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Mentoring practices of cooperating teachers to prepare student teachers for meeting selected Iowa Teaching Standards: the student teacher's perspective

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Mentoring practices of cooperating teachers to prepare student teachers for meeting selected Iowa Teaching Standards: The student teacher’s perspective

by

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For the Major Program
This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of

my mother, my mentor, Alice Circus,

who instilled in me the concept of lifelong learning and education.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF FIGURES** vii

**LIST OF TABLES** viii

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ix

**ABSTRACT** x

**CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

Overview 1
Significance of the Study 4
Definition of Terms 7
Purpose and Questions of the Study 8
Assumptions and Limitations 10
Deficiencies in the evidence 12

**CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE** 13

Overview 13
Definitions of Mentoring 13
Value and Benefits of Mentoring 15
Mentoring as a Professional Development Tool 17
The Role of Mentoring in Teacher Education 20
Stages of Mentoring 25
Characteristics of Mentors 27
Mentoring Related to Teacher Retention 29
Relationship of Mentoring to Iowa Teaching Standards 30

**CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY** 35

Overview 35
Research Design 35
Method 38
Setting 39
Sampling 40
Procedure 41
Researcher’s Role 44
Participants 45
Data Collection 50
Data Analysis 55
Summary 57

**CHAPTER 4. RESULTS** 58

Emerging Themes 58
Challenges  
Classroom Management  60 
Teaching Techniques and Strategies  63 
Networking and Professionalism  66 
Mentor Relationship  67 
Support  71 
Classroom Management  73 
Teaching Techniques and Strategies  75 
Networking and Professionalism  77 
Mentor Relationship  83 
Advice  84 
Classroom Management  84 
Teaching Techniques and Strategies  85 
Networking and Professionalism  91 
Mentor Relationship  96 

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS  99 
Introduction of the Research Questions  99 
Summary of the Findings  99 
Research Question 1  99 
Research Question 2  108 
Research Question 3  113 
Research Question 4  117 
Standard 7  119 
Standard 8  126 

CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS  133 
Overview  133 
Reflections of Research  135 
Discussion of Results  137 
Research Question 1  138 
Research Question 2  139 
Research Question 3  141 
Research Question 4  143 
Conclusions  145 
Method  145 
Data Analysis  146 
Themes  147 
Research Questions  147 
Recommendations  151 
Suggestions for Future Research  152 
Summary  153 

APPENDIX A. HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM  155
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Data collection and coding schema. 56
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Student teaching subjects, grade levels, and cooperating teachers. 47
Table 2. Cooperating teachers' data. 49
Table 3. Data types collected. 51
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ABSTRACT

Student teaching is the most widely studied aspect of inservice teacher preparation (Gibson, 2000), the premier event for which the preservice educator has been trained. It is critical that this experience goes well, as it sets the stage for his/her career. Appropriate guidance is key during this stage of development for teachers. Without mentoring or guidance, student teachers may not be ready to meet the challenges that await them in their own classrooms.

This study used qualitative research to determine how student teachers perceive that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. Mentoring skills that developed within the student teaching experience as a result of the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher were observed.

This project used multiple methods to collect data. Data were obtained from interviews, student teaching seminars, student teacher focus groups, and the reflective journals of each student teacher and from a focus group session of cooperating teachers. Behaviors, skills, and mentoring practices were observed by the student teachers as demonstrated by the cooperating teachers. Data from the focus group questions were grouped into four themes: classroom management, teaching strategies, networking/professional development, and mentor relationships.

The student teachers observed examples of professionalism and ethical behavior during their student teaching placements. These observations provide the real world application of topics discussed during their collegiate program of study. For these Iowa preservice educators, it is imperative to grasp the reality of these concepts. These concepts
specifically relate to standard teacher licensure through the Iowa Teaching Standards.

The results of this study indicate that mentoring contributes to the professional demeanor of the student teachers studied, and assisted them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards. Successful practices that the study participants pointed to as beneficial included communication skills, the sense of mutual trust, independence in allowing the student teacher to find his/her own way, collaboration, and the feedback provided to assist in growth. These practices are consistent with the characteristics of effective mentors.

As a result of this study, the opportunity exists for professionals involved in higher education to listen to the voices of student teachers and their mentors, the cooperating teachers. Additionally, the first stage of successful classroom teaching careers begins with the preservice educators’ instruction and the student teaching experience. However, it must extend beyond the university classroom and to the mentors, the cooperating teachers. It is imperative that universities work collaboratively with school districts as programs are developed to continually assist with a beginning teacher’s professional development.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Overview

Just as mentor relationships such as the doctor-intern and electrician-apprentice have contributed to successful career direction, so has the supervisor-student teacher mentoring partnership been critical in producing successful educators. The purpose of this study was to determine how student teachers perceived that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors.

Mentors are used in many careers and facets of life and provide not only hands-on training and practice in a guided setting, but also may create a relationship for career advice and friendship. It is well-documented that there is an intrinsic value in the presence of a significant other individual in the lives of both young people and adults (Bennetts, 2002). The mentoring process often provides for a seamless transition to first employment and may continue as the new employee defers to his/her mentor regarding initial work issues and situations. Similarly, the beginning teacher who can rely on the support and wisdom of his/her cooperating teacher relating to classroom issues and school situations will see a smooth start of his/her teaching career. This may be evident within the preservice educator’s initial student teaching experience and continue into the beginning teacher’s first job. Key personnel of the student teaching experience are the participants in the supervisory triad. This group includes the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the university supervisor. The student teacher is the central figure. The cooperating teacher is
the individual with whom the student teacher has daily contact and who sees the student teacher in his/her role more consistently than anyone else. Finally, the university supervisor ensures that the university’s policies and procedures are being followed, verifies that the student teacher is, indeed, meeting all state licensure mandates, and observes and provides feedback about the student teacher’s performance in the classroom.

Mentoring entered the vocabulary of U.S. educational reform in the 1980s as part of a broader effort to professionalize teaching (Little, 1990). The early association with beginning teacher induction often led to a narrow view of mentoring as a form of temporary support to help novice teachers cope with the demands of first year teaching. As the idea of mentoring was extended to the preservice level in the early 1990s, researchers advanced various competing and complementary role definitions and specifications of mentors’ functions, characteristics, and qualities (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Few studies give serious attention to mentors’ practice and consequences of the novices’ learning.

Gold (1999) suggested that specific behaviors (see Appendix F) may indicate the presence of mentor traits in the relationship. Student teachers who are afforded the opportunity to experience the tutelage of an effective mentor not only have been shown to perform at a higher level in the classroom, but also have a higher retention rate once in their own classrooms (Heskath & Laidlaw, 2003).

At a time when unprofessional behavior among new teachers, and even student teachers, is making headlines, it is imperative that the cooperating teacher not only offers direction and advice as to teaching strategies and innovative lesson planning and delivery, but also conveys the necessity of appropriate actions in and out of the classroom. What may
have been construed as “common sense” cannot be taken for granted any longer. There must be an emphasis on professionalism and being professional.

Offering student teachers an opportunity to gain a sense of professionalism and grow within the context of the classroom is both relevant and crucial. Several aspects of professionalism—being responsible, working hard, being positive, and seeing oneself as competent—may come about as a result of the respect shown to student teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). When the student teacher is shown respect often reserved for the cooperating teacher and other staff members, it may become a learning cycle: by being responsible and positive, one demands respect. With the honor of being respected, one works harder and sees him/herself as competent.

In an effort to increase the quality of Iowa’s new and veteran teachers, the Iowa Teaching Standards were developed and implemented in 2002 (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002). The implementation of the standards has been beneficial to the teachers as it delineates what the expectations are and affords them the opportunity to demonstrate how they are meeting the standards. The mentor relationship may assist the student teacher in working toward meeting the criteria of the Iowa Teaching Standards. Most of the standards and criteria are content-based and, thus, can be addressed within the student teachers’ preservice education. The student teacher must be within the daily routine of teaching to practice the criteria demanded in standards 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards, which relate specifically to professionalism, ethical and collaborative behaviors. Standards numbers 7 and 8 encompass the following model criteria:

Standard number 7: The teacher:

a. Demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.
b. Works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.

c. Applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.

d. Establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher’s needs aligned to the Iowa teaching standards and district/building student achievement goals (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

Standard number 8: The teacher:

a. Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.

b. Demonstrates professional an ethical conduct as defined by state law and district policy

c. Contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals

d. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.

e. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student learning (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

A cooperating teacher who models these teaching behaviors and imparts their importance assists the student teacher in preparing for his/her own classroom. Collaboration is emphasized in both of these standards, as a mainstay of the mentoring process within the student teaching experience. Professional development is emphasized and the student teacher may pursue continued opportunities for learning within the daily teaching experiences (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

**Significance of the Study**

Mentoring plays an important role in the preservice education of student teachers. The mentor has many functions: model, instructor, advisor, observer of the student teacher’s
lessons, provider of feedback, evaluator, supporter, challenger, and coach (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). Mentors both support and challenge the student teachers in an effort to increase teaching competency (Hawkey, 1997). Those who have been mentored report stronger, more positive perceptions of belonging, support and confidence, along with improved accomplishments, renewed commitment, and a better understanding of expectations (Goodwin, Stevens, & Bellamy, 1998). Through effective monitoring, supervision, and interaction, mentors can ease the transition from preservice to in-service teaching. Mentoring has the potential to foster powerful teaching and to develop the dispositions and skills of continuous improvement. Mentors may also perpetuate standard teaching practices and reinforce norms of individualism and noninterference (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Mentoring also plays a role in the recruitment and retention of teacher candidates and teachers (Holloway, 2002). Little (1990) argued that mentoring does not necessarily ease novices' entry into teaching but helps confront difficult problems of teaching and uses teaching as a site for learning. This may essentially make first years less stressful in the short run. An attrition rate of only five percent was demonstrated in first-year teachers whose induction program included mentoring (Gold, 1999). With the national average at 30% within the first five years, mentoring affords a powerful means of reducing teacher turnover.

Mentoring is a skill that requires training, patience, and a desire to learn. As defined by Dortch (2000), mentoring includes building trust, bonding with the person being mentored, and setting mutual goals. Liebhaber (2003) suggested that mentoring provides the opportunity for each of the members of the supervisory triad to not only teach one another,
but also to learn from one another, even considering the unequal power hierarchy of the triad members.

To mentor is to offer the presumption of wisdom (Feiman-Nemser, 2001), yet little is known about what thoughtful mentors try to teach novices, how they make their knowledge accessible, and how they think about their mentoring in context. Mentors have been asked to explain the thinking behind their teaching decisions and actions, evaluate these enactments with a preservice teacher, and scaffold experiences that will allow teacher candidates access to the inner knowledge of teaching (Bell, 2003).

Student teachers observe their cooperating teachers demonstrating instructional behaviors that may be modeled. These demonstrations can help beginning teachers visualize new practices and see how teachers enact particular values and principles. Beginning teachers may not see what experienced teachers notice, because their cognitive maps are less elaborated. To ensure that demonstrations are used as educational tools, mentors need to point out what they regard as central and find out how novices interpret what they see (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Cooperating teachers are assigned student teachers with little preparation or training in how to mentor and assist the student teachers. The university may meet with cooperating teachers to review basic guidelines and answer questions or provide a handbook with pertinent information, but with busy schedules, attendance is often poor. Mentor training is not a prerequisite to be a cooperating teacher.

Mentoring is essentially a collaboration, where the mentor works with the protégé to enhance learning and address issues and challenges. Mentoring relationships differ in a
number of key ways relating to the formation and aim of the relationship, the context in which it occurs, and the degree of difference in experience between the mentor and protégé.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used.

**Cooperating teacher**: The teacher whose classroom the student teacher is in. He/she observes and offers feedback to the student teacher in an effort to improve classroom performance.

**Focus Group Interviews**: Process of collecting data through interviews with a group of 4-6 people in which the researcher asks a small number of general questions and elicits responses from all individuals in the group (Creswell, 2002).

**Iowa Teaching Standards**: The Iowa teaching standards were established in Chapter 284.3 (Iowa Code 2003: Section 284.3) for developing teacher evaluation criteria and to promote high student achievement and enhance teacher quality.

**Member checking**: Qualitative process during which the researcher asks one or more respondents in the study to check the accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2002).

**Mentee**: The person who is gaining benefit of the mentor's experience, education, and nurturing. Synonym for protégé in the mentoring process and synonymous with student teacher in that mentoring relationship (Bennetts, 2002).

**Mentor**: A person who “achieves a one-to-one developmental relationship with a learner and one whom the learner identifies as having enabled personal growth to take place” (Bennetts, 2002, p. 1).

**Professionalism**: The collection of characteristics that a teacher may possess to allow him/her to demonstrate appropriate actions and behaviors befitting an educator both in and out of the classroom.
Protégé: A person under the “care and protection of an influential person usually for the furthering of a career” (Merriam-Webster, 2003). Synonym for the term mentee.

Qualitative research: An inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. Research that relies on narrative data (Creswell, 2002).

Student Teacher: The preservice educator who is practicing teaching under the direct supervision of the cooperating teacher and direction of the university supervisor.

Supervisory Triad: The group that consists of the student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor and works together for the improvement of the student teacher’s classroom performance.

University Supervisor: A university employee who works as a liaison between the school and university, answers questions for the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, observes and evaluates whether the student teacher meets university standards, and makes recommendation for teacher licensure.

Purpose and Questions of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how student teachers perceived that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. To achieve the purpose described above, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How does mentoring contribute to the development of professionalism in student teachers?
2. What constitutes a good mentor?
3. What behaviors and skills are being demonstrated by an effective mentor?
4. How do mentoring behaviors assist student teachers in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards 7 and 8?

This research project investigated the demonstrated behaviors and skills used by cooperating teachers to assist student teachers in their learning and how the student teachers perceived these actions affecting their teaching. This study provided insight into how a student teacher develops a professional persona to meet the criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards. This relationship was examined to ascertain how these parties corroborate to ensure a successful experience for the student teacher. The mentoring skills that developed among the parties are the focus of this project.

The method for this study was a descriptive, qualitative approach to research. Factors that led to this choice of research method included the opportunity for all involved to reflect on their performance and to make any changes deemed necessary within the boundaries of the study. The very nature of this study is one of personal perspective, individual experience, and role definition. Consequently, individual perspectives are extremely important in data collection. It was important to interview participants and to discuss their observations to gather real and relevant data.

As a result of this study, cooperating teachers may evaluate themselves in terms of how they can best assist in the education of student teachers. Also, the professors in universities’ teacher education programs may see a need for changes and/or recommendations for training cooperating teachers. Methods of placement may be reconsidered as well. Student teachers may see themselves as more effective in the classroom than they had perceived themselves as a result of this reflection during their student teaching experience.
All researchers aspire to produce valid and reliable knowledge. To ensure quality in research, a study should be conducted in a “rigorous, systematic, and ethical” manner (Merriam, 2002, p. 24). It should be assumed that multiple methods were used in data collection as a means of triangulation. Member checks throughout the course of the study were also utilized. Peer examination was conducted as well.

Some concerns may arise as to the reliability of a study. Because human behavior is not static, replication is problematic; however, consistency and dependability are better barometers of reliability within qualitative research (Merriam, 2002). Consistency and dependability were established by formalizing the procedures. The data collected were considered reliable because others reviewing this data provided the same report. Member checks and peer review contributed to the reliability of the study. In addition, it was helpful to work with the same group of student teachers over the entire fourteen-week placement, to ask all subjects the same questions, and to meet with them on a regular basis to establish researcher/subject rapport.

Assumptions and Limitations

Ironically, a limiting factor may have been the nature of the relationship between the cooperating teachers and student teachers. It is conceivable that the student teacher may have withheld some comments as the cooperating teacher assessed the student teacher’s performance.

The researcher’s relationship with the respondents may have also been a factor in their responses. As an advisor or instructor or university supervisor, the researcher had interactions with a number of the respondents. Nine of the student teachers had been students in the researcher’s classes, four of them in more than one class. Four respondents
were advisees, one was a work study for two semesters prior to the student teaching semester, and the researcher was the university supervisor for two of the student teachers during this study. Three of the respondents had minimal interaction with the researcher prior to being approached about participation in the study; the researcher did know one of the participants prior to the initial interview. Therefore, the respondents' comfort level with the researcher may have contributed to some being more open during the interviews and/or focus group discussions.

Reluctance on the part of the participants to openly discuss issues and concerns that arose within the student teaching placements may have been a limiting factor. This study was based on the assumption that all participants would be willing to share feelings and opinions. From the candid remarks within the focus groups and the reassurance on the researcher's part to the student teachers, the participants were, indeed, very open and willing to share those feelings and opinions regarding their experiences.

The amount of time spent within this mentoring situation may also have been a limitation. While a seven week period of time may appear to be a small segment in the mentoring process, many student teaching arrangements are of that length, and often, are enough to establish the beginnings of the mentor relationship.

An additional concern had to do with the time needed for the focus group on the part of the cooperating teachers. The participation in the focus groups occurred for part of the cooperating teachers toward the end of the academic year, an extremely busy time for them. It was hoped that their dedication to the betterment of the educational experience was motivation for them to fully participate. Many cooperating teachers did make the effort to participate in a focus group to offer their insight on their mentoring roles.
Deficiencies in the Evidence

Within qualitative research, questions may be uncovered as the study develops rather than knowing all the questions to be asked before beginning the project. In this holistic approach to research, it was imperative that the researcher also participate in self-reflection. What the researcher sees, or chooses to see, depends upon the researcher’s background and perspective (Esterberg, 2002). It is a learning process for the researcher to observe the parties involved within the triad and to see the developing relationships in an objective manner.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

This study sought to determine how student teachers perceived that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. In examining that relationship, a number of factors were considered, including:

- Definitions of mentoring
- Value and benefits
- Mentoring as a developmental and training tool
- Role in teacher education
- Stages of mentoring
- Mentor skill set/characteristics of mentors
- Mentoring related to teacher retention
- Relationship to Iowa Teaching Standards

All of the above factors will be addressed in this chapter.

Definitions of Mentoring

Although mentoring programs were becoming a national phenomenon by the 1980s, a universal definition of mentoring is lacking (Gold, 1999). Mentoring is an activity that has many different interpretations. The term mentor has its origin in the poem by Homer, The Odyssey (Hamilton, 1942). In ancient Greece, Odysseus entrusted the education of his son, Telemachus, to a trusted counselor and friend to educate and nurture him while Odysseus
was at war. This friend, Mentor, became the counselor, guide, tutor, coach, and sponsor for his protégé. Mentor was to demonstrate wisdom, integrity, and personal involvement with Telemachus, who in turn was to demonstrate respect. This concept of a mentor was supported by Gehrke and Kay (1984) in describing the interaction between mentor and protégé as a relationship that is healthy and positive. Their belief is that this relationship serves a socialization purpose: the older and wiser person is responsible to nurture and educate the younger person.

Another interpretation of mentoring conveys the impression that “facilitating teachers is more acceptable than leading them” (Little, Galagaran, & O’Neal, 1984, p. 19), indicating that the mentor’s role is more of assisting the student to fulfill his/her own potential, rather than teaching, such as in the case of a doctor-intern or a craftsman and an apprentice. Kay’s (1990) work is reflected in the definition that states, “Mentoring is a comprehensive effort directed toward helping a protégé develop the attitudes and behaviors (skills) of self-reliance and accountability within a defined environment” (p. 27).

From personal experience, Parkay (1988) believed that modeling by a mentor should encourage the protégé to determine direction and mode of learning, thus making it essential that the parties share a similar thinking style. Hardcastle (1988) felt that this was too limiting and urged that a “significant mentor” would act as a catalyst and create a more abstract, interpersonal, and life-changing relationship.

Healy and Welchert (1990) consider mentoring to be “a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent (mentor) and a beginner (protégé) aimed at promoting the career development of both” (p. 17). This creates a vision of the protégé moving from understudy to self-directing colleague.
Then, who should define mentoring? Wildman, Maglario, Niles, and Niles (1992) suggested that there should not be an attempt to rigidly specify mentor roles and that developing and imposing any definition of mentoring amounted to political pressure or a high powered staff development activity. “Mentoring, like good teaching, should be defined by those who will carry it out” (Wildman, et al., p. 213).

Therefore, a universal definition of mentoring does not seem to be available or may not be clearly conceptualized. Some believe a universal definition is not necessary and would be limiting to the roles of the mentoring process. It is possible that the definition of support within education lies somewhere between what exists in the literature and what is still being discovered (Gold, 1999).

**Value and Benefits of Mentoring**

The value of mentoring has been illustrated in numerous contexts. Initially, the one who is being mentored is perceived as gaining the most in the relationship; however, all parties within a mentoring relationship gain some benefit (Holloway, 2001). It is believed that education borrowed the mentoring concept from the business sector, and that the value related to being part of a mentoring relationship can enhance both individuals’ development (Kram, 1983). The benefits of mentoring indicated by Hegstad (1999) are both career-related and psychosocial. Also, Kram (1983) referred to the functions of the mentor as being divided into career-related as well as vocational and psychosocial. The career-related functions contribute to career advancement and the ability to perform tasks related to education. They include:

1. Orientation to the school setting
2. Emphasizing the importance of taking responsibility
3. Sharing information
4. Assigning challenging tasks
5. Encouraging self-assessment and critical reflection
6. Providing advice and guidance regarding career choices
7. Providing opportunities to interact and build networks with others involved in education (McDonald, 2003, p. 20).

Student teachers may experience tremendous personal and professional growth through the mentoring process. Because a mentor has greater experience and networks within the field, he/she can help in this regard. Career-related functions have been found to have a positive influence on job satisfaction and organizational socialization. Leadership and professional development skills such as communication, self-assurance, cooperation, collaboration, career development, and networking also evolve during mentoring (Peer, 2004). Confidence is increased, which leads to increased learning as well (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002). In studying Pathwise, a formal mentoring process developed by the Educational Testing Service, prospective teachers who participated exhibited more complete and effective planning, more effective classroom instruction, and a higher level of reflection on their teaching practice (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002).

Evidence of the value of mentoring (Miller, Thomson & Roush, 1989) indicated that many teachers (i.e., cooperating teachers) involved in mentoring situations felt a renewed sense of professionalism as a result of their participation. Mentoring may also assist faculty in becoming better teachers by increasing their contact with students (Peer, 2004). Many authors pointed to the networking component as an additional benefit of mentoring. Scott (1999) found that experienced teachers believed mentoring allowed them to help others,
improve themselves, develop collegiality, and profit from fresh ideas and energy. In addition, working with new teachers allowed the mentors to reflect about their own instructional practices (Holloway, 2001).

The psychosocial functions of a mentor contribute to the protégé's well-being by developing a sense of competence in his/her work. Components of the psychosocial aspects of mentoring include: 1) role modeling, 2) acceptance, 3) friendship, 4) offering attention, time, and assistance, 5) giving support, feedback, and encouragement, 6) sharing personal aspects of his/her life, where relevant, and 7) sensitivity to the student teacher's feelings (Kram, 1985; McDonald, 2003, p. 20).

Relationships develop during mentoring programs based on these behaviors. These interpersonal relationships may be the key to the success of mentoring. The career and psychosocial components of mentoring seem to work together in mediating each other in how the student teacher effectively utilizes the mentoring relationship (see Figure 2 in Appendix B). Formal and informal relationships evolve with faculty, peers, and others to assist in the establishment of a critical network for the future (Peer, 2004). Students involved in mentoring are introduced to the environment of teaching and can establish the psychosocial relationships where they may learn about the support and communication needed to succeed.

**Mentoring as a Professional Development Tool**

Mentoring is an important training and developmental tool for professional progression in organizations (Hunt & Michael, 1983). For centuries, wise men and women have offered counsel to the young. Mentorship is a developmental process in many related occupations: master-apprentice; doctor-intern; and teacher-student.
Mentors play an important role in the student teacher’s learning process. Danielson (1999) concluded that mentoring fosters professional development of both the student teacher and the mentor. The Holmes Group (1990) proposes teacher mentoring as an important strategy for helping novice teachers develop professional knowledge. Even in application, The American Federation of Teachers (2004), a subgroup of the AFL-CIO, provides in its sample contract language that “Mentoring is the process by which a practicing member of the profession who has demonstrated excellence in the profession and can, with training, share that expertise with others offers structured training and support to members of the profession.”

The mentor has many functions: model, instructor, source for tips and advice, observer of the student teacher’s lessons, provider of feedback, one who stimulates a student teacher’s reflections, an evaluator, supporter, challenger, and coach (Zanting, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2003). The relationship between the student teacher and the university supervisor can develop in a number of ways, often dependent on the background of the relationship (the student teacher has known the supervisor prior to the student teaching experience, he/she has been in the professor’s class, etc.), the amount of time that the supervisor spends with the student teacher, and how the supervisor assists the student teacher. The cooperating teacher and student teacher’s relationship, however, is often one of a new friendship; they may not have known each other prior to the student teaching placement. It is ironic that the one who exerts a daily influence on the student teacher is the “newest” person in the triad.

Today more than ever, the classroom teacher is seen as the primary facilitator for student success (Simplico, 1999) and must, therefore possess an ever widening array of skills and talents. Besides the essential day-to-day preparations, one needs to learn other important
skills. Educators now must be compassionate, understanding, knowledgeable, fair, dedicated, and accountable for their students' achievement. Society often judges the teachers, their students, and often the entire educational system based on how well the teacher performs these tasks. "A teacher needs time and training to learn the various approaches that work and to discover which is the best fit" (Gold, 1999, p. 12). A lot can be learned in college, but much more remains to be learned about classroom teaching. Learning about this profession is a continuously growing process. Mentoring is a successful method of introducing preservice educators to their profession. Acting as mentors, experienced teachers can help aspiring educators communicate effectively with students, present materials, establish goals and perform other classroom management and organizational techniques.

Offering student teachers an opportunity to gain a sense of professionalism and to grow within that context is both relevant and crucial. Several aspects of professionalism—being responsible, working hard, being positive, and seeing oneself as competent—may come about as a result of the respect shown the student teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2002).

