demonstrated that mentor relationships elevate students' aspirations and goals (Lee & Cramond, 1999). These aspirations and goals include academic success, fitting in with their peers, and "meaningful adult relationships" (Smith, Mann, Georgieva, Curtis, & Schimmel, 2016, p. 1). Youth who participate in school-based mentoring programs are more likely than their non-mentored peers to report having a non-parental adult who they look up to and can talk to about personal problems, who cares about what happens to them and influences the choices they make (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, & McMaken, 2007). These interpersonal gains contribute to positive future outcomes (National Mentoring Partnership, 2014).

Mentoring relationships have also been shown to contribute to the cognitive development of youth by providing exposure to new opportunities for learning, intellectual challenge and guidance, and promotion of academic success (Rhodes et al. 2006). Mentoring program participants also show increased feelings of connectedness. Researchers suggested that students who are mentored develop more positive attitudes toward school, are more likely to trust their teachers, and develop higher levels of self-confidence and a greater ability to communicate and express their feelings (Curtis & Hansen-Schwoebel, 1999; Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002; Rhodes, 2002). Randolph and Johnson (2008) found that the primary benefits for students who participate in school-based mentoring programs are increased connectedness at school, as well as increased connectedness in the family and in the community. Mentoring has also been shown to improve student grades, in addition to attendance and behavior, thereby reducing disciplinary action (McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Rhodes, 2002). Sipe (1996) and Tierney and Grossman (2000) provided additional evidence which indicated that involvement in consistent, long-term, well-supervised relationships with adults can lead to decreased alcohol and drug use among adolescents.

Although mentoring programs are becoming more prominent within schools, these types of programs are not always successful. Successfully implemented mentoring programs share characteristics that contribute to the success of the program (Karcher & Herrera, 2007; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Rhodes, 2002, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). A look at mentoring programs throughout the literature provides reasons as to why some programs succeed while others do not.

Successful and effective mentoring programs place a strong focus on building meaningful relationships between mentor and mentee. Adolescents benefit the most from programs that

focus on relationship-building (Larose, Cyrenne, Garceau, Brodeur, & Tarabulsky, 2010). Pryce (2012) supported the idea that mentoring programs with specific goals for mentors may provide the greatest benefit to mentees in middle school. According to Jones, Doveston, and Rose (2008), the motivations of mentors impact the success of mentoring programs. The reasons why one has chosen to serve as a mentor impact factors such as the strength and duration of the relationship. For example, mentors who are serving to fulfill a community service requirement may not be as invested or committed as those who have chosen to take part in a mentoring program for intrinsic reasons. Nonjudgmental and empathetic approaches on the part of the mentors were critical in developing effective relationships with the young people involved; successful mentors possess warmth and are responsive to the inferred needs of the mentee (Van Ryzin, 2010). Another significant characteristic of an effective mentor is that he or she is goal-oriented and seeks to build the relationship with his or her mentee (DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewitt, Kitzman, & Cole, 2007). Students require a level of support and acknowledgement that extends beyond their academic development and needs. Many students need someone, such as a mentor, who will involve himself or herself with the life of the student on a consistent basis and let the student know that he or she is interested in more than just the student's academic performance. Mentors must demonstrate empathy and strive to reach and understand students on the human level—learning what it means to walk in their shoes and be a part of their world (Merwin, 2002).

Meeting times and the design of the relationship also are contributing factors to the success of mentoring programs. According to Van Ryzin (2010), mentoring relationships are most effective in a one-to-one design, as this design helps to supplement the relational fulfillment that the student receives at home and in the classroom. Consistent meetings once or twice a week outside of the classroom may help develop a positive rapport between the student

and the mentor (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). Additionally, keeping meeting times predictable also contributes to mentor effectiveness (Ahrens, Dubois, Lozano, & Richardson, 2010; DeSocio et al., 2007).

Although the characteristics of successful mentoring programs are clear, schools still face numerous challenges during program implementation. According to Jucovy and Garringer (2008), fostering the level of understanding and degree of commitment that is necessary to operate a successful program at the school site can be difficult for school-based mentoring programs. Often, school-based programs are incorrectly perceived as a tutoring service, whose goal is to boost grades or provide additional academic support. On-campus programs may also have difficulty garnering the support of administrators, teachers, and other school personnel who may view the program as yet another item to add to their already full list of responsibilities (Jucovy & Garringer, 2008).

Given the myriad of challenges that come along with the implementation of a school-based mentoring program it is imperative that school leaders are supportive throughout the process. The success of school-based mentoring programs rests on the commitment and leadership of the principal and other administrators (Jucovy & Garringer, 2008). These individuals are instrumental in securing funds and facilities for the program as well as gaining the support of teachers, counselors, coaches, and other staff members who will assist with implementation (Jucovy & Garringer, 2008). School administrators play an integral role in setting the precedent for teachers and other school personnel. Essentially, if the administration seems disinterested in the program, faculty and staff members will follow suit.

School-based mentoring programs often utilize the support and services of members of the community by recruiting these individuals to serve as mentors. This creates a partnership

between the school and the community from which students are able to benefit. Much like everything else within a school, the successful implementation of community-partnership programs depends largely on a school's leadership (Jucovy & Garringer, 2008). School leaders, such as principals, set the tone for community involvement. Sanders and Harvey (2002) conducted a case study in which they identified principal support for community involvement as a central factor in schools' success in developing meaningful community connections. Other factors that are crucial to program success include a high commitment to learning, a welcoming school climate, and two-way communication about the level and kind of community involvement.

There are two roles that leadership can choose to play in building relationships between the school and the community; the leader can either serve as a buffer or a bridge (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005). Buffering is an independent strategy that is used by principals in an attempt to keep their school independent from the environment. Independent strategies are means by which an organization can rely on its own resources and ingenuity to reduce uncertainty and dependence on external factors which may threaten its existence. Principals who prefer this strategy reduce environmental influence as much as possible to protect the tasks of teaching and learning. Buffering might include principals' insistence that community groups, social service agencies, businesses, or parents make their initial contact with them rather than with teachers (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005). These strategies seek to isolate the school from both community involvement and impact.

Bridging strategies are cooperative strategies used to increase the interdependence of an organization with elements in its environment. The survival of the school depends heavily on environmental factors. Thus, the collaboration between the school and community is necessary.

The principal utilizes community resources and works to change the community's goals to align with the goals of the school. Bridging strategies have been found to be influential in fostering student achievement. These strategies are also associated with improved student attendance as well as performance, specifically in English and math. Bridging strategies are also associated with decreased student dropout and delinquency rates (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005).

According to DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2005), leaders need to engage in both bridging and buffering strategies to maximize the effectiveness of their schools. School leaders make choices regarding which strategy to use in relation to parents and community. Buffering strategies are typically the most utilized by school administrators. However, investing greater resources and energy in bridging strategies will positively impact student achievement. In short, students benefit from the intentional bridging between communities and schools (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2005).

Despite challenges with partnership implementation, there are leaders who have made strides toward successfully bridging the gap between communities and schools. Sanders and Lewis (2005) described why educational leaders at three demographically different high schools with successful community partnership programs chose to dedicate time, energy, and resources to integrate community involvement into their school improvement efforts. These leaders perceived community involvement to be a way to support student success, enhance school quality, and support community development. Leaders interested in developing or expanding their relationships with community partners should prioritize process, permit time, and promote community ownership.

All work involves a set of processes (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015). According to improvement science principles, quality improvement “requires attention to how

these various processes are currently conducted, to identifying opportunities for carrying them out better, and to testing these changes over time against data” (Bryk et al., 2015, pp. 46-47). Similarly, school leaders must first prioritize process in order to lay a firm foundation for partnership program development. This includes developing a mission, a clear action plan, and an ongoing evaluation process. A large amount of time is required for identifying school and community needs, contacting potential community partners, attending planning meetings, and evaluating and reflecting on past activities in order to better design future ones. School leaders need to be willing to dedicate the necessary time for partnership program development. Finally, it is important that school leaders ensure that community partners are actively involved in the process by communicating with partners as well as helping them find their niche within the school.

Successful Implementation of a Mentoring Program

As has already been discussed, successful mentoring programs focus on building strong relationships in a structured environment. Both the focus on relationships and a structured environment are crucial. There are two additional procedural necessities to be aware of at the beginning for a mentoring program to maximize its positive impact and to avoid having a negative impact on the students involved. Mentors need to be screened and trained prior to meeting with their mentee, and the program must allow sufficient time for enduring relationships to be built (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Steltor, & Tai, 2015).

Mentors

Not just anyone should be a mentor. People may be excluded from being a mentor for a number of reasons, including mentee safety, other time commitments, and attitude (Garringer et al., 2015). Mentors selected to participate in a program must also be committed to the program,

as the premature departure of a mentor can cause negative outcomes for the mentee (Karcher, 2008, as cited in Smith & Stormont, 2011).

Teachers are definitely fine possibilities for mentors, and using teachers as mentors improves the relationship that mentored students have with all of their teachers (Herrera et al., 2007). However, teachers are also already burdened with many responsibilities and program administrators must be cautious not to use teachers who are likely to back out due to other commitments (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016; Sanders, 2001; Zachary, 2002).

Prior to the start of the mentoring program, mentors need to be matched with a mentee. Although there are almost as many ways of pairing mentors and mentees as there are mentoring programs, it is generally agreed upon that mentors and mentees should share a common interest (Komosa-Hawkins, 2009; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008), and the more interests shared, the stronger the relationship may become (Liang & Rhodes, 2007). Grossman and Rhodes (2002) found that there is no strong negative effect for matching a mentor with a mentee of a different race. However, teachers may display negative bias towards students of a different race (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Cross-gender mentoring is rarely done, and there is a shortage of literature that discusses any effect caused by this matching (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

Mentor training. Mentors must receive some training prior to meeting with their mentees in order to experience positive outcomes (Komosa-Hawkins, 2009). Rhodes and Spencer (2005, as cited in Komosa-Hawkins, 2009) found that mentors who received less than two hours of formal training prior to the start of the mentoring program had the lowest quality relationships with their mentees and reported the lowest satisfaction with the overall program. The purpose of mentor training is to increase the mentors' awareness of possible problems, sensitivity to students' issues, delineate expected behaviors, and set clear roles and outcomes for

the program (Carswell, Hanlon, O'Grady, Watts, & Pothong, 2009; Liang & Rhodes, 2007; McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016; Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Mentors should also be provided with resources, including possible activities, for their meetings with mentees (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002). Jeanette Simon, a consultant for the mentoring initiative of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, advised holding a two-hour training session for mentors prior to their first meeting with mentees that allowed time for role-play and a question and answer session (Personal communication, July 26, 2018). It is worth noting that mentors should still receive training for the current program even if they have previously acted as a mentor, although the prior experience will improve the current experience (Lejonberg & Christopherson, 2015).

Role clarity. Although the provision of expectations and program goals are discussed during mentor training, role clarity was of sufficient importance in past research to merit its own heading. Komosa-Hawkins (2009) noted that “a lack of clarity and direction at the outset of the program or relationship might lead to premature termination [of the program]” and could possibly cause more harm than good (p. 129). Granger (2010) observed that clarity is important and that teachers may make better mentors than community mentors for school-based mentoring programs as they already understand the goals of the school and its administrators. Granger further noted that program expectations must be explicitly stated. The importance of role clarity for mentors was further emphasized by the finding that the likelihood of a mentor remaining committed to the program is impacted by their perception of the clarity of their role in the program (Lejonberg & Christophersen, 2015).

Time. Perhaps the most important procedural factor in the success or failure of a mentoring program is time. Relationships and related outcomes may be the goal of the program,

but these goals will not be reached unless sufficient time is allotted to the program. Time, as it pertains to mentoring programs, can be described in three ways. One, the amount of time mentors spend with their mentees per meeting. Two, the frequency with which these meetings take place. Three, the duration of the program. Although there is some research on the first two aspects, the majority of existing research deals with the third aspect.

In their review of existing literature, McDaniel and Yarbrough (2016) cited time as key to the success of a mentoring program, stipulating that mentors meet with their mentees for at least one hour per week.

The longer a mentoring program runs, the greater the benefits received from involvement with the program (McQuillin, Smith, & Strait, 2011). Furthermore, a formal mentoring program should run for at least a full year, although this typically references a full school-year (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Wheeler, Keller, & DuBois, 2010). This is not surprising given that the success of mentoring programs is dependent on relationships, which take time to establish and build (Liang & Rhodes, 2007). Relationships that last less than a year have less of a positive impact (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). This pattern continues until a negative impact on the student was noted when a mentoring program had a duration of less than three months (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

Of course, no program will be perfect; there will be flaws, bumps, and unexpected delays, but an awareness of necessary factors and an accurate valuation of time will do much to ensure that a mentoring program is implemented with as much ease as possible (McQuillin et al., 2011).

Relationships

In addition to time, relationships are a crucial aspect of the effectiveness of mentoring. The Georgia Department of Education (2017) defined relationships as student social support

from educators and parents, the level of respect students have for others, and school and community engagement. Relationships reflect the social interactions of students in and out of the classroom environment. Through the social interactions that teachers have with students, teachers are able to shape students' behavior in school as well as influence their educational progress (Peguero and Bracy, 2014). Adolescents that have positive relationships with teachers and other school personnel show improved educational achievement, motivation, cognitive, emotional, and social development, positive behavior, and self-esteem (Tschannen-Moran et al., & Moore, 2013). Peguero and Bracy (2014) also mentioned that students who perceive the relationships they have with their teachers as poor display negative social, emotional, and behavioral responses to their education. Overall, establishing positive relationships in the school environment can lead to a sense of belonging and the establishment of trust among students which may impact discipline rates and absenteeism.

Belonging

To establish positive relationships between students and other members of the educational environment, a sense of belonging must be engendered in students that causes them to identify with their school. Students who feel they belong in their school settings are the students that can be described as demonstrating a sense of affiliation, attachment, involvement, commitment, and bonding (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). They believe that school plays an important role in their lives, and they value school and goals related to attending school. In addition, this sense of connectedness to school correlates with interactions among teachers and students within the school. Tschannen-Moran et al. (2013) argued that school membership theory encompassed the phenomena that,

when adults exhibit care and concern for their students as individuals and learners, the students will reciprocate the adults' commitment to them by demonstrating positive behaviors towards others, commitment to school, and engagement in academics. Students who fail to feel a sense of belonging are likely to alienate themselves (p. 155).

One of the factors associated with connectedness and commitment is a feeling of engagement (Polk and Halferty, 1972, as cited in Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Polk and Halferty described three categories of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. When students are engaged behaviorally, they are more likely to follow school rules and norms. They also tend to participate in school-related activities that take place outside of the classroom. Behavioral engagement has been correlated with students' perceptions of teachers (Van Ryzin, 2011).

