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Will you be my mentor? Self-selecting a mentor during student teaching.

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WILL YOU BE MY MENTOR?
SELF-SELECTING A MENTOR DURING STUDENT TEACHING

By
Linda Ludwig

THESIS

Submitted to
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study was to investigate student teachers who self-selected mentors during student teachings and the ways they perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors. The study examined the nature of the mentoring relationships with student teachers and their self-selected mentor. This mixed-methods research collected data using a five-point Likert scale and open-ended questions. Questionnaires were given to students during their 16-week student teaching placement. The common themes to emerge were that a self-selected mentor's greatest influences included: offering advice, teaching strategies, encouragement and being a role model. The nature of the self-selected mentoring relationships were reported as positive and had a lasting impact on the student teachers.

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This thesis follows the format prescribed by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Sixth Edition and the Educational Leadership Department.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Student Teacher: A university student who is placed in a cooperating teacher's classroom to practice teaching. This typically occurs during the final semester of college before a student graduates and becomes a certified teacher. Students can receive certification as elementary teachers (K-8 grade) or secondary education teachers (9-12 grade). Student teaching is offered through a university and is taken for credit.

Cooperating Teacher: A student teacher is placed in the teacher's classroom for an extended amount of time to practice their craft of teaching. The teacher has a classroom in a school setting in grades K-12.

University Supervisor: A person who supervises and provides feedback during the student teacher's final semester in a classroom. This person is associated with a university or hired by the university to supervise the student teacher. This person is a bridge between the university and the school district.

Self-Selected Mentor: A person who is chosen or selected to be a trusted advisor. A mentor's role is to provide support, guidance and assistance. A mentor is a role model who has experience and who is committed to helping a less experienced person become prepared for all aspects of life.

It is important to note that some researchers in studies use the term "mentor" to mean the same role as the cooperating teacher. For this research study, the two words were used independently and seen as two separate roles.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Through qualitative and quantitative research this study compared student teachers who self-selected mentors, outside of their assigned cooperating teacher, compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors and the ways they perceived support and professional advice. The research also examined the nature of the mentoring relationships with student teachers and their self-selected mentor. At the teacher preparation institution for this study, student teachers are not given the choice to select their cooperating teacher. Student teachers are assigned their cooperating teachers in partnership with school administrators and the University Field Office.

Transitioning from a university campus to being a student teacher in a school setting can be shocking to students. Corcoran (1981) stated that student teachers risk showing their vulnerability during student teaching. They try to appear “competent and confident” in the classroom while each school community has a different set of routines and procedures (p. 20). Uncertainty can shake a student teacher’s confidence from the beginning while they are trying to fit into the culture. Ingersoll (2003) studied why teachers left the teaching profession and found that 40 to 50% of beginning teachers left the profession. Teaching has been described as “sink or swim” and mentors can serve as role models to provide guidance, support and assistance during the transition.

Mentoring is a way to ease the transition for beginning teachers. A mentor is typically older with greater experience and seniority and serves the role of teacher, advisor and role model. One of the obvious differences between a cooperating teacher and a mentor is that the cooperating teacher has to evaluate the student teacher. The self-

selected mentor does not have to evaluate, but instead provides advice and guidance to the student teacher.

RESEARCH TOPIC

This study explored student teachers who self-selected mentors and the ways they perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors. The research also examined the nature of the mentoring relationships with student teachers and their self-selected mentor.

A self-selected mentor is a person who a student selects for professional advice and support. There are two general kinds of mentoring relationships, formal and informal. A formal mentoring relationship is when the organization assigns a mentor to a protégé. These structured programs are arranged where a mentor and a protégé are selected and matched through a formal process (Jackson et al., 2003). An informal mentoring relationship develops naturally where there is choice to decide who will be a good fit. Jackson et al. (2003) found that the interpersonal aspect in a relationship and having the right chemistry is critical to long-term mentoring success. Informal mentorships can occur through friendship, collegiality, teaching, or coaching. The informal mentoring relationship occurs because the mentor feels a certain level of comfort or chemistry with the protégé.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND JUSTIFICATION

The transition from being a student at a university to being a new teacher can be a reality shock (Weinstein, 1988). Student teachers often lack guidance and professional advice, outside of their assigned supervising teacher. Student teaching can be stressful and awkward, especially when it is time for a student teacher to take over the supervising

teacher's classroom. Often student teachers do not know who to go to for advice, to get honest feedback or to vent. Cooperating teachers are often not prepared for their role of working with student teachers and are hesitant about giving feedback. Mentoring strategies and developing a framework for effective teaching and communication practices can be helpful (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore student teachers who self-selected mentors and the ways they perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors. It examined the nature of the mentoring relationships with student teachers and their self-selected mentor. Student teachers were asked to identify a mentor, in addition to their assigned cooperating teacher. This study explored if teacher education programs should take an active role having student teachers select a mentor during the semester of student teaching. The mentor is an extra person for the student teachers to have as a support system during student teaching and later as they transition into their first teaching positions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In what ways do student teachers who self-selected mentors perceive support and professional advice compared to student teachers who do not self-select mentors?
What was the nature of the mentoring relationship of those who self-selected mentors?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework underpinning this study stems from Homer's *Odyssey* and the story of Mentor. Odysseus, king of Ithaca, fights in the Trojan War and leaves home for years. Mentor is the name of the person to whom Odysseus (a.k.a. Ulysses)

gives his son, Telemachus, when he set out on his famous journey called the odyssey. Mentor was Odysseus' wise counselor and tutor to Telemachus. Telemachus goes on a quest to search for his father. The myth says that the goddess Athena would assume Mentor's form for the purpose of giving advice to Odysseus (Shea, 1997). Mentor's name, with a lower-case "m," has passed into our language as a shorthand term for wise and trusted counselor, advisor, teacher and friend. Mentoring is where a person invests time and energy to help another person grow and learn (Shea, 1997).

The idea of teacher mentoring and professional development for educators began with Horace Mann (1796-1859) who is known as "The Father of Education." One of Mann's principals of public education was having well-trained, professional teachers in the classroom. Mann was born into poverty and educated himself by reading at the town library. At 20 years old Mann was admitted to Brown University. He practiced law and served on the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Education for all people, rich or poor, was a cause that was important to Mann (Cremins, 1957). Mann was passionate about teacher training. He proposed state-sponsored teacher training institutes and in 1838 established the first Normal School in Massachusetts. Mann recognized the importance of mentoring and having teachers gather together to share their ideas to continue improving their practice (Howe & Messerli, 1972).

Mentoring received attention in the early 1980's in an attempt to reform teaching and improve education. Education leaders and policy makers were concerned that teachers were leaving the profession, so they attempted to provide support by providing mentors in teachers' first years of teaching. Experienced teachers served as role models to help teachers who were new to the profession (Little, 1990). Consequently, many states

require beginning teachers to have a mentor during the first year or two of teaching for accountability. These induction programs are recognized by the state, require external monitoring and mentors are paid for their time and services (Abell et al. 1995).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

New teachers are entering a profession that has great turnover, few resources and high expectations. This is a very stressful time for beginning teachers in the first few years in the classroom. Schools are looking at ways to help new teachers stay in the profession. This research project was designed to investigate ways that student teachers who self-selected mentors perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors, and the nature of this mentoring relationship. This chapter addresses relevant research related to the topic of mentoring and student teaching. The review of literature will look at research in three areas. The literature reviewed the (1) transition from student to teacher (2) types of mentoring and (3) benefits of mentoring.