Classroom management issues can be a difficult area for any novice teacher. The opportunity to discuss concerns with someone outside of the student teacher's classroom and to gain a fresh insight may be valuable and reassuring. The young teacher often sees a need to be the students' friend and does not distance him/herself as the instructor in an effort to gain trust and respect of his/her students. A strong mentor may be the one to point this out, model appropriate behaviors, and suggest successful management strategies. Effective teaching strategies not only should be discussed in methods' courses; they also should be modeled by professors/mentors (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). This can make a student teacher's experience a positive one.
Professional development in terms of networking, professional organizations, and activities also can be emphasized by the mentor. Through involvement with district, state, and national professional organizations the student teacher can grow within the educational organization and create lasting contacts to improve his/her teaching and classroom presence. Professionalism may also be a contributing factor in the renewal of schools and teacher education (New Jersey Network for Educational Renewal (NJNER), 2004). The university supervisor may provide direction for the student teacher to seek out these professional development opportunities and to point out the benefits. The student teacher not only is able to develop his/her personal leadership style, but also may begin a career-building network for future endeavors. At a time when the student teacher may feel very busy and overwhelmed, it can be easy for him/her to forgo these important professional development opportunities that are available.

The Role of Mentoring in Teacher Education

Mentoring plays an important role in the education of student teachers. Mentors (i.e., cooperating teachers and university supervisors) may support and challenge student teachers in an effort to increase teaching competency (Hawkey, 1997). Not only can mentors support novice teachers in teaching strategies, they can also assist in analyzing teaching and reflection, which can lead to transforming teaching practice (Wang, Strong, & Odell, 2004).

The stage for the preservice educator to be a part of the mentoring experience was set well before college. Learning to teach is a lifelong process, often unconsciously based on the mentoring provided by a young student’s own teachers. Feiman Nemser (1983) discusses four phases of learning to teach:
Pretraining—occurs before preservice educators realize that they are learning the fundamentals that will shape their teaching;

Preservice formal preparation—the coursework and practical experiences;

Induction phase—the first years of teaching; and

In-service phase—the rest of the teaching career.

Because these phases are in place at an early point in the student teacher's career, they may have observed teaching practices that are not based on sound theory, but from observing the practice of others. The student teacher, in the pretraining and preservice formal preparation phases, learns the educational theories to be better suited to implement them into their teaching repertoire. Realizing there is a gap between what teachers should know and how they will learn to actually apply those theories, teacher education programs have set goals to improve preservice learning opportunities. This can be a challenge to develop a balance of theory and practice to guide the teacher through these phases. With no universal model for teacher preparation to follow, each program must follow its own direction in the way that best meets the needs of the preservice educators.

There are many key components of the student teaching experience, but of great significance are the main participants. The supervisory triad (Kauffman, 1992) consists of the student teacher, most obviously, as the central figure and the one that has the most to gain or to lose. The cooperating teacher is the individual with whom the student teacher has daily contact and who sees the student teacher in his/her role more realistically than anyone else. Finally, the university supervisor ensures that the university's policies and procedures are being followed, verifies that the student teacher is, indeed, meeting all state licensure mandates, and observes and provides feedback about the student teacher's performance in the
classroom. The university supervisor, along with the cooperating teacher, theoretically may have a strong influence on the growth of the student teacher (Zahorik, 1988). Cooperative efforts among students, advisors, university faculty members and classroom teachers can be utilized to help teacher candidates succeed. Student teaching provides the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice while being offered support by a classroom mentor (Zeichner, 1996). This support must take many forms and provide a solid base.

A University of Vermont (Holloway, 2001) project to recruit and nurture minority teachers suggests that the following four factors influenced and supported the work of mentors:

Individualization: faculty helped preservice educators plan their courses of study to meet course objectives, yet personalize their assignments,

Independent study: preservice educators select a course of study to foster effective teaching skills and community service,

Support: advisors provide preservice educators assistance on using university resources and dealing with personal issues, and

Monitoring: mentors monitor preservice educators’ progress through formal and informal methods, in an effort to address their changing needs. (p. 89)

Student teaching is the most widely studied aspect of inservice teacher preparation (Gibson, 2000). The student teaching experience is the capstone event of a preservice educator’s college career. This is the premier event for which the preservice educator has been trained, the point of being judged the most important aspect of teacher preparation (Zahorik, 1988). It is critical that this experience goes well, as it sets the stage for his/her career. Appropriate guidance is key during this stage of development for teachers. Without
this mentoring or guidance, student teachers can not be ready to meet the challenges that await them in their own classrooms. This is supported by Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996):

The application of knowledge about learning, teaching, curriculum building, development, motivation, and behavior to the individual needs of diverse students is a daunting task requiring skillful observation, diagnosis, and integration of many different concepts and abilities. Unless this occurs with the support of an able mentor, the effort can quickly become overwhelming (pp.44-45).

The value of the university supervisor’s contribution to the student teacher often lies in the need to understand what the supervisor looks for when observing a lesson (Coleman, 2001). The cooperating teacher may not say the things that need to be said about the student teacher because of the personal relationship that has developed. As a result, the university supervisor must be the one to ask the “tough” questions of both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher (Slick, 1998). The tough questions are necessary to insure that the student teacher is meeting criteria not only for the university, but also for the state requirements for teacher licensure. When asked whether the university supervisor should hold any responsibility toward assigning a final grade for the student teacher, most cooperating teachers indicate that this should be a combined responsibility (Deeds, Plowers, & Arrington, 1991).

The cooperating teacher provides support to the student teacher in a variety of ways. Instructional support and emotional support are both critical for this novice who is now on his/her own in the “real life” classroom. Mentor-novice conversations about one another’s instruction are an effective way to support teachers in developing the professional knowledge
necessary for effective teaching (Wang, et al., 2004). Beginning teachers often are looking for moral support and guidance as they traverse their first year of teaching. Possibly, the most effective emotional support provided comes from the mentors (Kueker & Haensley, 1991).

Preservice educators may be allotted only a limited amount of actual teaching experiences. The student teaching experience is one of the largest of these experiences. These student teachers get their ideas of teaching from the cooperating teacher who is of special influence during student teaching. It becomes a daunting task for the student teachers to pull together theory and practice and determine what good teaching really is in the relative brevity of the student teaching experience. Feiman Nemser and Remillard (1996) stated that:

...there is a lot to learn, more than teachers could possibly master in the limited time allotted to teacher preparation. Some of this content falls outside the traditional boundaries of the teacher education curriculum: much of it has not been codified. Second, what teachers need to learn not only includes knowledge, skills, and dispositions, but also ways of knowing, thinking, caring, and acting. Third, since much of what teachers need to know can only be learned *in situ*, an important part of learning to teach involves learning to learn in context. Fourth, defining the content of learning to teach depends on clarifying a vision of good teaching (p.78).

Student teachers must shape their vision of what constitutes good teaching based on what their cooperating teachers, their mentors, are demonstrating through the daily teaching routine. One means of helping preservice educators construct this vision is to provide opportunities for discussion with other educators during formal teacher training to gain
knowledge from one another’s experiences (Gibson, 2000). This sets the stage for mentoring opportunities.

**Stages of Mentoring**

Ideally, the mentoring relationship is one that should develop and strengthen over time. Keeva (1995) suggested that good mentoring develops through a naturally occurring affinity, in the context of a trusting relationship. It is not an immediate connection in most instances, but evolves through a series of stages. Independent of the terminology or the situation, professional or personal, the mentoring process moves through very predictable steps, where similar feelings, roles, and activities occur. Zachary (2000) suggested that the mentoring process occurs in four stages: preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure. These are predictable in most mentoring relationships. Critical to the development and success of the relationship is the preparing stage, where the groundwork is laid for the roles of the relationship. The negotiating phase allows the mentor and protégé to discuss what the purpose of the learning relationship will be. This stage sets the tone for a successful relationship. Growth of the mentee through support and challenge occurs during the enabling stage. The mentor actively supports learning, monitors, and evaluates progress toward learning goals. Finally, the last stage is closure, an inevitable step, but nonetheless the most difficult. This difficulty arises from the close personal ties that may develop as well as the anxiety of an abrupt ending to a relationship. Once the new professional (mentee) achieves specific competencies, the relationship may end. This ending may also take place if the relationship is counterproductive. Kram (1983) reported that a mentor relationship moves through four phases: (a) initiation, (b) cultivation, (c) separation, and (d) redefinition. These parallel Zachary’s (2000) stages in description.
According to Moitoza (2004) the true mentoring relationship can be broken down into three categories, each represented by a role the mentor takes. This is especially applicable to the student teacher-cooperating teacher mentoring relationship. First is the mentor as teacher—the information professional. Second is the mentor as sponsor. This is the connector, the person who helps the individual in the professional world, making the necessary connections along his/her career path. Finally, there is the mentor as person, who manages the heart and spirit of the relationship. Although there is a continuum, and the teaching relationship and sponsorship are valuable, the ideal mentor relationship will include the personal dimension as well.

In a similar manner, Dortch (2000) identified five stages in mentoring: (a) helping the mentee grow, (b) expanding opportunities for the mentee, (c) learning together (d) investing in the future of the mentee, and (e) trusting each other. This theory is based on the assumption that the mentor relationship grows as all parties become more comfortable with each other and the learning situation.

In all cases these stages are a continuum—each builds on the previous one to deepen the bond between mentor and protégé. Dortch (2000) specifically pointed out that trying to jump over any of the stages may create frustration and may undermine the relationship. The first stage sets the tone for the relationship. The mentor establishes him/herself as a model. The second stage expands the protégé’s opportunities for success and expands the nurturing of the first stage. The mentor determines as much as possible about his/her mentee’s environment to support their growth and development. Stage three should allow the mentor and the protégé to become learning partners as both parties gain new perspectives. In stage four, Dortch (2000) advocates taking the mentoring relationship to a deeper level:
acknowledgement of the teachers’ and the student teachers’ lives, which may involve increasing integration of families, dependent on the nature of the mentoring relationship. As the parties continue to grow and learn more about each other, it may be a natural progression, in many mentoring relationships, to meet one another’s families. Finally, in stage five, the mentor and protégé continue to build trust, understanding, and respect and often are at a point where they know they can rely on this unconditional support long after the formal relationship is over. Dortch (2000) described this by saying, “You will carry one another in your hearts for the rest of your lives” (p. 128).

**Characteristics of Mentors**

Mentoring may be professionally rewarding and can be an important means for influencing commitment and self-image. Further, it may be encouraged or informally rewarded by peers and superiors. It can be a crucial tool for training. The mentoring function exists as a part of many activities and relationships. Coaches, teachers, sponsors, and mentors are often asked for advice or for protection and are regarded as role models of optimal traits and behaviors needed to attain success in life or in a career. Mentors are often described as parent-like figures. All that is required of a mentor is the commitment to make a difference, the willingness to listen and hear, and the discipline to balance the heart and the mind (Dortch, 2000). Mentors are usually individuals who are successful in their fields. Generally older than their protégées, a mentor must be old enough to have accumulated the experience necessary to benefit the preservice educator. Traditionally, they are self-confident professionals who are concerned with the needs and development of their subordinates (Marshall, 1983.)
Portner (1998) states that student teachers have to develop the capacity and confidence to make their own informed decisions. They also need to enrich their knowledge and improve their abilities regarding teaching and learning. Therefore, the primary role of the mentor is to enable mentees to reach these levels. The mentor can play this role well by implementing the following characteristics of effective mentoring:

**Relating**

The mentoring relationship usually includes individuals of senior and junior status but ideally is a relationship in which the veteran is trusted and expected to guide the novice. This relationship is built on mutual trust, respect, and professionalism. Relating behaviors create an environment that is conducive for understanding ideas and needs and for encouraging sharing and reflection. Without this trust, mentoring may become frustrating and difficult for both individuals.

**Assessing**

In order to grow professionally, a mentor must assess what the mentee needs. The cooperating teacher must determine what the student teacher needs to assist in his/her growth. In assessing, the cooperating teacher gathers and diagnoses data about his/her student teacher’s way of teaching and learning and determines the student teacher’s confidence to handle a situation.

**Coaching**

This is the role where relating, assessing, and facilitating behaviors have collectively come together to improve the mentee’s performance (Portner, 1998). The cooperating teacher must observe the student teacher so he/she can help the mentee perform well. If left
to their own devices, student teachers will learn how to survive and to satisfy their own needs, but they will not learn how to facilitate effective learning (McIntyre & Haggar, 1996).

**Guiding**

A mentor’s task is to guide his/her mentee to become an independent teacher. Teaching involves constant decision making, so a student teacher has to be guided to make his/her own decisions. The cooperating teacher’s guiding skill is to ask the right questions, the right way, at the right times. These questions should encourage the student teacher to reflect on his/her decisions. The cooperating teacher must decide which relating, assessing, and coaching behaviors to use in the different situations they will encounter in an effort to best facilitate professional growth (Mohono-Mahlatsi & van Tonder, 2005).

**Mentoring Related to Teacher Retention**

Recruitment can be a monumental task when states and districts have not enacted mentoring programs for teachers. Darling-Hammond (1996) found that districts in Ohio and New York reduced attrition rates by more than two-thirds by providing mentors: “beginning teachers who have access to intensive mentoring by expert colleagues are much less likely to leave teaching in the early years” (p. 22).

Mentoring also plays a role in the recruitment and retention of teachers and teacher candidates (Holloway, 2002). Through effective monitoring, supervision, and interaction, mentors can ease the transition from preservice to in-service teaching. Mentors are asked to explain the thinking behind their teaching decisions and actions, evaluate these enactments with a preservice teacher, and scaffold experiences that will allow teacher candidates access to the inner knowledge of teaching (Bell, 2003).
Mentors provide the experience to teacher candidates that allow them to withstand the rigors of a beginning teacher. News of a national teacher shortage is commonplace, but what can be done about it? There is much speculation on what course of action to take, including financial incentives for specific subject and geographic areas or combining classes. However, retention can be one of the best ways to meet this head on: Keep the teachers in the classroom. Nearly 30% of new teachers leave within five years of entry into teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Districts that are disadvantaged have even higher attrition rates. Nationwide, more than half of all teachers leave the profession before the end of their sixth year of teaching (Gold, 1999; Marso & Pigge, 1997). Mentoring can serve as a connecting link between the teacher preparation phase and the induction phase as a first-year teacher. Experiences associated with the transition will influence their effectiveness and longevity in the profession (Greiman, Walker, & Birkenholtz, 2002).

When a mentoring program is established, often the underlying objective is ultimately to benefit the organization. Retention is a factor that is positively impacted by mentoring. Mentoring employees can increase the number of experienced staff and reduce staff turnover (McDonald, 2003). Specifically, mentoring programs may lower the attrition rates of new teachers (Holloway, 2001). In a study of new teachers in New Jersey, Gold (1999) indicated that first-year teachers whose induction program included mentoring demonstrated an attrition rate of only five percent.

**Relationship of Mentoring to Iowa Teaching Standards**

The Iowa Teaching Standards were developed and implemented in 2002 (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002) in an effort to increase the quality of Iowa’s new and veteran teachers. It was also an effort to assist the state’s administrators toward a
more objective and equitable method of evaluating teachers. It has been beneficial to the teachers as it delineates what the expectations are and affords them the opportunity to demonstrate how they are meeting the standards. To move from the initial beginning teacher license to the standard license, teachers in public schools must meet all eight Iowa teaching standards and be recommended for the standard license by an evaluator who holds a valid evaluator's license. The school district is required to provide the beginning teacher an approved mentoring and induction program and be comprehensively evaluated to determine successful completion of the program and whether the teacher meets expectations to move to the career level (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

For the teacher education institutions, coursework and experiences are developed to assist preservice educators to be able to meet those standards. At this researcher's institution, preservice educators develop a career assessment portfolio to demonstrate their competence in ten specific goal areas, which parallel the eight Iowa Teaching Standards. Similar to the Iowa Teaching Standards, preservice educators are able to meet the competencies of the majority of the major assessment goals through coursework. However, there are two goals that may only be addressed through the student teaching experience. Some things must be experienced rather than taught. Standards seven and eight of the Iowa Teaching Standards also include concepts that have to be observed, experienced, and practiced. While coursework can be offered, ethical standards and professionalism are best learned by modeling, and the cooperating teachers are the instructors and models for those concepts.

In a board adopted policy statement "What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do" the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (1990) documents the following characteristics in its definition of professional standards:
1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to their students.
3. Teachers are responsible for monitoring and managing student learning.
4. Teachers think systematically about their practices and learn from experience.
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

The final standard affords the opportunity for student teachers to meet the four previous standards. In the case of student teaching, that learning community lies within the school and the cooperating teacher’s classroom. Essentially, mentoring is its own learning community, and the cooperating teacher who is mentoring the student teacher is assisting in the development of the student teacher’s commitment to teaching.

The mentor relationship may assist the student teacher in working toward meeting the criteria of the Iowa Teaching Standards. Most of the standards and criteria are content-based and, thus, can be addressed within the student teachers’ preservice education. Standards numbers seven and eight, however, are modeled and practiced only in the student teaching context. Standards numbers seven and eight encompass the following model criteria:

Standard Number 7: The teacher…

e. Demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.

f. Works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.

g. Applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.
h. Establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher’s needs aligned to the Iowa Teaching Standards and district/building student achievement goals (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

Standard Number 8: The teacher...

f. Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.

g. Demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and district policy

h. Contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals

i. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.

j. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student learning (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

The student teacher must be within the daily routine of teaching to practice the criteria demanded in standards seven and eight. A cooperating teacher who models these teaching behaviors and imparts their importance may assist the student teacher to prepare for his/her own classroom. Collaboration is emphasized in both of these standards, a mainstay of the mentoring process within the student teaching experience. Professional development is emphasized, and the student teacher may pursue continued opportunities for learning within the daily teaching experiences (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

From the beginning the mentor has been a coach and guide devoted to preparing and promoting the protégé into a successful career. The value of mentoring has been demonstrated through the research and prior studies. Both the mentor and the mentee have gained valuable experiences in the relationship as discussed in the literature. Mentors have been found to be an integral part of the student teacher’s learning process and development
into an in-service professional. The mentor was found to be a model instructor, source of advice, observer, and tutor to the student teacher. The mentoring relationship is one that has been shown to increase over time as the stages develop and grow between the mentoring participants. The impact of mentoring on first year professionals has increased retention to 95% (Gold, 1999), a statistic which education should notice, embrace, and strive to meet on a regular basis.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study used qualitative research to determine how student teachers perceive that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. This research project investigated the mentoring skills that developed within the student teaching experience as a result of the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. This relationship was examined to understand how these parties worked together to ensure a successful experience for the student teacher. This research project investigated behaviors and skills that cooperating teachers demonstrated to assist the student teacher in his/her learning.

Research Design

This study has utilized a qualitative approach to establish a clearer understanding of how mentoring practices of cooperating teachers impact student teachers in meeting selected Iowa Teaching Standards. As Merriam (2002) noted, a qualitative researcher is interested in the meaning people have constructed in regard to a given situation, how those persons are able to make sense of their world, and the experiences that have contributed to their meaning-making. Because of the nature of this study, the qualitative approach was used to examine the impact of mentoring practices in student teaching.

When choosing a qualitative design, the following considerations were taken into account. Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined characteristics that guide qualitative research as a postpositivist approach to naturalistic inquiry. First, the research is conducted in a natural
setting. Because of the nature of the research questions, communicating with subjects in the field to determine what respondents are thinking is a logical means to attempt to understand the meaning of experiences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

A second characteristic Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested was the selection of the researcher as the primary data-gathering instrument. In the qualitative approach, the methods used for interaction between the researcher and the participant allow for an interpretive evaluation of the phenomenon described. Qualitative methods tend to be “more sensitive to and adaptable to the many mutually shaping influences and value patterns that may be encountered” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40).

A further consideration was that of the use of descriptive data. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) described qualitative research as interpretive and naturalistic in its approach. As these authors have indicated, qualitative research involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials that include interviews and interactions, which were used in this study. The opportunity was presented for all involved to reflect on what they were doing and what it offered to the student teaching experience. By using a variety of methods, Denzin and Lincoln maintained that researchers were able to make those connections that enabled a better understanding of the subjects being studied. This triangulation of data established trustworthiness through its use of multiple sources of data to confirm emerging findings. A rich, descriptive product is the result of a qualitative research whose focus is on process, meaning, and understanding (Merriam, 2002). Guiding this design were characteristics reiterated by Creswell (1998) that included: “the multiple nature of reality, the close relationship of the researcher to the participants, the value-laden aspect of the inquiry, the
personal approach to writing the narrative, and the emerging inductive methodology of the process of research" (p. 73).

Because this study sought to determine how student teachers perceive that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors, the use of focus groups was chosen as a method to collect data. Creswell (2002) noted that focus group interviews can be used to collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as get views from specific people. Focus groups provide for interaction among interviewees, collection of extensive data, and participation by all individuals in a group (Krueger, 1994). The advantage of utilizing focus groups is that the interaction allows the researcher to yield the best information when the individuals are similar to and cooperative with each other (Creswell, 2002). This was the case with these subjects. They were familiar with each other from previous university classroom interaction and were interested in each other’s experiences within student teaching.

As a result of this study, student teachers perceptions of how they were mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors were examined. The university may use these findings to consider changes and/or recommendations for the teacher education program at the university. This added to the knowledge base of how the university may better train cooperating teachers to more effectively mentor and prepare student teachers for their student teaching experiences as well as their teaching careers. It was thought that the lessons learned might be helpful in providing insight into the application
and implementation of the Iowa Teaching Standards into in-service teaching, as well as be useful in the retention of new teachers.

**Method**

This project used multiple assessment methods to collect data. Interviews of the student teachers were conducted prior to the student teaching placements. Student teachers were asked to use reflective journaling to specifically note examples of mentoring behaviors and actions of the cooperating teachers and to provide the student teachers’ viewpoint on how the mentoring may have assisted them in their teaching. The investigator also sat in on student teacher seminars throughout the semester. Throughout student teaching and at the conclusion of each placement, the student teachers were randomly grouped into focus groups on four separate occasions to provide comments and to reflect on how the mentoring by the cooperating teachers was of help. A focus group of cooperating teachers also were organized to gain their perspective on how they perceived their own mentoring.

Lincoln and Guba (2000) recommend that qualitative researchers must assess the trustworthiness of their research. This can be accomplished by using alternative criteria. These criteria include: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility: According to Zambo (2004), credibility is the stability and plausibility of data. In this regard, the researcher had prolonged engagement at the focus group interviews with student teachers. Each focus group discussion took 40 minutes to an hour until no new data were revealed. The researcher’s observations were persistent and continued so various perceptions could be identified from the participants. The researcher also shared her insights with her colleagues. They listened, prompted and helped to clarify insights.
Transferability: According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents. Results of this qualitative study are mainly applicable to the student teachers. However, the transferability of this study should be evaluated by the readers by evaluating the data prepared by the researcher, which may offer other applicable situations. Other institutions may utilize these findings regarding their teacher education programs, with elementary and/or secondary student teachers.

Dependability: A study must provide its audience with evidence that if it were to be repeated with the same participants in the same context but with a different researcher, findings would be similar (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). To ensure dependability, the researcher collected information from different sources (i.e., a literature review, interviews with student teachers and cooperating teachers, and reflective journals from student teachers) in order to compensate for the possible weakness in one source with the strength of the other.

Confirmability: To ensure confirmability, the researcher kept audiotapes and transcriptions of focus group interviews as an audit trail. In addition, the researcher performed member checks throughout the writing process. Confirmability is achieved with these processes that ensure that data collected were neutral and objective (Zambo, 2004).

Setting

This study took place during the spring 2005 semester at a private, four-year liberal arts college in a Midwestern state. Student teachers were assigned two placements for student teaching, each one lasting seven weeks, during this time period. They each had two elementary placements, one in the primary grades (K-3) and one in a higher elementary
setting (4-6). The study took place during these placements, for approximately fourteen weeks.

The university that the students attend has approximately 740 students, primarily Caucasian but with a diverse population of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian students, and a strong representation of nontraditional students (H. Streeter, personal communication, November 10, 2004). Cultural, age, and gender diversity are evident within the university and the education division. Three percent of university students were Asian, 15% African American, 6% Hispanic, and 1% of other diverse populations. Gender diversity is a bit more equal, with 41% female and 59% male (H. Streeter, personal communication, May 24, 2005). Nontraditional students are a part of the university’s population, with approximately 10% falling into that category. A unique situation of the university is its format of four eight-week terms each academic year. Students attending the university take two to three courses each term, and during student teaching complete two placements over two terms, as was the case for the subjects in this study.

**Sampling**

In this study, the focus was on student teachers and their cooperating teachers and the mentoring practices within that relationship. Selection of the subjects for this group was determined from the researcher’s work with the teacher education program in a Midwest private liberal arts college. Stake (1994) maintained that important things could be learned by studying a small subpopulation of accessible cases from a larger population. By identifying a group with which the most time could be spent, the researcher was able to generalize about the learning gleaned from the mentoring relationship in student teaching.
Thirteen elementary preservice educators from the same liberal arts college were identified to be student teaching in the spring semester 2005. An introductory letter was used to secure the consent of the participants. All student teachers contacted agreed to be respondents in this study. Approval was obtained through the director of the Division of Education to observe student teacher seminars and to take field notes. Interviews, transcriptions of focus group discussions, reflective journals, and pertinent emails were also identified as methods of data collection (see Table 3).

Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the university attended by the participants. IRB approval at Iowa State University was granted in December, 2004. An introductory letter was used to secure the consent of the participants (Appendix B), and signed consent form was returned to the researcher (Appendix D).

**Procedure**

Because the researcher examined how the parties functioned as a collaborative team, focus groups of student teachers were formed during the placements, and a focus group of cooperating teachers met at the end of the placement. Because the subjects were similar to and cooperative with one another, the likelihood that all participants had the opportunity to offer their own perspectives, reflections, and ideas was increased. From the researcher’s observations, all were open to offering their comments and fully participated in the focus group discussions. It was anticipated that the participants would share their insights regarding each one’s role related to mentoring within the student teaching experience.

In order to gauge each of the participant’s perspective on the student teaching experience, the researcher first interviewed the student teachers prior to student teaching. The interview questions afforded the student teachers the opportunity to reflect on their
personal histories and allowed the subjects to see what impact, if any, their stories may have on their current teaching views and styles. By their reflections, they often were able to evaluate their needs and plans for the student teaching experience, offering a clear picture of what their goals were; they did not go into the experience with little direction.

The student teachers were interviewed separately by the primary researcher prior to their placements (see Appendix E) and were audio tape recorded. The tapes were then transcribed. Data were also collected through observations at the student teacher seminars where student teachers and the education division chair gathered to discuss topics relevant to their experiences. The student teachers often asked questions and made comments which provided additional insight into their concerns and how their mentors assisted them.