Students with teachers who support them and show concern for their learning are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement and on-task behavior (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Emotional engagement describes the feelings that students have towards school related tasks and members of the school community (Brophy, 1985). Finally, cognitive engagement refers to the psychological or intellectual investments of students in their learning. Students with an intrinsic motivation to learn are focused on comprehension and skills mastery (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013).

Blum (2005) identified three characteristics that stand out as helping students feel connected to their school environment while demonstrating commitment and engagement. These characteristics are: high academic standards combined with strong teacher support, an environment in which adults and students have positive and respectful relationships, and a physically and emotionally safe environment. Blum (2005) also mentioned that among threats to

a student's sense of connectedness are social isolation, which can result from bullying or environments dominated by social cliques, and unsafe schools, which can be categorized by classrooms that are poorly managed or that lack environments stable enough for meaningful student learning.

Although teachers are central to school connectedness, relationships cannot be achieved without support from administration; who also assist teachers in supporting their students. Blum (2005) mentioned a series of factors that are associated with school engagement that were identified by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine. From these factors, it was determined that school connectedness can be improved when schools avoid separating students on college and vocational tracks, set high standards in a common curriculum, create small learning environments, form multidisciplinary education teams among teachers to work with students, assign all students advisors, implement mentorship programs, make course content relevant, provide service learning and community service tasks, provide hands on learning experiences, use various instructional strategies, extend learning time, and provide opportunities for remediation for those falling behind. In addition, schools can foster feelings of connectedness by "ensuring that every student feels close to at least one supportive adult at school" (Blum, 2005, p. 3). This means by receiving support at school from an adult who is not a parent or guardian, the student will develop a greater sense of belonging.

Belonging within the school environment is referred to as "school connectedness" and was determined to be the only school-related variable that was a protective factor in preventing risk behaviors among adolescents such as morbidity, emotional health, violence, substance abuse, and sexuality in an analysis of eight different health risks among adolescents (Resnick et al., 1997). Furthermore, behavior, motivation, and mental health are influenced by the fit

between the developmental adolescent state and the social environment and that a feeling of connectedness is less likely to exist in a school that fails to meet the developmental needs of its students (Resnick et al., 1997). McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2002) advised that school leaders work with public health professionals to develop school policies that supplement the developmental needs of students. In addition, McNeely et al. (2002) found that school connectedness is lower in schools that suspend students for minor infractions and in schools that lack classroom management but is higher in smaller schools than larger schools and is higher in ethnically or racially segregated schools than in integrated schools. Therefore, it is important for schools to meet the developmental needs of its students to ensure that they develop a sense of connectedness with their school that not only assists them academically and socially, but that prevents other risk behaviors.

Building Trust

Positive relationships among teachers and students are significant in meeting the developmental needs of students; which can in turn foster student engagement and positive behavior. In addition, creating a strong social-emotional culture within the school environment begins with those who have the most direct contact with students. Teachers with the most direct contact with students have the opportunity to establish a sense of trust within their students. When teachers create an atmosphere in which students trust their them and feel they share something in common, the number of negative behaviors among students will decrease (Uslu and Gizir, 2016). In addition, to examining the relationships among students and teachers, the construct of trust can be used to examine the relationships among other members of the school community as well (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Trust is recognized as “a willingness to be

vulnerable based on confidence that the other party is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 151).

When individuals are exposed to the possibility of facing hardships or challenges, they tend to seek the assistance of others. This vulnerability happens when people find themselves in a situation of interdependence when they realize that they cannot accomplish a set goal or achieve valued outcomes without the help of others (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). This interdependence results in vulnerability and causes individuals to assess the character and behavior of one another and trust becomes significant. In the school setting, students are those who are vulnerable to their teachers, as their teachers control the access that students have to the knowledge and skills necessary to excel academically. Teachers also have the ability to coerce or punish the students.

Benevolence and honesty involve the students’ best interests and their ability to remain genuine. Students expect their teachers to remain benevolent: to express a sense of caring and good will toward them. They expect their teachers to act in their best interest in various ways. Teacher benevolence increases student confidence that their teachers will offer a sense of protection. In terms of honesty, students expect teachers to follow through with statements of future actions in much the same way that teachers expect students to own their behaviors in the educational environment. Students expect teachers to provide them with honest feedback in helping them become successful, to keep promises, and have integrity (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Uslu and Gizir (2016) stated that when teachers act in the best interest of their students by attending to their social needs and capabilities and by providing support, they not only develop their own social competence as teachers, they also develop a sense of trust among students.

Russell, Wentzel, and Donian (2016) examined teacher beliefs on developing student trust and found that teachers believed that it was important for their behaviors to be motivated by care for their students and their actions to be in their students' best interests. The teachers also felt that they created safe learning environments by showing sensitivity to students' personal issues. The teachers' understanding of trust was defined in two ways: belief in another individual and honesty among individuals (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Rotenberg, 2010 as cited in Russell et al., 2016). Teachers' belief in students reflected teachers' confidence that student behaviors are valid and serve as a reliable signal to determine if teachers have effectively cared for their students. Trust-defined-as-honesty was described as behaviors of teachers that reflect truthfulness, such as being straightforward or admitting mistakes (Russell et al., 2016).

Next, trust relies on school members' willingness to share information and control. A level of reciprocal trust must be in place during the exchange of information that affects all members of the learning environment. Students expect their teachers to relay important information in regard to content, skills, and resources that will help them be successful academically. Being open leads to reliability among school members. When information is communicated, school members must be able to trust one another to provide accurate information and to follow through with appropriate actions when necessary (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013).

Lastly, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) posited that school members must be competent in order to gain student trust. Competence is an individual's ability to perform his or her assigned duties and responsibilities. Students depend on the competency of their teachers when learning content. They trust that teachers will present the knowledge relevant for them to be successful. In addition, students trust that teachers are competent in ways that maintain order

and ensure that they are safe in the school setting. When students are aware that their teachers are competent, they are willing to demonstrate vulnerability necessary to establish trust (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Romero, 2015).

When children enter school, they form attachments with their teachers. These relationships have various characteristics that may influence the behaviors and performance of students in regard to discipline and academics. The relationships students form also affect their cognitive development. In the school setting, various attitudes are influenced by student-teacher relationships. For example, student-teacher trust relationships can impact whether or not students feel that school is important and whether or not it is a place in which they belong. They can also influence how willing students are to accept the support offered to help them become successful academically (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013).

Another influential factor of positive student-teacher relationships that affects student performance is student perceptions of whether or not teachers care about them. Caring is a moral obligation in which a caring individual takes responsibility for the protection of the interests of the individual he or she cares for despite his or her own feelings and needs (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). This act of caring has been called pedagogical caring. This asserts that students who believe that their teachers care about them in school also believe that their teachers are concerned about them as a person outside of school, are friendly, and are able to openly communicate with them (Wentzel, 1997, as cited in Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). In a study on academic resilience, researchers provided support for the belief that students perform well academically if they receive support from their teachers, and support from teachers results in student-teacher trust. The existence of a single teacher to whom a student feels more attached than he or she may feel with others can positively impact academic outcomes and student behaviors (Omer & Hatice

Çiğdem, 2016). Therefore, students can achieve academically if there is teacher support, if the importance given to education is increased, and if the students feel loved.

Impacts on Student Behavior

Fostering a sense of connectedness and trust among students is significant in achieving the goal of education. This goal is to transform students by providing them with knowledge, skills, behaviors, and diverse ways of thinking. This transformation is dependent upon student trust and willingness to take risks (Mitchell and Spady, 1983, as cited in Romero, 2015). In addition, in an environment in which students trust and feel a sense of connectedness with the adults with whom they interact, students are more likely to risk being vulnerable by asking questions to clarify learning and to engage in help-seeking behaviors that are significant to academic success. Trusting students are more likely to adopt teacher and institutional goals in terms of behavior and achievement. They are also more likely to comply with teacher requests and less likely to display defiance and other negative behaviors. This diminishes the need to implement strategies for compliance (Romero, 2015).

Overall, according to Cash, Debnam, Waasdorp, Wahl, and Bradshaw (2018), a feeling of connectedness among students results in fewer negative student behaviors. When adults are actively connecting with students, behavioral change is positively affected. Students who trust the adults with whom they interact have fewer behavioral incidents, which suggests that trust functions through behavior. This is true regardless of SES, school size, or prior achievement (Romero, 2015).

[I]n an environment in which students perceive their teachers as benevolent, caring, interested in their well-being, as competent, by providing lessons that are interesting and challenging, and setting high expectations for student success; and as demonstrating

integrity, fairly and even handedly enforcing school rules, problems of behavior and classroom management can be expected to diminish, and in turn lead to improved academic outcomes (Romero, 2015, p. 227).

Because using teachers as mentors improves the relationships that mentees have with all of their teachers, Romero recommended that professional development be used to help faculty and staff to understand the importance of relationships and the ways in which trust impacts student behavior and learning, as well as to provide guidance in establishing and maintaining these relationships (Romero, 2015). The advocacy and encouragement of teachers as mentors will forge connections that prevent social disincentives and feelings of hopelessness, while keeping students engaged in school (DeSocio et al. 2007). As a result of the benefits of fostering a sense of connectedness, not only will students improve behaviorally, cognitively, and academically, they will develop a sense of trust for those who teach them.

Leadership

Effective leadership is an important factor for student achievement and school performance (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). In fact, effective leadership is one of the most important aspects of creating a successful learning environment and positioning the school for continuous improvement (Kilinç, 2014). An effective educational leader should protect time for his or her staff to address core curriculum components in order to achieve students' gains (Dishman-Horst & Martin, 2007). Thus, effective educational leadership is key to a positive school climate.

Educational Leadership and Relationships

Successful educational leaders recognize the importance of clear, effective communications and communicating expectations to their followers. Successful principals were

found to have implemented school-wide behavior programs that identified expected behavior and helped students and staff to develop and use similar language (Brown, 2016). In order to reach the vulnerable, most at risk, and hard to reach students, effective educational organizations and environments were found to have developed and utilized multiple support systems for students with varying needs (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009).

To help identify the varying needs of each individual student, effective school leaders utilize empathy to build and maintain relationships. Educational leaders should develop and utilize a variety of leadership practices to develop formal and informal relationships with multiple community resources (Masumoto and Brown-Welty, 2009). As identified earlier, it is critical for school leaders to protect time in which their followers may build and implement a mentoring program; school leaders should also allow for an adequate time period for a mentoring program to have an impact on its participants.

Connecting the Dots

Although it may not be immediately apparent, there are direct connections between a student's connectedness to his or her school, his or her relationship to a mentor, and a student's success. Support for these linkages can be found in the previously discussed conceptual framework. Bandura's (1971) social learning theory and the ecological theory proposed by a number of researchers (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Little et al., 2006) are tied together in Finn's (1989) school membership theory.

Finn (1989) supported the idea that the establishment of strong relationships between students and adults, whether in school or outside of school, impacts students' feelings of connectedness toward the school as well as increases positive behavior and student engagement. This means that students who are supported by mentors and with whom their mentors

successfully develop relationships should be more likely to display prosocial behaviors. Furthermore, students who identify with school feel that they belong within the school community and that school plays an important role in their lives. Because these students value school and school-related goals, they are less likely to display behavior that their teachers may consider negative and are therefore also less likely become objects of discipline by teachers and administrators. The support of school leaders is crucial for effecting this change in paradigms. Additional support for the transitive effects of a student having a mentor are found in research published by Little et al. (2006) in which they posited that the positive support of an individual in any area will have a positive impact on all outcomes for that person. In the next chapter we describe the methodology used to collect data about relationships, trust, and experiences in the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School.

Chapter 3

Methodology

We originally proposed to approach this study using a mixed methods research design in which we would be examining the impact of a one-to-one community mentoring program on the number of student absences and discipline referrals of middle school students. We planned to use a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017) which would have involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, but separately, and the merging of analysis. We felt that this design would allow us to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem. Quantitative data would have helped to determine the impact of the mentoring program by comparing the number of absences and suspensions both prior to and after program implementation. The qualitative data would have given a more in-depth explanation of the impact of the program through the experiences of both mentors and mentees. Both would have been useful results, and their contribution would add up to not only more data, but also a more complete understanding than what would have been provided by either data set alone (Creswell, 2015, p. 36).

Due to competing initiatives within the school, our study transformed into one that was significantly different from what was initially proposed. Despite efforts to canvas the community and contact numerous community organizations, we were unable to recruit enough community volunteers to serve as mentors in the program. We were able to find two members of the community who were willing to dedicate their time and efforts to this endeavor, however getting the appropriate background checks completed by the district was a challenge. Thus, instead of examining a community-based mentoring program we had to shift our focus to examining the impact of a school-based mentoring program, with teachers serving as mentors. This was the first

of many changes. In an effort to respect the time of teachers and reduce the possibility of teacher burnout the principal decided to pair each mentee with two teacher mentors. This change in the structure of the program meant that we would no longer be examining a one-to-one mentoring program but instead a two-to-one approach. The program was originally set to begin in early September of the 2018-2019 school year. However, due to several new initiatives within the school and other time-consuming demands of the principal that took priority the program's first meeting was not held until late November. Finally, once we received the quantitative data for the mentees and began data analysis we only had a complete set of data for two of the five mentored students. This was not enough data to run a thorough and valid quantitative analysis. As a group, we decided to no longer approach this study using a mixed methods design, but to instead use a fully qualitative research design in which we examined the implementation of the emerging mentoring program at Summerville Middle School and sought possible improvements and suggestions for the future.

Research Design

We chose to approach this study using a qualitative case-study analysis (Patton, 2015) research design. This type of research design allowed us to use qualitative data collection techniques to complete an examination of the mentoring program implementation at one particular school. A case-study analysis was applicable to this study as we were looking at how the program was implemented and what could be improved going forward in a specific context, Summerville Middle School. While findings may not be generalizable to other middle schools in the district, there are insights to be gained from this one school's emerging program implementation that could possibly be applied in other contexts. Additionally, findings that confirmed previous research may be transferable to other settings. This study was an emergent

pilot study of the program implementation, as we were studying the implementation with a small sample of mentors and mentees during the beginning stages of the mentoring program.