TRANSITION FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER

Corcoran (1981) discussed the transition shock of new teachers in a study where she followed one student teacher. The data were collected using weekly interviews and bi-weekly observations of beginning teachers during their first fourteen weeks in the classroom. The condition of “not knowing” is most stressful to student teachers that are trying to appear both knowledgeable and confident in an unfamiliar school setting. The student teacher did not know who to turn to for advice, began doubting her teaching

abilities, didn't ask for help and in return it led to her instead to do nothing, a kind of paralysis.

Student teachers usually do not have a voice about the details of their student teaching placement. Typically, somebody from the university matches student teachers with cooperating teachers in K-12 schools. Awaya et al. (2003) found that these matches of connecting student teachers to cooperating teachers is like a dating service and are often made based on availability of cooperating teachers not on teacher expertise.

Weasmer and Woods (2003) studied a group of cooperating teachers and their expectations of their student teachers. Some cooperating teachers required the student teacher to model after them, others immersed their student teacher from the very beginning, and some encouraged them to discover their own teaching style. Each student teacher had a different experience because of the role of the cooperating teacher.

Some cooperating teachers believe in a trial and error method and others prefer a more reflective approach to teaching. Nevertheless, it depends on the student teacher's previous experience and knowledge (Boudreau, 1999). Anderson (2007) agreed that cooperating teachers have a greater impact on student teachers than their university supervisor.

Most agree that student teaching is different from actual teaching. During student teaching there is advice and resources, during actual teaching these supports are gone. Actual teaching can be isolating and feel like a reality shock with so many responsibilities and not knowing where to turn. Many new teachers discover during actual teaching that they are not as prepared as they thought they were (Gaede, 1978).

“To admit to not knowing, is to risk being vulnerable. To pretend to know is also to risk error. The beginning teacher is trapped in a paradox” (Corcoran, 1981, p. 20).

Beginning teachers have to establish themselves professionally while still learning the art of teaching. Trying to establish a positive reputation, staying organized and preparing lessons can be a struggle for young professionals who have to assume the new roles of both adult and teacher (Gaede, 1978).

The teaching profession has a high rate of movement and attrition in the beginning years for new teachers. Ingesoll and Smith (2004) found that 3 out of 10 new teachers move to a different school or leave teaching altogether at the end of their first year. Schools are looking for creative ways to retain their beginning teachers. Consequently, the “sink or swim” mentality is causing schools to have high turnover and staffing problems.

Stokking, Leenders, De Jong and Van Tartwijk (2003) studied reducing shock and early dropout in the teaching profession in the Netherlands. The relevant factors that they found to help beginning teachers were mentoring in the schools and a gradual transition to teaching. A positive environment that encouraged reflection and open feedback led to greater independence and less shock.

No matter what kind of preparation a teacher receives, some aspects of teaching can be learned only on the job. No college course can teach a new teacher how to blend knowledge of students and knowledge of content in decisions about what to do in specific situations (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, p. 18).

DIFFERENT TYPES OF MENTORING

Villar and Strong, (2007) asked the question if mentoring is worth the money. It looked at beginning year teachers and a benefit-cost analysis. Mentoring programs can take many different forms. Some mentoring programs are an informal buddy system and other are highly trained mentors that are highly monitored. This study found that no matter what form of mentoring, there was a positive return to the school district, teachers and students on the original investment in mentoring programs.

There are two types of mentoring, formal and informal. Formal mentorships are typically arranged and monitored by an organization. Informal mentorships occur because of the quality of the relationship or similarities in personality. Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1992) said, “Mentors often select protégés with whom they can identify and with whom they are willing to develop and devote attention. Formal mentorships are typically not based on initial informal relationships or interactions” (p. 620). Formal mentorships typically take more time for the individuals to get to know one another and to develop trust. They also have pressure attached to it, because the organization is requiring the mentoring relationship and is part of their job responsibilities. Informal mentorships have a greater willingness to work together and have a higher “intrinsic” value (Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992).

Jackson et al. (2003) talked about the importance of “chemistry” in the mentoring relationship. Sharing similar interests and being on the same wavelength can lead to a great professional partnership. “The interpersonal aspect of the mentoring relationship can be especially problematic in programs that assign mentoring pairs” (p. 331). An effective mentoring relationship will see the potential in the mentee and offer support and

encouragement. A mentor will provide positive feedback and constructive criticism, along with being an advocate for the mentee (Jackson, et al. (2003). “The idea of mentoring, on the other hand, indicates a particular kind of personal relationship in which there is some degree of choice between the parties to it” (Awaya et al., 2003, p. 46). Successful mentoring is dependent on the willingness to be mentored on the part of the beginning teacher (Little, 1990).

Christensen and Conway (1991) researched self-selected mentors role in supporting beginning and new-to-district teachers. Both elementary and secondary level beginning and new-to-district teachers, who had a self-selected mentor, perceived the experience as valuable. “A self-selected mentor was defined as a wise and trusted counselor or teacher who was identified by personal choice rather than district assignment” (p. 22). The teachers chose mentors from a variety of backgrounds and grade levels. In all of the comparisons, the primary role of mentors was to provide answers and information.

Having mentors work with beginning teachers creates new career opportunities for experienced teachers. Russell and Russell (2011) said that experienced teachers found that mentoring students “enhanced and recharged their teaching and promoted self - reflection” (p. 35). However, we still know very little about how mentors interact with mentees or what mentees learn from mentors. What we do know, is that public education is complex and that teachers need support to continue learning their practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Ambrosetti and Dekkers (2000) explained that a mentoring relationship can break stereotypes, especially when it comes to age and experience. A mentoring relationship

could be a co-worker, a peer or someone who is the same age. The most important part is that each person knows the role that they play and that the relationship is valuable to both parties. Giebelhaus and Bowman (2002) explained that there is no uniformity in how mentoring teachers should be conducted, but agree that it should help young teachers' successfully enter the profession.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Mentoring arrangements in which a new teacher is provided support from a more experienced teacher have been seen as a way to improve teacher education and to retain talented teachers in the profession (Little, 1990). Mentoring is perhaps the most effective form of supporting the professional development of teachers (Hobson, Malderes, & Tomlinson, 2009). These benefits for beginning teachers, included reduced feelings of isolation, increased confidence and self-esteem, professional growth, and improved self-reflection and problem solving capacities. Equally important is the emotional and psychological support, which has been shown to be helpful in boosting the confidence of beginning teachers, enabling them to put difficult experiences into perspective, and increasing their morale and job satisfaction (Hobson, Malderes, & Tomlinson, 2009).

Evertson and Smithey (2000) found that having a mentor alone is not enough. The mentor needs to have knowledge and skills and be able to communicate well. The study that they conducted provided mentors with training new teachers in classroom management and instruction. For instance, the mentors helped beginning teachers focus on staying organized when starting the school year and talking through any concerns or issues from the beginning. "If we are to support new teachers as they learn to teach, then

attention to what mentors know and how they support protégés practice is of paramount importance” (p. 313).

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) suggested that after just five years of teaching between 40-50% of all beginning teachers leave the profession. The study found that teachers leave for school staffing reasons, family or personal reasons, to pursue another jobs and general dissatisfaction. What can schools do? It seems that schools need to find ways to retain their talent, not just hire more teachers. “The image that comes to mind is that of a bucket rapidly losing water because of holes in the bottom. Pouring more water into the bucket will not do any good if we do not patch the holes first” (p. 33). Raising teacher salaries is one effective strategy along with better working conditions, and more support from administration. Additionally, the study found that providing mentors is crucial and can make a difference to beginning teachers. The hope is that experienced teachers will serve as mentors and role models for the next generation of educators.