Cooperating teachers and university supervisors also were invited to attend these seminars, although as in the past, their attendance was weak. Most cooperating teachers do not attend; university supervisors attend sporadically. Student teachers generally felt free to be open in their comments in these seminars. Wolf (1992) pointed out that unequal power between the researcher and the respondents has been a concern within research that stems from the different positions of these factions. In this study differences noted were in relation to class, education, age, and employment. The primary investigator made notes pertinent to the study from the seminars.

Two focus groups were organized after each seminar and the student teachers discussed questions prepared by the researcher (see Appendices G-J) that were related to their cooperating teachers' mentoring practices. The students were randomly assigned to the focus groups and were self-responding in their comments. The groups each were in a separate room and the researcher and the university division chair were each present in one
room to assist as needed. The researcher moved back and forth between the rooms/groups and, if inclined, asked follow-up questions to the participants' comments and responses. The student teachers were open and honest in their comments about their experiences and, due to the nature of the self-responding format, appeared to be having informal conversations with other peers about their experiences, which added to the discussion's openness. These discussions were audio tape recorded and then transcribed. Student teachers' reflective journals were utilized, with the student teachers being asked to take time to comment on the mentoring influence they received and how that was demonstrated. The student teachers met in focus groups after each of three seminars and then for a final focus group near the end of the student teaching experience. After each focus group discussion, the researcher revisited the data to flesh out more information, to formulate new questions based on responses to the previous session. Creswell (2002) indicates that qualitative research is considered to be an emerging design, indicating that the “questions asked by the researcher may change during the process of inquiry based on responses from participants” (p. 147). The researcher allowed the respondents to set the direction by learning the participants' views rather than imposing her own view on the study.

The student teachers were required by the university to keep reflective journals throughout their student teaching experiences. These are reviewed by the university supervisor and provide insight into the student teachers' routines, reactions to classroom interactions, and their professional growth. For this study, the student teachers were asked to record in their reflective journals mentoring behaviors, techniques, skills demonstrated by their cooperating teachers. They were asked to reflect or comment upon the impact of those techniques and behaviors on their professional performance.
The student teachers’ cooperating teachers were invited to participate in a focus group near the end of the student teaching placements. They were asked questions (see Appendix L) regarding their own perceptions of mentoring with their student teachers. Seven cooperating teachers attended the focus group discussion, facilitated by the researcher. Guided questions had been provided to the cooperating teachers prior to the session. Those who were not able to attend were contacted again and five more responded to the questions either via e-mail or by phone. The focus group and the telephone respondents were audio taped and transcribed.

**Researcher’s Role**

The researcher’s role as a college professor and university supervisor was a factor in this qualitative study. This researcher has performed all of the roles of the supervisory triad: as a former student teacher in undergraduate work 31 years ago, as a past cooperating teacher in the public school system intermittently over 21 years, and as a current university supervisor the past four years. This researcher was more of an “observer participant” than “participant observer” because the participation was minimal. Two student teachers within the study were being supervised in their student teaching experiences by the researcher. As a member of the university faculty, the researcher also had contact with ten of the respondents in prior situations as an advisor, instructor, or work-study supervisor. Additionally, the work of the observer participant was shaped by the researcher’s background knowledge (Florio-Ruane & McVee, 2002). As a result, the researcher was able to rely on these past and present experiences to construct reality and bring practitioner background knowledge to the research site. In qualitative research, the “understanding of reality is the researcher’s interpretation of participants’ interpretations or understandings of the phenomenon of
interest” (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). The researcher interviewed the student teachers, attended student teacher seminars, and facilitated all the student teachers’ and cooperating teachers’ focus groups.

A clarification of the “researcher’s position” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183) allows the reader to better understand how data may be interpreted. The primary investigator is an Assistant Professor of Education at the same university as the student teachers. She is a female, age 50, and her duties include teaching courses within the education division. Her teaching responsibilities include the following courses: Human Growth and Development; Introduction to Early Childhood Education; Curriculum and Administration of Early Childhood Programs; Family, Child Health and Nutrition; and Personal, School, and Community Health. Human Growth and Development is required of all teacher education students and is also a general education elective, with dual listing in the education and psychology disciplines. The early childhood courses are required of students with a PreK-Kindergarten and/or PreK-3 major or endorsement. Students attending these courses are usually in their junior or senior years of college. The courses in health, wellness, and nutrition are taken by a variety of education and health, physical education, and recreation majors (athletic training, fitness, etc.). It is possible for the researcher to work with some students as many as four or five terms over a four year period.

Participants

Thirteen student teachers participated in the study (See Table 1). These were elementary preservice educators identified to be student teaching in the spring semester, 2005. Interviews with the participants took place prior to the beginning of the student teaching placements, using prepared interview questions (see Appendix E).
All student teachers involved in this study were seniors, four males and nine females. One student teacher was a PreK-3 major, ten were elementary majors, and four of them were earning an early childhood endorsement. One of the elementary majors also was seeking an endorsement for special education, and one was seeking both the early childhood and special education endorsements. In addition to an elementary major, one subject was also taking coursework for the middle school endorsement. The remaining two subjects were in physical education; one a physical education major and one seeking the K-12 physical education endorsement to complement his agricultural education major, earned a year ago at another university. The student teachers ranged from 22 to 35 years of age, a mix of traditional and nontraditional students. Elementary endorsements being sought included K-6 Reading, K-6 English/language arts, K-6 math, K-6 Instructional Strategist I, and K-12 physical education.

The student teachers spent fourteen weeks student teaching. The fourteen weeks were divided into two seven-week placements, one each in lower and upper elementary classrooms for elementary student teachers. Seven student teachers were in the same building within the district for both placements, four were in one district, but in a different building for each placement, and two were in a different district for each placement. Although special education and early childhood endorsements required additional placements, 21 weeks was the maximum amount of time for the subjects, affecting four of the student teachers.

The thirty cooperating teachers were a diverse group in terms of age, experiences, and education (see Table 2). There were four males, which was typical, as statistically only 21% of all elementary teachers are males (NEA Report). Twenty-two were
Table 1. Student teaching subjects, grade levels, and cooperating teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Teacher</th>
<th>Placement #1</th>
<th>Placement #2</th>
<th>Placement #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperating Teacher</td>
<td>Grade level</td>
<td>Cooperating Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl</td>
<td>Mr. Howard</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>Mrs. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>Mr. Carson</td>
<td>K-8 Physical Ed.</td>
<td>Mr. Carson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>Mrs. Hart</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Mrs. Horner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonya</td>
<td>Mrs. Wright</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>Mrs. Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen</td>
<td>Mrs. Marshall</td>
<td>5th grade Science</td>
<td>Mrs. Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Mrs. Zimmer</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>Mrs. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Mrs. Harris</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Mrs. Mills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Mrs. George</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Mrs. Jensen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nora</td>
<td>Mrs. Dartmouth</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori</td>
<td>Mrs. South</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>Mrs. Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Mrs. Allen</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>Mrs. Flint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Mrs. Raymond</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Mrs. Reck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Mrs. Door</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>Mrs. Harper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl</td>
<td>Mr. Fisher</td>
<td>3-5 Physical Ed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Pseudonyms used for student teachers and cooperating teachers

veteran teachers with more than 10 years experience, sixteen had more than 15 hours past a Bachelor’s degree, and six had secured Master’s degrees. One teacher had attained National Board Certification.

The student teachers were placed in a variety of elementary classrooms, in rural to midsized community school districts; however seven student teachers were in the same school building, but different classrooms, for both of their placements. Numerous socioeconomic and cultural populations were represented, from small, rural districts, to larger, suburban districts. School building populations for these student teachers ranged from 95 to 650 students. The buildings contained grades K-2, 3-5, or K-8. A few of the districts
were consolidated schools and PreK-12 were in the same building. Three of the student teachers were in parochial schools, while the rest were placed in public schools. The preschools were all within public schools, as opposed to private institutions, although they were independent in operation.

The cooperating teachers were chosen through a process initiated by the university’s education division chair. She first reviewed student teacher applications which indicated three school district preferences and may not be the student teacher’s alma mater or where he/she has done field experience. After consideration of the student teachers’ preferences, the location, and how many student teachers that need to be placed (so a district is not “oversaturated”), the division chair e-mailed the principals with a description of what is needed, i.e., upper or lower elementary, length of placement, and/or any specific endorsements required. The student teachers’ profiles and philosophy of teaching were sent to the principals as well. Some review this information thoroughly and spend time determining cooperating teachers. One principal asked the student teacher to come in for a visit and then he worked to place the student teacher with a cooperating teacher who may be a good “fit” for that student teacher. The elementary principals then chose from building teachers who have been strong mentors for the teacher preparation program in the past or have indicated a desire in serving as a cooperating teacher.

The university’s only guideline for cooperating teachers is that they have two years of successful teaching experience, are fully certified in the area they are teaching (highly qualified teacher, per No Child Left Behind legislation), and hold a Standard or Master Educator Iowa teaching license. No formal training for the cooperating teachers is required. There is a mandatory session for student teachers prior to student teaching, where the
division chair reviews expectations of the student teachers and answers questions related to procedures during the student teaching experience. The cooperating teachers are all invited to this session, but few attend. Of the thirty cooperating teachers that were supervising the student teachers in this study seven attended the session held prior to the spring semester.

Cooperating teachers are paid a $100 stipend for each seven week placement. They directly receive the money from the university or they may choose to receive a university scholarship certificate worth $100 for each seven weeks of student teaching assigned, which will be matched by a university certificate of equal worth when a student (a graduate of that district) attends the university. The cooperating teacher, then, can essentially be the donor of a $200 scholarship for a graduate of that school district.

Table 2. Cooperating teachers’ data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Certification/endorsements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Allen</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 24</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Reading Instructional Strategist I (Class C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Brown**</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 32</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Door</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 20</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Downs**</td>
<td>K-2 Special Education</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Mildly Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 MD, mild/moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Multicat, Sp. Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Instructional Strategist I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Fisher</td>
<td>3-5 Physical Education</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 39</td>
<td>7-12 Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-12 Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Grade/Subject</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>K-6 Physical Educ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Jensen**</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>B.A. + 6</td>
<td>7-12 Physical Educ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Marshall**</td>
<td>5th grade Science</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>B.A. + 34</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Mills**</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>M.A. + 30</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 BD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 LD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Multicat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource Mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Multicat. Spec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Inst. Strategist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sargent</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B.A. + 15</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Shuler**</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>B.A. + 20</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PreK-K Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. South**</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>B.A. + 27</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PreK-K Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Star</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>M.A. + 29</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-6 Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>K-12 Physical Educ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pseudonyms used for cooperating teachers

** In attendance at focus group discussion

**Data Collection**

Data were collected using multiple sources. Triangulation through a combination of interviews, focus groups, observations during student teacher seminars, and document analysis has been found to strengthen the internal validity of a study (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, data were collected through interviews of all student teachers, their reflective
journals, focus groups, student teaching seminars, and ongoing verbal and written communication (See Table 3).

All student teachers had an initial interview prior to their student teaching placements. Student teachers were asked to keep reflective journals, to make note of mentoring skills and behaviors demonstrated to them by cooperating teachers and their response to these in terms of how the skills and behaviors were helping their teaching and professional growth.

E-mails and informal conversations between the participants and the researcher throughout the assignment were ongoing as necessary. Separate focus groups of student

Table 3. Data types collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Interview</td>
<td>Audiotape transcription</td>
<td>Prior to student teaching</td>
<td>Individual interviews with student teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Teacher Seminars</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>1/26/05, 2/16/2005, 3/16/05</td>
<td>All student teachers Selected speakers Education Division Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Teacher Focus Groups</td>
<td>Audiotape transcription</td>
<td>Immediately after student teaching seminars 1/26/05, 2/16/05, &amp; 3/16/05</td>
<td>Student teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Journals</td>
<td>Student teacher-written journals</td>
<td>Collected 2/16/05, 4/7/05, &amp; 4/27/05</td>
<td>Student teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperating Teacher Focus Group</td>
<td>Audiotape transcription</td>
<td>4/7/2005</td>
<td>Cooperating teachers (7) present; 3 responded via email; 2 by phone interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Teacher Final Focus Group</td>
<td>Audiotape transcription</td>
<td>4/27/05</td>
<td>Student teachers (7 present), 2 interviewed later, 4 responded via email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
teachers and cooperating teachers were organized for follow up and reflection during and after the placements. The researcher interviewed the participants individually to allow time for open-ended questioning to take place. These interviews included formal questions as well as informal discussion and feedback. The questions were adapted from a variety of sources. Interviews with all participants occurred prior to the student teaching placement. By using open-ended questions, the researcher attempted to follow the interviewee’s train of thought, guided the interviewee at times, and at others, discovered information that the researcher may not have expected. Verbatim quotations from transcriptions and attributed to the specific subjects were used to provide the thick description inherent to this qualitative study. This ensured the descriptive and thematic development as well as the interrelation of the themes presented (Creswell, 2002).

The relationships with the participants were developed through personal and written contact. The student teachers were provided with an introductory letter explaining the expectations for participating in this study as well as a written informed consent document. The individual interviews were scheduled with the student teachers by the researcher at a time convenient for each prior to the student teaching placement.

The researcher had the opportunity to discuss relevant issues with those involved and listened and read their reflections. Journals provided the researcher with closer insight into each subject’s experience. The student teachers were encouraged to communicate their reflections regarding their view of mentoring. E-mail provided an opportunity to give prompt feedback as well as monitored the mentoring process as it evolved. The interviews were audio taped and then responses were transcribed.
The journal was helpful for the participants in the study to reflect and to document those reflections at the moment, to review these at a later date, and to present those ideas when they met in seminars and in focus groups. Wallace (1999) suggests the importance of the journal as “a reflective instrument that will provide insight into the evolution of relationships and connections all the way round” (p. 10). It appears important, then, that these journals were shared with the researcher.

Throughout the student teaching semester, seminars were held, facilitated by the university’s education division chair. Topics included resume writing and applications, interviewing techniques, licensure application, and ethics. Time was allotted for the researcher to talk with the student teachers about the mentoring behaviors and techniques they were observing. Informal conversation among the student teachers was documented with field notes, as this was a time when the student teachers often felt comfortable to speak openly about their experiences.

Two focus groups of six to seven student teachers met following the three student teacher seminars as well as a final time, and the cooperating teachers met in a focus group one time toward the end of the second placement, at the completion of the student teaching experience. All cooperating teachers were invited to participate in the focus group. It was held at the end of all placements as a measure of convenience in conjunction with an appreciation dinner hosted by the university’s teacher education division. It was hoped that attendance would be increased if the cooperating teachers could participate in the focus group immediately after the dinner rather than making another trip. The student teachers were randomly placed in the focus groups, and in the instance of an absence, the missing student teacher(s) responded via e-mail to the questions. Prepared questions for the focus
groups, which met after each seminar, helped elicit comments specific to mentoring and the Iowa Teaching Standards (see Appendices G - J).

Through the data collection process, all of the respondents were aware that the interviews and focus group discussions were tape-recorded and were being transcribed by the researcher. This was conveyed in the consent form and also was discussed by the researcher prior to the initial interview. The researcher also assured the respondents of the confidentiality employed in the study, the need to use a pseudonym for the student teachers and their cooperating teachers, and that possible identifying information would be masked in the final written document. The individuals were encouraged to ask questions at any time and reminded that parts of conversations that they preferred to keep off the record would be handled as such. The respondents were informed that the transcripts would be available for review and all were welcome to read the final document. All participants were told that they would have the opportunity to read the findings (member checking) so chapters four and five of the final document were emailed to all respondents. This allowed them not only to check the accuracy of the researcher’s recording, but to provide a sense that the information was not exclusive to the researcher. This method of cross-checking strengthened the validity of the study.

Additionally, an external audit (Creswell, 2002) was conducted to review and evaluate the research. Three of the researcher’s education department colleagues read and reviewed the document at a variety of stages of development in an effort to affirm accuracy and credibility. As student teaching supervisors themselves, they had seen many of these mentoring behaviors among the student teacher-cooperating teacher dyads. Although outside the study, they were familiar with the student teaching process within this university, so they
could evaluate the theory of the study compared to what the researcher actually did and reported.

**Data Analysis**

Through data analysis, open coding was used to see what was appearing in the data and to focus on its potential meaning (Esterberg, 2002). Using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, themes and key elements became clearer, and these were then analyzed to reveal ways that mentoring practices the cooperating teachers modeled were helpful for the student teachers (See Figure 1). A funnel approach was used to bring the amount of data into manageable ideas. Open coding was used to see what was appearing in the data and to focus on its potential meaning (Esterberg, 2002). The transcripts were color coded for each participant. The participants' comments were cut apart and sorted into piles, according to common themes. These individual responses were sorted into themes and then further sorted and narrowed into the subgroups. The transcripts, journals, and field notes were reviewed, line by line, looking for recurring themes and categories. Data were coded until similar themes surfaced. Then these code words were grouped and categorized, to make the data more manageable.

Axial coding compared the categories to determine further connections. Then throughout selective coding, these connections were reintegrated in an effort to form a theory congruent to the teaching standards addressed. Through this constant comparative method the emergent theory is reflective of the respondents' experience and grounded in data (Merriam, 2002). The main themes that emerged were related to classroom management, teaching techniques and strategies, networking, and the mentoring relationship that develops within student teaching.
Figure 1. Data collection and coding schema.
Upon further analysis, the themes could be subdivided into the areas of support, challenges, and advice related to each theme. With these themes and subgroups determined, the field notes and comments in the reflective journals were further analyzed for supporting data. The respondents were consistent in their comments in all areas of data collection. The mentoring behaviors demonstrated by the cooperating teachers were examined to observe the relationship to and impact upon Standards 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards.

This information can be utilized by the university education chair in assisting and advising cooperating teachers, and is available to be used in training and recruiting cooperating teachers and in preparing student teachers. University supervisors were also beneficiaries, as many work with student teachers and cooperating teachers.

**Summary**

This section focused on the methodology planned for the investigation of the collaborative mentoring process between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher in the student teaching experience. Following the completion of the project, results will be disseminated possibly through journal articles and/or speaking engagements. Target audiences may include university professors in the field of teacher education, university supervisors of student teachers, and principals and cooperating teachers who hope to mentor student teachers.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Emerging Themes

The purpose of this study was to determine how student teachers perceived that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. This research project investigated behaviors and skills that cooperating teachers demonstrated to assist the student teacher in his/her learning. This relationship was examined to understand how these parties work together to ensure a successful experience for the student teacher. The mentoring skills that may have developed among the parties were another facet of this project. This study can provide insight into how the student teacher may have developed a professional persona to meet the criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards.

In this chapter, data are presented which were obtained from interviews, student teaching seminars, student teacher focus groups, the reflective journals of each student teacher, and from a focus group session of cooperating teachers. This project used multiple methods to collect data. Interviews of the student teachers were conducted prior to the student teaching placements. Student teachers were asked to use reflective journaling to specifically note and provide examples of mentoring behaviors and actions of the cooperating teachers and the student teachers’ viewpoint on how that mentoring may have assisted them in their teaching. The researcher also recorded verbal discussions in student teacher seminars throughout the semester. Throughout each 7-week student teaching placement, the student teachers were grouped into focus groups to provide comments and reflection on how the mentoring by the cooperating teachers was of help. A focus group of cooperating teachers
was also organized to gain their perspective on how they perceived their own mentoring styles.

In an effort to make meaning of the raw data, analysis began with review of field notes, interview and focus group transcriptions, and journal entries. Three steps of coding were employed: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was used to see what was appearing in the data and to focus on its potential meaning (Esterberg, 2002). The transcripts, journals, and field notes were reviewed, line by line, looking for recurring themes and categories. Data were coded until similar themes surfaced. Then these code words were grouped and categorized, to make the data more manageable.

Axial coding compared the categories to determine further connections. Then throughout selective coding, these connections were reintegrated in an effort to form a theory congruent to the teaching standards addressed. Through this constant comparative method the emergent theory is reflective of the respondents' experience and grounded in data (Merriam, 2002).

The responses to the focus group questions which were supported by the interviews, comments within the student teaching seminars, and reflective journal comments were grouped into four themes: classroom management, teaching strategies, networking/professional development, and mentor relationships. Within these themes, three areas appeared as central to the cooperating teacher's role as a mentor in addressing the themes: challenges, support, and advice (see Figure 1).

There were definite commonalities among all of the respondents' comments and observations. All student teachers indicated that they had similar expectations for their cooperating teachers. The goal of the student teaching experience is to provide the student
teacher the opportunity to actually demonstrate and apply the content knowledge and pedagogical theories that he/she has studied. This experience will not be without incident. Real life situations seldom go as smoothly as the text examples, the case studies presented by the professor, or the role plays practiced in class. This is why the cooperating teacher is such an integral part of the student teaching triad. The cooperating teacher has a responsibility to assist the student teacher in developing classroom strategies that are suitable for him/her as well as meet the needs of the students within the conditions of the classroom. The student teacher needs to know where his/her strengths lie and what areas to focus on in an effort to improve. He/she deserves to know the expectations of the school as well as the state standards and to be treated as a professional. To that end, these areas all are identified as being central to a strong cooperating teacher/student teacher relationship.

**Challenges**

The challenges encompassed a broad range of concerns: classroom management, teaching techniques and strategies, networking and professional information, and mentor relationship. Student teachers do not necessarily expect their experience to be without challenges, yet they respond in a variety of stages of surprise when they are faced with a day, a student, or a situation that does not go according to plans. Learning to meet and deal with these challenges of teaching are what makes the student teacher better at his/her craft and able to adapt to a variety of teaching situations.

**Classroom Management**

As the student teaching experience began, many of the student teachers referred to the concerns regarding classroom management issues. The prospect of managing their students was not only the biggest fear, but also the hardest part of teaching to master. Classroom
management is an integral part of solid teaching; the success of the teacher and the students is dependent on it. A recent survey examining student learning in the classroom found disruptive student behavior to be a major learning inhibitor (Seidman, 2005). Poor classroom management is often equated with decreased learning as many distractions and disruptions interfere with student concentration and therefore, learning potential. Student teachers indicated their concerns about classroom management prior to student teaching as they understood the impact of successful classroom management, which is apparent in these comments from their pre-student teaching interviews:

I’m always concerned about classroom management. With the preschoolers, that’s a different kind of thing than the situations with older students (Annie, initial interview, December 31, 2004).

Kayla was more confident and expected guidance from her mentor:

I don’t think that management and behavior should be an issue…but you just don’t know til you work with them…that’s the area that I think he’ll be able to really help me with; you know, advise me on how he’s handled different kids who acted up (Initial interview, January 5, 2005).

Jane indicated some trepidation in her initial interview; “I am concerned that I may struggle with classroom management (Initial interview, January 2, 2005).

Lori understood the importance of effective classroom management:

The classroom management is a big one because you always have somebody there kind of guiding you along on how to deal with things and what to do if this happens, so actually having to take control is my biggest concern (Initial interview, January 12, 2005).
All the student teacher participants had taken the course Individual Behavior and Classroom Management as a foundation for this work, but actually applying techniques and strategies proved to be a different situation. Classroom management is one of the areas that the teacher education colleges can offer as coursework, but it appears that the student teacher must actually be in the classroom implementing the information from the course for application to take place. Some students applied information better than others:

The classroom management—I don’t think we got a whole lot of good classroom management tactics here. I think the best way you can get those is actually being in the classroom and dealing with problems (Earl, focus group, February 16, 2005).

Laura felt confident in the content related to classroom management, but indicated that her experience was lacking:

I took the classroom management class, of course, but I haven’t had that experience of being in control of a classroom very much…. (Initial interview, December 27, 2004).

Student teachers continued to bring up discipline and classroom management issues throughout their student teaching experiences as they saw the impact of effective classroom management on learning and instruction. They were challenged in how they addressed and handled classroom management and disciplinary issues, evidenced by the comments from their reflective journals, focus group discussions, and student teaching seminars:

Some of the things that I’ve noticed that had the most impact on my teaching so far would be the means of student control (Tonya, focus group, January 26, 2005).
Using a tone of surprise and disgust on his difficulty with classroom management, Earl commented, “Discipline. I’m having trouble with that. They—the kids—do not respect me like they respect the cooperating teacher. And I’m trying everything, but it doesn’t work” (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Mary, too, voiced her frustration early in her student teaching:

The discipline … I know there’s learning taking place, but it’s like, come on, I shouldn’t have to say this 75 times. It’s going better, but I’ve gotten stricter. I don’t like being that way, but you have to be (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Jane was surprised by the amount of time it took to stay on top of behavior issues, exclaiming, “Behavior—I spend so much of my time! And I’ve tried different strategies; I mean I have to—there’s 15 kids … You almost have to have a different strategy for each child” (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Nora seemed to learn quickly about being an assertive teacher, saying, “I tried coming in being … a little more, you know, nice to the students … and now, I’m, you just really got to put your foot down and you got to gain respect …” (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

And the bottom line according to Sue, “I had to get mean” (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Teaching Techniques and Strategies

According to the student teachers and their mentors, once the classroom management issues were addressed, teaching strategies followed. Unlike their concern for classroom management, subjects indicated that teaching techniques and strategies were areas in which they expected the cooperating teachers to help. The student teachers had their own ideas
about lessons and units they would teach and the methods of motivating students, but again, they indicated that much would be attributed to pedagogical theory rather than actual classroom practice. The student teachers indicated that while they felt comfortable with the material and the actual teaching techniques, they were less sure of their own presentation and teaching style. They were concerned that the few weeks of practica and field experiences weren’t adequate to put them “in charge.” The following are their comments within interviews and student teaching seminars, starting with Jane’s feelings:

I suppose. I guess I’m just not positive on what … what I should expect, like …oh … just on how I’m going to feel maybe, I guess, would be the best word for it. How I’m going to feel, how I’m going to interact with the students. How well it’s going to go, and I just don’t know if I feel quite as prepared with that (Initial interview, January 2, 2005).

Laura indicated her apprehension, saying, “I feel less prepared in my own personal ability to run a classroom. Hopefully, practice in the classroom and tips from my cooperating teachers will help me overcome this feeling of inadequacy.”

Laura also noted, “I am concerned that I will not be able to handle the task of teaching an entire day. I have taught many individual lessons but never the lessons of an entire school day” (Initial interview, December 27, 2004).