Context and Participants of Study

All teachers, administrators, and students were selected from Summerville Middle School, located in Summerville, Georgia, a quickly growing city in the Central Savannah River Area. At the time of this study, Summerville Middle School served approximately 1,010 students in grades six through eight. Based on statistics from the 2017-2018 school year (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2018) of these students 2% were Asian/Pacific Islander, 36% were Black, 17% Hispanic, 0% Native American/Alaskan Native, 37% White, and 7% Multiracial. Additionally, 4% were considered to have limited English proficiency, and 11.1% were students with disabilities. Approximately half of the students in the school (48%) were eligible for free or reduced-price meals (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, 2018). Summerville had a total of three administrators: one principal and two assistant principals. Additional faculty included one instructional specialist, two counselors, a school nurse, and 87 teachers and paraprofessional staff. Summerville Middle School was identified as a Title I school, which meant that students and parents had access to additional resources purchased through Title I funds. Summerville was also a STEM academy, offering programs specifically for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Five students participated in this study as mentees. All of them were also enrolled in the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st Century) after-school program. At the time of this writing, the 21st Century program at Summerville Middle served 54 sixth through eighth grade students. The 21st Century program's staff included eight teachers, one data clerk, and one parent liaison. Most of the adults involved in the 21st Century program were teachers at the middle

school concurrent with the program. All of the adults were teachers in the district. At the time of this study, the program was taking place at two high schools and two middle schools in the county. Schools were required to maintain at least 75% attendance in their 21st Century Community Learning Centers to continue to receive funding for the after-school program. On Mondays and Wednesdays, students received one hour of math instruction. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, students received one hour of instruction in English Language Arts. Two teachers provided reinforcement of basic skills in addition to instruction tailored to meet the specific needs of students. The teacher to student ratio for reading and math was 1:10. Enrichment activities included cooking, STEM, and athletics. There were also plans to add gardening and art as enrichment activities in the future. The teacher to student ratio for enrichment classes was 1:15.

The emerging mentoring program at Summerville Middle School was an extension of the school's 21st Century program. The principal felt that the program provided an easily accessible pool of students who would already be present afterschool. Meetings were held from 2:45 to 3:10 on Tuesdays or Thursdays. This time was selected because it was a time at which teachers would still be in the building and was concurrent with the 21st Century program. Mentor and mentee meetings took place twice a month in the school's library. The first session was held on November 27, 2018. Each mentee was paired with two adult mentors who would meet with them throughout the school year. There were no specific criteria used when pairing mentors and mentees. The principal used his prior knowledge and judgement to pair each student with mentors that he felt would be a good fit based on interests and student needs. No students were paired with teachers who taught them concurrent with the mentoring program.

Students were chosen to participate in the mentoring program based on their availability and the ease with which the principal was able to access them. Mentees were selected from eighth-grade students who participated in the 21st Century program. The mentees (students) were selected for the mentoring program based on specific criteria. According to the principal, students were first selected for program participation based on free and reduced lunch status. If there were slots remaining, then additional students were selected based on academic or social need. A total of five students were involved in this study as mentees. Ten teachers were involved as mentors. An email was sent out to all of the teachers at the middle school asking for mentors. Of those, 13 teachers volunteered to serve as a mentor in the program. Ultimately, ten teachers ended up participating in this pilot study.

Two administrators, the school's principal and the instructional specialist, who played active roles in the implementation of the mentoring program served as study participants as well. Although they were not mentors, we felt their perceptions of the program would be valuable as they both had a part in the program implementation and the literature indicated that administrative support is a contributing factor to a successful mentoring program. Additionally, as outside local experts, two military personnel from a nearby military base who had prior experience with mentoring programs in this district were also interviewed. The district already had a relationship with the local military base because a nearby high school had utilized members of the military as mentors for high school students. We felt that the military base would be an ideal location to begin recruiting community mentors for the middle school program. Although the focus of our study shifted to no longer include community mentors, we still believed it would be beneficial to include two military affiliates as their experience with the high school mentoring program added relevant data to our study as external, local experts. The

experiences shared by these participants regarding program implementation at the high school provided useful data on how to improve the program at Summerville Middle School going forward.

Five eighth graders participated in the study as mentees. Three of the students were boys and two were girls. The three boys were all African American. Of the two girls, one was White, and the other was African American. Four of the students were 13 years of age and one student was 14 years of age.

A total of 10 teachers participated in the study as mentors in the program. The mentors represented a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Of the 10 mentors, seven of them identified as White while the remaining three identified as African American or Black. Three of the mentors were men and seven were women. Three of the teachers were between the ages of 20-30, two were between the ages of 31-40, three were between the ages 41-50, and two were over the age of 50. The mentors ranged in teaching experience from first-year teachers to those who had been teaching for over 20 years. Two administrators participated in the study: the school's principal, who was an African American man and the instructional specialist, who was a White woman. Lastly, two military personnel with mentor program experience participated in the study as well. The first was a 30-year-old White female lieutenant. This participant had a great deal of experience working with Summerville High School, the school that would be attended the following year by the eighth graders in our study, providing soldiers as mentors for students there. She met with the principal of Summerville Middle School to discuss the possibility of implementing something similar at the middle school level. Captain Scott, a 29-year-old White man with over four years of mentoring experience, was also interviewed.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative data were collected through a combination of interviews, observations, and a focus group. Interviews were conducted with mentors, school administrators, and military personnel who had mentor program experience. We used three different semi-structured interview protocols designed specifically for each group of participants. The interview protocols included a series of questions pertaining to each individual's thoughts about the mentoring program currently, as well as suggestions for improvement. All interviews began with an opening question in order to get to know participants and then included 10-20 additional questions. The interviews lasted 12-30 minutes, depending upon the length of participant responses. A pilot interview was conducted to determine areas of weakness within the protocols, and adjustments were made prior to participant administration. The finalized protocols were administered to all participants. Interviews were conducted either in person at Summerville Middle School or over the phone during times that were convenient for participants. All participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of the interviews and were not offered any type of incentive for participation. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were also given the opportunity to review interview transcriptions for accuracy. All recordings were deleted following transcription.

Data were also collected using observational field notes. We observed the 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program at the school a total of two times. We also conducted three observations of mentor and mentee pairs during meetings together. Originally, we had planned to conduct an observation early on in the program and another observation toward the end of the semester. The purpose of conducting two observations in this manner was to compare relationship and interactions over the course of the program. However, mentoring

sessions did not begin until late November. With this time constraint, we were limited by the length of time that mentors and mentees had actually spent with each other. Although we were not able to collect data in the proposed time frame, we were able to observe the relationships that were beginning to form and the interactions that took place during the first few meetings between mentors and mentees. Additionally, due to the program's late start we felt that it was beneficial to observe the 21st Century program because all mentees were selected from this group of students. Observations lasted 15-30 minutes each and at least two members of the dissertation team were present each time to observe. Observational field notes were recorded by each observer. All observations were conducted based on time and availability. We observed whoever was present during our visit.

A focus group of mentored students was also conducted to determine student perceptions of the program as well as ways in which the program could be improved for future students. We felt that students would be able to give us valuable information regarding the program, as they were the ones who were actively involved as mentees. Four out of the five students who were selected to be mentored were present for the focus group. The remaining student was interviewed individually. Prior to student focus group or interview participation, both verbal and written parental consent was obtained. We used a semi-structured focus group protocol consisting of eight questions pertaining to experiences in and thoughts about the mentoring program to help with focus group facilitation. The focus group took place in the school's library and lasted approximately 20 minutes. Participant responses were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The audio recording was deleted following transcription. Member checking was used to ensure validity and accuracy of all participant responses.

Data Analysis Methods

Thematic content analysis was used to determine if there were any commonalities among participant responses. Predetermined themes included goals of mentoring, relationships, perceptions of mentoring, mentoring experiences, challenges to implementation, and improvement and sustainability. These themes were then broken into sub-themes as a result of additional commonalities within each theme. Additional themes developed based on participant responses to interviews questions, observations of mentoring interactions, and responses during a focus group. They were mentoring experiences, challenges to implementation, and sustainability. These themes were then broken into subthemes.

Transcripts from interviews and the focus group as well as observational field notes were read multiple times. Similar quotes were color coded, grouped together, and assigned themes. We coded for themes that emerged using several coding strategies including descriptive coding, in vivo coding, and process coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Descriptive coding was used to assign labels to passages of data that summarized specific topics. In vivo coding was used, using words from the participants' own language as codes. Process coding was used to note specific actions within the data. Additionally, we coded using some predetermined themes guided by our research questions. In the following chapter we discuss the findings within each of the major themes.

Chapter 4

Findings

The combination of interview, observation, and focus group data revealed a vast amount of information regarding program implementation at Summerville Middle School. There were several ideas that appeared across all three methods of data collection. Through the processes of content analysis and coding, collectively, five major themes emerged pertaining to factors that play a vital role in the successful implementation of a mentoring program. These were: goals, perceptions, relationships, experiences, and challenges to implementation.

Goals

The participants had goals, reasons, and desired outcomes for the mentoring program that were unique to each individual. Based on the interviews, observations, and focus group conducted for this study various goals were revealed. Among them were the goals of the principal, the mentors, and the mentees. We discovered that the mentors had goals for themselves as mentors including goals they intended to help their mentees achieve, as well as personal goals.

Goals of the Principal

The principal of Summerville Middle School, Mr. Gregg, believed that selecting students from the 21st Century program allowed him to identify and assign mentors to students that needed additional academic and social support. He stated, “We feel like we have a very good vehicle in our after-school program to kind of target certain kids who need that support....” His goal was to implement a two-to-one mentoring program, assigning two mentors to one student to provide students with more than one advocate for their overall success. In addition, he believed that “mentoring is not just for the mentee.” Although he did not mention in what way, he hoped

that the mentors involved would benefit from the program as well. He wanted to make sure that sufficient time for students to meet with their mentors was provided to ensure that students benefit from their meetings. In regard to the effects of the mentoring program, he mentioned that he wanted students “to feel good when they leave” Summerville Middle School, and wanted to achieve “a downward trend in [problem] behavior as well.” Mr. Gregg hoped that the mentoring program would not only assist students academically and socially; but that program participation will help decrease negative behaviors as well.

As a long-term goal, the principal wanted a self-sustaining and growing mentoring program. To that end, he built a team to facilitate implementation of the mentoring program, as well as to manage its structure in the future. Mr. Gregg planned to make parents aware of the program each spring to increase student involvement in the program and to help bridge the gap between the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School and the mentoring program at Summerville High School. Building a team, in conjunction with parental outreach and involvement, increases the likelihood of the sustainability of the mentoring program (Karcher, 2008, as cited in Smith & Stormont, 2011).

Mentor Self-Goals

The teachers set goals for themselves as mentors. They described whom they wanted to be as a mentor and defined the roles they would play in the lives of their mentees. The commonality among all of the mentors was that they wanted to make a positive impact on their mentees and develop positive relationships with them. This included being someone to whom students can come in times of need or when facing challenges, helping them succeed academically, and helping them with life skills, such as problem solving. For example, Ms. Hill stated that she wanted to be, “Somebody that they [students] can come to if they are having

issues with things, to celebrate positive things, or to, you know, figure out how we can fix things.” Ms. Johnson stated, “I just want to be that adult that-hey, I’m having a bad day-maybe I should go talk, can I go talk to Ms. Johnson.” In addition to being someone students can turn to when faced with challenges, mentors discussed the desire to be advocates, encouragers, and additional outlets of student expression. In building these relationships with their mentees, the mentors were able to establish a sense of trust. These relationships showed that they have a desire to understand the mentee and act as an advocate on his or her behalf (Williams & Bryant, 2013 as cited in Lindt & Blair, 2017).

The mentors also set personal goals for themselves. Mr. Brown stated that he hopes to become a better educator as a result of being a mentor in the program, while Ms. Johnson stated she hoped to learn not to be judgmental. She mentioned, “I can tell I need to be more non-judgmental, ‘cause like I said, I, I hate to say, I judged her [her mentee]. So, I need to do better with that...” As a parent, Mr. Smith discussed that he wanted to learn things that he could say or do to help his mentee understand things and learn to use that skill to be a better father to his own children.

Mentor Goals for Mentees

At the start of the program, the principal instructed mentors to begin their mentoring session by assisting their mentees with setting academic and personal goals. According to Pryce (2012), programs that have established goals for mentors may provide the greatest benefit to mentees in middle school. One mentor stated, “I know that one thing was that they want us to set goals, help them [the mentees] set goals.” DeSocio et al. (2007) stated that one of the most significant characteristics of mentors who are effective is that they are goal oriented and focused on building a relationship with their mentee. Effective mentors make it a priority to establish a

connection of empathy and understanding (Lindt & Blair, 2017). Upon meeting their mentees, each mentor determined what they wanted to help their mentees accomplish as a result of the program. The mentors shared common goals in regard to academics; however, other goals varied based on the needs, talents, and interests of the mentee. The common goals mentors had for their mentees were to become successful academically, to develop positive relationships, and to develop life skills.

As previously mentioned, mentors had specific goals that they hoped to accomplish with their mentees; many of these were academic or education related. Ms. Hill stated that she plans to “find what she’s [the mentee] struggling with and seeing what we can do to make it better. Her academic goal was to get her social studies grade up.” In addition, she planned to teach her mentee study skills. She continued, “So hopefully being able to study a little along, instead of all at the same time, she’ll be able to comprehend better.” The mentors planned to assist their mentees in developing skills that would help improve their academics overall instead of simply assisting them with specific assignments.

Another common goal among mentors was to develop positive relationships with their mentees. All mentors expressed a desire to be the adult that their mentee to whom their mentee came when he or she was having issues or facing challenges outside of academics. This positive relationship was based on a sense of trust. This was reflected in Mr. Smith’s statement, “I want to get him [his mentee] to trust another adult who has his best interest at heart. I think that’s my main role, to give him another outlet to express himself.” Ms. Hill stated she wants to “have them to be able to put their trust in an adult that can help them grow and mature.” The mentor’s desire to develop positive relationships with their mentee showed that they correlated positive relationships and developing a sense of trust with effective mentoring.

In addition to improving academic performance and developing positive relationships, the mentors wanted to assist their mentees in the development of life skills. These skills are those that will help them function effectively outside of the academic environment. Expressing the importance of life skills, Ms. Strawbridge stated, “A.J. needs life skills, to learn how to function in society. He needs to learn how to hold down a job. He needs to be able to talk to people in positions of authority, correctly, respectfully.” Another mentor, Ms. Washington, stated she wants her mentee “to feel confident enough in himself in going to where he wants to be in life.” Other life skills were to not be afraid of failure and to make the right choices. Last, Ms. Martin wanted her mentee to be more active in her learning so that she would become her own self-advocate in education. She believed that self-advocacy would produce empowerment in her mentee’s life. The goals established for individual mentees were goals that their mentors felt would help them become more confident and productive outside of the classroom.

Next, the mentors set diverse goals for their mentees based on individual needs. After meeting with their mentees, each mentor came up with individual goals for their mentees. For example, Ms. Sawyer discussed how she planned to help her mentee enter a piece of art in the county art show. She stated, “One of her personal goals was to learn how to draw more realistically. We did actually yesterday talk about her working on something to go in the county art show.” Ms. Sawyer set up a team drive in Google for her mentee, Faith, to upload artwork. She would then be able to critique the work and provide Faith with feedback. In addition, Faith’s goal was to make all As. She failed to do so previously because of a number of missing assignments. To make sure Faith turned in her assignments, Ms. Sawyer showed her how to use her school agenda to write down assignments and instructed her to start carrying it with her to all of her classes.