Israel, Kamman, McCray and Sindelar (2014) studied a school district where new teachers worked with mentors to help support them through the teacher evaluation process. This school adopted the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teachers which contains four domains: Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction and Professional Responsibilities The main goal of the mentoring program was to increase teacher competence and to reduce teacher attrition. “Mentors are critical to the induction of beginning teachers, and having a clear understanding of how they can support beginners in a holistic way is critical to mentor training and development and retention of novices” (p. 62).

The need to provide student teachers with general support and encouragement comes naturally to most teacher mentors. “Being a cooperating teacher or a mentor can enhance the personal and professional life of a veteran teacher in ways rarely found in more traditional forms of staff development, such as university courses or district in-service workshops” (Ganser, 2002, p. 385). For decades research has shown how mentors are a valuable resource to new teachers, but often overlooked is the positive effect it may have on veteran teachers. For instance, Yost (2002) found that teachers who mentored student interns became better communicators, increased their leadership skills and recognized that they had much to give. The mentors were empowered and described the experience as “rejuvenating” to their careers.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2002) looked at mentoring in the new millennium. They found that mentoring can help new teachers fit in and have a role model providing them advice and support. “After decades of assuming that teachers teach alone and get better only through their own individual trial-and-error, there is increasing commitment to the idea that all teachers are more effective when they can learn from and be supported by a strong community of colleagues” (p. 52).

In conclusion, the review of literature affirms that new teachers are entering a critical and often stressful time when they begin teaching. The research shows that having a mentor during the transition for a beginning teacher can be helpful. Mentoring can take several different forms. The two most common are formal mentoring where the mentor and protégé are assigned by the school or organization, and informal mentoring where the mentoring relationship happens when there is a chemistry that leads the mentor and protégé to form a relationship. Lastly, the benefits of mentoring include both the mentor

and the protégé. This can include feeling connected, ongoing support and professional confidence.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the methodological framework for this research project is outlined including the research design, the participants, the sample data collection, the data analysis procedures and the interview questions. Two clearly defined questions will serve as the basis for this research. The researcher will investigate student teachers who self-selected mentors and the ways they perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who do not self-select mentors, and the nature of this mentoring relationship. This study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative survey questions. The basic assumption is that the uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods, in combination, provides a better understanding of the research problem than either method by itself (Creswell, 2001).

PARTICIPANTS

The site for this study was Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Michigan located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This site was chosen because the researcher is the Director of Field Experiences at Northern Michigan University and teaches the student teaching seminar (ED450). The participants were Northern Michigan University students who student taught during the Fall 2015 semester and Winter 2016 semester. Student teaching is a full semester, 16 weeks long. Student teachers are placed throughout the country, including four states, New Zealand and Ireland. Northern Michigan University

requires student teachers to be enrolled in a Student Teaching Seminar (ED450) while student teaching. This course is offered in person for local student teachers and online for out-of-area student teachers. Participation in the seminar is mandatory.

Of the 103 student teachers enrolled in student teaching in the Fall 2015 and Winter 2016, 69.90% (72) agreed to participate in some capacity. Eighty (78%) of the student teachers were female and twenty-three (22%) were male. There were two subgroup categories of the student teachers, each of which was analyzed separately. Group A, student teachers who did not have self-selected mentors, included fifty (50) students. Group B, students who self-selected mentors, included 53 (53) students. Groups were divided by alphabetical order. Group A students were with last name ending in A-M. Group B students were with last names ending in N-Z. Participation was voluntary, and all volunteers signed consent forms. Student teachers provided their names in the survey, but the researcher made no attempts to contact the participants in the study.

DATA COLLECTION

Two weeks into the semester student teachers were invited to complete a questionnaire that contained Likert scale questions and open-ended questions. The quantitative data were obtained from student responses to fixed-form questions using a five (5) point Likert scale. Strongly Disagree = 1 Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5. The data were collected by sending an email to participants to an online link to Qualtrics. The quantitative data were open-ended questions that allowed deeper insight into participant experiences. This questionnaire was discussed during the in-person student teaching seminar and information was sent to students through email. Participants were given an introduction letter, and their consent to participate was

solicited (see Appendix A and Appendix B). The participants were asked to answer five open-ended survey questions. The data collection happened online using a Qualtrics survey. Email reminder notices were sent out to participants. The open-ended questions were developed for participants to write their perceptions about their student teaching experience.

Group A students were not asked to find self-selected mentors. Group B were asked to find self-selected mentors during student teaching. The letter that they received asked them to do the following:

- 1) Select a mentor that you are comfortable going to for professional advice during student teaching. The only requirement is that this person that you select is currently a teacher.
- 2) Contact the person that you have identified and ask them to be your mentor.
- 3) Engage in regular communication during your student teaching semester. This can be in the form of phone calls, text messages, emails or in person meetings.

During the last week of student teaching, all students were sent a final questionnaire. Group A, who did not have a mentor, completed a survey with ten fixed-form questions and three open-ended questions. Group B, who self-selected a mentor, completed the same 10 fixed-form questions and three open-ended questions and with an additional 11 questions about their experience with their mentor.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The mixed methods design of the study allowed the research to use both the data collection and the analysis processes to answer the two research questions. In what ways do student teachers who self-selected mentors perceive support and professional advice

compared to student teachers who do not self-select mentors? What was the nature of the mentoring relationship of those who self-selected mentors?

For the quantitative data, a statistical analysis was performed on two sets of data. Group A responses, students without mentors, were compared to Group B responses, students with self-selected mentors. The responses include two semesters of student teachers. Descriptive statistics were calculated, including the following: minimum values, maximum values, mean, variance, standard deviation and total responses.

For the qualitative data on the questionnaire, the researcher used an inductive process to narrow the data into a few themes. “Coding is a process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data (Creswell, 2011, p. 243). The researcher used a process of coding to develop themes and explain how students with or without self-selected mentors perceive quality support and professional advice during student teaching. Open coding is the process of identifying categories of information. Axial coding is selecting different categories and how they relate to other categories. Selective coding is when a theory is written based on the relationships of the selected categories (Creswell, 2011). The researcher identified themes and responses from students who self-selected a mentor and compared those who did not self-select a mentor. Next, the researcher created visual graphs comparing the data through the qualitative questions and open-ended survey responses.

Grounded theory is a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains a broad concept. The process included collecting data, identifying categories, making connections with these categories and then forming a theory that explains the process. In addition, triangulation is the process of collecting data from

multiple sources with different methods of collection and developing themes (Creswell, 2011).

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

All participants were given the same questionnaire in the first two weeks of student teaching. The researcher separated the student teachers into two groups, Groups A and B were formed. Group A was not asked to find self-selected mentors. Group B was asked to find self-selected mentors. A final survey was given during the last week of student teaching specific to Group A and Group B. See Appendix C for interview questions.

In conclusion, this mixed-methods study involved Northern Michigan University student teachers being divided into two groups. Group A did not self-select mentors and Group B had self-selected mentors. The student teachers answered questionnaires with Likert scale questions and open-ended questions during their student teaching semester. The researcher compared student teachers who self-selected mentors and the ways they perceived support and professional advice to student teachers who did not self-select mentors, and the nature of the mentoring relationship using qualitative and quantitative data.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this study, the researcher used a mixed methods design to analyze data and identify ways that student teacher who self-selected mentors perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who do not self-select mentors. Two groups were formed. Group A did not self-select mentors and Group B self-selected

mentors. The data collection included a questionnaire given to both groups of student teachers during the first two weeks of student teaching, and a questionnaire given during the final week of student teaching. The final questionnaires were different because Group B had questions about the nature of their self-selected mentors.