Allen expressed his concerns:

I am pretty nervous about the special needs student and like, behavioral and other students….about the only class I took was special education, and you know, Dr. Jones did a very good job, and I have a very good background in it, but I haven’t had nearly the interaction with those types of students that I’ve had with others and I
don’t know as much as what .... as I’ve not had the hands-on experience of dealing with those students like that, so I’m a little bit nervous about that (Initial interview, January 6, 2005).

Lori adds, [What I’m most concerned about is] “I would say just for preparation of teaching, because you really don’t have an understanding unless you were there.” (Initial interview, January 19, 2005).

Mary expressed her doubts in her initial interview:

A concern of mine would be that I’m kind of scared to mess up and make mistakes, because I’m learning and I will make mistakes, but I don’t want that to be held against me. That’s what I worry about ...is not doing everything just perfect (Initial interview, December 31, 2004).

In his initial interview, Larry said:

You always have that doubt or wonder in the back of your head if kids are going to know more than you do or if they’re going to run faster than you or do something a little different than you. But, uh, there’s always the fear of lack of knowledge (Initial interview, December 30, 2004).

Prior to starting his first student teaching placement, Karl projected:

There’s always fears, wondering what the district is going to expect, or people in the community, what they think of you there student teaching. Um and for that matter are you pleasing all the students and what the students are going home and telling mom and dad? Do they think it’s going good, or do they think it’s not going good? So you always, you always, are wondering in the back of your mind, “Is
everything really going as good as it seems or not?” (Initial interview, February 1, 2005).

Not all were as hesitant; all but a couple of student teachers did feel comfortable not only with the subject matter and content, but also in their ability to handle the rigors of teaching. They were confident in their abilities going into the student teaching experience, as indicated by the following comments.

Allen indicated, “My college course experience has prepared me for student teaching. I feel I have learned a great deal in my classes that can be directly used in the classroom to create a positive learning environment” (Initial interview, January 6, 2005).

Tonya was optimistic in her comments, “I think this will be the first opportunity for me to establish some sense of my own teaching style (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

“I know how to write lesson plans! [It’s] the planning aspect of it… Mary commented (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Confidently, Jane acknowledged, “I know I can write lesson plans, but I don’t know if it works the same way when you’re in the class daily… practically, is it like, following that plan?” (Initial interview, January 2, 2005).

Lori agreed, “I think that all three of those things (curriculum, management and content) come down to one thing and that’s being organized, having definite plans set aside, having all your materials ready” (Focus group #1, February 16, 2005).

Networking and Professionalism

Within the university training, this area appeared to be the weakest for the preservice educator, so consequently the cooperating teacher was truly the primary instructor and model. Student teachers indicated that they were not as astute in their pursuit of professional
opportunities and networking and didn't realize the importance of that component of
education. During a student teaching seminar, two area administrators spoke to student
teachers on tips for applying, interviewing, and securing a teaching position. They noted that
it is extremely important to have anyone who the student teachers may know to make
contacts for them in a potential job situation. The student teachers were surprised to hear the
importance that the administrators put on this. It truly reinforced for the student teachers the
necessity of networking within the profession and the impact it may have on them as Allen
indicated:

No one really emphasized how important the connections were going to be
until [Mr. Jones and Mr. Harper] told us about it. I knew that it would be good to ask
a teacher or principal to say something if they knew of an opening, but [the
administrators] really told us to cultivate those professional connections to help get an
interview (Student teaching seminar, January 26, 2005).

The professional component of mentoring also includes the development of teaching
behaviors and skills. Professional development is important in becoming a well-rounded
educator. The opportunity to participate in district, regional and state meetings and
conferences was offered and those who participated gained a greater insight into the business
of education.

Mentor Relationship

The true mentor relationship that encompasses not only the professional relationship,
but also personal relationship is the most elusive component of mentoring, but in many
situations, defines a true mentor. Hardcastle (1988) suggests that a mentor is a catalyst who
creates a more abstract, interpersonal, and life-changing relationship. This indicates a
relationship beyond the classroom, beyond the professional component, which sustains the relationship over time. This type of relationship was anticipated by some student teachers, as the following comments indicate.

Sue observed, “I think (this relationship would be) professional overall, but there has to be a personal level at one point...(Initial interview, January 4, 2005).

Lori remarked:

I would say both. It’s really important to know her personally as well because then you can feel comfortable talking about things you really need help with and can get information from them. I think it’s important to know them personally to get comfortable with them (Initial interview, January 19, 2005).

Nora disagreed, noting:

I wouldn’t say strictly professional. I think the majority of it would be professional, but I think that, and I’m going to spend every day with this person. I would say it’s pretty much impossible not to build some sort of personal relationship with them also (Initial interview, December 30, 2004).

Another explanation, offered by Karl:

I guess you can go both [ways]. I mean it’s a professional setting, and you need to take it to a professional level and be serious, but at the same time, there is more to life than just going to school every day and teaching and so you know when school’s in you’re professional. You need to be professional about it and the same thing, you know, people in the community see you outside of school and see what you’re doing and they expect you to be on professional behavior, but that’s not to say you can’t have a relationship or know somebody and deal with them personally or go
Agreeing, Jane said:

Oh definitely. I think like I said before I think any teacher or anyone who overlooks you or helps you in a way becomes a mentor just from being there to assist you at any time and I’m sure that we’ll possibly build that bond where it’ll go beyond student teaching and we’ll see each other from here on out and we’ll always be there to help each other, so that’s definitely a mentor (Initial interview, January 2, 2005).

Most students, however, seemed to be more concerned about the professional aspect of mentoring, as described by Kay’s (1990) work which states, “Mentoring is a comprehensive effort directed toward helping a protégé develop the attitudes and behaviors (skills) of self-reliance and accountability within a defined environment” (p. 27). As indicated in the following comments from the interviews prior to their student teaching experiences:

“I certainly believe that my cooperating teachers could become my mentors. I think that if open communication is kept and a positive environment is established, mentoring could be occurring on a very regular basis” (Laura, initial interview, December 27, 2004).

Jane wholeheartedly agreed:

Oh—yes, I think ... that’s why they’re there ... that’s what this experience is doing for me ... teaching me how it actually happens, how to be a teacher and during that process, watching those teachers mentor me. Helping me on specifics, so yeah, I believe they’re going to be my mentors (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).
Larry agreed, saying, “I believe so, ‘cause she’s going to help me out, kind of show me the ropes. I’m going to learn what she taught me” (Initial interview, December 30, 2004).

Tonya added:

Yes, definitely. I really feel a connection in what we’ve done already and I think she’s so willing to let me jump in and really teach. I think that we’re going to work well together and that sets the stage for that kind of relationship. I admire her teaching style and I would like to emulate that (Focus group, March 16, 2005).

Earl pointed out:

I don’t know, I definitely think he could, uh it just depends how, how, uh, how he reacts to the situation. How we get along; I’m sure we’ll get along. I mean, sports, he’s only three years older than me. I definitely think he could be considered as a mentor (Initial interview, January 3, 2005).

In addition, Lori remarked:

I believe so ... I think that they can help me out and give me ideas about what they’ve done and things like that. I don’t expect them to be a life long mentor, like … but I think that they’ll be someone that I’ll refer to in my teaching experience (Initial interview, January 19, 2005).

Gehrke and Kay (1984) described the interaction between mentor and protégé as a relationship that is healthy and positive. Their belief is that this relationship serves a socialization purpose; the older and wiser person is responsible to nurture and educate the young. The personal aspect of mentoring, however, is not a required component of being a mentor, and does not occur in all mentor/mentee relationships. The student teachers appeared to accept the fact that this personal aspect may not have happened between them
and their cooperating teacher as evidenced from the following communications from their reflective journals and focus groups.

According to Jane:

I have two other teachers to go to yet, but this one I really look up to her, but we’re really not very close, connecting, like some people really mesh. I really like her, as a teacher ... but I haven’t really gotten to know her as a mentor (Focus group #1, January 16, 2005).

Annie emphatically states:

I would say that my first teacher was not a mentor, and will never be a mentor ... No skills as far as personal skills with myself or with her associates that are in the room. I guess I did learn … that’s not what I want to be and you know, that’s not who I am; that’s not who I’ll be ever (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Kayla explained, “My teacher as a mentor? Not really. He doesn’t really go out of his way to do anything obviously and so you’re not really a mentor if you’re not trying to help or anything” (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

With a hint of remorse, Kayla also remarks:

I guess we don’t really; we interact, but probably not as much as maybe we should or as much as other students do. And maybe it’s not a bad thing either, maybe it’s just how our personalities are … you know, so I guess we’ll see. Maybe he’ll change or he’ll start giving me more tips as we get going so we’ll see how time goes (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Support

As a mentor, one expects to learn the steps of a profession and this is the crux of the cooperating teacher’s responsibility. This is the true content area in the practicing classroom.
For every challenge presented to the student teachers, student teachers reported that the majority of the cooperating teachers provided reassurance and support. Overwhelmingly, student teachers reported that their cooperating teachers promoted their abilities in all endeavors of their teaching in the effort to help them grow in their educational styles, as indicated in the following enthusiastic comments:

I can’t even tell you a specific incident because she was just so excellent, and she was just a great mentor. She would always provide me with great feedback. She always told me how great of a teacher I was going to be and, you know, she just kind of really boosted my morale quite a bit. She always answered my questions too; always asked me if I had any questions or if she, you know, if she had any questions of me she’d even ask me. She was just a good mentor (Allen, focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Tonya observed:

She was a very good mentor. We communicated daily, every morning and night, you know when we first got there, just to, for her to let me know anything that would be going on or anything that I had to be aware of. And then every afternoon before we’d leave, we’d just touch base on how everything went for the day. With the students in that placement, I had special ed, and she, from the start, told me as much as she could about each one of the kids and made sure I, um, read their files, so I knew as much about them as I could to know how to handle them, I guess, and how to work with them best. And any tips she could think of to help me with their behavior problems or any of their academic problems she would let me know whenever she thought of them. Or if any situations came up she’d, if I didn’t handle it
quite the way she would, she would tell me what she would’ve done and told me, I
guess, you know, that I handled it ok. This is what she would’ve done, but it worked
fine the way I did it. Or if I could’ve done something better, she’d let me know. We
kind of communicated a lot. (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Earl concurred regarding his cooperating teacher, “I think Mrs. B. will be a great role
model to teach by. She has so much experience. No book or video can touch the things she
has learned through the years” (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Annie’s comments on her second cooperating teacher:

She had all the skills I could ever picture as a good mentor. She helped me
grow professionally, personally. Um, she’ll be on my speed dial list probably for the
rest of my life. She’s just an amazing person, and I’ve learned a lot from her, even
personally. She’s got twins and one of them has cerebral palsy and she’s been through
all that in her life, too, and that’s just something else that just makes her a good
mentor...you know,...if I ever need someone like that, that would be someone in my
corner (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

**Classroom Management**

As classroom management created the largest share of student teaching concerns and
challenges, the cooperating teachers rose to those challenges by supporting the student
teachers as they formed their own system of discipline and guidance.

Jane commented on her cooperating teacher, citing specific comments:

Specifically, um, my teacher currently is talking to me a lot about classroom
management because we have a very difficult class. Um, we have about five students
who need one-on-one attention constantly. Um, so we’re talking a lot about classroom
management and different strategies that she uses and how, um, important it is to be consistent, and she always provides feedback on how I'm doing a good job keeping up with the management plan that she has for the classroom. She's always asking me if I have questions, so she definitely demonstrates habits and skills of inquiry and helps me to ask questions too (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

The cooperating teachers offered suggestions, support, and feedback in helping student teachers become confident in their own management style. This was an area where the student teachers expected guidance, and the cooperating teachers truly were mentors. They were nonjudgmental, but offered suggestions based on their own past experiences and not only provided ideas and strategies, but rationalized and explained their reasoning to their apprentices. Student teachers noted the varying styles of their cooperating teachers and either implemented or made note of what they believed would work for them in their own classroom, as indicated in the following comments:

She's given me lots of ideas, um, regarding all ...of these things. She is just an amazing teacher and I'm learning all kinds of different management techniques. 'Cause she tries so many different things with these kids. And some of them seem to work. But she said that mostly she finds that she had to change her management structure every so often, so it continues to work. So I'm learning lots of different strategies (Nora, focus group, March 16, 2005).

Allen was enthusiastic about the management style demonstrated by his cooperating teacher:

She (first placement cooperating teacher) ran a very free will classroom and the students, it wasn't to the point where students were out of control, but the students
basically reigned, which I loved. Because they got up to go to the bathroom whenever they wanted. I mean they didn’t waste time to ask, they just went. And I really liked that, I mean, I would probably run my classroom very similar to that. She would offer some suggestions to classroom management but wouldn’t really be as strict as others. My second placement, she’s like, not in a negative way, but she’s like Hitler. (All laugh!) I mean... she keeps every; the kids do not get by with anything in her classroom and she will snap on them like crazy. So, part of me thinks it’s good to see the other extreme so it will kind of toughen me up a little bit to see, you know, that you can act a little bit tougher on the kids and they won’t hold it against you forever and ever. I mean, she comes down on kids daily and they always come to school happy and chipper the next day. So it’s been good to see that end of the spectrum as well (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Teaching Techniques and Strategies

The goal for the student teachers was to implement the theories they learned in class, try them out, gain feedback from the cooperating teacher, observe him/her and the successful strategies, and meld this all into their own teaching style. As the following comments suggest, many discovered from their cooperating teachers’ comments that their teaching style will evolve and change over the years:

My cooperating teacher has given actually, just today, gave me her research paper on DTT because I am doing DTT—Discrete Trail Teaching—with a student with autism and she provided me with her research paper that she did for her masters degree so I can learn a little more about it. Um, we go to staff meetings very frequently in [my first placement school] and we had an in-service with occupational
therapists on different things we can do in our classrooms. Any tips and meetings that come up that would have any information on anything I could possibly use she recommends I go to (Tonya, focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Laura adds, “As for content and curriculum, my teacher usually tells me how she’s taught in the past, how to do something, so any new ideas I usually come up with on my own” (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Jane points out that in her special education classroom, there are limitations due to federal and state regulations:

As far as the classroom content and curriculum goes, that is pretty well described by my students’ IEPs so, uh, I know just even after one session of working with them, whether it be math or reading or whatever the content area is, you can tell where the student is at and what types of things he needs to work with. So, that, you know, the teacher, she will offer suggestions of ways to use manipulatives to help get the subject understood (Focus group, #3, March 16, 2005).

Lori indicates the trust placed in her by both of her cooperating teachers:

My cooperating teacher, well, the first two, have shown a lot of trust in me and urged me to take over as quickly as I wanted and, you know, allow me to do whatever I wanted to do with the class, even if they knew something might not work as well—certain seating arrangements, things like that, but they figured I should experience that for myself and learn from some mistakes, too (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Annie observed the collaboration between her cooperating teacher and herself:
We also worked together by coming up with documentation information on every student. She gave me some of her kid-watching sheets and said, “put each one of these students’ names on one of those and do that while you’re here and that way you can help me out by getting some documentation and also see how that’s done.” And her kid-watching techniques were just so awesome that I actually got copies and definitely will use it in my classroom (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

In a response in his journal during the second week into his student teaching experience, Earl made the following comment about his cooperating teacher: “I am going to try to model his teaching styles as much as possible, because I really like the way he teaches” (Initial interview, January 3, 2005).

Networking and Professionalism

The end goal of the student teacher upon completion of student teaching is to secure a teaching position and set up his/her own classroom. To that end, he/she has looked to the cooperating teacher not only for support, but also to assist in making connections for teaching openings, writing a letter of recommendation and responding to reference calls, leading a mock interview, and offering suggestions based on their own application and interview experiences. These mentoring behaviors appear to have the greatest effect on the student teachers as this is what may actually help them secure their own classrooms and provide the opportunity to use the knowledge gained under the cooperating teacher’s tutelage. The student teachers took to heart the advice given in the seminars and utilized the networking advantage in the following ways.

Earl explained:
He actually gave me his resume to help me with some things. He’s one of my personal contacts. Um, he helped me with questions, he helped me, he lined me up with one of the jobs down by Des Moines to get--actually I got interview there--just different things like that (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Lori’s cooperating teacher offered this advice:

My teacher explained to me, like, how her interviews went and things like that. She’s been in the profession, I think for like 15 years, so I’m sure it’s different somewhat, but she explained what she went through (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Sue also has received job hunting assistance from her mentor:

I’ve talked to my first cooperating teacher about all aspects of interviewing and resumes and contacts and she ... before I asked her to write a letter of reference she offered and, um, just telling me the tricks of the trade. And, um, she’s brought in the Des Moines paper for me and, um, just, she’s been more than helpful (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Lori’s cooperating teacher has involved her in professional development in numerous ways:

Whenever there was a professional development day, I was always told beforehand. I was always given the daily bulletins and kept up-to-date on information regarding school happenings. I was always made to feel like part of the staff, which is something that meant so much to me. She also wants to see what I have done with my portfolio and different things I have done…((Focus group #3, March 16, 2005)).
Allen's mentor was keeping him abreast of current district openings:

In terms of networking and potential jobs and all that my … teacher emails me almost daily still saying that she hasn't heard anything in the district, but she has heard rumors that there might be an opening, and so she is constantly keeping me in touch (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Laura realized the importance of the professional connections in securing interviews:

I have realized connections make a difference. The first interview I had the principal knew … the principal where I student taught. The second interview came because the principal had taught in the school district where I graduated from (Student teacher seminar, January 26, 2005).

Toward that end the student teacher must be fully cognizant that learning and coursework do not stop the day he/she graduates and gets a job. Education is a profession of lifelong learning. Remaining current with teaching techniques, content matter, legislation, and policies are not only necessary to stay in the profession, but also many states and districts also base salary increases on continued professional development. The cooperating teachers in this study all have been exemplary role models in urging their student teachers to gain as much as they can in professional growth. Committees, workshops, in service presentations, continued coursework, and National Board Certification all were promoted and/or modeled for this group of student teachers. The student teachers were included in in-service presentations, district curriculum initiatives, and professional meetings. The following comments display insight to what happens outside the realm of the classroom to contribute to being an effective educator.
Tonya said, “I saw professional development as very important while I student taught. I attended a professional day with my teacher as part of an obligation to fulfill a grant requirement” (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005). Lori states, “I developed many great relationships with teachers in the school district. Those relationships allowed me many beneficial resources as I completed my teaching experience. They gave me great ideas and tons of support” (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Annie concurs:

And she really is aware of everything and, um, like, right now she is taking a class on classroom management because she is finding that as the years go on, classes are becoming more difficult to handle and she wanted to know what she could do and I think the class is called, Yes I Can, or something really catchy like that, but, um, she’s just really good at developing herself further (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

We did talk about students a lot more and she always had something to say about, um, her professional conferences that she would go to and any classes she had taken and any, um, jobs that she had heard of. As far as professional development goes, you know, I guess, I, we, just take advantage of any type of training that comes along that we possibly can in the district (Nora, final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Laura observed:

I really feel that my cooperating teacher has always been a good leader as far as telling me what I need to do as a teacher. She stresses that you always have to have that professional development; you always have to continue your education, um, and change your instruction with the changing times, because it changes all the time (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).
Another aspect of professional development is the actual professional demeanor of an educator. This collaboration and professional relationship with colleagues, administrators, parents, and community members will be instrumental in a student teacher being successful in his/her own school district. This is a concept that must be demonstrated and modeled for the student teacher, and the following comments indicated that they noted these behaviors.

Lori made the following observation:

She (cooperating teacher) was professional. She, um, communicated with parents and students and the community with conferences, and they’re having a math night and the community will be involved. She puts things in the paper all the time; things like that. Very professional, very good (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Allen commented:

I’ve gone through portfolio stuff with almost all the fifth grade teachers and the PE teacher and the principal, and my cooperating teacher, Mrs. Marshall, actually got out her portfolio and told me how she was organizing it and what information she was putting in there and how she was documenting it, um, so that kind of helped me get at least an idea of what to expect when I get into the classroom, and also the principal gave me a handout for their first and second year teachers that they have to meet certain criteria and what was required from them, so that kind of gave me an idea of what to expect as well (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Jane pointed out:

As for professional growth, my teacher works collaboratively with other teachers. She’s a resource teacher, so daily she meets with, um, the classroom teachers, and she discusses ways with them, um, in how to integrate and adapt the
general ed curriculum into her special ed curriculum (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Tonya explained:

We had, um, team meetings every Tuesday, and she taught me how to collaborate with the other first grade teachers. Some of them weren’t always the most positive teachers and she taught me kind of how to ignore that and just kind of be an advocate for the team. That’s what she was, an advocate. She also, you know, had me work with other staff and all the other teachers both professionally and outside of school [chuckles]. We had a poet’s meeting one Friday—do you know what that is? Yeah, that was great … Very interesting. It was nice to be included (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Allen added:

The only thing I’d like to add is it seemed like at my first school, and this just kind of added to the greatness of the experience, but it just seemed like it wasn’t just grade-wise, with unity, but the whole school 5-8, all of the teachers would converse, they’d all talk about the same thing. They’d all go to parties together, they’d all go to the bar after school together, [all chuckle] they’d all, I mean, it was unbelievable how united they were as a middle school, not just as a grade (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

And, finally, Mary noted, “I just learned so much about being a professional” (Final focus group #3, April 27, 2005).
Mentor Relationship

The mentor/mentee relationship occurred in all but two instances with the student teaching subjects. Although not all student teacher/cooperating teacher pairs reach this step, many aspire to it, and those who attain it seemed inspired and grateful as noted in the following comments from the student teachers.

Karl mentioned:

I definitely think that in my first placement and my second placement I have developed both a professional and a personal relationship with my cooperating teachers. Um, I think that our personalities are kind of fit very well together, so we were able to, you know discuss things other than school when we have off time, or after school or before school, but, um, during school time it's definitely a professional relationship that goes on and they are very willing to help me with whatever things I might need (Initial interview, February 2, 2005).

I feel in my first placement I developed a personal relationship with my teacher. We could talk and uh, joke about things and just get along very well. And then it can easily switch over to talking professionally about things, so I think we had a very well-balanced relationship (Sue, Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Earl added:

Actually, I do stuff with my first placement, my first teacher. Every once in a while... we had each other’s cell phone numbers, you know, and it’s developed into kind of a friendship. He’s 27, or whatever, and I’m 22 and we both like sports we both ... so ... yeah, that’s about it. We definitely had a good professional relationship as well. We both had many of the same beliefs (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).
Annie’s enthusiastic comment:

My second placement teacher, um, she’s awesome, again, I say, and she and I, I mean, we do, we are a lot alike, so we have a good personal relationship and a professional relationship. She tells me all about her family, and she has twin sons, and one of them has cerebral palsy and she’s always talking about him. And I just feel like she’s welcomed me into her classroom and her family, and she’s just really, really a good person (Final focus group #3, April 27, 2005).

Tonya expanded on this:

I guess when I was reading the question, “how do I look at my cooperating teachers now,” I kind of was thinking more that way... I would consider them both, the first two at least, good friends and colleagues. I mean, I’ll feel very comfortable calling them and talking to them at any time and even asking them about their families and different things, because I’ve gotten to know them so well (Final focus group #3, April 27, 2005).

Advice

The cooperating teachers left their charges with advice that the student teachers would be able to use and apply in their own classrooms. Like an effective mentor, the classroom teachers nurtured, educated and provided guidance, yet let their protégés form their own styles of teaching.

Classroom Management

In this area of the greatest challenges for student teachers, the cooperating teachers provided strong support and advice along the way for use within their teaching assignment
and beyond. The focus group session provided an opportunity for the cooperating teachers to comment on what they felt they had offered their student teachers, as noted in the following:

I was confident with [Allen’s] content knowledge so we worked more … on management of the entire classroom. Sometimes it’s very easy to get focused on what your lesson is instead of getting the whole picture of what’s going on with, you know, this little group over here, that little group over there, and watching the time and trying to give them cues to be successful all the way through the lesson and that sort of thing. So, uh, just kind of monitor the picture a little bit and look at that (Mrs. Marshall, cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

This student teacher, Nor, also gave her perspective on what one of her cooperating teachers offered her in this area:

Um, I also learned a lot about being a teacher through her classroom management skills and what she taught me about classroom management: How to manage the little things, how to manage the big things, and just how to manage the classroom over all (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Teaching Techniques and Strategies

While often confident in their content knowledge and lesson plans, the “ins and outs” of day-to-day teaching proved daunting for the student teachers. The cooperating teachers indicated that the student teachers were well prepared for the most part but still offered very practical and real life advice to assist the student teachers throughout their experiences. The student teachers reflected on what they had gained in their focus groups and reflective journals:
I’ve learned a lot about communication and just being prepared. You really have to be on top of things in order to just make the day go smoothly and that, but I’ve really learned a lot professionally in how to handle different situations and communicate with other staff and principals and whatever (Laura, final focus group, April 30, 2005).