Ms. Strawbridge had a previous relationship with her mentee, AJ. She assisted him with homework and talked to him about his negative behaviors. “He’d come in here, work on the computers, and, umm, we’d talk a lot because he was very, what’s the word, um he could be very defiant at times.” She learned that his defiance was a result of his home environment and that he had been diagnosed with a learning disability. Therefore, her goal for A.J. was to make sure he is capable of functioning in society. She stated, “He needs to learn how to hold down a job. He needs to be able to talk to people in positions of authority, correctly, respectfully.” She continued, “My plan was to find out what he likes to do so if I need to reward him, I know what I can reward him with, which I have now.”

Ms. Hill based her goal for her mentee on the goal that her mentee set for herself. She stated that she would, “find what she’s struggling with” and “what we can do to make it better.” To complement this goal, her mentee, Joy, had already set a goal of improving her social studies grade. The two met and looked at Joy’s assigned tasks and from there, Ms. Hill began to show Joy skills to help her study. Ms. Hill mentioned, “Hopefully being able to study a little along, instead of all at the same time, she’ll be able to comprehend it better.”

Each mentor developed diverse goals for their mentees. These goals were not only based on academic needs; they were influenced by various factors, including behavior and life outside of school. Getting to know their mentees by sharing personal information and being authentic helped the mentors to build a sense of trust among their mentees. This familiarity also intensified the emotional closeness between each mentor and his or her mentee (Dappen & Iserhagen, 2005, as cited in Lindt & Blair, 2017).

Mentee Goals

In addition to the administrative goals of the two-to-one mentoring program, and the goals set by mentors, the mentees participating in the program each had his or her own goals. Although teachers focused on academics and life skills, those were not the goals emphasized by the mentees. They each expressed the desire to engage in activities with their mentors outside of academics. According to Mervin (2002, as cited in Lindt & Blair, 2017), mentees need support and acknowledgement that reach far beyond academic development. They need someone who is a part of their lives on a consistent basis to let them know that they are interested in more than just grades and test performance. Mentors must establish a connection with mentees on the human level, to comprehend what it would be like to walk in their shoes. During a focus group consisting of four of the mentees, each mentee discussed goals outside of academics that they wished to accomplish with their mentors.

Joy spent time engaged in computer coding. She stated, "I would like to bring my computer to school and show 'em what kinds of codes I can do and stuff like that." When she graduates, she wants to go into the Army. Faith wanted to make all A's, to learn new things, and to display qualities of a leader. Art was one of her favorite subjects. She also stated, "I like learning new things all the time. So maybe she could like teach me new techniques and stuff like that." She went on to state, "I feel like...kids feel like, oh yeah I'm going to become a leader, so I need to set an example." She explained how she helped a friend overcome being bullied. Mark wanted to play sports with his mentor. Dennis also asked his mentor questions about his mentor's childhood and learned that she spoke Italian and wanted to become a translator when she grew up. Her goal of becoming a translator led her to teaching instead. Dennis stated he wanted her to teach him Italian. Last, Damien wanted to try hobbies that his mentors are interested in or to

simply play sports with them. If the mentors addressed the needs of the mentee outside of academics, they became more effective at getting to know their mentee and could even fill relational voids that exist in many students' lives (Mervin, 2002, as cited in Lindt & Blair, 2017).

Perceptions of Effective Mentoring

Based on the interviews, we determined that the perceptions of effective mentoring differed. For purposes of this study, these perceptions are defined as the way the mentor understood and interpreted effective mentoring. The identified perceptions of the participants were broken into administrative perceptions of mentoring, mentor perceptions of mentoring, and mentee perceptions of mentoring. Mentor perceptions of mentoring were then broken into 5 sub-themes. They are perceptions about what constitutes effective mentoring, perceptions about mentoring effects, perceptions of self as a mentor, perceptions about the mentee, and perceptions of mentee needs. Some of these perceptions could have been biases about students, while other perceptions developed based on interactions with mentees.

Administrative Perceptions

As principal of Summerville Middle School, Mr. Gregg believed that implementing a mentoring program would aid students with academics, social relationships, and behaviors. He explained mentoring as providing mentees with an adult who will support them, advocate for them, and assist them in obtaining the right resources to address any needs and concerns that they may have. When asked about the purpose of his mentoring program, he stated,

I think that kids need, they need an adult that's not necessarily their parent or even their principal, in most cases, or even their own teacher. It needs to be someone that's not judging them in any way, someone that's just support and, so when they have that, an advocate for them, I think that the kids are able to articulate better what their needs are.

He believed that students at the high school level have an understanding of how to articulate what their needs are. This skill is important to develop at the middle school level as well. The mentoring program provided mentees with adults who could listen to their concerns and help them to articulate their needs prior to their high school years. This provision ensured that mentees obtained resources relevant to their needs early on. These relationships among mentors and mentees, along with establishing autonomy and connectedness for the mentee, should be beneficial to mentees during adolescence (Larose et al., 2010).

In addition, Mr. Gregg perceived effective mentoring programs as those that are organic, or that develop naturally, and have elements that are harmonious. He stated, “For anything that’s going to be successful, the relationship has to be organic. Because, I mean, you can have the vision, but, so if you don’t have the vision and the time it doesn’t go over as well.” Mr. Gregg believed that effective relationships had to be established naturally, with minimal interference from outside entities. In his opinion, there was no specific formula or script to be followed for relationship building, but instead a combination of elements working in tandem to achieve positive relationships. These harmonious elements includes genuine conversations, care and concern, and trust between mentor and mentee.

Mentor Perceptions of Effective Mentoring

As mentoring programs have become more prominent in schools, each potential mentor may develop their own idea of what is effective mentoring. Although there are research-based qualities of a mentoring program that indicate future success, mentor participants in the Summerville Middle School mentoring program had their own perceptions about what makes mentoring effective both prior to the start of the mentoring program and when initially paired

with their mentees. Various perceptions about the overall characteristics of an effective mentoring program were discussed by mentors.

In order to be effective, a mentoring program must have a plan, must be written, must be organized, and must be guided by the principal. According to Pryce (2012), these types of planned and goal-oriented programs provide the greatest benefit to mentees at the middle school level. Ms. Strawbridge believed an effective mentoring program should be written and have direction. She stated,

For the first few sessions there needs to be some sort of formula to be followed to get to know children in a way that the outcome is clear for that session. After that, there needs to be a plan, you know, even if it's an individual plan for individual students.

When asked how the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School could evolve into the ideal mentoring program, she continued,

Depends upon who's in charge of it you know. If we have somebody who has a plan [in charge of the program] and where it's supposed to go [it will be effective] but if it's just a haphazard meeting, meet with the kids, see what they want, you know, then it's not, nothing will work without a plan and without goals.

Next, the mentors perceived effective mentoring to be a result of pairing an open-minded mentor with the right person. Ms. Johnson stated that to implement the ideal mentoring program, "I would need teachers who are going to be open minded, not you know, judgmental or who have this one opinion of a kid." When asked about how mentors were chosen for Summerville's program, Ms. Strawbridge stated, "All of them have the ability to talk to children. They can get them to see the side that they should be on..." In addition, she said, "They can make kids understand that and [Mr. Gregg] has chosen the best teachers in our school." Although Mr.

Gregg may have chosen the best teachers in the school both Ms. Johnson and Ms. Washington shared the belief that mentors must be paired with the right child. Ms. Johnson stated, “I think they need to be case by case scenario,” suggesting that Ms. Johnson believed that a good mentor might not be effective if not paired with a good match in their mentee. Mr. Brown stated that the mentees’ strengths should be determined and from there - “just try to pair them with teachers that [...] work well with students.” Again, Mr. Brown suggested that an appropriate match between the mentor and mentee might influence the effectiveness of the sessions.

Next, each of the mentors agreed that large amounts of time did not need to be spent with their mentee for mentoring to be successful. Ms. Merriwell stated, “People get the wrong interpretation of mentoring. Nobody said you had to be 24/7 with these kids. Nobody said that you have to, constantly.” Summerville’s mentoring program allowed each mentee to meet with each of their mentors once a month for 30 minutes. In response to a question about the meeting times, Ms. Sawyer stated, “Because we’re doing two mentors. I think for [the mentee] it's probably enough for her to meet twice a month.” The amount of time allotted for mentors to meet with mentees did not appear to be an issue among other mentors either. This may be attributed to the fact that mentors would encounter their mentees at other times during the school day, in addition to the fact that mentors hoped their mentees would come to them when they need assistance outside of meeting dates. Meeting one to two times a week may help develop a positive rapport between mentors and mentees (Johnson & Lamply, 2010). In addition, having set meeting times will add to effectiveness (DeSocio et al., 2007).

When asked if training was necessary for a mentor to be effective, the mentors stated that they felt that training was not always necessary. This may have been because some of them had prior mentoring experience or because they were teachers and already had experience working

with students. Clear direction and understanding of mentoring procedures are crucial to mentor effectiveness (Ahrens et al., 2010). Other literature also suggested that mentors in teaching roles may be effective because their positions already allowed them to connect with students (Lejonberg & Christophersen, 2015).

Ms. Merriwell expressed her belief that training was not necessary to be an effective mentor by stating, “In my personal opinion, hands on and being thrown in the water, sink or swim, is the best tool for this type of situation because all kids aren’t the same.” She felt that training did not prepare you to deal with the diversity encountered among mentees. Ms. Sawyer agreed that training was not necessary because going through training “would have kind of taken away from the authenticity” of the mentoring process. Mr. Jones believed that, because all of the mentors were teachers, there was already an existing system directing their work with students. Although the mentors agreed that mentor training was not always necessary, one mentor stated that he would have benefitted from material that outlined the activities he should engage in with his mentee. Mr. Smith stated, “I’m not gonna lie to you. I was hoping that they would give us that sort of information.” Although the mentors felt that they did not necessarily need training to be effective mentors, they believed that they could benefit from more clearly defined expectations and more direction in regard to the activities in which they should engage their mentees.

According to Van Ryzin (2010), successful mentors possess warmth and are responsive to inferred mentee needs. The mentors at Summerville Middle School believed that they knew what their mentees needed as part of the school’s mentoring program. Mentors stated that the mentees needed someone they can talk to, someone they can trust, someone to encourage them and teach them life skills, and someone who is a positive role model. Ms. Hill stated, “I think that sometimes they just need an extra set of ears, somebody who doesn’t necessarily see them

every day... somebody that they can go talk to about stuff. I just kind of took what I thought she needed and rolled with it.” Lindt and Blair (2017) described this type of response as liquidity in mentoring, a situation in which the mentor flexibly and appropriately responds to the current of the relationship.

Mentor Perceptions of Mentoring Effects

The next perceptions were about the effects of mentoring. The participating mentors believed that effective mentoring programs could not only improve the academic performance of students, they could also decrease negative behaviors among students. Additionally, mentors believed mentoring should help students develop life skills. Ms. Merriwell stated, “If we had more of those [mentoring programs], stuff like Columbine may not have happened.” Mr. Jones felt that effective mentoring teaches leadership skills. He stated, “Mentorship and leadership, I think they go hand in hand.” According to research conducted by Lindt and Blair (2017) that followed the implementation of a three-year mentoring program, as mentees developed ownership and interest in their education, academic performance improved and truancy decreased. This supports Mr. Gregg, from this current study, and his beliefs that a strong mentoring program will have positive influence upon his students’ attendance rate and their prosocial behaviors in school.

Mentor Perceptions of Self as a Mentor

During the mentor interviews, the mentors perceived themselves as individuals who were beneficial to the mentoring program. They mentioned the personal qualities they believed they possessed that made them ideal mentors. The one common quality they mentioned as being beneficial was their role as an adult that their mentees can talk to about the challenges they face. Ms. Strawbridge stated, “They come and talk to me all the time about things that go on in their

lives. So, I'm pretty good with the whole mentoring thing." Ms. Washington considered herself a supporter, and Mr. Brown considered himself a big brother. Like Strawbridge and Washington, he also felt he was a good listener. He mentioned, "Teachers have a hard time just listening, so I just take the time out to listen." In addition, he equated teaching with being a mentor all day. Therefore, he was experienced as a mentor. Last, Mr. Jones stated that he understood that the mentees needed another adult that they can talk to other than their parent or teacher. He believed he would be that outlet of expression for his mentee.

Mentor Biases and Perceptions about Mentees

Prior to developing a relationship with their mentees, the mentors held biased beliefs about the students. With little to no interaction with their mentees prior to the initial mentoring session, mentors verbalized judgments and assumptions they had already made about their mentees. The mentors had not met the students they were assigned to as mentors or had only met with them once; however, they believed that the students were in the mentoring program because they were facing some type of challenge.

Ms. Cleaver admitted that she thought she would be paired with a student who was a major behavior problem. She went on to discuss how her mentee was not what she pictured. After one meeting with her mentee, she characterized her mentee as being very innocent, not accepted by a lot of people, and from a difficult home environment. Ms. Merriwell described her mentee as an introvert after one fifteen-minute discussion. Mr. Jones described his mentee as shy, reserved, and careful when he speaks. In addition, he stated, "He knows what he likes. He knows what he doesn't like. I think he's very careful when he talks that is my first impression. He seems like a very nice polite young man." This suggested that mentors entered the program

with preconceived notions that did not necessarily align with their actual experiences with their mentees.

Student Perceptions about Mentors

In addition to mentors having perceptions regarding effective mentoring programs, the mentees at Summerville Middle School also had their own perceptions of mentoring. Through a focus group with the mentees, we learned that mentoring was something the mentees felt was positive and enjoyable. Their perceptions were based on prior involvement in mentoring programs. In regard to a previous mentoring experience, Joy stated, “I did look forward to it. I always like mentoring. I always like when people mentor me. They would pull me out of class and talk to me and things like that.” That mentors showed an interest in the mentees and talked to them was a commonality of the mentees’ perceptions regarding what made mentoring enjoyable for them. The mentees enjoyed having an adult who showed a genuine interest in them individually and appreciated that positive relationships had been established. These positive relationships could possibly result in improved educational achievement; motivation; cognitive, emotional, and social development; prosocial behavior; and improved self-esteem (Tschannen-Moran et al. 2013).

In reference to the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School, Mark stated that he liked the fact that someone else was talking instead of him. He said, “I can be doing the listening to what they're trying to say and connecting what I've got in common with them and what they like and what I like.” He continued by mentioning the mentors that he was assigned and that he learned what they were like outside of school from talking to them. “Both of my mentors, they are the same. They have a lot of stuff in common. [...] Both wanted to learn how to

play Fortnite (video game).” In addition to appreciating the fact that his mentors took an interest in him, he was receptive to learning about his mentors outside of their teaching roles.

Because of their positive perceptions about mentoring, the mentees also stated that they would recommend mentoring to other students. Joy would recommend mentoring to others, “Because it's fun to do and you can get to talk about what you like and ...and they give you options. They try and help you out with your school.” Faith would recommend mentoring to others because mentoring helps students develop leadership qualities. She stated, [...] like, hey you have your mentor, you're going to be a leader... you can help students out because, like, I feel like with it... like kids feel like... oh yeah I'm going to become a leader, so I need to set an example.