This chapter is broken into two sections to answer each research questions. Comparison data from Group A and Group B will answer the question, in what ways do student teachers who self-selected mentors perceive support and professional advice compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors? Questionnaire data from Group B answered the question, what was the nature of the mentoring relationship of those who self-selected mentors?

To answer the research question in what ways do student teachers who self-selected mentors perceive support and professional advice compared to student teachers who do not self-select mentors, students in Group A and Group B answered ten Likert scale questions. Part of the questionnaire asked students if their experience was positive, if they received enough feedback from their cooperating teacher and university supervisor, if they felt encouraged by their cooperating teacher and university supervisor and if they discussed their future career. Group B answered each one of these questions with a higher mean, compared to Group A. Another part of the questionnaire asked students if they acted differently during student teaching, if they were concerned about if they complained that it would negatively affect their evaluation, if the experience was stressful and if they felt isolated. Group B answered each of these questions with a lower mean, compared to Group A.

Three open-ended questions were given to Group A and Group B to identify ways that student teachers who self-selected mentors perceived professional advice and support compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors. When students were asked who they thought had the biggest influence on their student teaching experience, the majority indicated that their cooperating teacher had the biggest influence, followed by university supervisors. Group B indicated that their self-selected mentor had an influence. If student teachers had the opportunity to student teach again, most said they would not change anything or wish they had had the courage to be themselves early. One student said, "I would show who I am as a person sooner. I feel like I could have come out of my shell sooner with my students and colleagues." Group A indicated that they would have wanted to have better classroom management during their student teaching experience. When asked who they would go to for professional advice and support when they receive their first teaching job, the majority of participants in Group A and Group B, said their cooperating teacher or their professors. Group B indicated they would reach out to their self-selected mentor for professional advice during their first teaching job.

Table 1: Comparison Data – Group A and Group B

Question	Group A - Mean <i>Student teachers without mentors</i>	Group B – Mean <i>Student teachers with self-selected mentors</i>
My student teaching experience was positive.	4.5	4.78
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.	4.35	4.63
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.	4.18	4.34
I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.	4.65	4.71
I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.	4.55	4.58
I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.	4.5	4.72
During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently than I would have if it were my own classroom.	3.00	2.56
I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.	2.23	1.84
Student teaching was stressful.	3.60	2.94
I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.	2.15	1.91

Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?)

The response of cooperating teacher received 85% of participants from Group A and 78.12% from Group B. The response of university supervisor received 10% of

participants from Group A and 15.62% from Group B. The response of mentors received 2.5% from Group A and 34.36% from Group B.

If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently?

The majority of participants in Group A and Group B said that they would do nothing differently in their student teaching experience. Some participants stated they would volunteer more in the school and wish they had the courage to “do my own thing” earlier in the experience. Classroom management concerns received 10.25% from Group A and only 2.56% from Group B. “I would show who I am as a person sooner. I feel like I could have come out of my shell sooner with the students and colleagues.”

When you have your first teaching job, whom will you go to for professional advice and support?

The response of cooperating teacher received 50% from Group A and 54.83% from Group B. The response of professor received 42.5% from Group A and 19.35% from Group B. The response of mentor received 7.5% from Group A and 38.70% from Group B.

To identify the nature of the mentoring relationship, this section reviews the eleven open-ended questions asked to Group students who had self-assigned mentors. The student responses indicated that they chose mentors from every grade level from pre-kindergarten to college. The majority of students chose mentors at their same grade level who taught in the same school. The most popular form of communication was face-to-face along with emailing/texting. Students communicated daily or weekly with their self-selected mentor. All students said that they discussed their future career with their mentor and will stay in touch with their mentor after student teaching for professional advice.

The mentor's greatest influence on participants, included: offering advice, teaching strategies, encouragement and being a role model. One student said, "She not only passed on her teaching strategies and techniques but her positive attitude helped me feel confident in my teaching abilities as well."

Who was your mentor?

Participants wrote down the name of the person who they asked to be their mentor during student teaching. Of the 32 responses, 78.12% identified their mentor as a female, 18.75% identified their mentor as a male. One participant wrote, "a former teacher."

What grade level does your mentor teach?

Of the 32 responses, 37.5% said their mentor taught grades K-6, 25% said their mentor taught grades 6-8, and 21.87% said that their mentor taught grades 9-12. Only 9.37% of the participants said their mentors taught college.

What school is your mentor located? Include city and state.

The participants identified that 75% of the mentors were located in Michigan, 12.25% in Michigan and 6.25% in Colorado. One mentor was identified as living in China. This student was an exchange student at Northern Michigan University and she chose her mother as her mentor who was a former teacher.

Does your mentor teach in the same school as you?

Of the 32 participants, 68.75% taught in the same school. 31.25% did not teach in the same school.

Does your mentor teach the same group level as you?

Of the 32 participants, 68.75% taught the same grade level. 31.25% did not teach the same grade level.

Why did you select your mentor?

Of the participants, 34.37% said that they chose their mentor because they were their cooperating teacher and 34.37% said it was because of their knowledge. “I asked my cooperating teacher because I saw her regularly and she has many years of teaching experience and she is a great role model to learn from!” Other participants said they chose their mentor because of the rapport (18.75%) and their positive support (12.5%). “I always felt a sense of comfort and support. She truly has a kind heart and I knew she would always guide me in the right direction.” A few participants said that it was because of the teacher’s reputation (6.25%).

How did you communicate with your mentor?

Participants answered this question by listing a multiple methods of ways that they communicated with their mentor. The majority of the participants said that they communicated with their mentor mostly face-to-face. Other participants said that it was through email, text message or phone.

How regularly did you communicate with your mentor during student teaching?

Of the 31 participants, 64.51% said that they communicated daily with their mentor and 19.35% of the participants communicated weekly.

Will you stay in communication with your mentor after student teaching for professional advice?

Of the 31 participants, 100% stated that they would stay in touch with their mentor after student teaching for professional advice. “She is someone I will turn to for the remainder of my career and life.” Another student said, “Absolutely! She has already provided me with great professional advice.”

Did you discuss your future career with your mentor?

Of the 31 participants, 100% discussed their future career with their mentor. “He helped me look for job openings and figure out what I needed to do get my teaching license.” A participant said, “I spent a lot of time with her preparing for my interview because she had previously been a part of the interview panel.”

How did your mentor influence you?

The top four responses to this question were that mentors offered advice, teaching strategies, encouragement and being a role model. One student teacher said, “She not only passed on her teaching strategies and techniques but her positive attitude helped me feel confident in my teaching abilities as well.” Another participant said, “She kept me sane. She validated all my fears and problems by admitting that she has the same problems. She’s shown me that teaching is hard, but worth it with the right focus and attitude.”

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The questions addressed in this study were: In what ways do student teachers who self-selected mentors perceive support and professional advice compared to student teachers who do not self-select mentors? What was the nature of the mentoring relationship of those who self-selected mentors? This research study used a mixed methods design with student teachers from Northern Michigan University. Participants took questionnaires during the first two weeks of student teaching and during the final weeks of student teaching. The questionnaire included Likert-type questions and short answer questions. Student teachers were broken into two groups. Group A was not asked

to do anything additional, just take the two questionnaires. Group B was asked to self-select a mentor and take the two questionnaires. The common themes to emerge were that a self-selected mentor's greatest influences included: offering advice, teaching strategies, encouragement and being a role model. Overall, the nature of the mentoring relationships were identified as positive and had an impact on the student teachers.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study involve Group B, who was asked in an email to self-select a mentor during student teaching. The email gave Group B a directive, though voluntarily, to ask someone who was a teacher to be a mentor and engage in regular communication throughout the student teaching experience. The researcher did not ask if they already had a person who they consult with regularly for support and advice. The email may have been misinterpreted to mean that they had to choose someone in addition to who they already have as part of their support system. Further, the researcher did not consider if Group A had a chosen mentor in spite of being in the control group.