Lori gained a great deal from her mentor in dealing with parents:

She taught me so much about that. I also learned a lot about fostering that home-school-community relationship—communication with parents. She never hesitates to pick up the phone and give them a call, and she kind of instilled that in me, too, and I actually, a couple times, did pick up the phone and call the parents and that was an interesting opportunity for me to give them a call ... that I had to learn to do that, to communicate with the parents instead of just the weekly newsletter that we did also, um, and let’s see, another thing. Oh, reflection. She was always asking me, “How did the lesson go?” “What would you change?” “Here’s what I would suggest if I were doing it” (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Annie offered:

I think that she just really builds my confidence a lot and helped. She pushed a lot, for, you know, “You did this really, really, really well,” and with the communicating with the parents. Rather than her writing the notes back to parents that would write them, she had me do that. And she also encouraged the different ways, you know, relating it to other things in our lives. Like saying, “Okay, this is what they’ve had so far, this is what you know, at this age what they’ve dealt with.” So it was easier to link; it’s a prior knowledge for subjects she was teaching. But, she
was just really impressed. She just always wanted me to think what was coming up next, how did that go, you know, and always staying on top of things with the next lesson plans coming up and trying to get all that information covered and keeping it in line with your standards and everything else (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Laura said:

I think everything that I’ve adopted from my teachers in a positive sense, but I think also inadvertently, you kind of have in your mind; at least, have established your own teaching style. Things you would do the same and things that you would expect differently or would change in your own classroom (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Mary complimented Mrs. Allen, her mentor in the first 7 weeks, on the guidance she received regarding organization:

We planned every Thursday and Friday and then when she left me, you made the copies, you stick your stuff in the folder, you organize for the next week; you go at 7:45, you leave at 3:45 (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

Tonya expounded on the organizational aspect of teaching and the assistance she received:

I actually have another teacher in the school who they said is the most organized and the most structured teacher in the school building. And they thought I should go and observe her for a while one of my last days there. And, I mean, this lady has everything labeled, everything in binders or shelves, or boxes, and I mean, and so organized. And I mean, it was very interesting to see and she told me to bring my camera and take pictures of how things were organized and that, and my second
teacher said, “Take your camera and take the pictures to make her happy, but you’ll find your own system that works. Some of the things she does may work just fine for you, but I guarantee you won’t want to be that structured and that, um … organized because….” (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Again, Tonya’s mentor offered practical advice about the balance of her personal and professional lives:

My teacher stressed to me probably a week and a half into my placement. I was very devoted to being there by 7:15-7:30 you know, every morning, and then I would be there till 5:30-6 every night and she finally looked at me and said, “This is not happening anymore. Family comes first. You come to school by 7:45 and you leave at 4 o’clock. And I don’t want you spending the whole night doing schoolwork. You go and take care of your family, ‘cause that’s the way my life is as a teacher. My family comes first, and you’ll get what you need to get done, done during the day while you’re here. You’ll find a way to make it work.” And she showed me all kinds of shortcuts and how to get things done so I actually could get out of there at 4 o’clock and still be prepared for the next day (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

The cooperating teachers also provided the following examples of how they felt they assisted their student teachers. Mrs. Brown, Earl’s second cooperating teacher remarked:

I guess one of the ways I’ve really tried to help [Earl] is to show him how much easier it is if you’re very well organized and if you’ve got a real idea of the goal you want to achieve in that lesson and then working toward it. And that’s hard as a new teacher, I think, to set that goal out there and to say if they don’t learn anything else, I really want them to learn this, and that’s really not going to happen without a
lot of organization and thought into that (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Mills, Jane’s cooperating teacher, made the following remark:

We’ve really worked hard on, in the special ed. room, on organization and time management because we have 15 kids coming in and out all day and I think that was really mind boggling at first for her. And it took her probably two weeks to get their schedules down, so we really worked on that and now, she feels comfortable, I think, with that (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Nora’s cooperating teacher in her second placement, Mrs. Jensen, was pleased to report:

We came up with the idea of creating a matrix for each child to fill out as the different presentations were coming along. Just giving her some of those tools, too. Do yourself a favor: have the kids sign a contract, take that home, have the parents sign that contract, so when the kids come back and say, “I didn’t do that,” then you can pull up the contract and say, “Yes, but you signed it, and so did Mom and Dad.” So then you have something to fall back on, and she’s really taken off on using contracts to commit to studying and doing their work that their supposed to do, so she’s made them very accountable for that. And that’s something that I want kids to be. You know, I just try to teach them that you have to be accountable all your life, and it’s time to start now (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Sue’s cooperating teacher in her third placement, a preschool, was especially pleased to talk about Sue’s experiences. Mrs. Shuler pointed out:
She helped me with our assessment checklist and worked at individually assessing the kids and also working with a number of AEA staff. In preschool we have a little guy who is autistic so we have an awesome resource team—the OT and PT comes in, the speech and language, the early childhood special education consultants, so I’m just kind of getting used to having all those people in the classroom with you. Sometimes in a classroom you’re there by yourself where in a preschool she needed to be used to having all those people coming in and out, taking kids, bringing kids back, and how to reach all those resources that you need, because a lot of time, we’re the first time kids have been in school, and we’re the first people there to identify the needs there are. So that was, I think, just an awesome experience for her to come in on that ground level, and we had the little guy that was autistic move in, and she was there when we were trying to set up his program and figure out what he needed and who we needed to talk to and that kind of thing. It was a good experience for her (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Jensen summed up Nora’s experiences in her classroom:

She was involved in Parent-Teacher conferences. She’s done all the grading so far, you know, since the beginning. I said, “Here’s the gradebook, this is how I score these papers” I’ve given her rubrics to go from. Um, when she’s been developing her lesson plans in her units she says, “What are the grade level expectancies, what are the standards and benchmarks?” and I was able to hand those to her and she’s done a good job of initiating a lot of these things herself. She’s not afraid to ask for help, and I think that’s a good mark for any professional. And she’s just been very involved and I try and, anytime I find something that I think, “Oh this
could be good, I can use this.” For example, today I found a paper on how to help the child grade themselves, to write up their own report card, which I want them to do that, too, so I passed that on to her also (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Mills discussed the experience she tried to provide for Jane:

She’s also done conferences with me and a couple of IEP meetings with me and helped me write them then. She’s done some of the progress monitoring and had to score it and chart it. I’ve tried to give her kind of a good variety of the things you have to do besides be a good teacher (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Networking and Professionalism

The professional aspect of teaching was addressed by the cooperating teachers in a number of situations. Job-seeking, as addressed in the following comments, was but one of the ways that they assisted their student teachers:

Tonya’s cooperating teacher, Mrs. Wright, offered assistance with establishing contacts while applying for teaching positions:

Um, networking, um, I mentioned a job I was applying over and she said, ‘Did you know, the principal up there? His wife is our librarian. You may want to talk to her.” So she kind of lets me know who’s related to who and who knows who and who else works at what other schools to kind of get my foot in the door somewhere I guess (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Mary detailed similar experiences of how Mrs. Allen helped her:
Contacts for potential jobs. I guess they let me know who’s related to who and how to contact them and things like that so, um, I guess the principal there at my school. She’s been very cooperative; she actually looked over my resume and all my materials and gave me suggestions on things to add for things that I have done in the placements. What would really sound good on the resume and what I could take off, because my résumé’s so long (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

The cooperating teachers, well aware of the importance of networking, made the following points in how they assisted their protégés with the details of job hunting. Mrs. Shuler stated:

[Sue] and I talked about once you find a place that you are interested in, you need to get online and find out everything you can about that school district, about that specific class opening that is there, any initiative that is going on in the school, any programs they have going on, anything you can find out that will help you when you get into that interview to sound like you really researched that school and you’re really interested in being there (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

During Allen’s first 7 weeks, Mrs. Marshall suggested that he involve the administration to assist with his career search:

I happen to have a couple of colleagues, one who has just gotten his administrative degree and one is just finishing his classes right now. So I suggested to [Allen] that like a month ago or two months ago, that before he left me to go visit with those people and run some ideas past or ask them some questions about the interview process, so he would be more comfortable (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).
Mrs. Downs brought up some basic suggestions about professional appearances:

I think it sounds really trite, but at the same time I think it’s very important. We talked about physical appearance, you know, her dress; you need to dress professionally. If you’re going to be serious about this, then you need to be serious in your dress, too (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Raymond demonstrated her interest in assisting Sue by her comments:

We’ve talked about her resume; we’ve talked about her portfolio. She’s working on it, so now I ask her every day what she got done on it last night. Um, she is also planning on talking to our administrator and planning on doing a mock interview (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

The collaborative aspect of teaching, the feeling of being a part of a larger entity working for the good of the building and district, was an area that the cooperating teachers addressed effectively. They demonstrated the effect of being a team player, often by including the student teacher as a full partner, a “regular” staff member, and not just as a student teacher. The student teachers felt very strongly that this was a huge part of making them feel as if they were actual educators. In the following comments they spoke favorably of those who “included” them:

As far as a collaborative team, with both my placements, I felt part of the team, not just with my cooperating teacher, but with all of the teachers in the school. Everybody made me feel just like I was one of the regular teachers and I’d have classroom teachers coming to them about students that were in the special ed class and, you know, they wouldn’t go directly to her when they knew I was doing the
teaching full time. They just acted like I was part of the team, and it was an excellent experience (Jane, focus group, March 16, 2005).

Tonya related her experience with Mrs. Sargent and the principal, and also advice from Mrs. Downs, who helped her with portfolio development:

For the professional practice, I guess here with my third placement, my first day in the classroom, my teacher had a meeting with her principal to go over her portfolio, so I got to sit in on that meeting and see my teacher’s portfolio and what documentation she’s got in it so far. And the principal told her how they had planned on putting them all together in these binders with the plastic sheets and all that ‘cause right now she just has a stack of papers put in a folder. But she has so many things that go for different goals and that. And then they were wondering and wanted to see what my portfolio looked like and how I would combine the ten [university major goals] into the eight [Iowa Teaching Standards]. So I actually sat down with the principal earlier this week while the kids were doing some testing and discussed that with her for about an hour the other day, so I’m already being included there, too. So that’s interesting. And my second teacher [Mrs. Downs] gave me several different professional articles that related to autism or to this new law that the state’s trying to enforce, the highly qualified teachers and things like that that are going on in the legislature. So she’s keeping me informed (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Allen compared the dynamics of both of his student teaching situations:

I think a different spin, not just looking at your two placements as, um, cooperating teachers and mentors, but the whole staff. I mean, I just thoroughly enjoyed the whole. It’s weird to see the different dynamics of... I had one very social,
lower placement teacher. There's kind of a big divide. And then I had one very self-contained upper placement. Just the dynamics and the reason for it, that people are related to each other... that this one is social because... this one withdrawn because....this one, you know a lot of teachers don’t like this one because.... And you really do have to, you know, the advice about getting to know the janitor and the principal, no not the principal, the secretary, rather, that's true. And when I had free time, and not when I wasn't supposed to prepare lessons or anything, but especially in my last week, about a half hour I'd go and coffee with the ladies in the kitchen. But that stuff is just as important as planning lessons properly, because it does make a big difference. You don’t have to be the social butterfly of the school, but you do have to have good human relations with everybody (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).

The cooperating teachers also indicated that they enjoyed and appreciated the collaboration with their student teachers. The opportunity to discuss educational issues with another person who was current in the field appeared to be valuable to many. The mentors treated their student teachers as colleagues and contemporaries as noted in the following comments from Mrs. Marshall:

We had some awesome conversations, because I’m in my masters’ program, and I'm finishing up my National Board Certification so as far as learning, I’m out there. I’m immersed in it right now. So, but the thing is, with [Allen], with his current training, with the writing lesson plans with the standards and benchmarks and coordinating all that, it was really good for me to see how he did that, because my teacher training didn’t include that, and I know we’ve been using the benchmarks and things for several years, and we have them posted and we refer to them and all that, in
the classroom. Um, it was a nice exchange between both of us; to talk about what we knew (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Mills emphasized how important it was to her to include Jane in professional development opportunities as a part of lifelong learning:

I try to take [Jane] every place I go, so she’s getting the idea that just because you’re done with your formal training you’re not really done, and I’m in Success 4, which is now learning support, that I’m in learning, so she’s getting a smattering of those things and how you keep learning forever, you don’t just stop (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Brown focused on another aspect — the ability to remain professional in the workplace, by modeling appropriate behaviors:

I’ve tried to tell [Earl] and show him by not entering into this back-biting and gossip that seems to be going on, because I think it’s much more professional if you stay out of that kind of happenings. I hope I’m setting an example both by what I tell him and what I do in that area (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mentor Relationship

The personal aspect of the mentoring relationship proved to be the most elusive aspect. Those student teachers and cooperating teachers who formed this personal connection and have a high likelihood of continuing the relationship are the ones who have reached the “self-actualization” role of mentoring and will continue to reap many benefits from this relationship, apparent in the following comments made in the student teachers’ reflective journals and the final focus group session held April 27, 2005, upon their completion of
student teaching. Tonya related the open communication established immediately with Mrs. Downs:

Both of my placements actually have had really good relationships. My second one, I started out my first day walking into the room and she handed me, she had a notebook sitting on the table for me and had all kinds of information written out about her and her family. What all of her kids do, where they lived, which ones are married and all that kind of stuff. And on a daily basis, she’ll ask me how my night was before and she’ll remember what activities we had planned and you know, tomorrow when I go, she’ll ask me how my student teaching seminar went. And she’ll remember exactly what we talked about, because she’ll ask me every day what I’m doing that night or what we’re doing that weekend, and she knows a little about my family already. I mean she’s very ... I guess one of the comments she made to me one day was, “My family and my church come first; teaching is my job.” But she says, “And that’s the way you should think of it. Always think about your family before you leave. When you’re heading home, know what you’re planning on doing with your kids that night,” and all that, you know. She really stresses the importance of that, to not, I guess, devote your whole life to teaching and forget about your other life responsibilities, I guess. We have a really good relationship though (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Mary surprised herself with this realization:

It’s weird, because I didn’t think that when I first started the first placement I didn’t think that I would get, I got more out of the first placement not expecting to and I didn’t’ get out as much out of the second placement expecting to get more. So
on a professional level, I think I connected with both of them on a professional and personal level. As far as being a mentor I think I connected with the first. I don’t know... I just ... two totally different people, two totally different dynamics, both mentors in their own way (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Both student teachers and cooperating teachers responded in a manner that indicated that they were willing to be contributing and receiving members of this mentor/mentee partnership. All cooperating teachers were willing to share their expertise in an effort to increase the quality of future educators, and student teachers were anxious to try out their skills and hone them to be contributing members of the profession.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Introduction of the Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine how student teachers perceived that they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. This research project investigated behaviors and skills that cooperating teachers demonstrated to assist the student teacher in his/her learning. This relationship was examined to understand how these parties work together to ensure a successful experience for the student teacher. The mentoring skills that may have developed among the parties were a focus of this project. This study hoped to provide insight into how the student teacher may develop a professional persona to meet the criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards.

To achieve the purpose described above, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How does mentoring contribute to the development of professionalism in teachers?

2. What constitutes a good mentor?

3. What behaviors and skills are being demonstrated by an effective mentor?

4. How do mentoring behaviors assist student teachers in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards 7 and 8?

Summary of the Findings

Research Question 1

How does mentoring contribute to the development of professionalism in teachers?
The aspects of professionalism in the education field are often best learned through observation and modeling. Professionalism encompasses a large array of behaviors. Standards 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards address many of these behaviors within the profession. Lifelong learning, collaboration, professional development, and ethical conduct all may be interpreted in different manners by different teachers, but the bar for these standards has been set quite high by the teacher education institutions and supported by the cooperating teachers within the individual districts. The student teachers' comments revealed that their cooperating teachers have been promoting professional behaviors in their mentor roles. Lifelong learning and professional development were not only modeled by the cooperating teachers, they actively involved the student teachers in their districts' professional development activities.

The mentoring relationship ideally should develop and strengthen over time. Zachary (2000), Kram (1983), Dortch (2000), and Moitoza (2005) all advocated the development of mentoring through sequential stages. Although these may be labeled in varying steps and termed differently, there are definite similarities and parallels. Although the student teachers were not aware of these stages, the researcher saw them move through these steps with their cooperating teachers. When they did not follow this sequence, there appeared to be no true mentoring relationship. The stages, though different in number and terminology, start with the "getting to know you" phase, move into a professional relationship development stage, a learning and supporting stage, a personal relationship stage (this may not be more than finding out if each party has a family), and finally the closing stage, which sets the tone for whether the relationship continues or closes.
In this study, it was evident that the student teachers and the cooperating teachers progressed through these stages. From the comments gathered from the student teachers and cooperating teachers it was clear the mentor relationships were developing. In initial interviews, all but two felt that their relationships with their cooperating teachers would evolve into a personal relationship. Surprisingly, these were not the two who appeared to not have mentor relationships with their cooperating teachers.

Within the first days of each student teacher's placement, the researcher could see the first stage (i.e., initiation, preparing, etc.) of mentoring begin; often the early comments, even prior to actual student teaching, were an indicator of the mentoring relationship to come. All the student teachers and cooperating teachers had met, and many had e-mailed, visited, and talked with each other throughout the first semester, so the initial stage may have been forming. Although the researcher only supervised and observed two of the student teachers, the comments in focus groups, seminars, and reflective journals gave a valid picture of the mentoring relationship's progression.

(Kram, 1983) believed that education borrowed the mentoring concept from the business sector and that the value related to being part of a mentoring relationship could enhance both individuals' development. Hegstad (1999) purported the benefits of mentoring as career-related and psychosocial, consistent with Kram (1983), who referred to the functions of the mentor as being divided into career-related as well as vocational and psychosocial. The career-related functions contribute to career advancement and the ability to perform tasks related to education. The cooperating teacher-student teacher mentoring relationship specifically related to vocational advancement in many ways. McDonald (2003) specifically addressed career advancement, one component of professional development.
These leadership and professional development skills which evolved through mentoring have been shown to create a positive influence on job satisfaction (Peer, 2004).

1. Orientation to the school setting

As the student teacher became accustomed to his/her role, the cooperating teacher made the mentee feel comfortable and "at home." Both student teachers supervised by this researcher pointed out that when they arrived at their first placements, the cooperating teachers had ready a desk, plan book, schedule, and other pertinent information to assist in transitioning to the room's routine and school schedule. They also were introduced to staff and given a building tour. For many student teachers, the orientation had started earlier in the year, when they attended the beginning of year professional days.

2. Emphasizing the importance of taking responsibility

As the cooperating teachers delegated more responsibility, the student teachers took the lead and became more like the "teachers in charge." They appreciated the opportunity to be the teachers of record and practice their skills. They observed the cooperating teachers' organization and preparation as part of the responsibility of teaching, then were given the chance to take over.

Another responsibility demonstrated by the cooperating teachers was the importance of professional development related to lifelong learning. Setting the model for continued education and expanding the knowledge base to keep up with professional changes is of utmost importance. Annie's cooperating teacher was a strong role model for continuing education:

This cooperating teacher is always, always, always talking about, "Oh, I took this class and I took this class and it was so great." And I really find that with her
being such an excellent teacher that those professional, um, classes that she takes, and she’s always taking them, really helps her stay up on things that are going on in the world today (Annie, focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

3. Sharing information

The cooperating teachers shared information regarding the school, the students in the classroom, the routine of the day, classroom management strategies, and how the student teachers could improve their teaching styles. Daily they imparted their wisdom regarding this teaching situation to guide their protégés. Student teachers indicated that they appreciated feedback and ideas from their mentors. Those who felt that they were not given that feedback and information may have felt that they did not have a true mentor.

4. Assigning challenging tasks

Although most of the student teachers indicated that they enjoyed the challenge of teaching, some tasks were more taxing than others. Disciplining a difficult child, settling a conflict between students, and meeting with a disgruntled parent were challenging tasks that the cooperating teachers delegated to their apprentices in the effort to educate and provide real life experiences that may be encountered during teaching careers.

5. Encouraging self-assessment and critical reflection

Student teachers were encouraged by their cooperating teachers to reflect on the lessons they taught and discuss questions and concerns. The reflective journals provided to the university and this researcher accomplished this, but the cooperating teachers were not privy to these journals. As mentors, however, they urged the student teachers to talk about their perceptions of a lesson or activity. Daily discussions of teaching performance provided the opportunity for the self-assessment and reflection necessary to improve teaching.
6. Providing advice and guidance regarding career choices

Although the student teachers sought and received direct feedback and guidance regarding specific teaching skills, the cooperating teachers also indirectly offered advice about career choices. Student teachers pointed out numerous examples of their mentors reviewing resumes and portfolios, practicing interview questions, suggesting contacts for jobs, and writing recommendations.

7. Providing opportunities to interact and build networks with others involved in education (McDonald, 2003).

The networks made within the district will serve the student teachers well in a variety of professional situations. From simple introductions to providing opportunities to serve on policy councils, the cooperating teachers urged the student teachers to participate, interact, and make contacts within the educational community. Inclusion in networking provided the student teachers insight into the mechanics of teaching outside the school day. Two student teachers were included in district curriculum discussions and one was taken to a state math conference. Mary was given the opportunity to attend local and state professional meetings:

We went to the state math conference in Ankeny. We did a lot of professional development. My teacher was involved in several meetings throughout the course of the placement and urged me to come along. She stressed the importance of staying involved professionally at all levels (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Collaboration with staff members was a priority for student teachers; Tonya appreciated the respect given her in being treated as one of the faculty:
As far as a collaborative team, with both my placements, I felt part of the team, not just with my cooperating teacher, but with all of the teachers in the school. Everybody made me feel just like I was one of the regular teachers and I'd have classroom teachers coming to them about students that were in the special ed. class and, you know, they wouldn’t go directly to her when they knew I was doing the teaching full time. They just acted like I was part of the team, and it was an excellent experience (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

In addition to the vocational aspect, described by McDonald (2003), another component of mentoring is the psychosocial aspect which contributes to the student teacher’s well-being by developing a sense of competence in his/her work, described by Hegsted (1999) and Kram (1983). The sense of competency that resulted from the psychosocial facet of mentoring not only benefited the student teacher, but also aided the cooperating teacher as he/she became reenergized in his/her teaching and looked at him/herself as adept in coaching future educators. As the student teachers became better prepared in planning and presenting lessons, they gained more confidence, which led to a feeling of satisfaction and competence in their teaching styles. More competence fueled the drive to continue to do better and this resulted in a well-prepared, confident teacher in the classroom. This continuously pushed the student teachers toward quality.

Ethical behavior was more elusive in terms of what the student teachers observed, but they were well aware of the ramifications, based on news media reports of highly publicized cases. Within their student teaching seminars prior to and during student teaching, the director of teacher education emphasized appropriate and ethical behavior at all times. All student teachers indicated that they were well aware of appropriate actions and behaviors
with students, other staff members, and parents. Prior to student teaching Earl was almost indignant in a comment during the meeting:

I almost feel insulted that so much emphasis is put on how I may respond to students and other teachers in a sexual manner. Do they think I’ve worked this hard to dump it with one stupid action? (Student teacher seminar, February 16, 2005).

In essence, the student teachers expected their cooperating teachers to demonstrate appropriate and professional behaviors, to guide them in their teaching style, and to provide useful feedback to assist them in becoming a better educator as they face teaching on their own. They received much of what they expected, and often, a little more.

Nora became quite emotional when she related this experience about her principal, Mrs. Jones:

[At] The first staff meeting ... she just said, “Every one of you is a teacher. Every one of you teaches every student in this whole school and that includes student teachers .... She said, “You are responsible for those students, just like everybody else is.” And that was really neat (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Lori summed it up quite simply and gratefully, “I was treated like a professional …” (Reflective journal, March 1, 2005).

At the end of his first week, Earl’s journal entry says what all the student teachers hoped for: “The nicest thing so far is the faculty has been so receptive and really helped me out.”

As noted earlier, two cooperating teachers did not appear to assume the role of mentor to their student teachers. Although that may appear to be a “failure” for the student teachers and they missed an opportunity, they both appeared to gain from the experience
nonetheless. Kayla, in particular, was with the same cooperating teacher for the entire 14 week placement, an elementary and middle school physical education teacher and Kayla spent 7 weeks within each building under Mr. Carson. Kayla did not feel as if Mr. Carson was a mentor, although she worked to point out his positive qualities. However, Kayla did benefit from the mentoring experience in a manner of speaking: she was the mentor. As she related this story to the focus group, she was very proud to report her actions as a positive mentor for a student:

> Well, actually, in the second week of my placement— I stand out in the hallway to just see the kids I have and also the kids I don’t have, but I just kind of do that, and also so the kids, you know, are appropriate out in the hallway, you know how middle school kids are. And I noticed a girl who would always walk by herself, she’d go to her locker to get her things and so I went home and was just kind of pondering that. And then one day I went to school and it was my chance. I was waiting for my students to come down to the gym and she was walking through the hall to class and I said, “Hi— How are you?” and things like that and she just had a big smile on her face, and I thought this girl probably just wants somebody to talk to, and I didn’t know if she feels like if she’s a minority in the school (researcher’s note: this student is Hispanic in a rural area) and didn’t have a lot of friends so I went and talked to the counselor the next day and asked if they had any kind of mentoring programs or anything I could do to work with her. And now I’ve been working with this little girl for, you know, almost the whole time I’ve been there. We work together every other morning. I work on homework with her and things like that and I also talk to her and I talked to [my university supervisor] when he came to observe and he
offered suggestions and so now we like translate. I had her set up some goals and we translated into Spanish so she can take them home to show her parents and now her parents are involved. I’ve been working with her a lot and she seems so much happier and it’s really fun, I really enjoy it. And today she asked me if I would come to her first communion.

Kayla’s example showed that although she was not necessarily being mentored by her cooperating teacher, she understood and was able to practice mentoring herself. She, too, moved through the stages of mentoring and has indicated that this will be a continued mentor relationship.

The findings from the study were concurrent with the literature related to the development of a professional persona within education. Behaviors related to standards 7 and 8 were modeled consistently in all but two instances within this study. The student teachers indicated that they understood the concept of professionalism, and they were able to see specific examples related to collaboration, collegiality, contractual issues, and ethical behaviors within their placements. Those who witnessed unprofessional behaviors were quick to point those out in their comments in focus groups or journals. Student teachers indicated that the mentoring process enabled them to meet Standards 7 and 8 by working to enhance their professional presence.

Research Question 2

What constitutes a good mentor?

To get an idea of what the student teachers felt contributed to being a good mentor, it was necessary to get an idea of their own perception of mentoring. In response to the
question, “How would you define mentoring?” there were a variety of responses, based on their prior experiences. Laura was firm and clear on her definition of a mentor:

I would define mentoring as being there to answer any and all questions that someone may have. Mentoring deals with instructing, informing, and providing feedback above and beyond the norm (Initial interview, December 27, 2004).

Mary’s view of mentoring was more of a practical nature. She hoped to gain usable information that she could apply to her classroom:

Mentoring to me would be passing on the knowledge that, as a teacher, uh, I think a lot of the theory that you learn in class, um, can’t be taught other than in the classroom. Um, practical things, day to day tips, things that have made her job easier that might make your job easier, practical knowledge (Initial interview, December 31, 2004).

Consistent with the literature, the student teachers felt that mentoring has no universal definition and is open to numerous interpretations. Many sources, from Odysseus (Hamilton, 1942) to Wang and Odell (2002), concur that a mentor is one who may guide, coach, and tutor a protégé or apprentice. Odyssues entrusted his son to Mentor to educate and nurture until he returned from war (Hamilton, 1942). Gehrke and Kay (1984) advocated the same concept and suggested the older and wiser person is responsible to provide a healthy and positive socialization experience for the younger person. The cooperating teacher was, indeed, that older, wiser person who was a coach and tutor for the student teacher. The student teaching experience is an ideal setting for the education and nurturing that a mentor can provide, and in this study, that type of mentoring was demonstrated by all but two of the cooperating teachers.
Another interpretation agreed that facilitating rather than leading (Little, Galagaran, & O’Neal, 1984) was a method of assisting the student to fulfill his/her own potential. Modeling to encourage the protégé to determine direction was encouraged by Parkay (1988) from his personal experience. Kay (1990) spoke directly toward the mentoring of student teachers, it appears, when he indicated that the mentoring effort helps a “...protégé develop the attitudes and behaviors...” within the teaching environment. Cooperating teachers modeled the attitudes, skills, and behaviors needed to be successful in teaching and did so in their roles as mentors to the student teachers.