Mark mentioned that other kids want to discuss things that they like and learn about what other people like, so he would recommend that they participate in the mentoring program.

Another observation made during the focus group was that mentoring had the ability to change a mentee’s perceptions and impressions of their mentors. Faith stated, “I know with teachers some students don't really like them but then like getting to know them better might like help you like understand where they're coming from...yeah, you might not like them at first but then after you talk to them more.... than like once a month.... you'll get to know them better and maybe you'll start liking them.”

Summary of the Perceptions

Through the data obtained from the interviews of the mentors and the focus group with the mentees, the perception that was most recurrent in participant responses focused on the relationships developed between mentors and mentees. The commonality among these perceptions, for both the mentors and the mentees, was the belief that having a nurturing adult

who showed genuine concern with students' academic progress and social interactions was a significant aspect of effective mentoring. In addition, the belief that having someone to talk to about issues or challenges is important in building a positive relationship among mentors and mentees. The mentors each had the desire to be supportive and to listen to students' issues as a result of their perceptions. In addition, the mentees enjoyed mentoring because the mentoring program provided them with a supportive adult whom they could talk to, who wanted to get to know them individually, and who shared information about himself or herself. Though various perceptions of effective mentoring emerged, the participants' perceived the building of positive relationships to be the most important.

Relationships

There are many benefits associated with positive relationship development. Positive relationships with teachers and other school personnel help improve adolescents' educational achievement; motivation; cognitive, emotional, and social development; prosocial behavior; and self-esteem (Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Relationships were frequently illuminated during interviews, observations, and the focus group. There were various types of relationships that were referenced by participants. Through analysis of participant responses, we found that relationships between the mentor and mentee (teacher and student), relationships between mentors (teacher and teacher), and relationships between mentors (teachers) and administration were most frequently mentioned.

Mentor-Mentee Relationships

Relationships between a mentor and mentee are a key factor in the success of a mentoring program. Adolescents benefit the most from mentoring programs that place a strong focus on building meaningful relationships between mentor and mentee (Larose, Cyrenne, Garceau,

Brodeur, & Tarabulsy, 2010). Participants in the study expressed the importance of these mentor-mentee relationships. Many felt that children need a non-familial adult who is available to discuss problems or issues as they arise. The school's principal, Mr. Gregg stated,

I think that kids need they need an adult that's not necessarily their parent or even their principal in most cases or even their own teacher. It needs to be someone that's not judging them in any way. Some that's just support and so when they have that an advocate for them, I think that the kids are able to articulate better what their needs are especially at the middle school level.

He went on to say that, "The relationship has to be organic." The principal stressed the importance of pairing students with teachers with whom they do not have classes. He also seemed to value a natural-forming relationship, as opposed to one that was forced. Mr. Jones also commented on the importance of building the relationship with his mentee as opposed to focusing solely on academic grades and test scores. He stated, "I do care about the grades you know but it's more about the relationship that you have with the kids. It's a lot more valuable than making sure they get an A on a test." According to Merwin (2002), students need someone who is involved and interested in more than just academic performance. Students require a level of support and acknowledgement that extends beyond their academic development and needs. Mr. Jones seemed willing to provide this level of support and acknowledged the importance of building a strong relationship that is not solely focused on academic performance.

Mentors talked about the relationships that they would like to have with their mentees and the relationships that had already started to form. Mr. Smith stated, "I hope that we can develop a good relationship so that when I see him in the hallway that we will speak every morning...just a good working relationship at school." Ms. Hill stated, "I think we're gonna have

a good relationship.” Ms. Cleaver had not yet met her mentee, but talked about the type of relationship she planned to establish with her. She stated, “I know it’s a, a girl. So, I think she’ll feel comfortable um you know sharing. So something that’s you know less formal you know but that’s directed so that we have a purpose in the meeting.” Ms. Sawyer said, “I want to be someone for her that she can come and talk to.” Ms. Washington stated, “[...] I could see us both having a good relationship henceforth.” Ms. Johnson said, “I just want to be that adult that-hey, I’m having a bad day-maybe I should go talk to Ms. Johnson. Or just somebody to listen to her. Ms. Merriwell commented on the relationship that she had established with her mentee thus far: “[... it’s just a new relationship, umm I’m going to say positive because she hasn’t given me the impression that it was negative or anything. Umm, new and positive.” Trust and respect were mentioned throughout participant responses as necessary to establish a positive relationship. Mr. Brown stated, “So with my interactions with all my students, my number one thing is respect....” Mr. Jones felt that trust was also important when establishing a relationship. He stated, “In order to be a successful mentor you got to get to know who you’re mentoring. [...] you’ve got to gain the kids trust.” Ms. Strawbridge also mentioned trust. She stated, “[...] it’s a trust thing with kids. They know who they can come to.” Mentors wanted to build positive relationships with mentees that were centered around trust and respect.

In addition to the mentors’ desire to create positive relationships with their mentees, the mentees expressed their desire to not only engage in positive relationships with their mentors, but to engage in activities that went beyond engaging in meaningful conversation. They showed that they wanted to engage in some type of activity with their mentor besides simply talking to one another and that planning these activities would be more effective. Joy mentioned possibly having two mentor-mentee pairs meet together. She stated,

Wait, I don't know how to say this but how about like every now and then we could, like pair two together like.... so... like... either mentors or the kids... and so like say if me and Mark we're going to be mentored, we can do it in the same place, and we can talk about all of our interests and get to know each other more and the mentor gets to know each other more.

Mark added, "Adding on to what she was saying..... instead of just having the same two mentors... like.... however long the mentor program is.... we could like switch up the mentors every now and then and get to know other teachers and other mentors." The mentees attempted to come up with ways to make the program more enjoyable and effective; their ideas could be considered during the planning of the mentoring program for future students in an effort to make the relationships established between mentees and mentors more exciting and engaging.

Mentor-Mentor Relationships

The relationships between the mentor pairs were also mentioned throughout participant responses. Although the manner in which teachers were paired was not clear, many seemed to feel as though Mr. Gregg paired them based on his own criteria. One participant mentioned that she and her mentor partner were paired based on their differences. She stated, "Um- I'm more the tough love jokester, you know, and she's a little older, so she's-you know, more of old-school, like-set in her way type things, but she's still a good person. So..." Another mentor commented on the fact that she knew very little about her partner mentor, despite working in the same school building and observed that this might present a challenge. She said, "I know Faith (mentee) more than I know the person I'm mentoring with, so that's probably gonna be more of a challenge..." The mentor pairs did not meet with their mentee together, but having some sort of relationship and communication with one another may benefit their mentoring efforts. Only time

could tell if these mentor pairings would prove to be a wise choice or if the lack of an established relationship between the two will be detrimental to the program's success.

Mentor-Administration Relationships

Lastly, the relationships between mentors and the school's principal, Mr. Gregg, were repeatedly brought up by program participants. Fortunately, there was a good relationship between the principal, who served as the administrator for this mentoring program, and his teachers; as he has pushed them in the past to take responsibility for their work. The teachers seemed to feel that relationships were important to Mr. Gregg; this sentiment was demonstrated through his actions toward the faculty and staff at the school. The teachers admired and respected him as a leader, which led to cohesive, forward-moving action— even without his intervention. As one mentor put it, “Mr. Gregg- he knows everybody in the [school]- he can tell you why he hired you. What were some things that stood out to make him you know— bring you in to— into the school.” Another mentor spoke of his reasons for choosing to serve as a mentor in this program which exemplified the trust that the teachers at Summerville Middle School have in their principal, who selected such people to work for him in a way that they do not have to be micromanaged;

I think part of the reason I was hired is because of my military background and being a father and having that military background and mentoring ability [...]. So when it was time to start the mentoring program I was already slotted to be part of it.

When the mentoring program started, this individual stepped up and joined in, even though he was a first-year teacher, demonstrating the principal's ability to orchestrate success without direct communication. If the principal was not the individual that he was, more direct communication would have been useful to avoid situations described by the mentors as “it was

just kind of a lot of back and forth” and “not clearly defined.” Successful school leaders maintain positive relationships with their teachers and provide them with opportunities to grow and expand their abilities and knowledge (Daly, Moolenaar, Yi-hwa, Tuytens, & Fresno, 2015; Fisher & Carlyon, 2015). Mr. Gregg had already done a great job establishing relationships with the teachers and students at the school. This was a contributing factor in the successful implementation of a mentoring program.

Participant Experiences while Implementing a Mentoring Program

As we continued to analyze the interviews, observations, and focus group conducted for this study, we identified the personal experiences of the participants as a theme that was especially important to the authenticity of the program— giving voice to the participants (Malone, Rincon-Gallardo, & Kew, 2018; Taubman, 2009). Several sub themes emerged from within the theme of personal experiences including past experiences of the mentors, preparation of the mentors, mentor-mentee interactions, adult-adult interactions, and selection for participation in the mentoring program.

Past Experiences

Our identity and actions are shaped by our past experiences. Thus, that having been a mentee in the past may have been a contributing factor towards the decision of some individuals to be a mentor to others was unsurprising (Allen, 2003; Maynard-Patrick, 2016). As one mentor reported, “My advisors in college were good mentors. Um, my mom was an educator and she was good. My student teacher that I did my um semester with was really good with helping me with that.” Having received mentoring in the past may have been especially influential for this particular mentor in causing her to decide to serve as a mentor in this program, as she was the youngest of the mentors and was the only mentor who had not served as a mentor prior to this

experience. All of the other mentors in this program had served as a mentor prior to this program, most of them in official mentoring programs, and many of them in several different programs at different levels: mentoring teachers, students, and lower ranking personnel in the military. This finding agreed with prior research that showed that people who have prior mentoring experience are more likely to be mentors in current and future endeavors (Allen, 2003; Bozionelos, 2004; Morales, Grineski, & Collins, 2017; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). One mentor stated that “mentoring is always one of my things” and had previously mentored at a halfway house for delinquent youth, and at a middle school. They stated that, “teaching in general [is] mentoring all day every day.” Another mentor informed us that she had:

mentored multiple teachers. Umm I’ve mentored every science teacher in the 7th grade that has come through [in the past 20 years...] I also used to work for Appalachian Youth Services in Pennsylvania, and it was for at-risk youth. I worked with male juvenile delinquents sexual offenders and I mentored them in addition to teaching. So, I used to do one-on-one mentoring sessions with them. I also did mentoring with umm people who needed their GED and then helped get them jobs. And then mentored them on jobs if they were having problems with their work [...] I mentor lots of kids here also. They come and talk to me all the time about things that go on in their lives [...] I mentor kids at the high schools umm at Brenner High (pseudonym), Summerville High, and at Brenner Middle (pseudonym).

So, when the time came to start this particular program, she joined as a mentor with the idea that, I am here anyway, because I run the 21st Century program for the whole county for the middle schools and the high schools. So, since I’m here I might as well put some time to

good use. That is part of my job description for 21st Century is as the program manager is to help mentor the children so if you're doing a mentoring program I might as well get my feet wet there too.

These findings aligned with existing literature that suggested that past experiences, either as a mentee or as a mentor, have a strong influence on one's choice to participate in a mentoring program. Prior mentoring experiences appeared to be an important factor, but could also present obstacles to implementation, as recruiting enough experienced mentors could be a challenge.

Preparation of the Mentors

Fortunately, an individual's prior experience as a mentor impacted the likelihood of that individual serving as a mentor again, as this was likely the reason that the mentors in the current program knew what to do. As one mentor put it, "because I have been a mentor, I knew [what to do...] But if I had never done this, [...] I don't think they were as clear as they [could have been]. Put in the simpler words of six of the mentors in the program; when asked if there had been a training process prior to them meeting with their mentees, they responded "no."

Two mentors did mention a meeting that was held prior to the first mentoring session as the only training that they received. This brief meeting was described as following in the observation notes of one researcher:

The principal then proceeds to explain the purpose of the mentoring program and the goal of today's meeting. "Today you will meet with one of your mentors. I have assigned each student to two teachers so that you can each get a different voice and different perspective," the principal states. "The goal of today is simply just introductions and getting to know one another. So right now, I want each mentor mentee pair to get together at a table and discuss three things: who you are, your interests, and academic

goals. We don't have long," he looks at his watch, "maybe about 15 minutes." (Young, 11.27.2018)

Although the mentors appeared to appreciate this meeting, with one stating, "Prior to the meeting yesterday, I had no idea [of what to do]," the majority of the mentors took preparation into their own hands, generally along the lines of a checklist of things to learn about their mentee, with several mentors bringing a notebook to record key details about their mentees to inform future meetings. One mentor was fortunate enough to be friends with her paired mentor and to be scheduled for the second meeting instead of the first, so she was able to talk to the first mentor who "[gave her] a little bit of background- so that [she] didn't go in blind." Although the majority of mentors in this program did have prior experience, a lack of role clarity and mentor training tends to have a negative impact on the efficacy of the mentoring program (Lejonberg & Christophersen, 2015).

Mentor-Mentee Interactions

In terms of experiences during the mentoring program, the interactions between the mentor and the mentee are of the utmost importance (Biggs, Musewe, & Harvey, 2014; Griffin, Eury, & Gaffney, 2015; Larose et al., 2010). The primary objective of most of the mentors during their first meeting was to try to get to know their mentee, although they did so in a number of different ways. One mentor said,

[I] talked about foods [my mentee] likes. We talked about you know video games he likes. We talked about all those things, so I have a list now you know and I took notes so that way I had things that you know if I needed to reward him I have that list of rewards for him.

Another mentor had previously taught her mentee, stating that,

I had her last year but it was my first year teaching so everybody was just, it was just a lot of kids that I didn't know so um I don't remember [...]. So, I knew her enough to have a conversation but it felt smooth yesterday so it went well but yesterday was the first time that I actually talked to her, talked about what she liked to do.

An older mentor summed up his first experience with his mentee by stating the following:

right now that he's into Fortnite and so I see to build a relationship I think I'm going to go ahead and [...] create a character so that we have something to [...] talk about because [...] I feel like it's a give-and-take thing.

These efforts to develop healthy mentor-mentee relationships are crucial to the success and efficacy of a mentoring program (Heung-Ling, 2003).

Some of the mentors made an admirable effort to ensure that they were contributing in the “give-and-take thing,” even though they were outside of their comfort zone. As one mentor recounted her efforts to learn about her mentee, a student whom she had never met prior to their meeting in the mentoring program, she said, “This is more of a challenge— I’m having to pull from her- and get to know her- and so I do like that.” This particular mentor had to really stretch herself to find commonalities between herself and her mentee, which her mentee noticed and appreciated, saying, “They try to connect to you... [...]they tried to talk to me like about college [...] they tried to talk to me about what I like so they try to do that....” Despite initial uncertainties, that the mentors within the program were open to stepping out of their comfort zone and attempting to connect with mentees was apparent. That mentees appreciated and responded positively to these types of efforts was also apparent.