Question number two on the questionnaire was poorly written. The question asked, "imagine yourself in five years from now, who do you think you would go to for professional advice and feedback?" The student teachers' responses included answers such as, "I think I will go to my future colleagues for advice" and "I imagine I will still be going to my NMU peers, if we are still in touch" I suppose this is the most accurate answer I can write considering I cannot tell the future." The question looked into the future and received unclear answers from participants.

Furthermore, a limitation of the study may be that the researcher of this study is the Director of Field Experiences at Northern Michigan University. The researcher knows

the student teachers because of making the student teachers' placements and conducting the student teaching seminars during the semester.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to research student teachers who self-selected mentors during student teaching and identify ways that they perceived support and professional advice compared to student teachers who did not self-select mentors. The study also examined the nature of the mentoring relationships. The common themes to emerge were that a self-selected mentor's greatest influences included: offering advice, teaching strategies, encouragement and being a role model. The nature of the mentoring relationships were identified as positive and had an impact on the student teachers.

These findings were consistent with the research of Russell and Russell (2011) who suggested having a mentor would help future teachers be prepared for the real world of teaching. The open-ended questionnaire responses offered insight into why the student teachers selected their mentors. One student wrote, "He has been teaching for 30+ years and has a wealth of knowledge. Plus, we have similar personalities." Another student wrote, "I always felt a sense of comfort and support. She truly has a kind heart and I knew she would always guide me in the right direction."

When given a choice, student teachers will choose a mentor with whom they are comfortable with and have the knowledge that they are seeking. Awaya et al. (2003) looked at what made the mentoring relationship unique. What they found was that the mentoring focused on the relationship. "The mentoring journey involves the building of an equal relationship characterized by trust, the sharing of expertise, moral support, and knowing when to help and when to sit back" (p. 55).

Student teachers have many people who influence them during student teaching. The study found that cooperating teachers had a profound impact on student teachers, but not all of them. When asked who had the biggest influence on them during student teaching, the top response was the cooperating teachers, but several students listed their mentors, university supervisors, professors and peers. One student said, “My cooperating teacher during my first placement, as well as the building principals were the biggest influence.” Another student highlighted her NMU professors. “My biggest influence was my professors from NMU because I was able to implement their teaching into my lessons.”

Often students don’t know who to go to for professional advice when transitioning into teaching, but a mentor can help ease this transition. Students who self-selected mentors during student teaching answered two questions with a 100% response rate, the two questions were: Will you stay in communication with your mentor after student teaching for professional advice? Did you discuss your future career with your mentor? One of the students said, “She is someone I will turn to for the remainder of my career and life.” Another student said, “I spent a lot of time with her preparing for my interview because she had previously been a part of the interview panel.” Students with self-selected mentors identified that the greatest influences included: offering advice, teaching strategies, encouragement and being a role model.

In conclusion, having student teachers self-select mentors during student teaching has the potential of great, long-term, positive affects both professionally and personally. Educators are leaving the teaching profession at an alarming rate and it is worth exploring the possibility in hopes of helping teachers stay in the profession. Adding self-selected

mentors to teacher education programs would not cost the program anything and has the potential of filling a gap that is currently unfilled with our new teachers. A mentor is an extra person for the student teacher to have as part of their support system to offer advice, encouragement and to be a role model. Having a mentor can bridge the gap during student teaching and as they transition into their first teaching position.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a number of areas for future research that were uncovered through this study. The literature review only found one study by Christensen and Conway (1991) that researched self-selected mentors and beginning and new-to-district teachers. No studies have been done specifically with student teachers. First, a study should be conducted with a larger sample size of student teachers choosing a mentor, in addition to their cooperating teacher. This study would not be a comparison study, it would ask all student teachers to find a mentor.

Second, a longitudinal study should be conducted on participants in Group B who self-selected mentors during student teaching. It would be helpful to follow the student teachers that have received jobs and are in their first years of teaching. Do they still have a relationship with their mentor who they selected as a student teacher? Are they still in the teaching profession? Did a self-selected mentor result in fewer teachers leaving the profession after three years?

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APPENDIX A. Survey Questions

Questionnaire for Student Teachers
(Same survey was given to Group A and Group B)

1. To whom do you go to get advice about teaching? How would you describe your relationship with this person?
2. Imagine yourself in five years from now, who do you think you would go to for professional advice and feedback?
3. Thinking about the upcoming student teaching experience, who do you think that you will go to and vent your frustrations?
4. List three areas of concern that you have upon entering student teaching.
5. Name and Email Address

Questionnaire for Student Teachers
Group A –students who did NOT have a self-selected mentor

Use the following scale to answer the questions that follows:
Strongly Disagree = 1 Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5

1. My student teaching experience was positive.
2. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.
3. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.
4. I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.
5. I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.
6. I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.
7. During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently that I would have if it were my own classroom.
8. I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.

9. Student teaching was stressful.
10. I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.

Open-Ended Questions:

11. Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?)
12. If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently?
13. When you have your first teaching job, who will you go to for professional advice and support?

Questionnaire for Student Teachers
Group B – students who had a self-selected mentor

1. Who was your mentor?
2. What grade level does your mentor teach?
3. What school is your mentor located? Include city and state.
4. Does your mentor teach in the same school as you?
5. Does your mentor teach the same group level as you?
6. Why did you select your mentor?
7. How did you communicate with your mentor?
8. How regularly did you communicate with your mentor during student teaching?
9. Will you stay in communication with your mentor after student teaching for professional advice?
10. Did you discuss your future career with your mentor?
11. How did your mentor influence you?

Use the following scale to answer the questions that follows:
Strongly Disagree = 1 Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5

1. My student teaching experience was positive.
2. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.
3. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.
4. I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.
5. I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.
6. I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.
7. During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently than I would have if it were my own classroom.
8. I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.
9. Student teaching was stressful.
10. I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.

Open-Ended Questions:

11. Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?)
12. If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently?
13. When you have your first teaching job, who will you go to for professional advice and support?

APPENDIX B. Emails sent to student teachers

Group A-Questionnaire Email Student teachers who did NOT have a self-selected mentor

Dear Student Teachers:

We are writing to invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore student teachers and where they seek professional advice during student teaching.

We are inviting you to be in this study because you are student teaching this semester at Northern Michigan University. Approximately 50 students will take part in this study. If you agree to participate, we would like you to complete two surveys this semester. The questions will ask you rate your student teacher experience and answer free response questions. You are free not to answer questions. The surveys will be given as part of the ED450 student teaching seminar. https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_d4pQtOZ2d76gebP

We will keep the information you provide confidential; however, federal regulatory agencies and the Northern Michigan University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. If we write a report about this study we will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified.

There are no known risks from being in this study, and you will not benefit personally. However we hope that others may benefit in the future from what we learn as a result of this study. You will not have any costs for being in this research study. You will not be paid for being in this research study. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to be in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify. If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Brian Cherry of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300) bcherry@nmu.edu. Any questions you have regarding the nature of this research project will be answered by the principal researcher who can be contacted as follows: Linda Ludwig (906-227-1881) lludwig@nmu.edu

By clicking on the link https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_d4pQtOZ2d76gebP you agree that you have read the "Informed Consent Statement." The nature, risks, demands, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without incurring ill will or negative consequences. I also understand that this informed consent document will be kept separate from the data collected in this project to maintain anonymity (confidentiality). Access to this document is restricted to the principle investigators.