Laura reiterated this “guiding” principal of a nurturing mentor:

I would define mentoring as someone who helps you understand, understand things that they already have a good concept of and would relate their ideas to you and help you form your own opinions and just kind of guide you, not dictate to you, but just guide you along the way (Initial interview, December 27, 2004).

Tonya expanded on the idea of learning from another, adding yet another dimension:

I would see it as somebody trying to help another person at trying to become better at what they do. Giving them any support that they need, answering questions, providing other resources and just being there for anything, for any situations that would happen to come up and to be able to help. I guess even be a psychologist or somebody just to listen to problems or to help you in many situations (Initial interview, December 31, 2004).

Hardcastle (1988) believed that a “significant mentor” would act as a catalyst and create an interpersonal and life changing relationship. The student teachers indicated in their initial interviews that they felt that the relationship between themselves and their cooperating
teachers would evolve from a professional relationship into a personal one and for many of them, it did. The vision of the protégé moving from understudy to self-directing colleague was presented by Healy and Welchert (1990). The student teachers looked at this to be a critical step in being mentored. They felt that they were being taken seriously as educators when they were looked at as colleagues and not only as students, as Mary pointed out: “And I guess the biggest thing she did as a mentor ... she treated me as, like an equal counterpart, instead of a peon student teacher...” (Student teacher seminar, March 16, 2005).

The student teachers felt that this acceptance as a professional was demonstrated when they were able to assist the cooperating teachers. In essence, the student teacher was doing some mentoring. The boost that a student teacher may receive from “teaching” the mentor goes a long way toward increasing self-esteem and self-confidence in his/her teaching ability. Annie noted in her journal her pleasure at helping her cooperating teacher:

We went on the [AEA] website and placed an order for a few more materials. Mrs. Hart had never used the website before and was confused by the whole process, so I helped her navigate. It was nice to teach her something! (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Although all educators are implementing standards and benchmarks, Mrs. Hall noted that she appreciated learning more about integration into lesson plans from her student teacher:

The thing is, with Allen, with his current training, with the writing lesson plans with the standards and benchmarks and coordinating all that, it was really good for me to see how he did that, because my teacher training didn’t include that, and I know we’ve been using the benchmarks and things for several years and we have
them posted and we refer to them and all that, in the classroom (Focus group, April 7, 2005).

Although the student teachers had similar thoughts regarding mentoring, each had his/her own definition and expectation of a good mentor. Overall, their expectations asked for guidance, someone to listen and answer questions, and provide them with suggestions and advice regarding teaching, professional ideas, and, sometimes, even personal issues. Although the student teachers all appeared to be comfortable in their training prior to student teaching, many indicated that they still were open to learning and direction from their cooperating teachers. By no means did any of the student teachers think that they “knew it all” about their classroom performance as an educator. They were well aware that the knowledge from the college classroom and the application to the elementary classroom were related, yet they were looking for guidance from the cooperating teachers as they worked to mesh those two perspectives into their own teaching styles. They truly embraced the idea of a mentor as one who nurtures and educates; who facilitates growth, and who models appropriate professional and personal roles. They were ready to be apprentices and to learn from their mentors. Well into his first placement Allen provided this comment in his journal on how his cooperating teacher was mentoring him:

[Mrs. Marshall] still offers me tips, but they are becoming more like “helpers” than suggestions. She tells me I’m doing a good job almost every day. She still offers up a few comments every once in a while, but I don’t mind at all. They help me think of things that I don’t always realize on my own (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).
Based on the comments from focus groups, both the student teachers' and the cooperating teachers' perceptions of what constitutes a good mentor were concurrent with the literature. Each had his/her own definition of what mentoring was: there was not an agreement, no "universal definition" of what mentoring was. Historically a mentor is a guide. Telemachus was tutored by Mentor and guided toward adulthood. The student teachers in this study expected guidance; however, they were not willing to specify rigid roles for their cooperating teachers, their mentors, either before or after their experiences. Like Gold (1999), they felt that what constitutes a good mentor is still being discovered.

Research Question 3

What behaviors and skills are being demonstrated by an effective mentor?

After describing their perceptions of a good mentor, the student teachers further referred to specific characteristics of an effective mentor. They pointed out behaviors, skills, and examples of how the cooperating teachers demonstrated them. Nora shared this comment from her journal:

My lead cooperating teacher told me anyone can be a teacher, but it takes someone special to make a difference in a child's life. This is such an awesome thought. It made me think about how important "quality" teachers are and also what characteristics a quality teacher has.

Mentoring can be an important means for influencing commitment and self-image. It exists within many activities and relationships. Mentors are regarded as role models of optimal traits and behaviors necessary for successful careers and lives. Not surprisingly, mentors are described or looked upon as parent-like figures, dispensing advice and support. Dortch (2000) believed all that is required of mentors is the commitment to make a
difference, the willingness to listen and hear, and the discipline to balance the heart and the mind. The student teachers agreed, citing characteristics such as good communication skills, trusting, having a positive attitude, being open-minded, and having the ability to be a role model. The student teachers' comments supported this.

Traditionally, mentors are self-confident professionals who are concerned with the needs and development of their subordinates (Marshall, 1983). Allen's comment from the focus group conversation held January 26, 2005, just two weeks into his initial student teaching placement supported Marshall's (1983) theory:

I feel supported by all of her good compliments she has for me and she always starts with a compliment and finishes with a few suggestions. And she's always asking me if I need help, or if I understand what we're doing or if I want to do things, and she's always very cooperating with letting me take over with what I feel comfortable with and not taking what I don't feel comfortable with.

Jane pointed out that she also was made to feel welcome as the teacher, Mrs. Wright "...said she would step aside whenever I want her to let me teach any of the subject areas or units" (Focus group #1, January 26, 2005).

Portner (1998) stated that student teachers have to develop the capacity and confidence to make their own informed decisions. They also need to enrich their knowledge and improve their abilities regarding teaching and learning. Therefore, the primary role of the mentor is to enable mentees to reach these levels. The mentor can play this role well by implementing the following characteristics of effective mentoring: relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding (Mohono-Mahlatsi & van Tonder, 2005).
Ideally the mentoring relationship is one in which the veteran is trusted and expected to guide the novice. Relating behaviors create an environment that is conducive for understanding ideas and needs, and for encouraging sharing and reflection. Without this trust, mentoring may become frustrating and difficult for both individuals. Kayla, in particular, experienced this frustration in her student teaching experience:

I had a really, one tough class, with just 12 boys, eighth grade boys, and they’re all, um, wild. They’re really crazy and it’s kind of hard to organize them and have good classroom management with them sometimes because I feel that he hasn’t really done a very good job with it so it makes my job a little bit harder. I’ve had the same placement so I’ve been working with them since January and I still sometimes struggle and I ask him for ideas and he just kind of—he doesn’t really give me good ideas. He just kind of puts them down and says, “Oh, they’re just a bunch of idiots.” And I’m like, “Oh-kay...” So it doesn’t really, um, I guess I feel like him being a teacher I don’t really find it appropriate for him to say remarks like that, but... I guess there’s nothing I can do about it. I just have to go the next day and keep working with my kids on that (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Mentors are generally older than their protégés in order to have accumulated the experience necessary to benefit the student teacher. Larry’s comments indicate his cooperating teacher was representative of the literature’s description in that she seemed parent-like and experienced in her actions toward him: “My cooperating teacher kind of puts me under her wing and just kind of guides me through the day and tells me the things that I should be doing or helps me out in that way” (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005).
The willingness to mentor (Dortch, 2000) was demonstrated by Mrs. Flint, Mary’s cooperating teacher, noting the boost that Mary received when she felt she earned her mentor’s trust:

I guess the biggest thing she did as a mentor was, once I proved myself, she treated me as, like an equal counterpart, instead of a peon student teacher, I guess. That was a big hurdle. I think once that was overcome, I think she just kind of let me go and was able to trust me and thought I was competent (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Nora, in her preschool placement with Mrs. George and Mrs. Dartmouth appreciated the way in which they offered feedback, “... they’re very open with suggestions, and they always ask for my input on how things went throughout the day rather than telling me how they feel that it went right away” (Focus group #2, February 16, 2005). This was indicative of the mentor who encourages self-assessment and critical reflection (McDonald, 2003).

Finally, Laura stated that the capability to be free to teach as she chose in the classroom was important for her:

I think the biggest thing that my cooperating teacher has done that I’ve appreciated is giving me free reign of the classroom and independence that I would have if I was the regular or employed teacher because I think that too much supervision would have ended my taking over. So the freedom is, the independence is probably the most important thing for me (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

Nora and Laura’s cooperating teachers confirmed their commitment to mentoring by agreeing to give ideas, but assuring the mentee that she has ownership (Murray, 1995).
Overwhelmingly, student teachers indicated that the list of mentor characteristics (see Appendix F) given prior to student teaching was a help for them as they observed their cooperating teachers. The cooperating teachers held high expectations for their student teachers, and rightly so. However, as mentors they also anticipated problems, provided information without taking over, and strove to be helpful without being authoritarian. The student teachers’ comments reinforced how the cooperating teachers demonstrated these and many more of the characteristics that describe an effective mentor. The respondents’ comments and examples were consistent with the literature and past research in how a mentor acts and behaves.

The researcher’s observations of the student teachers confirmed the research of Dortch (2000) and Marshall (1983) in their work on mentors as having the qualities of commitment, willingness to interact with student teachers, providing support and advice as needed. Student teachers indicated that they appreciated the treatment as equals and the willingness of the mentor to provide freedom to experiment, make mistakes, and learn.

**Research Question 4**

How do mentoring behaviors assist student teachers in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards 7 and 8?

The Iowa Teaching Standards were developed and implemented in 2002 (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002) to increase the quality of Iowa’s new and veteran teachers. It has been beneficial to the teachers as it delineates what the expectations are and has afforded them the opportunity to demonstrate how they meet the standards. The focus of Standard 7 advocates professional development opportunities and how the information gained is applied to both teacher and student learning. Standard 8 deals with
issues regarding ethical and professional behaviors and collaboration between stakeholders in an effort to further the districts purposes. Standards numbers seven and eight encompass the following model criteria:

Standard number 7: The teacher:

a. Demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.

b. Works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.

c. Applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.

d. Establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher’s needs aligned to the Iowa teaching standards and district/building student achievement goals (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

Standard number 8: The teacher:

a. Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.

b. Demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and district policy

c. Contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals

d. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.

e. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student learning (Iowa Teaching Standards and Model Criteria, 2002).

Most of the standards and criteria were addressed within the student teachers’ preservice education where coursework and experiences are developed to assist preservice educators to be able to meet those standards. At this researcher’s institution, preservice
educators develop assessment portfolios to demonstrate their competence in ten specific goal areas, which parallel the eight Iowa Teaching Standards.

Although they are able to meet the competencies of the majority of the university's major assessment goals through coursework, there are two goals that may only be addressed through actual teaching experience; some things must be experienced rather than taught. Standards seven and eight of the Iowa Teaching Standards include concepts that have to be observed, experienced, and practiced. Although addressed in coursework, pre-student teaching seminars, and seminars during student teaching, ethical standards and professionalism are best learned by modeling, and the cooperating teachers are the instructors and models for those concepts. The mentor relationship has assisted the student teacher in working toward meeting the criteria of the Iowa Teaching Standards. The student teacher was able to practice the criteria demanded in standards seven and eight of the Iowa Teaching Standards, which relate specifically to professionalism and ethical and collaborative behaviors in the student teaching setting.

Standard 7: Engages in professional growth
a. Demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.

As a student in the university classroom, the preservice educator is accustomed to inquiry and learning, but in the context of student teaching, it is imperative that this continues as the student teacher must continue to learn and grow as a practitioner. By constantly observing and asking questions of the cooperating teacher, the preservice learner attempts to expand his/her knowledge base on how to best meet the needs of the students. As an in-service educator in his/her own classroom, this inquiry and learning continues as well, in an attempt to continuously grow and improve. Professional development opportunities
contribute to this, as well as discussions with colleagues and/or administrators. The student teacher must realize, accept, and embrace the fact that teaching is truly a product of lifelong learning.

Student teachers saw evidence of continuous inquiry as they observed the teaching techniques of their cooperating teachers and other teachers in their buildings. Observation required prior to actual teaching allowed the student teacher to ease into the teaching routine. By watching the mentor model the handling of a situation or teaching strategy, the student teacher reflects on that method and asks further questions on how to perfect it to his/her own style and why a particular strategy works. Continued learning—lifelong learning—is a hallmark of educators. New technological applications, strategies for learning, brain-based research, and data-driven assessment are only a few of the topics in which educators must remain current. Whether that lifelong learning took place through the district’s professional development initiative, policy-setting meetings or committees, or through additional coursework, the student teachers saw their cooperating teachers model this aspect of continuous inquiry and learning and became actively involved themselves.

Mrs. Hart pointed out that her student teacher, Annie, had engaged in professional growth by attending “...professional development in-services on the seven reading comprehension strategies and went to the Teacher of the Year presentation hosted by our education association.”

As models and participants, the stage was set for the student teachers to go forward and add to their own knowledge base. They saw the priority placed on lifelong learning in the education profession and many ways to act upon that.

b. Works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.
Earl summed up the collaboration extended to him by his cooperating teacher in his reflective journal from his second placement:

I feel Mrs. Brown ... is helping me turn into a better educator by installing (sic) many things that otherwise may take ten years to learn. This is a huge way she is becoming a mentor to me. I very much enjoy the way my experience is turning out (Reflective journal, March 3, 2005).

Earl’s comment points to his role as student teacher and how his cooperating teacher is helping him to improve his teaching practice and style. The roles of the university student and the student teacher are different in terms of the approach, the behavior, and the content. In the former role, as university student, he/she is gathering information. Not only is the student absorbing the content knowledge, he/she is once again applying the concept of inquiry and learning, accumulating experience for the application of the material. In the latter role of student teacher, he/she is striving to be the model, albeit he/she may need to move into that role; it is not immediate.

Sue related the following example of how her cooperating teachers all worked toward increasing her professional practice:

I grew so much professionally because of my cooperating teachers. I learned so many things from them. Both introduced me to new techniques they were beginning to use and various research materials. I was able to see how something my cooperating teacher learned during a professional development day was put to use in her classroom (Final focus group, April 27, 2005).

The student teacher needs to utilize the strategies and techniques that the university professors have worked to instill, establish, and familiarize into his/her own repertoire of
teaching methods and to apply those techniques to assist the next generation of students in their learning. Sue’s previous comment demonstrated the immediate application of teaching strategies into classroom use. Theory now has evolved into practice. While the student teacher has all the tools at his/her disposal for this task, he/she will work with the cooperating teacher to apply them. The classroom teacher is the mentor, one who is familiar with the classroom; he/she has the experience from being a former student teacher and is now in the position to guide the student teacher. Wang, Strong, and Odell (2004) support this, emphasizing that teaching practice can be transformed when the mentors not only support the novice teachers in teaching strategies, but also assist in analyzing teaching and reflection.

Annie’s cooperating teacher, Mrs. Hart, noted the analysis and reflection that Annie used to improve her teaching:

She worked well with me and her supervising teacher from college. She worked hard to improve. She tried suggestions and was receptive to constructive criticism (Cooperating teacher’s focus group, April 7, 2005).

As described by Feiman Nemser (1983), the four phases of learning to teach are: 1) Pretraining: occurs before preservice educators realize that they are learning the fundamentals that will shape their teaching; 2) Preservice formal preparation: the coursework and practical experiences; 3) Induction phase: the first years of teaching; and 4) In-service phase: the rest of the teaching career. The first two phases have allowed the student teachers the opportunity to learn to teach since they were children. Now poised to start the third phase, they have taken their informal observations and formal classroom education and student teaching experience and melded them together to become a
collaborative being ready to work within a district’s faculty and promote learning in their own classrooms.

c. Applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.

Although the student teacher has been well versed in the role of the student learner, as he/she begins to move from student to teacher, he/she must realize that the learning does not stop once the student actually becomes the teacher. Professional development, in-service training, and mandatory updates are all components of lifelong learning which constitute the successful educator’s routine. Once again, theory into practice is the philosophy. Improved practices for teaching, training on new government mandates, integration of technology, and brain-based research for assisting learning are but a few of the opportunities that can be provided through professional development situations. Mentoring has been cited as an important strategy for helping novice teachers develop professional knowledge (The Holmes Group, 1990).

Danielson (1999) positioned that mentoring fosters professional development in both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. Tonya discussed the professional development opportunities and the classroom application:

As far as professional development goes, you know, I guess, I, we, just take advantage of any type of training that comes along that we possibly can in the district….as far as meeting the school district’s responsibilities, they are working on standards and benchmarks and their new goals and objectives throughout the district to make sure that the curriculum is set up, um, for each grade level (Focus group #2, February 16, 2002).
The cooperating teacher should serve in a strong role here in modeling the transfer of knowledge from the professional development opportunity to the classroom. He/she can demonstrate to the student teacher how to integrate and apply the research, knowledge, and skills to improve teaching practice. Mrs. Hart felt that what her student teacher, Annie, had gained through professional development was utilized in the educational setting. Mrs. Hart worked with her to integrate the new strategies into a usable application:

We implemented the comprehensive reading strategies we learned in our professional development. We worked with the other preschool teacher (peer coach) and planned how to implement these at the preschool level. She (Annie) also applied her knowledge of what she learned in her classes at [college] (Cooperating teacher’s focus group, April 7, 2005).

The integration and application of professional development content was modeled by the cooperating teachers within the student teaching experiences in numerous ways. Practicing innovative classroom management techniques or implementing standards and benchmarks in writing learning objectives indicated that the mentors were facilitating learning that the student teachers would need and use in their own classrooms. Consistent with the literature, student teachers had the opportunity to improve their teaching based on the cooperating teachers’ mentoring behaviors.

d. Establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher’s needs aligned to the Iowa Teaching Standards and district/building student achievement goals.
As part of the licensure requirement for the Iowa professional teaching license, mentoring, induction, observation, and evaluation must occur. One component of this is that the new teacher must document and demonstrate that he/she is indeed capable of performing the competencies outlined by the Iowa Teaching Standards. The teacher must set an individual professional development plan to guide him/her through that process. The cooperating teacher can model this behavior for the student teacher and show him/her how this will contribute to professional growth and improved teaching practice.

Annie’s cooperating teacher, Mrs. Hart, supported how they worked to align professional development with the teaching standards in the following statement. “We went over what our standards and benchmarks were and our district/building goals, looked at our checklists, and talked about the students with special needs that are in our class” (Cooperating teachers’ focus group, April 7, 2005).

Student teachers experience tremendous growth through the mentoring process. Leadership and professional development skills such as communication, self-assurance, cooperation, collaboration, career development, and networking evolve during mentoring (Peer, 2004). The development and implementation of a professional development plan is an extension of these skills gained during the mentoring process. Setting a plan for continued personal and professional growth provides goals leading to improved teaching performance.

Tonya related these comments regarding following set goals for improved teaching performance:

“...as far as meeting the school district’s responsibilities, they are working on standards and benchmarks and their new goals and objectives throughout the district to make sure that the curriculum is set up for each grade level. And we have to make
sure that our students in the special ed room get the appropriate assessments for their level. Not their actual grade level, but whatever their IEP will state. We’re redoing the IEP’s so they will match the assessments that these students will need” (Focus group #3, March 16, 2005).

Mentoring behaviors of cooperating teachers assisted the student teachers in this study in meeting Iowa Teaching Standard 7 by demonstrating habits and skills of continuous inquiry in the classroom, working collaboratively to improve student teachers’ professional practices, applying knowledge from professional development opportunities to improve practice, and implementing professional development plans to reach district achievement goals.

**Standard 8: Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district.**

a. Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.

The student has had only theoretical exposure to policies and procedures related to the school district prior to the student teaching term. The cooperating teacher may show the student teacher how he/she interacts within the district’s guidelines and stress the importance of being informed on how these guidelines affect the teacher.

A cooperating teacher, on the most basic of contractual obligations, stated of her student teacher: “She arrived on time and had good attendance.” Although this may seem quite simplistic, the very basic responsibility to be prompt, to be there daily, is a work skill that is endangered in some careers. This is the start of the student teacher’s obligation to a district’s policies and procedures.

Classroom management issues can be a difficult area for any novice teacher. The young teacher often sees a need to be the students’ friend and does not distance him/herself
as the instructor in an effort to gain trust and respect of his/her students. A strong mentor may be the one to point this out, model appropriate behaviors, and suggest successful management strategies. Nora experienced difficulty with a preschool student who had a violent outburst while lining up for music and kicked her. Using a tactic learned in her university coursework, she gave the young man a choice of actions: apologize and get in line, or go see the principal. He chose the latter. As Nora related in her journal:

I was embarrassed that I had to have [Joe] go see Mr. [Exline], but my cooperating teacher was very supportive and assured me that I had handled it correctly according to the preschool’s procedures. And the principal was great; he backed me up and together we handled the situation so it didn’t get any worse.

Beck and Kosnick (2002) note that effective teaching strategies such as classroom management not only should be discussed in methods’ courses; they also should be modeled by mentors. This can make a student teacher’s experience a positive one. Nora followed the classroom’s and school’s procedures on this behavioral issue appropriately toward a successful outcome and learned a great deal from her mentor in this situation. The experience which had troubled Nora turned into a positive learning experience.

b. Demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and district policy.

This is possibly the most critical component of the cooperating teacher’s modeling for the student teacher. News accounts detail inappropriate teacher/student behavior and the cooperating teacher must reinforce the consequences of such behavior to the student teacher.

Mrs. Brown’s comment on her efforts at modeling professional behavior to her student teacher, Earl, was:
Our elementary staff where, it's my first year in this building and everyone doesn't seem to have the kind of respect for one another I feel there should be, and I've tried to tell [Earl] and show him by not entering into this back-biting and gossip that seems to be going on because I think its much more professional if you stay out of that kind of happenings. I hope I'm setting an example both by what I tell him and what I do in that area (Cooperating teachers’ focus group, April 7, 2005).

Another cooperating teacher’s comments on her apprentice were, “Confidentiality was a priority for her. I didn’t have to emphasize it more than once.”

The literature points to the value of mentoring in professional conduct in that cooperating teachers felt a renewed professionalism as a result of their participation (Miller, Thomson, & Rousch, 1989). In improving themselves, they improve the student teachers’ performance and conduct—a circle of quality control.

c. Contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals.

Within the context of No Child Left Behind legislation, the districts and buildings goals become more important than ever in the educational realm. Student teachers observed firsthand how school improvement was developed and implemented. Mrs. Hart provided the following example, stating: “She taught lessons based on our curriculum (standards and benchmarks) and district and building goals (like Character Counts, reading, and math)” (E-mail response to cooperating teachers’ focus group questions, April 11, 2005).

More complete and effective planning, more effective classroom instruction, and a higher level of reflection on teaching practice are all results of the mentoring process (Giebelhaus & Bowman, 2002) and are all components leading to increasing student achievement, a common goal of school districts.
d. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.

Within the classroom, the student teacher sees a variety of learners and has the opportunity to utilize a variety of teaching techniques and strategies to reach those learners. He/she may practice a number of teaching techniques to assist with learning under the guidance of the cooperating teacher. Additionally, the student teacher interacts with other staff members within the classroom and may come to appreciate the contribution of associates, counselors, custodians, and administrators to the classroom environment.

Mrs. Hart was pleased that Annie demonstrated her competency in this area:

She used different methods/strategies for teaching to help students. She used visuals, songs and finger plays, sign language, and hands-on activities to help all learners. We also have special needs students in our room, and some needed repeated directions, directions broken down into smaller parts, and extra wait time. She got along well with all of the staff also (E-mail response to cooperating teachers’ focus group questions, April 11, 2005).

Student teachers base their vision of good teaching on what their cooperating teachers, their mentors, are demonstrating through their daily routine. By assisting preservice educators in providing opportunities for discussion with other teachers regarding learning styles, the student teachers are able to gain from other educators’ experiences (Gibson, 2000). This mentoring opportunity proves beneficial by providing learning strategies to use in the classroom and by creating the collegial benefits of open discussion with other faculty members—a win-win situation for all parties.

e. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student learning.
Finally, within the student teaching experience, the student teacher has the opportunity to interact with all stakeholders in the best interest of the student. The “dynamic, reciprocal relationship” (Healy & Welchert, 1990) of mentoring may extend to the school’s “extended family” of parents and community members. Involvement within school and district is a plus, the student teachers discovered, as they learned more about their colleagues and expanded their professional network, but they also gained insight into their students. Discussion with another colleague regarding a difficult student was easier if the student teacher had met and/or visited with that teacher at an earlier time. This may be the first time that the student teacher has worked with parents and other teaching colleagues to develop and/or implement a student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or to discuss the student’s progress in a conference.

Parent and community involvement are critical and the student teachers realized that the cooperating teachers were doing all they could to utilize those entities as partners in education. Laura related how her cooperating teacher engaged parents in learning:

And as far as her relationship with parents and in the community and whatever, she has conferences now because it’s the end of the term and she even had a parent come in during science, too. He’s a chiropractor, to talk about bones and all that stuff. So she has a really good relationship with all her parents (Focus group #3, March 16. 2005).

From his journal, Earl discussed another opportunity for community and parent interaction, “Last night we had museum night. This was a good opportunity to meet some of the parents and for these parents to see much of their work.”
Additionally, the need for communication with the parents was demonstrated. Many students developed newsletters, memos, and other communiqués to keep parents informed and involved with the classroom. Annie's cooperating teacher described her collaborative efforts:

She attended an IEP meeting for a student, wrote and sent home newsletters and notes, wrote in a daily notebook for the students with special needs to communicate with parents about the day, she went on home visits to see the student's home and talk with parents, and went on field trips in the community (Mrs. Hart, e-mail response to cooperating teachers' focus group questions, April 11, 2005).