Sadly, not all mentors made the effort to connect with their mentees. One mentor appeared to be less interested in her mentee, as she had worked in a small group setting with her

after school and still did not appear to be familiar with the student, stating, “She's an 8th grader and she's an introvert. So I'm [...] praying about how to best serve her. So right now we just talk.” Moreover, this same mentor seemed disinterested while meeting with her mentee (Observation, Mays, 11/27/18), which led to more silence than the “talk” that she felt had happened when recounting her mentoring session in the interview.

The mentees appeared to enjoy, and even appreciate, their interactions with the mentors and noticed that the mentors were trying to find commonalities with the mentees and are working to help them even outside of the mentoring program's allotted time. One student noted that

I like [the mentoring program] a lot 'cause they sat down and talked to me- like I have an art teacher and I'm like really interested in art so that's really cool and she's like like setting goals for me and also I have to go to tutoring now because my grades aren't good and yeah I told her that I was really interested in getting scholarships and she's been like looking up a bunch of programs for me.

Not only did the mentors interact with their mentees during the scheduled mentoring program, but they were also starting to interact outside of the formal times— which served to improve their relationships while enhancing the students' sense of connectedness to the school by means of one more adult in the building whom they could trust and access. One mentor noted that she followed up on the goals she and her mentee set: “Like this morning, I handed her a tutoring pass and she tried to walk past me with her hood up. I say, ‘Go to tutoring’ She tried to walk past me with her hood up and I was like, ‘No we're going to tutoring!’” Another mentor noted that she now knows her mentee when she sees him in the hall and greets him and high-fives him when they see each other.

Selection for Participation in the Mentoring Program

The selection process for the mentors involved in the program was, of course, different than that of the mentees.

Mentor selection. There is a shortage of research on how mentors can best be selected for mentoring programs, as most programs are voluntary on behalf of the mentor. This was also true for the current program, as mentors were selected for this program on a volunteer basis. The principal described his request for volunteers:

we sent out [...] an um email to our teachers and said ‘hey we believe a mentoring program would be impactful, [...] so we tried to make sure that it was a time for our teachers that they’re already here anyway [...] that way it was in the window of time for the teacher and if they had the heart we would make it happen. We also wanted to make sure that they weren’t tied every mentoring session, so we tied two adults to one student to avoid burnout with the mentor as well.

Thirteen teachers that they were willing to serve as volunteers; 10 of whom were chosen to serve immediately; three were held in reserve should one of the original 10 mentors become unable to continue. One veteran teacher who volunteered as a mentor noted that the teachers who responded positively to this email were “the best teachers in our school for [mentoring] and I don’t know how many people said they’d do it but the ones that [the principal] has chosen are the ones [...] that the kids come to all the time.”

Mentee selection. The mentoring program experienced the greatest deviation from its intended purpose in terms of the selection of students to be mentored. The idea in starting this program was that the program would lead to a reduction in non-medical absences and suspensions for at-risk students. As administration began selecting students, ease of access to the

students became priority, and a means to get them home was important. There was already a 21st Century Community Learning Center program held after school that provided transportation home for its participants, so the mentees were pulled from the 21st Century program for the sake of convenience. The principal noted that this was unfortunate, because “right now a lot of kids who may be some of our high fliers with discipline they’re not in the after-school program so they’re not being targeted for the mentoring program.” In fact, the students selected to be mentees had very few to no absences and suspensions and were all described in a positive light by their mentors.

Mentor-mentee pairing. The principal never disclosed how he paired mentors with mentees. When asked how Mr. Gregg paired mentors with their mentees, one mentor responded that “[Mr. Gregg] basically tried to pair the personality- um, maybe some- some things we may have in common with the mentee.” This idea of pairing based on commonalities was supported by the following conversation that a researcher had with a mentor:

Researcher: You’re the art teacher and she’s interested in art. Do you think that was intentional with the pairing or do you just think it just worked out that way?

Mentor: (Long pause, smirking) I’d like to say Mr. Gregg made it that way (cracks up laughing). I’m not sure that he did but it did work out really well so, we can credit him with that.

Another teacher who had a previous relationship with one of the students was selected to serve as his mentor in this program. She relayed the following:

I’ve known A.J. for two years already and A.J. and I umm I worked with him last year also one-on-one because he would come in here and need help with his homework. So, I’ve talked to A.J. quite a bit already. So, I was glad that when the opportunity came, and

I saw A.J. on the list I already have somewhat of a relationship with A.J. because of last year.

Outside of this prior relationship, a few things were observable when looking over the list of mentor/mentee pairings. The two Black male mentors were paired with Black male mentees; the sole White male mentor was also paired with a Black male mentee as there were no White male mentees. The only Black female mentor was paired with the Black female mentee. Thus mentor/mentee pairings were made with attention given to ethnicity and gender. The remaining six mentors were White women and were paired with the mentees so that each mentee had two mentors, regardless of race or gender. This does mean that the one White female mentee did have two White female mentors, but so did one of the Black male mentees. Prior research has shown that mentor/mentee pairings of same- versus different- gender does not have a significant impact on mentoring relationships (Kanchewa, Rhodes, Schwartz, & Olsha, 2014) nor does mentor/mentee pairings of same- versus different- ethnicity (Gaddis, 2012). There is research, though, that showed that student-teacher relationships and expectations are affected by different-ethnic identities (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007).

Challenges to the Implementation of a Mentoring Program

When implementing new programs or initiatives, there are bound to be some challenges throughout the process. Further examination of the data revealed that there were several challenges during the implementation of this mentoring program. Among participant responses challenges concerning time, teacher support, the need for a team, communication of expectations and responsibilities, lack of resources, planning, and student need were all repeatedly mentioned.

Time

According to McDaniel and Yarbrough (2016), time is key to the success of a mentoring program. This explains why time was one of the major issues that was continuously addressed by program participants. Finding time for implementation, the program start time, duration of the program itself, and the length and frequency of mentoring sessions were all aspects of time that were mentioned. The principal, Mr. Gregg, spoke of the challenges regarding the lack time. He stated, “[...] it’s been a challenge um not because of anything other than time.” He also said that, “You can have the vision but so if you don’t have the vision and the time it doesn’t go over as well.” The principal also mentioned the importance of teacher’s time. He stated, “[...] we tried to make sure that it was a time for our teachers that they’re already here anyway.” Mr. Jones also spoke about the challenge of time when he stated, “I think just making sure that I find time is going to be the biggest challenge. And making sure that the time I spend with [my mentee] is quality time.” Finding the time to dedicate to the program efforts was a challenge for those involved.

Participants also commented on the time of year when the program began, mentioning that starting the program earlier in the school year would have been beneficial. Ms. Cleaver stated,

I think the start day is you know if it could’ve been either before a little bit or maybe at the beginning of December or at the end after we come back from break because we’re gonna start and then I think almost you feel like you have to restart.

Mr. Jones stated, “I would probably do it earlier [implement the program]. Catch some kids at the beginning [of the school year].” Researchers suggested that students receive greater benefits from involvement with programs that last at least a full school year (McQuillin, Smith, & Strait,

2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Wheeler, Keller, & Dubois, 2010). Participants felt that the program should have started earlier on in the school year in order to be the most impactful for students.

When asked how the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School could be improved, the mentee also mentioned their concerns with the duration of the mentoring sessions and the times that they met. The mentees agreed that they wished they could meet more than once or twice a month. As Faith expressed, “I wish we could do it more than just once or twice a month because you can’t get to know someone only meeting them like twice, twice a month.” Meeting more than twice a month would prove beneficial to the program (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016). Given that time is a major component of a successful mentoring program, mentors and mentees should meet for at least one hour each week.

Joy responded to Faith by stating that they were told that they did not meet frequently to prevent them from growing tired of meeting with their mentors. Each mentee agreed that they would not get tired of mentoring if they met with their mentors more than once or twice a month because they liked meeting with them. They agreed that being assigned two mentors was one reason they would not get tired of meeting. Faith stated, “Especially when they’re like switching off.... okay on this date you’re going to get this mentor and the next time you’re going to get this mentor.” The mentees agreed that having two mentors was an aspect of the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School that they liked.

The mentees also wanted the duration of their mentoring sessions to be increased; however, they were conflicted about what times they preferred to meet during the school day. Faith stated,

I think it might be better if we had it during school hours (instead of during the after-school program) I'm thinking about other students 'cause the reason we're in it is because we're in after school... so we don't have to worry about somebody picking us up or anything... so it would be better if we did it... like in school... like maybe take them out of a class they're not doing bad in... maybe the mentor could take that student's schedule and pull them out of the class that they're doing good in.

Joy disagreed; "The class I'm doing good in, I want to stay in there." Although meeting times were arranged by administration, Faith considered making mentoring available to students who were not in the after-school program. Mark reminded her that "some of the mentors are teachers in the school." He pointed out that the current mentors would not be able to mentor during the day if they had classes to teach. Given the way in which the mentoring program was implemented, students who did not attend the after-school program were not participants in the program. The mentees felt mentoring should be available to students during school hours.

Time was a challenge during the implementation of this mentoring program, whether that be finding time to get everything in place, the time of year that the program got started, or the consistency and frequency of meetings. According to McDaniel and Yarbrough (2016), mentors should meet with their mentees for at least one hour per week. Once or twice a month is not nearly enough time to establish a strong relationship. Time was an issue that was repeatedly mentioned when participants were asked about challenges.

Teacher Support

Because the program model employed by Summerville Middle School utilized teachers as mentors, some degree of teacher support was required. Although the teachers seemed to be eager to dedicate time to mentoring an eighth-grade student, there were a few mentors who

expressed challenges related to teacher support. One mentor spoke of teachers being enthusiastic at first but then eventually dedicating less time to the program. She stated,

There are some who will you know they're real gung ho at the beginning and then when you hit the middle and the end they're not as you know... I put 100% in every time 'cause if not why do it 'cause you're here for kids you're not here for you.

She also went on to speak about the challenges of a limited number of teachers willing to commit themselves to the mentoring effort. She said that it “would help if more teachers would volunteer.” Recruiting a sufficient number of committed teachers seemed to have been a bit of a challenge during program implementation. Commitment was important, as the premature departure of a mentor can be detrimental for the mentee (Karcher, 2008, as cited in Smith & Stormont, 2011).

Need for a Team

During this study, much of the responsibility for implementing the program rested on the school's principal, Mr. Gregg. Another challenge that was commonly mentioned in participant responses was the lack of a team. Mr. Gregg had a great deal to say about sharing this responsibility. He stated that, “It's best to have some type of conduit or person in the middle that's not necessarily the principal.” He also stated, “[...] divvying up some of those responsibilities would make the process more impactful instead of one person trying to do everything.” Mr. Gregg also gave a word of advice to other administrators who might like to implement a program of this nature at their schools. He stated, “[...] develop a mentoring team of people who can help plan it out even with the vision and have some umm check marks along the way.” The principal also commented on the fact that the school had established teams for other initiatives and mentoring should be no different. Successfully implementing a mentoring

program is not something that can be carried out by one individual, but instead requires sharing of responsibilities and tasks.

Communication of Mentor Expectations and Responsibilities

Communication of mentor expectations and responsibilities was another challenge that was discovered during program implementation. Many participants felt as though there was a lack of communication regarding what they were expected to do and what their responsibilities were. When asked how clearly defined the mentor responsibilities were, Mr. Smith stated, “Other than meeting with [my mentee] the 4th Tuesday of every month for 20 minutes, that’s about all I know.” He also stated that he would like “more communication” and “expectations of what I need to do.” Similarly, Ms. Cleaver stated, “Yea, no one has said like you’re gonna do these three things.” When asked how clearly defined her mentor responsibilities were Ms. Sawyer replied, “Umm prior to yesterday, not clearly defined.” Another mentor, Mr. Jones said that “It was kind of just open—.” Ms. Hill stated, “[Responsibilities] weren’t necessarily spelled out but um, I just kind of took what I thought she needed and just kind of rolled with it. [...]it wasn’t like a here’s what you need to do.” Ms. Johnson felt that she had an advantage because she had served as a mentor, but those who had not had prior mentoring experience might not know what to do because expectations were not clear. She stated,

I just knew that I was gonna meet...with her. [...] I guess the expectations were not...I-I hate it-I mean I-for me, because I have been a mentor, I knew. But if I had never done this, I don’t think-I don’t guess-I don’t think they were as clear as they-like what do you want them to have?

It was apparent that participants would have appreciated additional clarity regarding their role as a mentor. Many of the mentors expressed that the expectations and responsibilities were not as clearly communicated as they should have been.

Communication is also key when trying to reach out to members of the community to involve them in a school-based program, as they are asked to give their time at the school (Epstein, 2010; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). A liaison for the local military base discussed her responsibility to support the schools in the county but noted that she was not given the feedback or details required to do so. At the end of the year prior to the start of this mentoring program, a county high school principal critiqued the military program by saying that while he “appreciated what we did they said they felt like we did not contribute to the school enough as a whole.” She recounted that he told her that, ““We want mentors and you're not doing enough! But I need to know details- what do you want from me? I need to know details- I need to know specifics- I was like okay what else do you guys need? They mentioned that they [...] wanted the one-on-one mentorship so they teamed me up with their graduation coach.” Even after this pairing, the liaison mentioned that she still had not received much feedback from the graduation coach, which made this a frustrating partnership. In a unique case such as this, in which the community organization was required to provide support to the school, the support continued despite any frustrations that volunteering at the school may have caused. If the situation were less regulated and more casual, and community support were wholly voluntary, then such failure to communicate would likely have caused community members to volunteer their time and effort elsewhere.

Lack of Resources

Another challenge that mentors discussed was the lack of resources. Mr. Smith stated, “I was hoping that they would give us that sort of information [activities].” Mr. Jones described the need for some sort of protocol, specifically for the initial meeting. He said, “You know a mentor checklist. Hey these are the kind of things...this is the kind of bare minimum information you need to get from him.” According to King, Vidourek, Davis, and McClellan (2002), mentors should be provided with resources, including possible activities, for their meetings with mentees.

Planning

Participants also mentioned challenges related to the actual planning of the program such as training. According to the mentors, there was no type of formal training prior to beginning to mentor. Ms. Strawbridge stated, “Umm no not here, but I’ve had lots of training other places.” Ms. Washington said, “There was a brief training-or meeting, umm...going into the process, but not like an in-depth training process, no.” While some participants saw the need for formal training others did not. Mr. Jones appreciated the leeway that the principal gave the mentors as they implemented the program. He stated,

I think he’s [Mr. Gregg] putting people, I think he’s got a good mix of people. And I think we can get quality feedback and say hey this works and hey this doesn’t work. I think he’s also giving us the leeway you know how to make on-the-spot changes or and say this doesn’t work and go ahead and effect this change or say hey this does work, and we need to continue doing this.

Although there were varying opinions regarding the need for training, Komosa-Hawkins (2009) stated that mentors must receive some training prior to meeting with their mentees in order to

experience positive outcomes. Training is a necessary component of successful mentoring program implementation.