Thank you.

Linda Ludwig
Director of Field Experiences
Northern Michigan University
www.nmu.edu/education
lludwig@nmu.edu

Group B Questionnaire Email
Student teachers who did have a self-selected mentor

Dear Student Teachers:

We are writing to invite you to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to explore student teachers choosing their own mentors, outside of their assigned cooperating teacher and university supervisor. If you wish you to participate you will be doing the following:

- *Select a mentor that you are comfortable going to for professional advice during student teaching. The only requirement is that this person that you select is currently a teacher.
- *Contact the person that you have identified and ask them to be your mentor.
- *Engage in regular communication during your student teaching semester. This can be in the form of phone calls, text messages, emails or in person meetings.

We are inviting you to be in this study because you are student teaching this semester at Northern Michigan University. Approximately 50 students will take part in this study. If you agree to participate, we would like you to complete two surveys this semester. The questions will ask you rate your student teacher experience and answer free response questions. You are free not to answer questions. The surveys will be given as part of the ED450 student teaching seminar. https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_d4pQtOZ2d76gebP

We will keep the information you provide confidential; however, federal regulatory agencies and the Northern Michigan University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. If we write a report about this study we will do so in such a way that you cannot be identified.

There are no known risks from being in this study, and you will not benefit personally. However we hope that others may benefit in the future from what we learn as a result of this study. You will not have any costs for being in this research study. You will not be paid for being in this research study. Taking part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to be in this study, or if you stop participating at any time, you won't be penalized or lose any benefits for which you otherwise qualify. If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Brian Cherry of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300) bcherry@nmu.edu. Any questions you have regarding the nature of this research project will be answered by the principal researcher who can be contacted as follows: Linda Ludwig (906-227-1881) lludwig@nmu.edu

By clicking on the link https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_d4pQtOZ2d76gebP, you agree that you have read the "Informed Consent Statement." The nature, risks, demands, and benefits of the project have been explained to me. I understand that I may ask questions and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without incurring ill will or negative consequences. I also understand that this informed consent document will be kept separate from the data collected in this project to maintain anonymity (confidentiality). Access to this document is restricted to the principle investigators.

Thank you.

Linda Ludwig
Director of Field Experiences
Northern Michigan University

Group B Questionnaire Email
Student teachers who did have a self-selected mentor

Dear Student Teachers:

Congratulations on completing student teaching. As a follow up to my research study, please complete the Post Student Teaching Survey. The purpose of my study is to explore student teachers and where they seek professional advice during student teaching.

https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2ofhlFYKzTWX7Uh

Please complete the survey by Wednesday, December 9.

Regards,
Linda Ludwig

Group A Questionnaire Email
Student teachers who did NOT have a self-selected mentor

Dear Student Teachers:

Congratulations on completing student teaching. As a follow up to my research study, please complete the Post Student Teaching Survey. The purpose of my study is to explore student teachers choosing their own mentors and where they seek professional advice during student teaching.

https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8BQvoYqe2obAigJ

Please complete the survey by Wednesday, December 9.

Regards,
Linda Ludwig

APPENDIX C. Interview Questions

Questionnaire for Student Teachers. (Group A and Group B)

1. To whom do you go to get advice about teaching? How would you describe your relationship with this person?
2. Imagine yourself in five years from now, who do you think you would go to for professional advice and feedback?
3. Thinking about the upcoming student teaching experience, who do you think that you will go to and vent your frustrations?
4. List three areas of concern that you have upon entering student teaching.

Questionnaire for Group A - Student Teachers who *did not* have a self-selected mentor.

Use the following scale to answer the questions that follows:

Strongly Disagree = 1 Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5

1. My student teaching experience was positive.
2. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.
3. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.
4. I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.
5. I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.
6. I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.
7. During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently that I would have if it were my own classroom.

8. I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.
9. Student teaching was stressful.
10. I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.
11. Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?)
12. If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently?
13. When you have your first teaching job, who will you go to for professional advice and support?

Questionnaire for Student Teachers for Group B. Student teachers *who had* a self-selected mentor

1. Who was your mentor?
2. What grade level does your mentor teach?
3. What school is your mentor located? Include city and state.
4. Does your mentor teach in the same school as you?
5. Does your mentor teach the same group level as you?
6. Why did you select your mentor?
7. How did you communicate with your mentor?
8. How regularly did you communicate with your mentor during student teaching?
9. Will you stay in communication with your mentor after student teaching for professional advice?
10. Did you discuss your future career with your mentor?

11. How did your mentor influence you?

Use the following scale to answer the questions that follows:

Strongly Disagree = 1 Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5

1. My student teaching experience was positive.
2. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.
3. I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.
4. I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.
5. I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.
6. I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.
7. During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently than I would have if it were my own classroom.
8. I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.
9. Student teaching was stressful.
10. I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.
11. Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?)
12. If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently?

13. When you have your first teaching job, who will you go to for professional advice and support?

APPENDIX D: Data Results

Questionnaire For Student Teachers Results (Group A & Group B)

Table 2: To whom do you go to get advice about teaching? How would you describe your relationship with this person? (Group A & B, N=54)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Cooperating Teacher	35	64.81%
Professor	15	27.77%
Colleagues	15	27.77%
Family	13	24.07%
Peers	9	16.66%
Former Teachers	6	11.11%
Administration	1	1.85%

“I get most advice from my cooperating teacher. She and I have a very good relationship.”

“I go to a number of people for advice – my cooperating teacher, my parents (who are both teachers), and other classroom teachers.

“I go to my previous NMU professors, she is an incredible teacher with a wealth of knowledge, and she is an amazing resource.”

Table 3: Imagine yourself in five years from now, who do you think you would go to for professional advice and feedback. (Group A & B, N=54)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Future colleagues	24	44.44%
Future Administrators	14	25.92%
Cooperating teacher	11	20.37%
Peers	8	14.81%
Professors	6	11.11%
Family	6	11.11%
Former teachers	4	7.40%
Online resources	1	1.85%
Professional development	1	1.85%

“I imagine myself going to my new colleagues that have more experience than me for professional advice and feedback.”

“Five years from now, I believe that I will contact my cooperating teacher for feedback. I will also contact my peers and teaching colleagues since we will all be going through the same things together.”

“I would hope at my future school I will have a good relationship with my administrators.

“I think the main source for professional advice will be my co-workers.”

“My soon to be mother-in-law who has been teaching for 25 years.”

Table 4: Thinking about the upcoming student teaching experience, whom do you think that you will go to and vent your frustrations? (Group A & B, N=54)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Peers	26	48.14%
Family	21	38.88%
Cooperating teacher	19	35.18%
Professor	8	14.81%
Colleagues	4	7.40%
Former teacher	1	1.85%

“I often vent to other student teachers because they are experiencing many of the same problems and questions.”

“With any frustrations I’ve experiences so far within my student teaching experience, I vent to my cooperating teacher and family/friends.”

“I have written to a group of other student teachers through private messaging. We tell stories, ask questions and get advice.”

“My NMU professor. She gives me thoughtful responses and makes me feel like I can get through student teaching and encourages me.”