Student teachers were exposed to many methods of interaction, communication, and involvement with all entities in the child's learning circle. Although some may seem to be outside the circle, the mentors impressed upon the student teachers the need for inclusion of all these groups in the educational process. And, all benefit in one way or another from that involvement.

Mentoring behaviors of cooperating teachers assisted the student teachers in this study in meeting Iowa Teaching Standard 8 through adherence to district policies and procedures, demonstration of ethical and professional conduct, efforts to achieve district goals, showing an understanding for all learners and staff, and collaborating with students, families, colleagues, and community members to enhance learning.

Effective cooperating teachers may greatly influence student teachers in meeting standards 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards in the aforementioned ways. Increased preparation for in-service teaching assists in demonstration of professional actions and behaviors. This has been shown to increase retention of beginning teachers and create an
attitude of self-competence. All these are factors that contribute to more effective teaching, which leads to the educator's ultimate goal: to increase student learning.
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Mentors are used in many careers and facets of life and provide not only hands-on training and practice in a guided setting but also may create a relationship for career advice and friendship. The purpose of this study was to determine how student teachers perceived they are being mentored by their cooperating teachers to assist them in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically standards 7 and 8, related to professional behaviors. Just as mentor relationships such as the doctor-intern and electrician-apprentice have contributed to successful career direction, so has the cooperating teacher-student teacher mentoring partnership been critical in producing successful educators.

This study took place during the spring 2005 semester at a private, four-year liberal arts college in a Midwestern state. Student teachers were assigned two placements for student teaching, each one lasting seven weeks, which was the duration of the study. In this study, the focus was on student teachers and their cooperating teachers and the mentoring practices within that relationship. Thirteen elementary preservice educators agreed to be respondents in this study. A qualitative research design was used to make meaning of the student teachers’ mentoring experiences. Descriptive data allowed for a natural, interpretive approach to the research. Multiple methods were used to collect data. Interviews prior to student teaching, reflective journaling throughout the student teaching experience, field notes from student teacher seminars, and focus group discussions throughout the student teaching semester were all used to glean the student teachers’ thoughts on the mentoring being shown them. A focus group discussion of the student teachers’ cooperating teachers was also
facilitated to gain their viewpoint. Not only did these methods allow the researcher to gain much information, it increased the validity of the study.

Thirteen student teachers took part in the study in the spring 2005 semester. Each student teacher completed a minimum of 14 weeks of student teaching under the guidance of at least one, but usually two, cooperating teachers. All student teachers participated in initial interviews, three student teacher seminars, and four focus group discussions. They also documented experiences in their reflective journals and submitted them to the researcher. Twelve cooperating teachers participated in the focus group discussions or responded to questions by phone or e-mail. All interviews and focus group discussions were audio taped and transcribed.

Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were used to establish themes, then the themes were further narrowed and themes sorted into subgroups. Supporting data were determined through analysis of field notes and comments in journals. Comments in all areas of data collection were consistent among respondents.

The results of this study indicated that the data were consistent with the literature. The majority of the respondents did indeed feel that they had been mentored by their cooperating teachers and noted examples and demonstrations of mentoring skills and behaviors. Specifically, they provided examples of increased professionalism and how they could meet Iowa Teaching Standards 7 and 8 by the mentoring provided by their cooperating teachers. The beneficiaries of this study could be the teacher education divisions of universities to better prepare educators.
Reflections of Research

Research and writing can be considered frustrating as well as demanding. The road to research can be fraught with bumps, curves, and construction. One must look at the research process as a journey; this researcher did. Like any successful and enjoyable vacation, the research started with a plan: looking toward the destination, the journey was mapped out, facts were collected about the sites along the way, and the materials (clothing, luggage, and car) were readied. Similarly, the journey of research was mapped out: the research questions, the literature review, whom and how to interview. The data were collected and materials readied. Then it was time to start. Through this journey of research, this researcher found unexpected surprises and most enjoyable moments, as she had on past trips. She also encountered detours and roadblocks. But, like a savvy traveler, she reviewed the map, the original plan, and pressed forward, perhaps taking another route to reach the destination.

Through this research, as with any trip, the journey and all it held were at least as interesting, and often more so, than the final destination. The opportunity to get to know these student teachers, who she had known as students and advisees, in their first professional venture, was enlightening, and perhaps the best part of the journey.

As the researcher reflected on her days as a student teacher, and on the other student teachers she had worked with, she now saw them through a varied lens. She thought of how the student teachers were mentored and the effect that the cooperating teachers may have had on these new professionals as they headed into their chosen careers. She thought of the cooperating teachers she worked with in her student teaching experience—an interesting mix of four cooperating teachers in a large, urban district. Three were outstanding mentors,
guiding this student teacher through all four stages of the mentoring process and setting the stage for her own teaching style. As she listened to the respondents’ comments, she could tell which cooperating teachers were doing the same type of guiding for them. The researcher also empathized with those who did not make that connection and truly did not feel mentored by their cooperating teacher. She has kept contact with many of these cooperating teachers over the past 30 years, further defining their role as true mentors.

The researcher was also fortunate enough in her first teaching position (which lasted 21 years) to teach with her former high school teachers; a situation that was somewhat overwhelming at the start, as she held these women in great regard. She believed these three women were her first true mentors. Starting in junior high school their teaching styles were loved and enjoyed. Their teaching influenced her to try to emulate them by choosing a career path in home economics education. They completed the mentoring circle by continuing their work with the researcher as a new teacher when mentoring induction was not the latest educational “special of the day.” These teachers were professionals who taught her more than could be discounted, but more importantly, they became strong, personal friends, whom she still turns to for advice. One only hopes for this type of mentoring relationship for all student teachers. It was invaluable beyond words.

Because of the positive mentoring experiences in this researcher’s life, she had hoped to explore the mentoring that was taking place within student teaching and how it affected the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically Standards 7 and 8. Although those standards were not in place during her own student teaching experience and entire public school teaching career, the tenets of Standards 7 and 8, addressing professional and ethical issues did not come from specific coursework, but from the examples and models of those cooperating
teachers and later, her mentors in teaching. She believed that she found what she was looking for: cooperating teachers were working to impart not only the skills and techniques of their teaching styles, but in the majority of the student teaching relationships, the cooperating teachers were mentors to their student teachers and will continue that personal/professional relationship. Overwhelmingly, these mentors were excellent models for demonstrating Standards 7 and 8, and the student teachers were well focused on that aspect of professional development. They knew what to look for, but it was reassuring that the cooperating teachers were modeling and living those behaviors.

Through this research journey, the researcher has practiced a process that will serve her well in her career. While tentative at first, as one is on a strange road, she has gained confidence in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the mountains of information involved in this project. Her navigational skills of research have grown to a point that she can work to promote further the mentoring concept within teacher education.

**Discussion of Results**

The results of this study indicate that mentoring contributed to the professional demeanor of student teachers and assisted them as they work to meet the Iowa Teaching Standards, specifically Standards 7 and 8. Successful practices of mentoring that the study participants pointed to as beneficial included communication skills, the sense of mutual trust, independence in allowing the student teacher to find his/her own way, collaboration, and the feedback provided to assist in growth. These practices are consistent with the characteristics of effective mentors. Discussion during focus group interviews provided the most telling results as the participants revealed both the most helpful aspects of their mentors and also some negative impressions. Although most of the mentors and their behaviors were positive,
the negative situations were recognized as such and methods to counteract those situations were used.

Research Question 1

How does mentoring contribute to the development of professionalism in teachers?

The findings from the study concur with the literature related to the development of a professional persona within education. The student teachers' comments revealed that their cooperating teachers have been promoting professional behaviors in their mentor roles. Zachary (2000), Kram (1983), Dortch (2000), and Moitoza (2005) all advocated the development of mentoring through sequential stages. As the relationships progressed between the student teachers and the cooperating teachers, the student teachers became more involved in their professional roles. The cooperating teachers modeled lifelong learning and professional development as they actively involved the student teachers in their districts professional development activities (Kram, 1983). Hegstad (1999) purported the benefits of mentoring as being career-related and psychosocial; this is consistent with Kram (1983), who believed that education borrowed the mentoring concept from the business sector and that the value of a mentoring relationship could enhance both individuals' development. The student teachers were included in district, regional, and state professional meetings and conferences. The student teachers indicated that they understood the concept of professionalism, and they were able to see specific examples related to collaboration, collegiality, contractual issues, and ethical behaviors within their placements. Both the student teachers and the cooperating teachers grew in their professionalism as they continued in their professional development. Behaviors related to Standards 7 and 8 were modeled consistently in all but two instances.
within this study. Those who witnessed unprofessional behaviors were quick to point these out in their comments in focus groups or journals.

In conclusion, the student teachers observed professional models, attended professional meetings, and witnessed specific examples of professionalism. Because they could also identify unprofessional behaviors, the ethical decision-making process developed. Clearly, the mentoring process assisted the student teachers' development of Standards 7 and 8.

Research Question 2

What constitutes a good mentor?

Although this question may beg a definition as a response, past research, this researcher, and the respondents avoided that. Consistent with the literature, the student teachers felt that mentoring has no universal definition and is open to numerous interpretations. Their own perceptions shaped their ideas of mentoring, and in the majority of the student teacher-cooperating teacher pairs, it was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many sources concur that a mentor is one who may guide, coach, and tutor a protégé or apprentice (Hamilton, 1942; Wang & Odell, 2002). The student teachers reported that their own cooperating teachers were guides, coaches, tutors, and/or friends, which was how they had initially described their views of a mentor.

Gehrke and Kay (1984) advocated the same concept and suggested that the older, wiser person is responsible to provide a healthy and positive socialization experience for the younger person. The cooperating teacher was, indeed, that older, wiser person who was a coach and tutor for the student teacher. The student teaching experience is an ideal setting
for the education and nurturing a mentor can provide, and in this study, that type of mentoring was demonstrated by all but two of the cooperating teachers.

Modeling to encourage the protégé to determine direction was encouraged by Parkay (1988) from his personal experience. Kay (1990) spoke directly toward the mentoring of student teachers, it appears, when he indicated that the mentoring effort helps a “…protégé develop the attitudes and behaviors…” within the teaching environment. Cooperating teachers modeled the attitudes, skills, and behaviors needed to be successful in teaching and did so in their roles as mentors to the student teachers.

Facilitation, rather than the teaching of information, was seen as the most beneficial tactic used in mentoring in the student teachers’ eyes. Little, Galagarin, and O’Neal (1984) proposed mentoring as a method of assisting the student to fulfill his/her own potential. The student teachers appreciated the discussion of their performance with their mentors rather than a straight critique. They were more receptive of constructive criticism when approached in that manner and enjoyed the collegiality that it afforded. Those who did not receive any constructive feedback, (i.e. “you’re doing great”) all the time and those who were overtly criticized did not feel that they were being mentored by their cooperating teachers. The guidance provided by other cooperating teachers made a difference in whether or not they were considered mentors.

Collaboration with the cooperating teachers was another hallmark of being a mentor. The vision of the protégé moving from understudy to self-directing colleague was presented by Healy and Welchert (1990). The student teachers looked at this to be a critical step in being mentored. When the student teachers were treated like colleagues, professionals, and/or teachers, they felt like they were teachers, increasing their sense of competence, often
leading to a higher standard of performance. Additionally, the student teachers tended to look to those cooperating teachers demonstrating that collaborative style more as mentors than merely supervisors.

The student teachers identified similar characteristics in the cooperating teachers whom they looked to as mentors: those who were facilitators or guides and those who treated them as colleagues. All who were considered to be mentors shared those qualities and demonstrated them within the student teaching experience. Other characteristics meant more (or less) to each student teacher, emphasizing Gold’s theory (1999) that they are continuing to discover what constitutes a good mentor.

Therefore, the student teachers discovered what constitutes a good mentor through their experiences. They valued the collaboration that occurred. Upon completion of these student teaching experiences, they truly viewed their mentors as guides, facilitators, coaches, tutors, and/or friends.

**Research Question 3**

What behaviors and skills are being demonstrated by an effective mentor?

Dortch (2000) believed that all that is required of mentors is the commitment to make a difference, the willingness to listen and hear, and the discipline to balance the heart and the mind. The student teachers’ comments all concurred with Dortch at some level. Based on the student teaching respondents’ comments, having a strong means of communication was valued by all as a skill essential to effective mentoring. The cooperating teachers’ ability to listen to the student teachers’ concerns were appreciated and respected. This validated the student teachers as credible figures in the classroom in addition to affording them the chance to explain strategies, ask questions, and even vent frustrations about their teaching
performance. By clearly communicating expectations, concerns, praise, and suggestions to the student teachers, the cooperating teachers enabled the apprentices to work toward improving their classroom demeanor and teaching style. The communication style of the cooperating teacher set the tone for the mentoring relationship in all student teaching pairs. Those cooperating teachers who were able to effectively communicate with their student teachers were looked on with increased respect and fit the student teachers’ descriptions of a mentor. Those who merely talked at the student teachers or didn’t listen to or act on concerns were simply supervisors in the classroom.

The cooperating teachers who were able to be trusted or extended trust were also perceived to be of mentor status. Trust was demonstrated by allowing the student teacher the freedom to take over the classroom, to teach in his/her own style, and teach the topics in a manner that the student teacher felt would engage the students. Portner (1998) stated that student teachers have to develop the capacity and confidence to make their own informed decisions. It was viewed almost as a leap of faith for the cooperating teachers to turn over their classrooms to the novice teachers, and these novices were indeed grateful. They needed to enrich their knowledge and improve their abilities regarding teaching and learning. Whether the student teachers felt this trust or not did not deter them from exerting their best efforts, but they were able to know if that trust was present. When the cooperating teachers displayed that trust, they were viewed as mentors.

Open-mindedness and a positive attitude were cited by the student teachers as behaviors distinctive to an effective mentor. This correlated to the trust displayed by the cooperating teachers as they possessed open-mindedness toward the student teachers’ independence in the classroom and strived to deliver positive feedback options about the
novices’ teaching styles. These appeared to be assets, because the student teachers not only looked forward to the freedom to make their own classroom decisions, but also they asked for feedback in an effort to improve their teaching. When they were given the opportunity to be autonomous in their classroom content and delivery and as they received comments to assist with improvement, they looked upon the cooperating teachers as mentors.

Acting as a role model was looked at as mentor-like behavior by both the cooperating teachers and student teachers. The cooperating teachers all discussed their efforts at modeling appropriate professional behaviors to their apprentice teachers, and the student teachers cited numerous examples of ways their mentors “showed them the way.” The student teachers pointed to the fact that their cooperating teachers not only talked about an issue or concept or expected behavior, they also lived it, giving the student teachers an example to follow. All the respondents felt that literally or figuratively, the added aspect of modeling the behavior was a wise approach and indicative of a mentor.

In summary, the primary role of the mentor was to enable mentees to reach these levels of competence, to enrich their knowledge and improve their abilities to become better teachers. Toward that end, specific behaviors and skills were demonstrated by the mentors during the student teaching experience. Communication skills and modeling behaviors were demonstrated.

Research Question 4

How do mentoring behaviors assist student teachers in meeting the Iowa Teaching Standards 7 and 8?

Effective mentoring behaviors assisted the student teachers in modeling the professional expectations and teachers’ responses. From something as seemingly simple as
"being at school on time" to more specific behaviors toward colleagues and students (such as collaborating with other teachers and advising students), these are skills that may not be applied until the actual student teaching experience has ended. Prior to their student teaching, student teachers only saw these situations as related to common sense or case studies. The student teacher must adhere to these rules and expectations of teacher behavior as if they were contractually employed by a district. Practicing these behaviors was the application of coursework. The classroom teacher was the mentor, one who was familiar with the classroom; he/she had the experience from being a former student teacher and was now in the position to guide the student teacher. As such, the mentors assisted by answering questions regarding when the student teachers needed to be at school, what was considered appropriate dress for that community and school, and concerns on how to deal with an administrator, parent, or colleague. Wang, Strong, and Odell (2004) agree emphasizing that teaching practice can be transformed when mentors not only support novice teachers in teaching strategies, but also assist in analyzing teaching and reflection. According to Feiman Nemser's induction phase of teaching (1983), this was the time, with the mentors' guidance, when the student teachers were able to work toward demonstrating the professional behaviors that would be required of them during their in-service teaching assignments. They achieved the capability to fulfill the requirements of the Iowa Teaching Standards to gain the standard teacher licensure.

In conclusion, based on the comments of the student teachers and the cooperating teachers in this study, the cooperating teachers were working to provide the preservice educators with the skills and techniques necessary for becoming successful teachers in their own right. As mentors, each had his/her own individual style, but there were numerous
commonalities within those. The mentoring process that the student teachers experienced seemed consistent with the literature. New teachers with effective mentors developed a sense of competence, practiced professional and ethical behaviors, and worked in a collaborative manner with colleagues, students, parents, and community members.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that student teachers and cooperating teachers benefited from the mentoring relationships that were formed within the realm of the student teaching experiences. The resulting behaviors observed in those relationships will assist them in meeting Standards 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards, related to professional behavior. The following conclusions summarize method, analysis, themes, and research questions investigated.

Method

The qualitative method of research and the particular methods of data collection employed provided appropriate data for this study. The initial interviews provided a baseline regarding the student teachers' views of mentoring and what their expectations would be. The focus groups were used to collect shared understanding from several individuals as well as get views from specific people (Creswell, 2002). The reflective journaling, specifically, noted examples of mentoring behaviors and actions of the cooperating teachers and provided the researcher with the student teachers' viewpoints on how the mentoring may have assisted them in their teaching.

The focus groups provided for interaction among interviewees and participation by all individuals in a group. Utilizing focus groups allowed the researcher to yield the best information with individuals who were similar to and cooperative with each other (Creswell,
These participants were familiar with each other from previous university classroom interaction and were interested in each other’s experiences within student teaching. The focus groups also allowed the researcher to revisit the data after each session to flesh out more information and to formulate new questions based on responses to the previous session. Creswell (2002) indicated that qualitative research is considered to be an emerging design, indicating that the “questions asked by the researcher may change during the process of inquiry based on responses from participants” (p. 147). The researcher allowed the respondents to set the direction by learning the participants’ views rather than imposing her own view on the study.

This study utilized a variety of data collection methods in order to make the connections that enabled a better understanding of the subjects being studied. Additionally, this triangulation of data established trustworthiness through the use of multiple sources of data to confirm emerging findings. In conclusion, these methods focused on process, meaning, and understanding and produced a rich, descriptive product characteristic of qualitative research.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The themes and key elements became clearer, and these were then analyzed to reveal ways that mentoring practices the cooperating teachers modeled were helpful for the student teachers. This approach accurately managed the amount of data collected and organized them into themes and subgroups that accurately reflected the concerns of the student teachers. The constant comparative method utilized all types of data collected (i.e. interviews, seminars, focus groups, and reflective journals) and allowed the emergent theory to be reflective of the
respondents’ experiences and still remain grounded in data. Therefore, this funnel approach to data analysis was well-suited to the purpose of this study.

**Themes**

The themes developed from the data collected accurately described the major areas that the student teachers were concerned with in their teaching placements and experiences. Themes gleaned from this study included classroom management, teaching techniques and strategies, networking and professionalism, and mentor relationships. Even though these themes address criteria included in standards other than 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards, the primary focus is professionalism and ethical behavior of teachers that was conveyed through this study.

Although broad in nature, these themes were then divided into subgroups. Data collected and categorized into these subgroups provided information for the overall picture of teacher mentoring. Therefore, support within the teacher mentoring process enabled the student teachers to transform from the student mode to the teacher mode.

**Research Questions**

The results of this study indicate that student teachers have overwhelmingly been mentored by their cooperating teachers and those mentoring behaviors will assist them in meeting Standards 7 and 8 of the Iowa Teaching Standards, related to professional behavior. The most common mentoring behaviors include communication, trust, being open minded, displaying a positive attitude, and being a role model. The mentoring offered by the cooperating teachers affected the student teachers’ perceptions of professional behaviors and offered a firsthand look at the way that they learn these intangible skills.
Through these observed and demonstrated mentoring behaviors, the student teachers were able to glean the skills necessary to assist them in knowing and practicing the ascribed behaviors expected of education professionals. They possess the knowledge about these professional behaviors and skills specific to Iowa Teaching Standards 7 and 8; it will now be up to them to implement and practice them. The cooperating teachers who were viewed as mentors were competent in discussing and modeling these behaviors so the student teachers would have the tools at their disposal to increase their professional stature, meet the requirements of the Iowa Teaching Standards, and gain full licensure as in-service teachers.

As a result of this study, the opportunity exists for those of us in higher education to listen to the voices of student teachers and their mentors, the cooperating teachers. It is not only important to consider what these groups are saying about how to make the student teaching experience a productive and positive growth opportunity, but it is especially critical for universities to develop training programs for cooperating teachers. Based on the respondents' comments, the evidence points to the need for mentor training. Most of the cooperating teacher had no formal mentor training. The following comments, all from the cooperating teachers' focus group support that.

Mrs. Downs said, “I’ve not had any mentoring training. We do have in our system mentoring for new teachers, but I’ve not had to do that yet (April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Schuler also had not been involved in training. “I did not have any training, any formal training as a mentor” (April 7, 2005).

“I’ve had no formal mentoring experience either,” agreed Mrs. Brown (April 7, 2005).
Mrs. Marshall concurred, “I haven’t had any mentoring training per se” (April 7, 2005).

The cooperating teachers who did have some training noted that it was minimal, provided at in-service meetings to prepare those who would mentor new teachers within their districts as part of the induction process. The following comments indicate their preparation.

“We did have at Valley a mentoring program for mentoring new teachers and I did have a little training with that and I carried that on with Jane” (Mrs. Mills, cooperating teachers’ focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Jensen had similar mentor training, from her comments at the cooperating teachers’ focus group session, “We had a kind of in service training at [our school] as far as mentoring goes…” (April 7, 2005).

All indicated that the major part of their training was from their own personal experiences and gained the most from those that mentored them, reiterated Mrs. Jensen, “…I’m basing that (my mentoring training) on my own personal experience of the wonderful mentors I’ve had in my life” (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

Mrs. Marshall had not had training, but had relied on the university’s student teaching handbook as a guide to mentoring her student teacher. “We do have that in my district. I have not done that and they do go through a whole training thing and it works out well for all the people that the new hires that have to have mentored them. I received the book with the rules and the guidance. I thought that was very helpful” (Cooperating teacher focus group, April 7, 2005).

These comments indicated that there is a need for the universities to provide consistency for cooperating teachers in mentoring student teachers. It is important to
recognize the stages of mentoring in order to speak to the needs of the student teachers. The first stage of successful classroom teaching careers begins with the preservice educators and the student teaching experience. However, it must extend beyond the university classroom and to the mentors, the cooperating teachers.

According to a study conducted by The Ohio State University and the Columbus Public Schools, further investigation is recommended for collaborative research that would benefit both the university faculty who help prepare teachers and the schools that will be receiving the teachers (Stroot, Fowlkes, Langholz, Paxton, Stedmen, Steffes, et. al., 1999). It is imperative that universities work collaboratively with school districts as programs for cooperating teachers are developed to continually assist with a beginning teacher’s professional development.

A consistent program of preparing cooperating teachers as mentors across the university would ensure that all student teachers would have access to the same opportunities to develop and expand their beginning teaching skills. This could also be addressed statewide, utilizing services of the Iowa Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (IACTE). This would not only provide the potential for expertise in collaboration between the colleges and the schools, but would also have the ability to create a support system among those with similar experiences. The Iowa Legislature has set a goal to ensure the success of beginning teachers through teacher induction programs; training cooperating teachers as mentors could extend that opportunity to be mentored effectively to all student teachers.
Recommendations

The identification of mentors’ practices available to student teachers allows teacher preparation programs to examine efforts that would be helpful in meeting the student teaching stakeholders’ needs. The data from this study contributes to consideration of these recommendations:

1. Evaluate student teacher placement in regard to an “appropriate” fit. Although the student teacher-cooperating teacher relationship may be adequate, the true continued mentor relationship is not always reached. In some cases, the cooperating teacher never reaches the first step of the mentor stages. Efforts to match the student teacher with a cooperating teacher based on teaching style and/or personality traits may lead to stronger mentor-mentee pairs.

2. Develop mentor training program for cooperating teachers. The cooperating teachers often receive minimal instruction in this area; they are expected to know what to do. A handbook is provided, and there is an optional session, but attendance is poor, in part due to the content, which is not promoted as a training session for cooperating teachers. A workshop to detail expectations and address effective components of mentoring would improve consistency for the cooperating teachers and also increase communication between the cooperating teachers and the university faculty. Although the majority of the cooperating teachers in this study did become mentors to their student teachers, those responding to the focus groups or follow-up questions indicated they would welcome training specific to mentoring. Specialized mentoring skills related to communication, facilitation, and evaluation could be helpful not only in consistency of supervision of student teachers, but in improving the mentor relationship.
3. Examine the role of university supervisors. Many different faculty members, both full-time and adjunct, supervise student teachers. Their role may need clarification. Consistency in their role within the supervisory triad may be helpful in assisting both student teachers and cooperating teachers. Additionally, continued training for university supervisors would increase uniformity for the student teachers and cooperating teachers. Faculty and adjunct instructors supervise student teachers, but often they learn the skills necessary for supervision through on-the-job training. Evaluator training may be helpful. As evaluators of the Iowa Teaching Standards, the university supervisors would have a stronger grasp on the expectations of in-service teachers and, therefore, may be better prepared to assist the student teachers in reaching those competencies. It would be beneficial for the teacher education program and the student teachers if all supervisors used similar methods of observation and assessment.

4. Integrate the concept of mentoring into the preservice education curriculum. For student teachers to be successfully mentored, it is realistic to believe that they must know the appropriate questions to ask of the cooperating teacher, the mentor, and what is expected of the student teacher as an apprentice. By preparing them for their role as an apprentice, a protégé, the success of the mentoring relationship may be increased.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should be directed to:

- Investigate the impact of the university supervisor on the student teaching experience.
- Explore the variations in the mentor relationship for same sex or opposite sex mentors.
• Study how student teachers may be placed with “appropriate” mentor situations.

• Research methods of debriefing student teachers upon completion of student teaching experiences in an effort to gain understanding that will better prepare preservice educators for the experience.

• Follow a student teacher through his/her first year of employment and the subsequent induction program required by many states.