Next, the mentees also opined that the program could be improved if more time was spent planning the activities in which they participated with their mentors. According to King et al. (2002), mentors should be provided with resources and activities to engage in with their mentees. Faith went into detail by saying, “Like what I mean by planning time is, like plan on an activity ‘cause sometimes when your mentor pulls you it's like.....” oh hey” ... like... “hey, how are you” (feigned awkwardness). Joy supported her statement by saying, “Yeah, it's like sometimes talking to yourself to get another conversation going, and I'm not good at those... so it's like kind of like quiet for a minute or two and.... so, the mentor goes... “So... college” (fancy accent) ok (more feigned awkwardness).

The mentees were also concerned about the locations in which they met with their mentees. Some of the locations in which they met were uncomfortable and made them feel uneasy. For example, Joy’s mentoring session took place in a classroom. She stated, “I don't really like how they take me to really quiet and small places. I like the library if it's quiet.... the library.... I enjoy that, but the quiet... like classrooms... kind of makes me feel uneasy.” When asked if the mentees preferred a more open place, she responded “Yeah... it's like I don't hear my own voice echo against the wall, and I don't feel like I'm in a classroom getting interrogated by the teacher.”

Mentees expressed moments of inactivity and awkward silence during their mentoring sessions. They also expressed feelings of uneasiness while meeting in certain locations. Training sessions for mentors provide them with the necessary resources to ensure that mentees are actively engaged during the duration of each meeting while promoting effective use of time

during mentoring sessions. It will also allow them to determine various locations that can be used to hold mentoring sessions in which the mentor feels comfortable.

Student Need

Finally, participants felt that the program only reached a small number of students. This raised another challenge to implementation which would be student need. Teachers felt that there were many students who could benefit from having a mentor, but the structure of the program was not designed to include students that were not involved in the 21st Century program. Ms. Washington stated,

I think the size of it is a challenge. We have many students, um who-who are needy-who need support, and then those who aren't identified as needy— um, they need moral support as well— and so I feel like the demand is very high.

She felt that there was a high demand for the program, but the students who were most in need were not able to reap program benefits. It was also interesting to note that she referenced both students who are needy as well as those who may not be identified as needy. The definition of the term needy in this instance was unclear, but her statements indicated that Ms. Washington believed that there were more students in the school who could benefit from the additional support that a mentor provides. Ms. Strawbridge shared the same sentiment. She stated,

I do wish there were more children who could be involved because I know they're working with the eighth graders right now but there are a lot of children in our school who really do need to have that one person who actually cares about them.

Similar to Ms. Washington, Ms. Strawbridge believed that there were many more students in the school who needed a mentor. She felt that the program should include additional grade levels, not only the eighth grade students.

During the time of this study, the program only targeted those students who were involved in the afterschool program for convenience purpose as well as access to transportation. Although the 21st Century program seemed to be a good avenue for selecting mentees, both mentors and mentees believed that the mentoring program should be expanded to include more than just afterschool students. When asked about challenges to implementation, Ms. Mitchell stated,

[...] only being able to choose students from 21st Century, cause I wish we kinda had a way that we could choose other students-cause I'm sure there are other students out there that aren't in that program that could benefit from a mentor.

One mentee, Faith, also commented on the program only being geared toward students involved in the after-school program. She even provided a suggestion for improving the program. She stated,

I think it might be better if we had it during school hours... I'm thinking about other students cause the reason we're in it is because we're in after school...so we don't have to worry about somebody picking us up or anything.

Participants felt that in order to achieve the greatest impact, the program needed to reach a wider range of students.

Summary of Findings

From three methods of data collection, five major themes emerged in regard to factors that play a role in the successful implementation of a mentoring program. They were goals, perceptions, experiences, relationships, and challenges to implementation. The first four themes mentioned correlate as the data from the interviews and focus group showed that the goals of a mentoring program may vary among administration, mentors, and mentees. However, while the

desire to achieve academic success is among these goals, additional goals were influenced by perceptions of effective mentoring, as well as prior mentoring experiences.

For the purpose of this study, perceptions were defined as the way an individual understood and interpreted effective mentoring. Because the participants had prior mentoring experiences, their perceptions of effective mentoring were based on the belief that positive relationships among mentors and mentees would result in positive outcomes for their mentees. The principal, mentors, and mentees perceived relationships as the most influential factor of effective mentoring.

The challenges faced during the implementation of the mentoring program influenced the ways in which the mentoring program could be improved and sustained. The initial challenges faced during implementation of the program were the need for an implementation team and a lack of resources. Meeting times and communication of expectations and responsibilities were later identified as challenges as well. We found that in order to improve and sustain the mentoring program at Summerville Middle School an implementation team must be created to carry out implementation tasks and procedures. Once created, this team would be able to determine the resources available to assist them as they plan and organize the mentoring program. Next, mentor training would prove beneficial to mentors despite their beliefs that their teaching roles enable them to be effective mentors. Mentor training would ensure that mentor expectations and responsibilities are thoroughly communicated and understood, as well as provide mentors with valuable resources to assist them with mentoring. Last, despite the mentors' acknowledgment that meeting with their mentees twice a month was sufficient, the mentees expressed the desire to meet more often. Time constraints must be considered during the

planning stages of implementation to ensure that mentors and mentees meet with sufficient frequency to reap the benefits of their mentoring relationships.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The findings from this study indicated that Summerville Middle School had a mentoring program that was just beginning to emerge. Concurrent with the implementation of the mentoring program, there were numerous components that were already in place that could ultimately contribute to the program's success. The school had a positive, enthusiastic, and goal-oriented leader who had already done a great job of acknowledging the importance of relationships, specifically by striving to personally build relationships with faculty, staff, and students. A successful school leader establishes and maintains positive relationships with their teachers while providing them with opportunities for growth (Daly, Moolenaar, Yi-hwa, Tuytens, & Fresno, 2015; Fisher, & Carlyon, 2015), and Mr. Gregg had done just that. In addition to strong leadership, Summerville also had caring, dedicated, and relationship driven teachers who were willing to serve as mentors, which was also important to the program's success (Karcher, 2008, as cited in Smith & Stormont, 2011; DeSocio, VanCura, Nelson, Hewitt, Kitzman, & Cole, 2007; Van Ryzin, 2010). However, in order to be effective, a school-based mentoring program requires more than just having the right people in place. In addition to dedicated mentors, impactful mentoring programs require training, dedication of time and resources, communication regarding role clarity, and a structured environment (Granger, 2010; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Komosa-Hawkins, 2009; Lejonberg & Christophersen, 2015; McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016). According to the National Mentoring Partnership (2015), there are six elements of effective practice for creating and sustaining impactful mentoring relationships and programs that are important to consider. These are: recruitment, screening, training, matching and initiating, monitoring and support, and closure. Mentors need to be

screened and trained prior to meeting with their mentee and the program must allow sufficient time for enduring relationships to be built (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Steltor, & Tai, 2015).

The participants' experiences, goals, perceptions, and perceived challenges to implementation were important factors in identifying ways in which the program could be improved going forward. While there are some aspects of the program that Summerville had correctly approached in this implementation, there are several other factors concerning the program structure that should be addressed in an effort to make improvements for future participants as well as to ensure sustainability. This discussion will specifically address the research question: How could the mentoring program be improved going forward to better meet the needs of students?

Time is often a concern when implementing any additional initiative within a school setting. Teachers are generally already struggling to complete the numerous tasks they face throughout the school day and sometimes even after school. It is the role of the administrator to protect the time of staff members. According to Dishman-Horst and Martin (2007), an effective educational leader should protect time for his or her staff to address core curriculum components in order to achieve student gains. In an effort to protect the time of teachers, the principal chose to pair two teachers with one student to prevent burn out. This goes against literature, which supports the notion that mentoring relationships are most effective in a one-to-one design, as this design helps to supplement the relational needs the student receives at home and in the classroom (Van Ryzin, 2010). However, The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) (1997), stated that students can benefit from more than one mentor, as one mentor may not know everything a given student needs to be successful.

In their review of existing literature, McDaniel and Yarbrough (2016) found that mentors should meet with their mentees for at least one hour per week in order to achieve the best results. The principal chose to hold sessions during a time in which teachers would already be present at the school, meaning that the sessions were only scheduled to last approximately 25 minutes. Although this was a considerate gesture, the shortened meetings may have been detrimental to the program in the long run. Frequency and duration of meetings were also concerns among the mentees. With meetings only being held bi-monthly, and lasting roughly 25 minutes, many mentees felt that sessions were not held often enough and that the meetings did not last for a sufficient duration of time. If one of the main goals of a mentoring program is to build relationships, students have to be given the time to establish this type of bond with mentors. Consistent and predictable meetings once or twice a week outside of the classroom may help develop a positive rapport between the student and the mentor (Johnson & Lampley, 2010). Additionally, keeping meeting times predictable contributes to mentor effectiveness and program success (Ahrens, Dubois, Lozano, & Richardson, 2010; DeSocio et al., 2007).

Another consideration for Summerville is the length of time that the program itself will last. According to McQuillin, Smith, and Strait (2011), the longer a mentoring program runs, the greater the benefits received from involvement with the program. Ideally, a formal mentoring program should run for at least a full year, although this typically references a full school-year (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Wheeler, Keller, & DuBois, 2010). This is no surprise given that the success of mentoring programs is heavily dependent on relationships, which take time to establish and build (Liang & Rhodes, 2007). Relationships that last less than a year generally do not have as great of an impact as those that last a year or longer (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). This is important for the administrators of Summerville Middle School to be

cognizant of and to make sure to continue the mentoring program for the remainder of the school year, despite the fact that the research team will no longer be studying the program's implementation.

One suggestion for Summerville Middle School would be to find ways that the program could be implemented to both protect teacher time and provide consistent and frequent meetings for students that are of a sufficient duration. Perhaps incorporating mentoring meetings during the school day might be one solution. However, if meetings are held during the school day, it may be wise to incorporate mentoring sessions during lunch, connections, or other times that do not interfere with classes. Schwartz, Rhodes, and Herrera (2012) found that there is evidence of negative effects on academic outcomes in mentoring programs that met during the school day as a pullout program.

Another consideration regarding time is the amount of time that is dedicated to implementation and planning of the program. A school principal is charged with a wide array of responsibilities, including the development of a shared vision for the school and stewardship of that vision, fostering an environment conducive to student learning, engaging all members of the school community, managing the organization, ensuring the effectiveness of the faculty, and doing these things with integrity and fairness (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). In addition to these general responsibilities, principals also have district specific requirements and initiatives to focus on as well. For an administrator to effectively carry out the task of implementing a school-based mentoring program alone is nearly impossible given the multiple demands that require the time and attention of the principal. This is supported by our findings which indicated that there is a strong need for a mentoring team to assist in handling the responsibilities associated with program implementation. The principal recognized this need and mentioned forming a team of

individuals to assist in this endeavor going forward. One suggestion might be to include some of those who were involved with this initial pilot of the mentoring program as a part of that team. Having experienced firsthand some of the strengths and weaknesses of the program thus far, these individuals might be able to add valuable insight on program improvement efforts going forward.

Based on the findings, some training and sample activities would be beneficial to mentors. There were mixed reviews regarding the training. Many of the teachers who were serving as mentors felt as though their role as an educator as well as prior experiences had already sufficiently prepared them to serve in a mentor capacity at Summerville. However, Komosa-Hawkins (2009) showed that mentors must receive some training prior to meeting with their mentees in order to experience positive outcomes. Rhodes and Spencer (2005, as cited in Komosa-Hawkins, 2009) found that mentors who received less than two hours of formal training prior to the start of the mentoring program had the lowest quality relationships with their mentees and reported the lowest satisfaction with the overall program. The purpose of mentor training is to increase the mentors' awareness of possible problems, sensitivity to students' issues, delineate expected behaviors, and set clear roles and outcomes for the program (Carswell, Hanlon, O'Grady, Watts, & Pothong, 2009; Liang & Rhodes, 2007; McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016; Randolph & Johnson, 2008). Mentors should still receive training for the current program even if they have previously acted as a mentor, although the prior experience is helpful (Lejonberg & Christopherson, 2015). Teachers and other school staff should not be assumed "mentor ready" simply based on previous experiences working with children. Serving as a mentor may be an unfamiliar or completely novel role. Teachers should be trained and supported accordingly.

The teachers' failure to attend the training that was provided at the start of the program as well as the lack of any other additional ongoing training leads to some additional concerns. How can teachers be motivated to participate in training? In what ways could Summerville implement necessary training while still respecting the time of teachers? One suggestion to motivate teachers may be to offer some sort of incentive for training completion. Additionally, providing the training in an online format as a series of modules may prove to be a beneficial option as well. This way, teachers can complete the training on their own time, there is no need to schedule any type of additional mandatory meeting, and this format would also allow the principal to keep a record of who has completed the training and who has not. There is not a vast body of research regarding the format of mentor training sessions. Training can either be offered in a group setting or in an online format, but there is not enough evidence to determine if one yields more favorable results than the other. Training is necessary regardless of occupation or prior mentoring experience.

Mentors should also be provided with resources, including possible activities, for their meetings with mentees (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002). During this study, the program did not make the best use of time during sessions, as mentees often felt as though mentors are spending a lot of time searching for talking points. One solution to this, which was also illuminated by our findings, is to provide mentors with some pre-designed activities to engage in during sessions. There are also mentoring programs and curricula available that have already been designed for use with middle school students. However, these programs are generally very expensive. The principal did mention the possibility of investing in a program of this nature as he felt that the program was worth the expense. In the meantime, perhaps developing some sort of outline or plan for sessions might be helpful until a pre-developed

mentoring program can be purchased. Additionally, providing each mentor with a background profile of their mentee would also be useful as this would give each mentor an idea of topics to stay away from, likes and dislikes of the mentee, and any other pertinent information. There was a bit of a divide at Summerville regarding the need for provided activities and the need to maintain some degree of authenticity within the relationship. This is something the school will need to continue to work on, maintaining the balance between planning and spontaneity. While a school-based mentoring program does require some degree of structure and planned activities, there is also a need for authentic and organic relationship building.

A mentoring program is implemented with hopes that there will be a positive impact on those involved. In order to measure such an impact, data must be collected on an ongoing basis. The principal spoke of including the school's data specialists as members of the mentoring team, as they were skilled in acquiring the necessary numbers to measure the impact on discipline referrals and student absences. Additionally, in order to truly measure the impact of the program going forward, the program should be implemented with a greater number of students, especially those who may benefit the most from having an additional adult who cares about them. Both mentors and mentees commented on the fact that only a few students were being reached, when there are several in the school who could use a mentor. All students can benefit from having a mentor, and students who are disengaged and at risk of falling behind their peers academically generally receive the most benefit from what a mentor relationship has to offer (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, & McMaken, 2007; Rhodes, 2002, 2005; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). As of this writing, the program only included those students in eighth grade who were involved in the after-school program. The administration at Summerville Middle School should explore other options for student selection in an effort to serve as many students as

possible, even though this was the convenient option. Again, implementing the program during the school day may open up other options.