Table 5: List three areas of concern that you have upon entering student teaching.
 (Group A & B, N=52)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Classroom management	21	40.38%
Relationships with colleagues	12	23.07%
Creating creative lessons	11	21.15%
Feeling unprepared	9	17.30%
Planning	7	13.46%
Student relationships	6	11.53%
Time	6	11.53%
Parent communication	5	9.61%
Money	3	5.76%
Jobs after graduating	3	5.76%
Pacing	2	3.84%
Finding “my style”	2	3.84%
Confidence	2	3.84%

“How to build the relationships with other teachers in the building. Classroom management. How to deal with students who have low motivation?”

“Being unprepared, classroom management, finding work after student teaching.”

“When will I take over the classroom? Do I teach the same style as my cooperating teacher or do I incorporate my own teaching style in my lessons.” When do I need to start looking for jobs?”

“Burnout, creating meaningful relationships with my students, understanding all the resources available to me.”

“I am concerned that I will struggle with the balance of maintaining classroom discipline and creating a fun and positive atmosphere.”

“The fear of not being able to handle planning and implementing for the entire day/week. Not knowing effective classroom management skills. Lacking in my creativity and instruction with certain subjects, such as math.”

“Working with parents has been an area of concern for me throughout this experience.”

“Classroom management, time management, relationships with parents.”

“How will I please my cooperating teacher? How will I foster respect in my classroom, being the newest person in the room?”

Table 6: Questionnaire Results (Group A) *Students who did not have mentors.*

The questionnaire asks 10 questions which were to be answered using a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. Table 5 shows the results.

GROUP A –Questionnaire Results. <i>Student teachers who did not have mentors. N=40</i>		
Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
My student teaching experience was positive.	4.5	0.68
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.	4.35	0.92
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.	4.18	0.84
I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.	4.65	0.77
I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.	4.58	0.71
I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.	4.5	0.75
During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently that I would have if it were my own classroom.	3.00	1.24
I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.	2.23	1.12
Student teaching was stressful.	3.60	1.01
I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.	2.15	1.23

Table 7: Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?)

(Group A, N=40)

Themes	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Cooperating Teacher	34	85%
Peers	5	12.5%
University Supervisor	4	10%
Professor	2	5%
Former Teachers	2	5%
Colleagues	2	5%
Mentor	1	2.5%
Principal	1	2.5%
Family	1	2.5%

“My cooperating teacher. She was always willing to talk about anything, even offering advice about things not related to school.”

I think my cooperating teacher during my first placement, as well as the building principals were the biggest influence.”

“My cooperating teacher an my friends who were student teaching.”

“I knew I could go to my University Supervisor with any questions or concerns in my student teaching.”

“My professors from NMU because I as able to implement their teachings into my lessons.”

Table 8: If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently? (Group A, N=39)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Nothing	7	17.94%
Classroom management	4	10.25%
Time management	2	5.12%
Build relationships with students	3	7.69%
Have a split placement, not full	3	7.69%
Done “my own” thing	3	7.69%
Taken more risks with lessons	3	7.69%
More parent contact	2	5.12%
Do a local placement	2	5.12%
Relax	2	5.12%
Volunteer	1	2.56%

“I would go back and tell myself not to be so nervous.”

“I might plan and manage my time differently.”

“Be more vocal on taking on more responsibility.”

“Try to build a relationship with y students first before eve getting upset at the student.”

“I would have not gone out of the area. I think my friends who stayed in area had a much better support system.”

“I’m not sure I would change a thing.”

“I would try to get to know the students quicker, and let my guard down a little.”

Table 9: When you have your first teaching job, whom will you go to for professional advice and support? (Group A, N=40)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Cooperating teachers	20	50%
Professors	17	42.5%
Colleagues	11	27.5%
Family	7	17.5%
Peers	7	17.5%
University supervisor	5	12.5%
Principal	4	10%
Mentor	3	7.5%
Former teacher	1	2.5%

“When I get my first teaching job, I will go back to my cooperating teachers and professors for advice.”

“I will go to my fellow NMU graduates of the education program along with my fellow teachers at the school.”

“I will go to my mom and aunt, who are both teachers.”

“My cooperating teacher and other teachers who are already in the profession.”

“I know that I can ask any of my previous professors for help. I do not regret not asking for help during my student teaching as I know I would only benefit from what they would have to say. I also know that I am able to contact my cooperating teacher. She has been nothing but helpful.”

Post-Survey Questionnaire Results (Group B) *Students who had self-selected mentors*

Who was your mentor? (Group B, N=32)

Participants wrote down the name of the person who they asked to be their mentor during student teaching. Of the 32 responses, 78.12% identified their mentor as a female, 18.75% identified their mentor as a male. One participant wrote, “a former teacher.”

Table 10: What grade level does your mentor teach? (Group B, N=32)

<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of all responses</u>
K-6	12	37.5%
6-8	8	25%
9-12	7	21.87%
College	3	9.37%
Retired	1	3.12%
Other	1	3.12

Table 11: What school is your mentor located? Include city and state. (Group B, N=32)

<u>State/Country</u>	<u>Number of Responses</u>	<u>Percentage of all responses</u>
Michigan	24	75%
Wisconsin	4	12.25%
Colorado	2	6.25%
China	1	3.12%

The mentor who was located in China was an exchange student at Northern Michigan University who chose her mother as her mentor.

Does your mentor teach in the same school as you? (Group B, N=32)

Of the 32 participants, 68.75 (22) taught in the same school. 31.25% (10) did not teach in the same school.

Does your mentor teach the same group level as you? (Group B, N=32)

Of the 32 participants, 68.75 (22) taught the same grade level. 31.25% (10) did not teach the same grade level.

Table 12: Why did you select your mentor? (Group B, N=32)

Themes	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Was my cooperating teacher	11	34.37%
Knowledge	11	34.37%
Rapport	6	18.75%
Positive support	4	12.5%
Family	3	9.37%
Reputation	2	6.25%

“He has been teaching for 30+ years and has a wealth of knowledge. Plus, we have similar personalities.”

“She was an inspiration to me in the past. Her teaching style encouraged me to become myself.”

“I always felt a sense of comfort and support. She truly has a kind heart and I knew she would always guide me in the right direction.”

“Because of her reputation and his teaching methodology.”

“She’s in the room next door, and quickly I noticed that we connected.”

“She started as my cooperating teacher and ended up being my lifeline.”

“I asked my cooperating teacher because I saw her regularly and she has many years of teaching experience and she is a great role model to learn from!”

“She is versatile in her knowledge of teaching. She is supportive and we work well together.”

Table 13: How did you communicate with your mentor? (Group B, N=31)

<u>Communication Method</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Face to Face	26	83.87%
Email	17	54.83%
Text Message	17	54.83%
Phone	10	32.20%
Skype/Facetime	3	9.67%

Participants answered this question by listing a multiple methods of ways that they communicated with their mentor.

Table 14: How regularly did you communicate with your mentor during student teaching? (Group B, N=31)

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Daily	20	64.51%
Weekly	6	19.35%
Every couple weeks	2	2%
Monthly	1	3.22%

Will you stay in communication with your mentor after student teaching for professional advice? (Group B, N=31)

Of the 31 participants, 100% (31) stated that they would stay in touch with their mentor after student teaching for professional advice.

“She is someone I will turn to for the remainder of my career and life.”

“Absolutely! She has already provided me with great professional advice.”

“Absolutely! She helped me significantly in securing my first job outside of college.”

“YES, most definitely”

Did you discuss your future career with your mentor? (Group B, N=31)

Of the 31 participants, 100% (31) discussed their future career with their mentor.

“He helped me look for job openings and figure out what I needed to do get my teaching license.”