• Study the mentor-mentee relationship among student teachers placed in middle school or high school classroom settings.

**Summary**

Research often causes us to look at things in new ways. The research conducted for this study caused the researcher to consider her own student teaching mentoring experiences with new-found appreciation. Results of the research provided an assurance—with new insights—that cooperating teachers were still providing mentoring much like she had received, to their student teachers, albeit through a new lens, the Iowa Teaching Standard 7 *The teacher engages in professional growth* and Iowa Teaching Standard 8 *The teacher fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district.*

The researcher found value in learning that student teachers in this study considered collaboration a hallmark of good mentoring. The student teachers appreciated frank open discussions of their performances rather than one-sided critiques. They appreciated facilitation of their learning rather than direct “how to” lessons. The researcher learned that collaboration and facilitation helped student teachers to develop a sense of competence and an ability to act in professional ways.
For those of us who work in college or university teacher preparation programs, surely a message to be retained from this study is to listen to the voices of our student teachers and to the voices of their cooperating teachers. Better, richer, and more productive experiences will likely be the result.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM
DATE: December 15, 2004
TO: Cynthia Waters
FROM: Ginny Eason, IRB Administrator
RE: IRB ID # 04-570

STUDY REVIEW DATE: December 14, 2004

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the project, “The collaborative relationship and mentoring within the supervisory triad within the student teaching experience” requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) 2. The applicable exemption category is provided below for your information. Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review by the IRB. Only the IRB may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

The IRB determination of exemption means that this project does not need to meet the requirements from the Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects, unless required by the IRB. We do, however, urge you to protect the rights of your participants in the same ways that you would if your project was required to follow the regulations. This includes providing relevant information about the research to the participants.

Because your project is exempt, you do not need to submit an application for continuing review. However, you must carry out the research as proposed in the IRB application, including obtaining and documenting (signed) informed consent if you have stated in your application that you will do so or required by the IRB.

Any modification of this research must be submitted to the IRB on a Continuation and/or Modification form, prior to making any changes, to determine if the project still meets the Federal criteria for exemption. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an IRB proposal will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

cc: AESHM
Cheryl Hausafus
ISU NEW HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH FORM

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Principal Investigator (PI): Cynthia L. Waters
Phone: 319-334-4495 Fax: 563-425-5379

Degrees: B.S., M.Ed., Ph.D. (anticipated 5/05)

Correspondence Address: 1586 260th St. Independence, IA 50644

Department: AESHM (FCSEd)
Center/Institute: College: FCS

PI Level: Faculty Staff Postdoctoral X Graduate Student Undergraduate Student

Title of Project: The collaborative relationship and mentoring within the supervisory triad within the student teaching experience.

Project Period (Include Start and End Date): 01/03/2005 to 05/01/2005

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS

Name of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty: Cheryl O. Hausafus
Phone: 515-294-5307

Department: FCEDS

Email Address: haus@iastate.edu

Signature of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty:

Type of Project: (check all that apply)

Research Thesis X Dissertation Class project

Independent Study (490, 590, Honors project) Other. Please specify:

KEY PERSONNEL

List all members and relevant experience of the project personnel. This information is intended to inform the committee of the training and background related to the specific procedures that the each person will perform on the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME &amp; DEGREE(S)</th>
<th>SPECIFIC DUTIES ON PROJECT</th>
<th>TRAINING &amp; EXPERIENCE RELATED TO PROCEDURES PERFORMED, DATE OF TRAINING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cynthia Waters</td>
<td>Principal investigator</td>
<td>10/28/2002-training date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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</table>

FUNDING INFORMATION

If internally funded, please provide account number: NA
If externally funded, please provide funding source and account number: NA
If funding is pending please provide OSPA Record ID on GoldSheet: NA

Title on GoldSheet if Different Than Above:

Research Compliance 04/10/03

1
SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

Although the compliance committees are not intended to conduct peer review of research proposals, the federal regulations include language such as “consistent with sound research design,” “rationale for involving animals or humans” and “scientifically valuable research,” which requires that the committees consider in their review the general scientific relevance of a research study. Proposals that do not meet these basic tests are not justifiable and cannot be approved. If a compliance review committee(s) has concerns about the scientific merit of a project and the project was not competitively funded by peer review or was funded by corporate sponsors, the project may be referred to a scientific review committee. The scientific review committee will be ad hoc and will consist of your ISU peers and outside experts as needed. If this situation arises, the PI will be contacted and given the option of agreeing that a consultant may be contacted or withdrawing the proposal from consideration.

☐ Yes ☐No Has or will this project receive peer review?

If the answer is “yes,” please indicate who did or will conduct the review:

If a review was conducted, please indicate the outcome of the review:

NOTE: RESPONSE CELLS WILL EXPAND AS YOU TYPE AND PROVIDE SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR YOUR RESPONSE.

COLLECTION OR RECEIPT OF SAMPLES

Will you be: (Please check all that apply.)

☐ Yes ☐No Receiving samples from outside of ISU? See examples below.
☐ Yes ☐No Sending samples outside of ISU? See examples below.

Examples include: genetically modified organisms, body fluids, tissue samples, blood samples, pathogens.

If you will be receiving samples from or sending samples outside of ISU, please identify the name of the outside organization(s) and the identity of the samples you will be sending or receiving outside of ISU:

Please note that some samples may require a USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) permit, a USPHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Import Permit for Etiologic Agents, a Registration for Select Agents, High Consequence Livestock Pathogens and Toxins or Listed Plant Pathogens, or a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) (http://www.ehs.iastate.edu/bs/shipping.htm).

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Briefly explain in language understandable to a layperson the specific aim(s) of the study.

The purpose of this study is to examine the collaborative relationship within the supervisory triad and analyze the mentoring process during the student teaching experience within elementary education at a private, Midwest liberal arts university.

BENEFIT

Research Compliance 04/10/03
Explain in language understandable to a layperson how the information gained in this study will benefit participants or the advancement of knowledge, and/or serve the good of society.

One benefit of this study is a deepened understanding of the mentoring process and how it affects teaching success. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit the education profession in that same manner.

ASSURANCE

- I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate and consistent with any proposal(s) submitted to external funding agencies.
- I agree to provide proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subject or welfare of animal subjects are protected. I will report any problems to the appropriate compliance review committee(s).
- I agree that I will not begin this project until receipt of official approval from all appropriate committee(s).
- I agree that modifications to the originally approved project will not take place without prior review and approval by the appropriate committee(s), and that all activities will be performed in accordance with all applicable federal, state, local and Iowa State University policies.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest can be defined as a set of conditions in which an investigator’s or key personnel’s judgment regarding a project (including human or animal subject welfare, integrity of the research) may be influenced by a secondary interest (e.g., the proposed project and/or a relationship with the sponsor). ISU’s Conflict of Interest Policy requires that investigators and key personnel disclose any significant financial interests or relationships that may present an actual or potential conflict of interest. By signing this form below, you are certifying that all members of the research team, including yourself, have read and understand ISU’s Conflict of Interest policy as addressed by the ISU Faculty Handbook (http://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty/) and have made all required disclosures.

☐ Yes ☐ No Do you or any member of your research team have an actual or potential conflict of interest?
☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, have the appropriate disclosure form(s) been completed?

SIGNATURES

[Signature of Principal Investigator] 12/02/2004

[Signature of Department Chair] 12/18/04

PLEASE NOTE: Any changes to an approved protocol must be submitted to the appropriate committee(s) before the changes may be implemented.

Please proceed to SECTION II.
1) ■ Yes □ No • Yes Is the probability of the harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research greater than that encountered ordinarily in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests?

2) ■ Yes □ No • Yes Is the magnitude of the harm or discomfort greater than that encountered ordinarily in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests?

3) Describe any risks or discomforts to the subjects and how they will be minimized and precautions taken.

While participating in this study the foreseeable risks are minimal. The stress from the researcher’s observations should be minimal.

4) If this study involves vulnerable populations, including minors, pregnant women, prisoners, educationally or economically disadvantaged, what additional protections will be provided to minimize risks?

NA

PART K: COMPENSATION

1) ■ No □ Yes • Yes Will subjects receive compensation for their participation? If yes, please explain.

Do not make the payment an inducement, only a compensation for expenses and inconvenience. If a person is to receive money or another token of appreciation for their participation, explain when it will be given and any conditions of full or partial payment. (E.g., volunteers will $5.00 for each of the five visits in the study or a total of $25.00 if he/she completes the study. If the subject withdraws from participation, they will receive $5.00 for each of the visits completed.) It is considered undue influence to make completion of the study the basis for compensation.

NA

PART L: CONFIDENTIALITY

1) Describe below the methods you will use to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained (e.g., who has access to the data, where the data will be stored, security measures for web-based surveys and computer storage, how long data (specimens) will be retained, etc.)

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information. To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: Information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. Subjects will be assigned a unique code and letter and will be used instead of names. I will be the only one studying your records and reading your journal entries or other documents. Written materials and tapes will be kept a locked filing cabinet. Transcripts will be stored on password protected computer files to insure privacy. The data will be retained for five years before erasure. If the results are published or presented at a scholarly conference, your identity will remain confidential.

Checklist for Attachments

Research Compliance 04/10/03
The following are attached (please check ones that are applicable):

☐ X A copy of the informed consent document OR ☐ Letter of information with elements of consent to subjects
☐ NA A copy of the assent form if minors will be enrolled
☐ NA Letter of approval from cooperating organizations or institutions allowing you to conduct research at their facility
☐ NA Data-gathering instruments (including surveys)
☐ NA Recruitment fliers or any other documents the subjects will see

Two sets of materials should be submitted for each project – the original signed copy of the application form, one copy and two sets of accompanying materials. Federal regulations require that one copy of the grant application or proposal must be submitted for comparison.

FOR IRB USE ONLY:

Initial action by the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

☐ Project approved. Date: 12/14/04 04-570
☐ Pending further review. Date: __________________________
☐ Project not approved. Date: __________________________

Follow-up action by the IRB:

[Signature]
IRB Approval Signature

Date 12/14/04
APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER: STUDENT TEACHERS
November 16, 2004

Dear Educators,

Currently I am working on my doctoral degree in FCS education from Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. For my dissertation I am planning to conduct a study that will look at the collaborative relationship and mentoring within the supervisory triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor in the student teaching experience.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the issues that arise during student teaching, the strategies that are employed to address those issues and the communication and mentoring skills that are developed as part of the process. Data will be collected through interviews of all members of the supervisory triad, observation of the interaction between the participants, and student teachers’ reflective journals. I will also be taking field notes throughout.

Your responses and participation will provide valuable insights to my study. I encourage you to be open and honest and to freely share your experiences. In order to use this information in my dissertation, and in the event this information might be included in an article submitted for publication, I need to request your consent to participate in this study. If you feel you need to withdraw from this study, you may do so at any time.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please read the informed consent form included and sign page 3 of the consent form and return it in the envelope provide by December 21, 2004. I appreciate your cooperation and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Cindy Waters
Assistant Professor in Education
Upper Iowa University
Fayette, IA 52142
563-425-5257
waterse@uiu.edu
APPENDIX C

INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE: STUDENT TEACHERS
TO: Spring student teacher research participants

FROM: Cindy Waters

RE: Expectations for research

DATE: 12/29/2004

Thanks for agreeing to participate in this research study. Here is an outline of what will be required of you as a participant. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns or questions.

- Read, sign, and return the human subjects' informed consent form to Cindy.
- Participate in a pre-student teaching interview.
- Record in your reflective journal mentoring behaviors, techniques, skills demonstrated by your cooperating teacher. Reflect/comment on its impact on you as an educator. I have attached a list of mentor characteristics that may assist you, but you are not limited to this; it is only a list to spark your thinking, if needed.
- While attending student teaching seminars, share your observations, insights into your cooperating teacher as a mentor and its influence on your teaching.
- Upon completion of your student teaching, attend a focus group meeting to summarize and reflect on the mentoring influence of your cooperating teacher.

Again, thank you for your involvement!
APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM: STUDENT TEACHERS
November 16, 2004

Dear Educators,

Currently I am working on my doctoral degree in FCS education from Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. For my dissertation I am planning to conduct a study that will look at the collaborative relationship and mentoring within the supervisory triad of student teacher, cooperating teacher, and university supervisor in the student teaching experience.

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Your responses and participation will provide valuable insights to my study. I encourage you to be open and honest and to freely share your experiences. In order to use this information in my dissertation, and in the event this information might be included in an article submitted for publication, I need to request your consent to participate in this study. If you feel you need to withdraw from this study, you may do so at any time.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please clip the consent form found at the bottom of this page and return it in the envelope provided by December 21, 2004. I appreciate your cooperation and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Cindy Waters

____________________________________________________________________

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose for the use of information received in this study.

_________________________________________  _________________________
Signature of Participant                        Date
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: For student teachers prior to the student teaching experience.

1. How would you define mentoring?

2. Would you say you have ever been mentored/had a mentor? Describe that situation.

3. What behaviors or techniques would indicate to you that someone is indeed a mentor?

4. Have you communicated with your cooperating teacher prior to your student teaching experience? Who initiated the contact? How does this contact affect your feelings about starting?

5. What are you hoping to gain from the student teaching experience?

6. In what ways do you feel prepared for this experience?

7. In what ways do you feel less prepared? How do you plan to strengthen these areas? Will you seek out your cooperating teacher to help you in these areas?

8. What are your concerns about student teaching?

9. Is your cooperating teacher clear about his/her expectations of you in your student teaching?

10. How do you anticipate your cooperating teacher will help you address your needs as a student teacher?

11. Are you clear about your responsibilities during the student teaching placement?

12. What are your expectations for this experience?

13. What do you expect from your cooperating teaching during this experience?

14. Do you believe that your cooperating teacher may become your mentor?
APPENDIX F

LIST OF CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR
List of Characteristics of an Effective Mentor

- Possesses high expectations
- Acts as a catalyst
- Has sense of humor
- Is exemplary role model
- Is sympathetic
- Is a motivator
- Is a successful practitioner
- Is a good communicator
- Is analytical
- Is supporting
- Is challenging
- Is sensitive—knows when to back off
- Respects confidentiality
- Is open-minded
- Asks questions appropriately
- Offers different perspective
- Is reflective
- Is non-judgmental
- Is credible
- Gives ideas, but assures that mentee has ownership
- Acts as a sounding board; lets ST sound off
- Shares own problems
- Displays humility
• Is patient
• Provides information without succumbing to temptation to take over
• Offers insight and guidance
• Has willingness to mentor
• Is helpful but not authoritarian
• Is emotionally committed to beginning educator
• Is astute (knows the right thing to say at the right time)
• Is diplomatic
• Anticipates problems
• Is nurturing & encouraging
• Is enthusiastic about teaching
• Is wise
• Is caring
• Is confident
• Exhibits leadership skills
• Provides opportunity to interact & build networks with others in field
• Emphasizes taking responsibility
• Encourages self-assessment & critical reflection

Adapted from:


APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS: STUDENT TEACHERS, SESSION 1
Mentoring Research Study Participants:
Focus group meeting #1:
- For student teachers during their first student teaching placement.
- First student teaching seminar within student teaching experience.

Tasks:
- Read the informed consent document, sign and date (if not previously completed.)
- Within focus groups, discuss the questions provided.
- Start the tape, go around and state your name and a test phrase (i.e., “This is Bill. I’m doing a great job within my student teaching experience.”) —this gives me a base for transcribing.
- Speak clearly and in a volume loud enough to be picked up on tape.
- State your name prior to your comments throughout the discussion. (i.e. “This is Tom. I think…..)"
- Feel free to include comments not specifically related to the questions.
- Ask questions at any time.
- Bring your journals (that include mentoring observations and comments) to the next seminar, February 16. I will copy those sections, so I can start data analysis.

Address the following questions within your focus group, specifically considering the mentoring component of your student teaching:

1. In what ways are you feeling supported by your cooperating teacher?
2. How have you established a positive working relationship with your cooperating teacher?
3. Provide examples of mentoring behaviors, skills, or techniques that you have seen from your cooperating teacher.
4. How are the two of you working together to help you grow as an educator?
5. Describe how your expectations for your student teaching experience are being met by your cooperating teacher.
6. Discuss any difficulties you are experiencing within your student teaching experience.
7. How has the cooperating teacher conveyed what his/her expectations are?
8. Describe how your personal experience as a student factors into your style and strategy as a teacher.
APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS: STUDENT TEACHERS, SESSION 2
2/16/2005

Mentoring Research Study Participants:
Focus group meeting #2:

- For student teachers as they complete their first student teaching placement.
- Second student teaching seminar within student teaching experience.

Tasks:
- Turn in journals at start of seminar; I will copy and return to you before you leave.
- Return informed consent form to me if not done.
- Within focus groups, discuss the questions provided.
- Start the tape, go around and state your name and a test phrase (i.e., “This is Bill. I’m doing a great job within my student teaching experience.”) This gives me a base for transcribing.
- Speak clearly and in a volume loud enough to be picked up on tape.
- State your name prior to your comments throughout the discussion. (i.e., “This is Tom. I think…..”)
- Feel free to include comments not specifically related to the questions.
- Ask questions at any time.

Address the following questions within your focus group, specifically considering the mentoring component of your student teaching:

9. How have you and your cooperating teacher worked together to help you grow as an educator?
10. Describe an event or situation (or more than one!) when you felt that your cooperating teacher was a mentor for you. How will that assist you as you grow as an educator?
11. As you prepare to start your next placement, how will you use the advice, suggestions, and feedback from your first cooperating teacher to improve your teaching?
12. Describe how your expectations for your student teaching experience have or have not been met by your cooperating teacher.
APPENDIX I

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS: STUDENT TEACHERS, SESSION 3
Mentoring Research Study Participants:
Focus group meeting #3:
• Focus on the second student teaching placement.
• Third student teaching seminar within student teaching experience.
NOTE: The final meeting to conclude this study will be on Wednesday, April 27 at 5 in room 302. It should take about 30-45 minutes. Supper will be provided. Bring your journals to be copied.

Tasks:
• Within focus groups, discuss the questions provided.
• Start the tape, go around and state your name and a test phrase (i.e. “This is Bill. I’m really enjoying this placement!”)—this gives me a base for transcribing.
• CRITICAL: Speak clearly and in a volume loud enough to be picked up on tape.
• State your name prior to your comments throughout the discussion. (i.e. “This is Tom. I think....)
• Feel free to include comments not specifically related to the questions.
• Ask questions at any time.

Address the following questions within your focus group, specifically considering the mentoring component of your student teaching:
1. Refer to the criteria from the Iowa Teaching Standards (2002) below. Specifically describe how your cooperating teacher is assisting/guiding/mentoring you to meet these standards. Give examples that you may have experienced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD: Engages in professional growth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher's needs aligned to the Iowa teaching standards and district/building student achievement goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| STANDARD: Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district. |
The Teacher:

e. Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.
f. Demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and district policy.
g. Contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals.
h. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.
i. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues, and communities to enhance student

2. Describe ways your cooperating teacher offers ideas regarding classroom content, management and curriculum.
3. Discuss ways your cooperating teacher offers information regarding professional development, networking, resume preparation, contacts for potential jobs.
4. Describe whether you believe you and your cooperating teacher may have developed a personal relationship as well as a professional one.
APPENDIX J

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS: STUDENT TEACHERS, SESSION 4
4/27/2005

Mentoring Research Study Participants:
Focus group meeting #4:

- A reflective look at the entire student teaching experience and what you have gained.
- Final comments

Tasks:
- I need your journals to copy. Let me know what you want me to do with them when I am done.
- Within focus groups, discuss the questions provided.
- Start the tape, go around and state your name and a test phrase (i.e. “This is Bill. I’m really enjoying this placement!”) This gives me a base for transcribing.
- CRITICAL: Speak clearly and in a volume loud enough to be picked up on tape.
- State your name prior to your comments throughout the discussion. (i.e., “This is Tom. I think.....)
- Feel free to include comments not specifically related to the questions.
- Ask questions at any time.

Address the following questions within your focus group, specifically considering the mentoring component of your student teaching:

1. Describe at least one specific example/incident within your second student teaching placement where your cooperating teacher demonstrated behaviors or skills as a mentor.
2. How have you grown as an educator in a professional sense based on what your cooperating teacher has done?
3. What could the cooperating teacher have done better to help you grow?
4. What would you have liked the cooperating teacher to have done differently during your student teaching experience?
5. Describe how you worked as a team with your cooperating teacher.
6. Overall, what did your cooperating teacher(s) do that best helped you improve in your professional practice?
7. How do you look at your cooperating teachers now as mentors?
8. How has their mentoring helped you as an educator?
APPENDIX K

INTRODUCTORY LETTER: COOPERATING TEACHERS
To: Cooperating teachers of study participants

From: Cindy Waters, assistant professor in Education, UIU

Re: Mentoring

Date: 3/11/2005

The student teacher with whom you worked this term from Upper Iowa University has agreed to provide information for my doctoral dissertation, *Improved Professional Practice for Teacher Preparation: How Cooperating Teachers Mentor Student Teachers to Meet the Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria*. Your student teacher has participated by agreeing to be interviewed regarding his/her views on mentoring and his/her expectations of student teaching prior to the student teaching experience. Throughout the student teaching experience, he/she has reflected on mentoring behaviors, techniques, and skills demonstrated by you, the cooperating teacher, and those that have assisted him/her in his/her professional and, perhaps, personal growth.

To provide some linkage and usefulness to the classroom, I would like to be able to discuss your perceptions of how you mentored this (and/or other) student teacher(s). To do this, I am asking that at the conclusion of the Teacher Appreciation Dinner, you would agree to stay for about 20-30 minutes to comment on your mentoring behavior. I will have questions regarding your contribution to the student teacher’s educational growth and also ask for your comments on how you feel you help them meet the criteria for the Iowa Teaching Standards.

A stipend to offset the cost of gas and mileage will be provided. Please respond to me, Cindy Waters, at 563-425-5257 or to watersc@uiu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in this discussion.
APPENDIX L

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS: COOPERATING TEACHERS
4/7/2005
Mentoring Research Study
Cooperating Teacher Focus group:

Tasks:
- Discuss the questions provided.
- You will be audiotaped. Your responses will be transcribed, but will be confidential. Names will be changed.
- Please go around the table and introduce yourself and give a test phrase (i.e., “This is Ann. I’ve had a good experience with my student teacher.”) This gives me a base for transcribing.
- Speak clearly and in a volume loud enough to be picked up on tape.
- State your name prior to your comments throughout the discussion. (i.e., “This is Tom. I think…..)
- Feel free to include comments not specifically related to the questions.
- Ask questions at any time.

Address the following questions, specifically considering the mentoring aspect of your student teaching supervision:

1. How would you define mentoring?
2. Have you had any training as a mentor? Would it have been helpful to have some/more training as a mentor to prepare you to supervise student teachers?
3. What role do you feel you played in mentoring the student teacher? Describe an event or situation (or more than one!) when you felt that you were a mentor for your student teacher. Provide examples of mentoring behaviors, skills, or techniques that you may have demonstrated.
4. How did you and your student teacher work together to help him/her grow as an educator?
5. Refer to the criteria from the Iowa Teaching Standards (2002) below. Specifically describe how you feel you may have assisted/guided/mentored your student teacher to meet these standards. Give examples that you may have experienced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD: Engages in professional growth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Demonstrates habits and skills of continuous inquiry and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Works collaboratively to improve professional practice and student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Applies research, knowledge, and skills from professional development opportunities to improve practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Establishes and implements professional development plans based upon the teacher’s needs aligned to the Iowa teaching standards and district/building student achievement goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD: Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Adheres to board policies, district procedures, and contractual obligations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. Demonstrates professional and ethical conduct as defined by state law and district policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. Contributes to efforts to achieve district and building goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. Demonstrates an understanding of and respect for all learners and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. Collaborates with students, families, colleagues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Describe ways you provided your student teacher with ideas regarding classroom content, management and curriculum.
7. Discuss ways you offered information regarding professional development, networking, resume preparation, contacts for potential jobs. Others?

8. Did you feel that you learned from your student teacher? Examples?

9. Did you feel that you and the student teacher worked as a collaborative team? Could you give examples? What might either of you have done to strengthen the collaborative effort?
APPENDIX M

TABLE OF DATA: COOPERATING TEACHERS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Years of teaching experience</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Certification/endorsements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Allen</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>B.A. +24</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Reading&lt;br&gt;Instructional Strategist I (Class C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Brown</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 32</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Carson</td>
<td>K-8 Physical Education</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 15</td>
<td>K-12 Physical Ed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Dartmouth</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>B.A. +</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Door</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 20</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Downs</td>
<td>K-2 Special Education</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Mildly Disabled&lt;br&gt;K-6 BD&lt;br&gt;K-6 MD, mild/moderate&lt;br&gt;K-6 Multicat, Sp. Ed.&lt;br&gt;K-6 Instructional Strategist I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Fisher</td>
<td>3-5 Physical Education</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>B.A. +39</td>
<td>7-12 Secondary&lt;br&gt;K-12 Coach&lt;br&gt;K-6 Physical Educ.&lt;br&gt;7-12 Physical Educ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Flint</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>B.A. +20</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. George</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 18</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Hall</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>B.A. +</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Harper</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 25</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-12 Coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Harris</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>23 years</td>
<td>B.A. +</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Hart</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>M.A. + 13</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Horner</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; grade</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>B.A. + 30</td>
<td>7-12 Secondary&lt;br&gt;Pk-3, Reg/ Spec.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>K-6 Qualifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr. Howard</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Social Studies&lt;br&gt;Middle School End.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Jensen</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>B.A. + 6</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Reading&lt;br&gt;K-6 Social Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Marshall</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>B.A. + 34</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Social Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Poor</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>M.Ed.</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Reading&lt;br&gt;K-6 Social Studies&lt;br&gt;K-12 Coach&lt;br&gt;PK-6 Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Raymond</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>B.A. + 13</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Reck</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>B.A. + 20</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sargent</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>B.A. + 15</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;K-6 Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Shuler</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>B.A. + 20</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Smith</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. South</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>B.A. + 27</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary&lt;br&gt;PreK-K Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Star</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>M.A. + 29</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Ward</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>B.A. + 12</td>
<td>K-6 Reading K-12 Physical Ed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Wright</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>B.A. +</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary K-6 Media Specialist 7-12 Media Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. Zimmer</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>K-6 Elementary PK-3 Teacher &amp; Classroom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES CITED