The term “success” is repeatedly used throughout this paper when referencing a mentoring program. The true success of a mentoring program is measured by the relationships that are built between mentor and mentee. It is these relationships that strengthen students’ feelings of connectedness toward the school. When students feel like members of the school community they are more likely to be engaged in school and less likely to misbehave or have excessive absences (Finn, 1989). Based on this definition of success, it appeared as though Summerville had a successful mentoring program. The students were eager to meet with their mentors, and it was evident that strong relationships were already beginning to form. If the program continued in this way, there would likely be decreases in behavior infractions and non-medical student absences.

Implementing a school-based mentoring program is not an easy feat, which was indicated by the findings during the implementation at Summerville Middle School. This study only provides a snapshot of what was happening in a specific context during a brief period of time. Specific changes will need to be made in order for this to become a successful mentoring program that contributes to academic and behavioral improvements for students in need. Much like anything else, this program had its strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of this study was to help shed light on some of those areas for growth and provide the school with recommendations for improvement. Additional program recommendations include maintaining a relationship with the local military installment, as they could provide additional mentors for the program and help to establish and strengthen relationships between the school and the community. Evaluations of the program, as well as mentor support, should be ongoing.

Additional research should be conducted in the future to determine the impact of the program over a course of time.

This study examined a nontraditional form of mentoring, as much of the literature focused on one-to-one mentoring approaches. In examining the literature, we were not able to find a single article that described a two-to-one mentoring program. The two-to-one mentoring format proved to be beneficial for Summerville Middle School, allowing student mentees to have the opportunity to interact with two individuals and gain two different perspectives. This method also helped to eliminate burnout of one teacher and ensured that sessions were able to continue even if one mentor was not present. The students seemed to enjoy working with two people and spoke highly of both of their mentors. This method appeared to be a promising alternative to traditional one-to-one mentoring programs specifically within the school environment. Based on the findings from this study and the lack of existing research, the innovative two-to-one mentoring model is worth studying further to determine if similar results might be achieved in other settings.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study was time. The length of the mentor-mentee relationship plays a role in the success of mentoring programs (Randolph & Johnson, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006; Rhodes, 2002). Also, as reported earlier, in order for a formal mentoring program to have a meaningful effect, the program should run a full school year (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Wheeler et al., 2010). The program had only been conducted for a few weeks when data were collected.

An additional limitation of this study was that student participants were made aware of the study details early-on in the data collection. The mentees knew that they were a part of a

study of the mentoring program. This may have impacted the ways in which participants interacted and responded throughout the data collection process.

This study was conducted during a time period in which the mentors and mentees had only met once or twice. Given the limited time in this study, it would have been difficult for mentors and mentees to establish a relationship that would have had a meaningful impact. Thus, because of the limited time mentors and mentees spent together, this study may not provide a realistic indication of the program's impact on the participants of the study. Another limitation was the small sample size of only five mentees and ten mentors. Additionally, this study was only conducted at one school. Thus, findings from this study may not be readily generalizable to other schools and other settings.

Conclusion

This study is a qualitative case-study analysis of the implementation of a school-based mentoring program. The findings from this study suggest that *time* and *prioritization* are key factors to the success of a mentoring program. School leaders, if they are going to implement such a program, should make the program a priority and formally dedicate resources and time to ensure the implementation and sustainability of the mentoring program. Also, school leaders should be realistic about allowing for an appropriate time period over which the program can be conducted before results or the impacts of such a mentoring program could be meaningfully quantified. Furthermore, in addition to proper prioritization and the dedication of time and resources; this study suggests, as do other studies in the literature, that building relationships, nurturing connectedness, and deploying creative, thoughtful, and dedicated individuals as mentors and school leaders are key to the success of a school-based mentoring program.

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Appendix A:

Mentor Interview Protocol

Goal: To determine perceived barriers to the implementation of a school-based mentoring program as well as ways that the program could be improved going forward.

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon and thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The following interview questions are part of a research study that my research team and I are conducting pertaining to the impact that having a mentor has on student absences and suspensions. We are also interested in determining barriers to program implementation as well as ways that the program could be improved going forward. The information you provide based on your own personal experiences will be used to enhance our research and contribute to the literature and educational discourse that already exists.

This interview should last approximately 20-30 minutes (maybe longer), depending upon the length of your responses. With your permission, your responses will be voice-recorded to enable me to type a verbatim transcription of this interview. This recording will be permanently deleted and all identifying information will be removed once transcribed and upon completion of this research project. None of your personal information or responses will be shared without your prior consent and a pseudonym will be used for identification purposes.

At this time, any information shared during this interview will be completely confidential and will only be shared with the research team which consists of: myself, three teammates, and my professors, Dr. Darla Linville and Dr. Do Hong Kim, all of whom are associated with Augusta University. However, there is a possibility that this research will be submitted for publication and may be used in future research endeavors.

All responses are completely voluntary. If at any time you would like to skip a question or discontinue the interview completely, please let me know. In the event that you no longer wish to continue with the interview, we will stop immediately, and any responses previously provided will be omitted from the study.

Considering all that I have shared with you, regarding the interview and its processes, do you have any questions or concerns before we get started? If there are no questions or concerns, let's begin.

Demographics

Interviewer: These first few questions will address demographic information.

1. With what race do you identify?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?

Mentoring Experiences

Interviewer: The following questions will address your prior mentoring experiences.

4. Describe any mentoring experiences you have had in the past.
5. Compare and contrast your previous mentoring experiences with your mentoring experience at Grovetown Middle School.

Mentoring at Grovetown Middle School

Interviewer: These next few questions pertain to the mentoring program you are currently involved with at Grovetown Middle School.

6. What was your reasoning for volunteering to serve as a mentor in this program?
7. What role do you see yourself playing in this child's life?
8. What type of impact would you like to have?

9. What are your thoughts after your initial meeting with your mentee?
10. What, if anything, do you hope to gain from this mentoring experience?
11. Describe the type of relationship that you would like to have with your mentee.
12. What types of activities do you plan to engage in with your mentee?
13. Of these, what types of activities do you believe your mentee will benefit from the most?

Interviewer: These final questions will address specific aspects of the mentoring program as well as ways that it could be improved.

14. How clearly defined were your mentor responsibilities?
15. Describe for me the training process that you underwent prior to mentoring.
16. If you could create the ideal mentoring program, describe what that would look like.
 - 16a. How does this ideal program compare to the one currently taking place here?
17. What challenges, if any, are you aware of that may have impacted the implementation of this mentoring program?
18. What, if anything, would you suggest to improve the mentoring program going forward?
19. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

Closing

Interviewer: In closing, thank you for your time and enthusiasm for our research project. In addition to providing you with a copy of our final research project, I will also ask that you review a summary of this interview and provide feedback as well, verifying its authenticity and accuracy.

If you have any questions moving forward, please feel free to contact either myself or other members of the research team. I am leaving with you, contact information for members of

the research team, including our two advising professors at Augusta University. Again, thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix B:

Administrator/Military Personnel Interview Protocol

Goal: To determine the perceived barriers to the implementation of a school-based mentoring program as well as ways that the program could be improved going forward.

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon, and thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The following interview questions are part of a research study that my research team and I are conducting pertaining to the barriers to program implementation as well as ways that the program could be improved going forward. The information you provide based on your own personal experiences will be used to enhance our research and contribute to the literature and educational discourse that already exists.

This interview should last approximately 20-30 minutes (maybe longer), depending upon the length of your responses. With your permission, your responses will be voice-recorded to enable me to type a verbatim transcription of this interview. This recording will be permanently deleted and all identifying information will be removed once transcribed and upon completion of this research project. None of your personal information or responses will be shared without your prior consent and a pseudonym will be used for identification purposes.

At this time, any information shared during this interview will be completely confidential and will only be shared with the research team which consists of: myself, three teammates, and my professors, Dr. Darla Linville and Dr. Do Hong Kim, all of whom are associated with Augusta University. However, there is a possibility that this research will be submitted for publication and may be used in future research endeavors.

All responses are completely voluntary. If at any time you would like to skip a question or discontinue the interview completely, please let me know. In the event that you no longer wish to continue with the interview, we will stop immediately, and any responses previously provided will be omitted from the study.

Considering all that I have shared with you, regarding the interview and its processes, do you have any questions or concerns before we get started? If there are no questions or concerns, let's begin.

Demographics

Interviewer: These first few questions will address demographic information.

1. With what race do you identify?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?

Basic Information

Interviewer: These next questions will address your job and responsibilities prior to the mentoring program.

4. What is your position at Grovetown Middle School?
5. What responsibilities does your job usually involve?
6. Mr. Allen mentioned that there have been several new initiatives started this year. What have you been involved with- besides the mentoring program?
7. How has your involvement in these initiatives impacted your workload and job satisfaction?

Mentoring Experiences

Interviewer: The following questions will address your prior mentoring experiences.

8. Describe any mentoring experiences you have had in the past.
9. Compare and contrast your previous mentoring experiences with your mentoring experience at Grovetown Middle School.

Mentoring at Grovetown Middle School

Interviewer: These next few questions pertain to the mentoring program you are currently involved with at Grovetown Middle School.

10. What role have you played in starting the mentoring program at Grovetown Middle School?
11. How did you get into your current role with the mentoring program at Grovetown Middle School?
12. Is this a responsibility you would have volunteered for?
 - a. Why or why not?
13. How has the mentoring program affected your workload?
14. How has the mentoring program affected your job satisfaction?

Interviewer: These final questions will address specific aspects of the mentoring program as well as ways that it could be improved.

15. How clearly defined were your responsibilities in the mentoring program at Grovetown Middle School?
16. Describe for me the training process that you underwent prior to mentoring.
17. If you could create the ideal mentoring program, describe what that would look like.
 - 17a. How does this ideal program compare to the one currently taking place here?
18. What challenges, if any, are you aware of that may have impacted the implementation of this mentoring program?

19. What, if anything, would you suggest to improve the mentoring program going forward?
20. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

Closing

Interviewer: In closing, thank you for your time and enthusiasm for our research project. In addition to providing you with a copy of our final research project, I will also ask that you review a summary of this interview and provide feedback as well, verifying its authenticity and accuracy.

If you have any questions moving forward, please feel free to contact either myself or other members of the research team. I am leaving with you, contact information for members of the research team, including our two advising professors at Augusta University. Again, thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix C:

Principal Interview Protocol

Goal: To determine the impact of a having a mentor on student absenteeism and suspensions.

Additionally, the purpose of this research is to determine perceived barriers to the implementation of a school-based mentoring program as well as ways that the program could be improved going forward.

Interview Protocol

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon, and thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. The following interview questions are part of a research study that my research team and I are conducting pertaining to the impact that having a mentor has on student absences and suspensions. We are also interested in determining barriers to program implementation as well as ways that the program could be improved going forward. The information you provide based on your own personal experiences will be used to enhance our research and contribute to the literature and educational discourse that already exists.

This interview should last approximately 20-30 minutes (maybe longer), depending upon the length of your responses. With your permission, your responses will be voice-recorded to enable me to type a verbatim transcription of this interview. This recording will be permanently deleted and all identifying information will be removed once transcribed and upon completion of this research project. None of your personal information or responses will be shared without your prior consent and a pseudonym will be used for identification purposes.

At this time, any information shared during this interview will be completely confidential and will only be shared with the research team which consists of: myself, three teammates, and my professors, Dr. Darla Linville and Dr. Do Hong Kim, all of whom are associated with

Augusta University. However, there is a possibility that this research will be submitted for publication and may be used in future research endeavors.

All responses are completely voluntary. If at any time you would like to skip a question or discontinue the interview completely, please let me know. In the event that you no longer wish to continue with the interview, we will stop immediately, and any responses previously provided will be omitted from the study.

Considering all that I have shared with you, regarding the interview and its processes, do you have any questions or concerns before we get started? If there are no questions or concerns, let's begin.

Interviewer:

1. Tell us about the mentoring program.
 - a. Where did the idea for this type of program come from?
 - b. Why do you feel a program like this is needed at Grovetown Middle School?
 - c. How do you believe the students will benefit?
2. Can you describe for us the selection process?
 - a. How were mentors selected?
 - b. How were students selected for the program?
3. What are your thoughts on the program as it stands currently?
 - a. Is this what you envisioned when you decided to implement a mentoring program?
 - b. How could the program be improved going forward?
4. What if anything would you have done differently at the onset of this program implementation?

5. What challenges have you faced in working to implement a mentoring program at your school?
6. What advice or suggestions would you give to other principals who would like to implement a mentoring program at their school?
7. What other information would you like to share with us?

Closing

Interviewer: In closing, thank you for your time and enthusiasm for our research project. In addition to providing you with a copy of our final research project, I will also ask that you review a summary of this interview and provide feedback as well, verifying its authenticity and accuracy.

If you have any questions moving forward, please feel free to contact either myself or other members of the research team. I am leaving with you, contact information for members of the research team, including our two advising professors at Augusta University. Again, thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix D:

Mentee Focus Group Protocol

Goal: To determine the impact of a mentoring program on student absenteeism and discipline.

Focus Group Protocol

Facilitator: Good morning/afternoon and thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group today. The following questions are part of a research study that my research team and I are conducting pertaining to the impact of community mentors on the relationship aspect of school climate. The information you provide based on your own personal experiences will be used to enhance our research and contribute to the literature and educational discourse that already exists.

This focus group should last approximately 30 minutes, depending upon the length of your responses. With your permission, your responses will be voice-recorded to enable me to type a verbatim transcription of this focus group. This recording will be permanently deleted and all identifying information will be removed once transcribed and upon completion of this research project. None of your personal information or responses will be shared without your prior consent and a pseudonym will be used for identification purposes. All responses are completely voluntary. In an effort to make sure that everyone gets a fair opportunity to respond to each question, we ask that you do not talk over one another. Please be respectful of all participants and give everyone a chance to complete his or her thoughts before interjecting.

Considering all that I have shared with you, regarding the focus group and its processes, do you have any questions or concerns before we get started? If there are no questions or concerns, let's begin.

1. Tell me about your experience in the mentoring program.

2. What types of activities did you and your mentor engage in that you found most meaningful?
3. What impact has the mentoring program had on you thus far?
4. Would you recommend the mentoring program to other students? Why or why not?
5. What could be done to improve the mentoring program?

Facilitator: This concludes today's focus group. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Your contribution towards our research is greatly appreciated.

Appendix E:

Observation Protocol

Observer:

Date:

Time:

Participants:

Setting:

Guiding questions to be used while observing:

- **What activities are the mentors/mentees engaged in?**

- **What are the attitudes of the mentors/mentees based on observed actions and behaviors?**

- **What types of conversations are the mentors/mentees engaged in?**

Time	Observations	Analysis/Interpretation/Reflections