“We even talked about my long distance future – possibly teaching college someday.”

“I spent a lot of time with her preparing for my interview because she had previously been a part of the interview panel.”

“We talked about how to go about networking and making good impressions.”

“Yes, almost every week.”

Table 15: How did your mentor influence you? (Group B, N=31)

Themes	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Advice	10	32.25%
Teaching strategies	10	32.25%
Role model	9	29.03%
Encouragement	9	29.03%
Positive attitude	6	19.35%
Classroom management	6	19.35%
Future job opportunities	1	3.22%

“She encouraged me when I was uncertain about what I was doing.”

“She not only passed on her teaching strategies and techniques but her positive attitude helped me feel confident in my teaching abilities as well.”

“My mentor influences me most of all in my decision to become a teacher.”

“She helped me emotionally, professionally, artistically, and everything in between.”

“She first influences me by her differentiated way of teaching when I was her student and her enthusiasm and care for each student’s education.”

“She encouraged me and has been a shoulder to lean on and person to let off some steam with.”

“She kept me sane. She validated all my fears and problems by admitting that she has the same problems. She’s shown me that teaching is hard, but worth it with the right focus and attitude.”

Table 16: GROUP B Student teachers who self-selected a mentor
N=32

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
My student teaching experience was positive.	4.78	0.42
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.	4.63	0.66
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.	4.34	1.07
I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.	4.71	0.59
I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.	4.55	0.93
I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.	4.72	0.58
During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently than I would have if it were my own classroom.	2.56	1.22
I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.	1.84	1.05
Student teaching was stressful.	2.94	1.19
I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.	1.91	1.00

Table 17: Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?) (Group B, N=32)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Cooperating Teacher	25	78.12%
Mentor	11	34.37%
University Supervisor	5	15.62%
Colleagues	2	6.25%
Peers	1	3.12%
Principal	1	3.12%

“Definitely my cooperating teacher!”

“My university supervisor was a big supporter and I felt I could talk to him about anything.”

“My mentor and university supervisor.”

“My mentor, my cooperating teacher and the administration had the biggest influence on my during my student teaching.”

Table 18: If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently? (Group B, N=31)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Nothing	10	32.25%
Done “my own” thing	4	12.90%
Volunteer	3	9.67%
Kept a journal/took pictures	3	9.67%
Build relationships with students	2	6.45%
Relax	1	2.56%
Do a local placement	1	2.56%
Time management	1	2.56%
Classroom management	1	2.56%
Do a split placement, not full	1	2.56%
Asked more questions	1	2.56%
More parent contact	1	2.56%
Created back up lessons	1	2.56%
More grading	1	2.56%

“Honestly, I do not think that I would do anything differently.” I had a great placement with a wonderful cooperating teacher.”

“I would have stayed in the area. It was incredibly difficult to be out of the area when there were issues.”

“I would show who I am as a person sooner. I feel like I could have come out of my shell sooner with the students and colleagues.”

“I would push myself more and allow myself to break out of my cooperating teacher’s old and begin forming my own.”

“I would be more involved with volunteer opportunities.”

“Establish better classroom management from day one.”

“I’d try to connect with every student.”

Table 19: When you have your first teaching job, whom will you go to for professional advice and support? (Group B, N=31)

<u>Themes</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Cooperating Teacher	17	54.83%
Colleagues	16	51.61%
Mentor	12	38.70%
Principal	7	22.58%
Professor	6	19.35%
University Supervisor	3	9.67%
Peers	3	9.67%
Family	3	9.67%

“Both my cooperating teacher and my mentor.”

“My mentor, other teachers in the building, and my cooperating teacher.”

“Mentor, colleagues, principal, and friends.”

“My current more, hopefully keep in contact with my cooperating teacher.”

“I will go to fellow staff at the school that I am hired at to get an understanding of the expectations and rules of the school.”

Summary of Data

Table 20: Comparison Data – Group A and Group B

Question	Group A - Mean <i>Student teachers without mentors</i>	Group B – Mean <i>Student teachers with self-selected mentors</i>
My student teaching experience was positive.	4.5	4.78
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my cooperating teacher.	4.35	4.63
I received enough feedback during my student teaching placement from my university supervisor.	4.18	4.34
I felt encouraged by my cooperating teacher.	4.65	4.71
I felt encouraged by my university supervisor.	4.55	4.58
I discussed my future teaching career with my cooperating teacher.	4.5	4.72
During my student teaching experience, I behaved differently that I would have if it were my own classroom.	3.00	2.56
I was concerned that if I complained to my cooperating teacher it would reflect negatively on my evaluation.	2.23	1.84
Student teaching was stressful.	3.60	2.94
I felt isolated during my student teaching experience.	2.15	1.91

Table 21: Who do you think had the biggest influence on you during your student teaching experience? (ex: cooperating teacher, university supervisor, mentor, other?) This was an open ended question where participants listed several answers.

(Comparing Group A & Group B)

Themes	Group A	Group B
	<i>Number or responses/ Percentage of responses</i>	<i>Number or responses/ Percentage of responses</i>
Cooperating Teacher	34 responses - 85%	25 responses – 78.12%
Peers	5 responses - 12.5%	1 response – 3.12%
University Supervisor	4 responses - 10%	5 responses – 15.62%
Professor	2 responses - 5%	0 responses – 0%
Former Teachers	2 responses - 5%	0 responses – 0%
Colleagues	2 responses - 5%	2 responses – 6.25%
Mentor	1 response – 2.5%	11 responses – 34.37%
Principal	1 response – 2.5%	1 response – 3.12%
Family	1 response – 2.5%	0 responses – 0%

Table 22: If you had the opportunity to student teach again, what would you do differently?

(Comparing Group A & Group B)

Themes	Group A	Group B
	<i>Number or responses/ Percentage of responses</i>	<i>Number or responses/ Percentage of responses</i>
Nothing	7 responses – 17.94%	10 responses – 32.25%
Classroom Management	4 responses – 10.25%	1 response – 2.56%
Build relationships with students	3 responses – 7.69%	2 responses – 6.45%
Time Management	2 responses – 5.12%	1 response – 2.56%
Have a split placement, not full	3 responses – 7.69%	1 response – 2.56%
Done “my own” thing	3 responses – 7.69%	4 responses – 12.90%
Taken more risks with lessons	3 responses – 7.69%	0 responses – 0%
More parent contact	2 responses – 5.12%	0 responses – 0%
Do a local placement	2 responses – 5.12%	1 response – 2.56%
Relax	2 responses – 5.12%	1 response – 2.56%
Volunteer	1 response – 2.56%	3 responses – 9.67%
Kept a journal/took pictures	0 responses – 0%	3 responses – 9.67%
Asked more questions	0 responses – 0%	1 responses – 2.56%

Table 23: When you have your first teaching job, whom will you go to for professional advice and support? (Comparing Groups A & Group B)

Themes	Group A	Group B
	<i>Number or responses/ Percentage of responses</i>	<i>Number or responses/ Percentage of responses</i>
Cooperating Teacher	20 responses – 50%	17 responses – 54.83%
Professors	17 responses – 42.5%	6 responses – 19.35%
Colleagues	11 responses – 27.5%	16 responses – 51.61%
Family	7 responses – 17.5%	3 responses – 9.67%
Peers	7 responses – 17.5%	3 responses – 9.67%
University Supervisor	5 responses – 12.5%	3 responses – 9.67%
Principal	4 responses – 10%	7 responses – 22.58%
Mentor	3 responses – 7.5%	12 responses – 38.70%
Former Teacher	1 response – 2.5%	0 responses – 0%